

FOUNDER OF RASHTRA SEVIKA SAMITI

Vandaniya Mavshi Kelkar



CHITRAKATHA

Founder of Rashtra Sevika Samiti

Vandaniya Mavshi Kelkar

(Chitrakatha)

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Foreword

Historically, woman had a very low status in male dominant society like India. She was merely confined to her family and domestic responsibilities. During British rule, atrocities on women increased. However, in such difficult situation, few women started getting educated. As the horizon of woman widened, she began looking beyond the four walls of her house and began realizing her potential and inner strength.

Among a few women who had the urge of doing some constructive work for society was Laxmibai Kelkar alias Vandaniya Mavsiji Kelkar. She decided to bring women together and collectively work towards their empowerment. This was a revolutionary move in Pre-Independence period and she succeeded in establishing 'Rashtra Sevika Samiti', which has now reached all parts of the world.

This is her birth centenary year and we are presenting her biography in form of Chitrakatha. We are sure that her life and work will prove inspirational to all readers.

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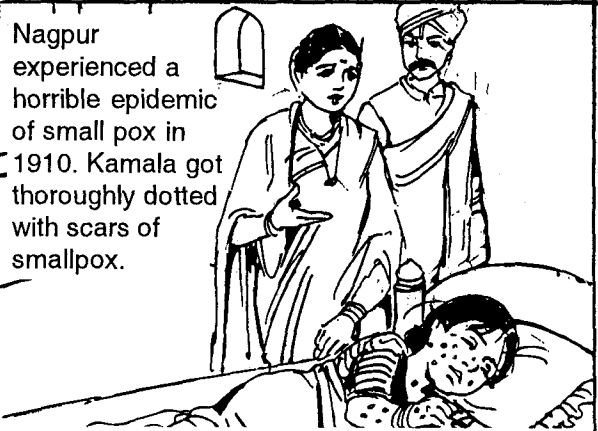
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Bhaskarrao & Yashdabai Dates' home celebrated birth of their beautiful daughter 'Kamala' on 6th July 1905

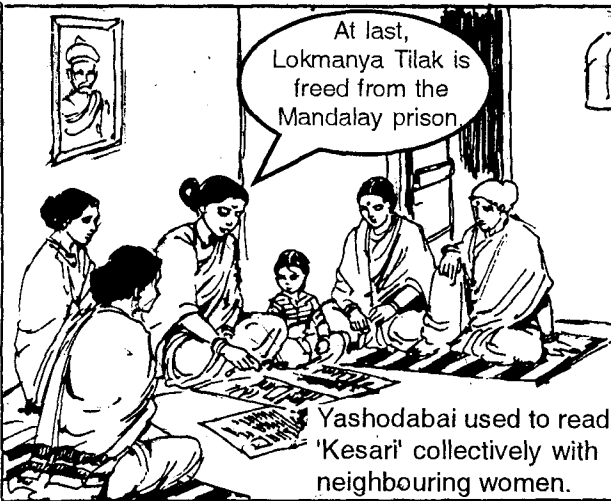


Nagpur experienced a horrible epidemic of small pox in 1910. Kamala got thoroughly dotted with scars of smallpox.



And to everyone's surprise, Kamala became more radiant and beautiful after the disease.

At last, Lokmanya Tilak is freed from the Mandalay prison

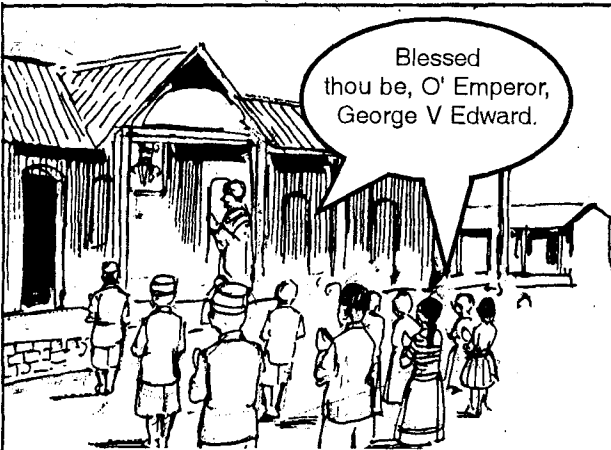


Yashodabai used to read 'Kesari' collectively with neighbouring women.

Non-Cooperation Movement took roots in the country against the injustice forced on India. Kamala's brothers entered this struggle.



Blessed thou be, O' Emperor, George V Edward.



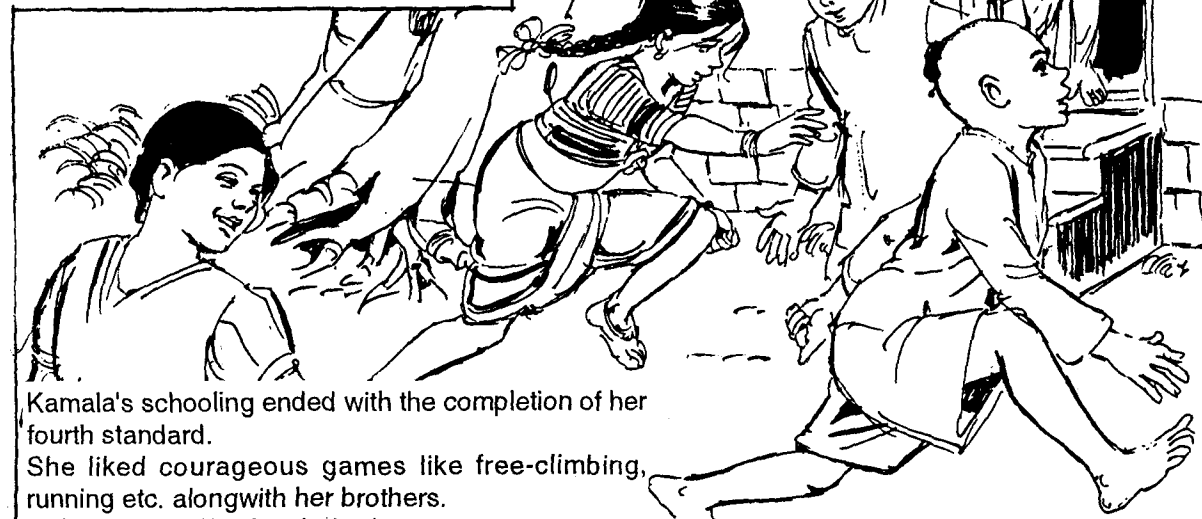
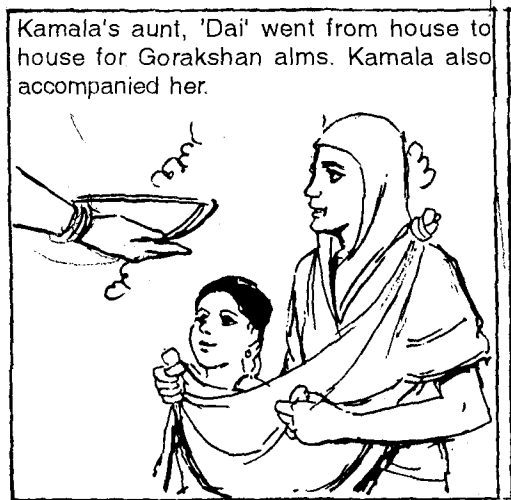
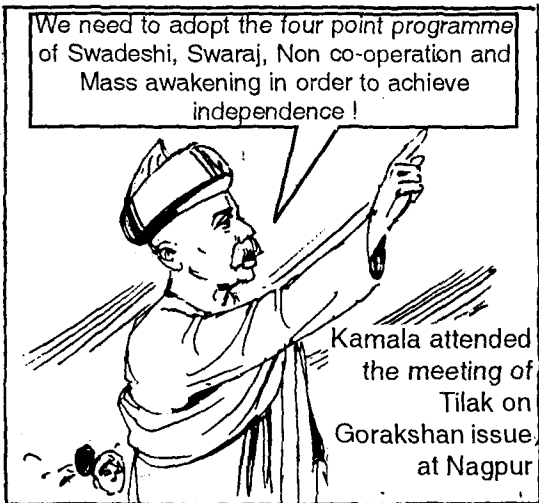
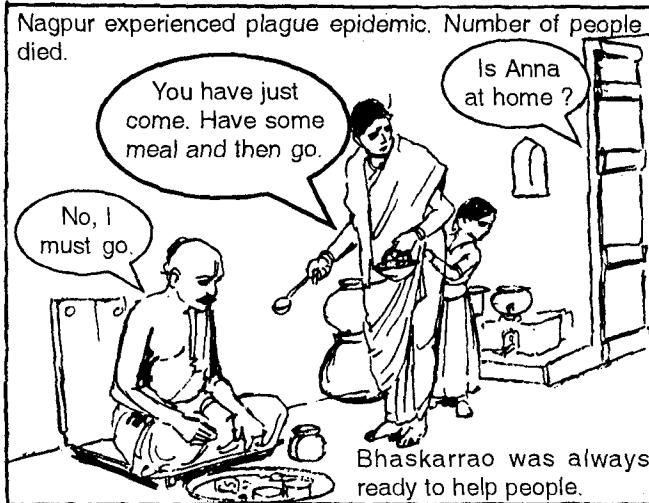
The Missionary school organised a grand welcome for King George V.

Kamala returns home, with a box of sweets

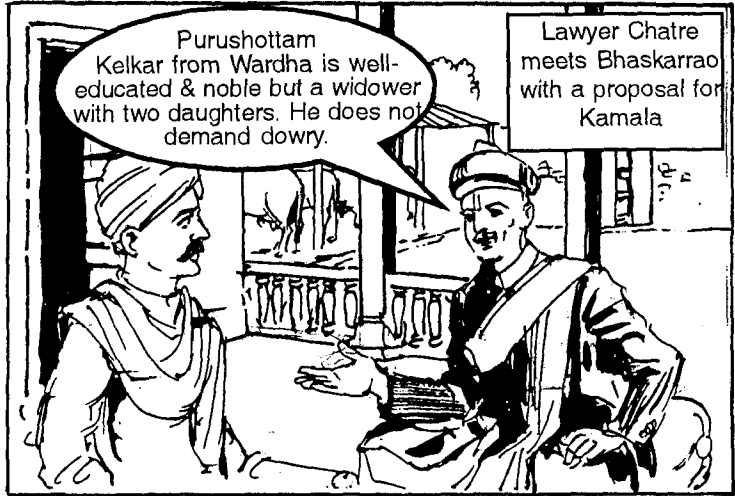
The king, a complete stranger to us and you danced before him.



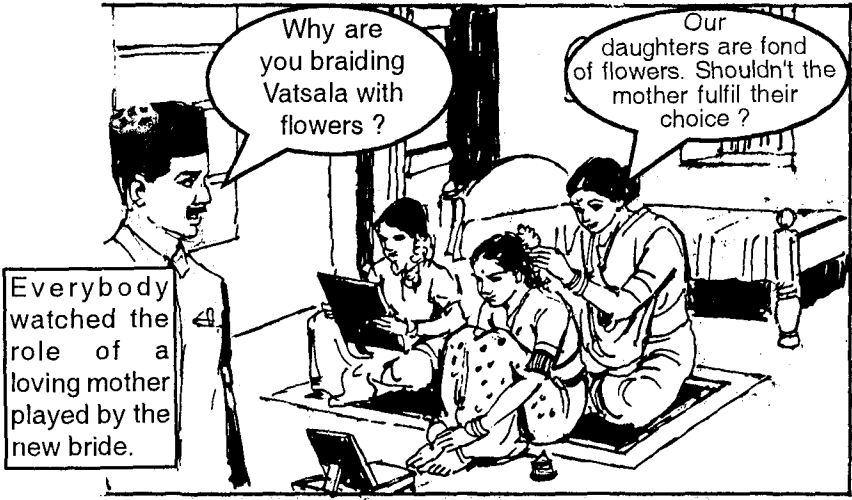
Kamala was disappointed and she threw the sweets and thus began realising the difference between her countrymen and the invaders.



News : Marriage cancelled due to dowry. Suicide of a young girl Snehalata.



Kamala alias 'Lakshmi' entered Kelkar's house in June 1919.



Laxmibai gave birth to her first son Manohar on 10th August 1920. Everybody was overjoyed.

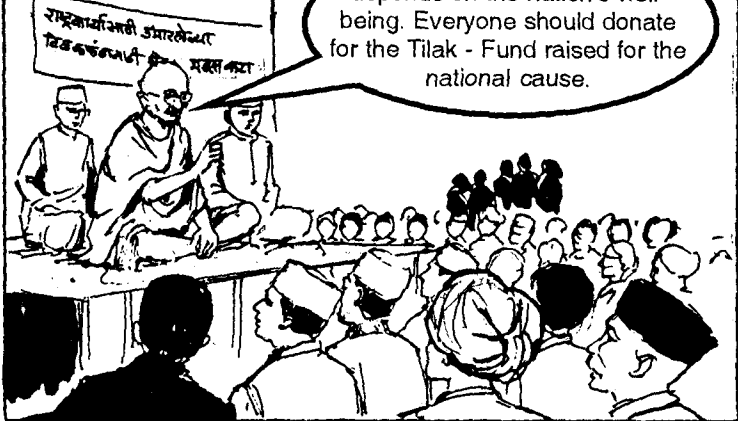
A public meeting of Mahatma Gandhi was held in Wardha in December 1920. Jamnalal and Jankibai Bajaj came for the meeting.



Laxmibai asks for Umakaku's permission.



Gandhiji's meeting



Laxmibai and her sister-in-law instantly donated their gold necklaces without even a second's thought.



During the Freedom movement, Laxmibai and her colleague women used to participate in the Dawn march (Prabhat Ferees)



We ought to boycott foreign cloth, sugar tea, coffee etc.



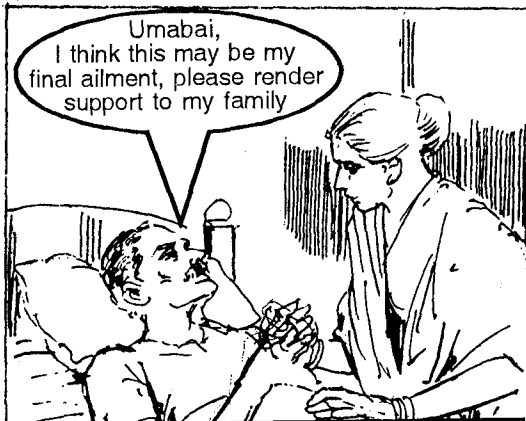
Her motivation towards social work did not allow her to sit idle.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha was established on Vijayadashmi in 1925.





On 14th March 1929. Laxmibai participated in the protest march against Simon Commission which marked her debut as an activist when the nation was in turmoil.



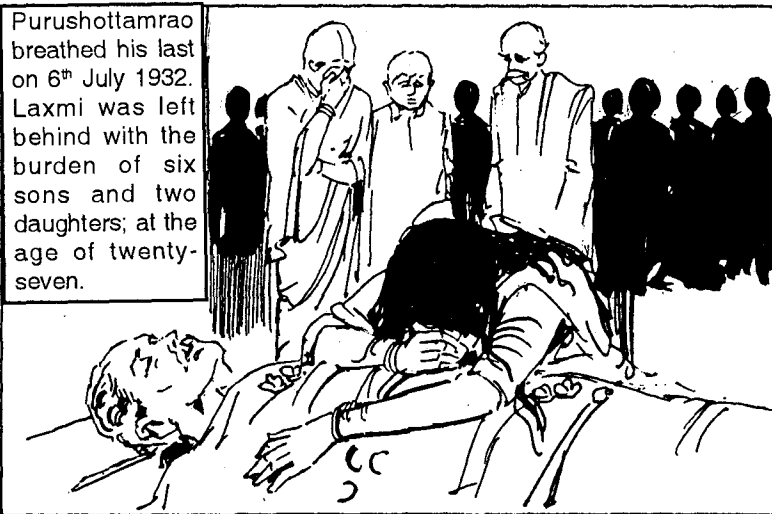
Purushottamrao became serious. He had caught T. B.



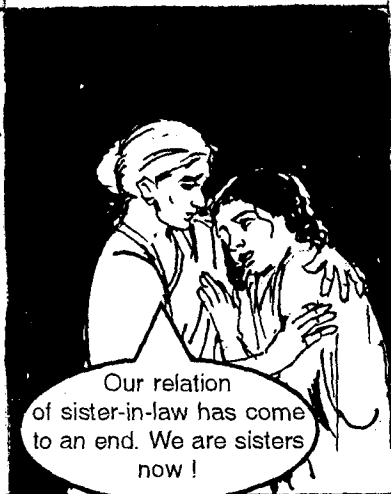
This kind of devotion and integrity helped Laxmibai gain psychological strength.



Purushottamrao breathed his last on 6th July 1932. Laxmi was left behind with the burden of six sons and two daughters; at the age of twenty-seven.



Laxmibai summoned a promising boy Dattu Vaishampayan for sharing domestic burden and agricultural work. Umakaku had a lion's share in all these transactions.

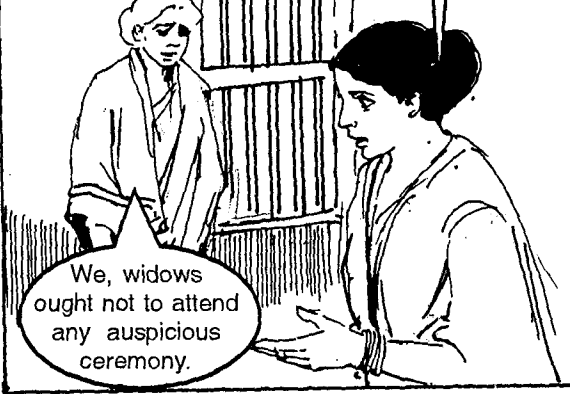


Our relation of sister-in-law has come to an end. We are sisters now!

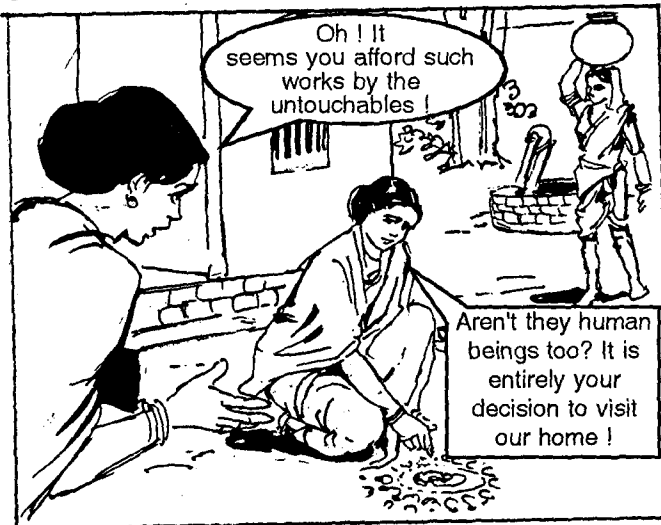


Laxmibai refused to give anything to II World War Fund imposed by Govt. So her income from the Sawli village was put to auction without notice. She met the collector and stoped the auction.

I will attend it. Whats our fault ? Such illogical traditions ought to be opposed & eradicated.

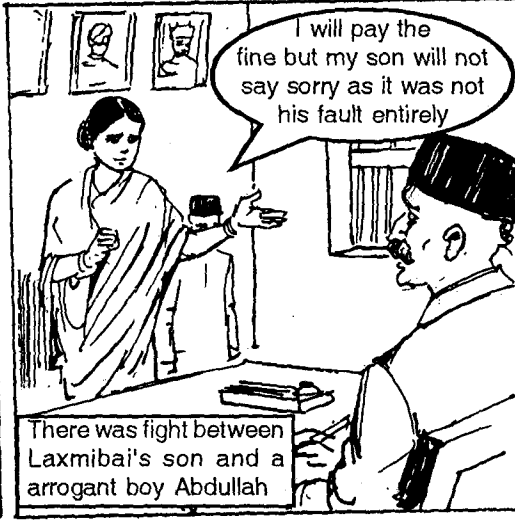


We, widows ought not to attend any auspicious ceremony.



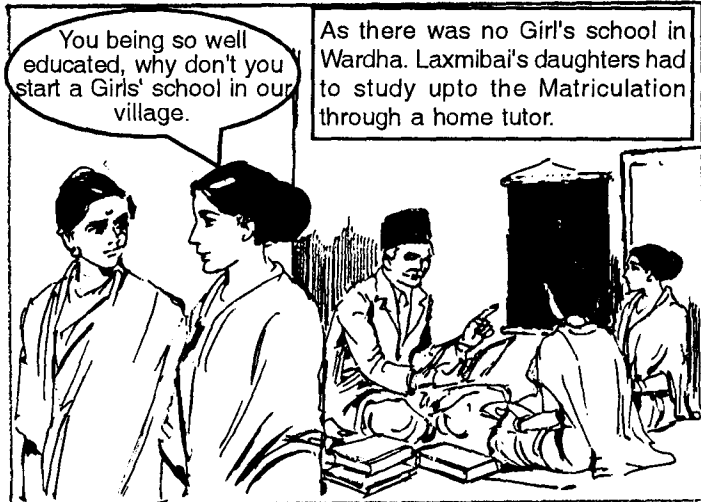
Oh ! It seems you afford such works by the untouchables !

Aren't they human beings too? It is entirely your decision to visit our home !



I will pay the fine but my son will not say sorry as it was not his fault entirely

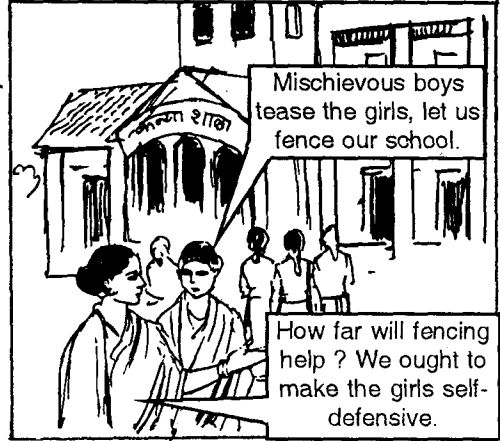
There was fight between Laxmibai's son and a arrogant boy Abdullah



You being so well educated, why don't you start a Girls' school in our village.

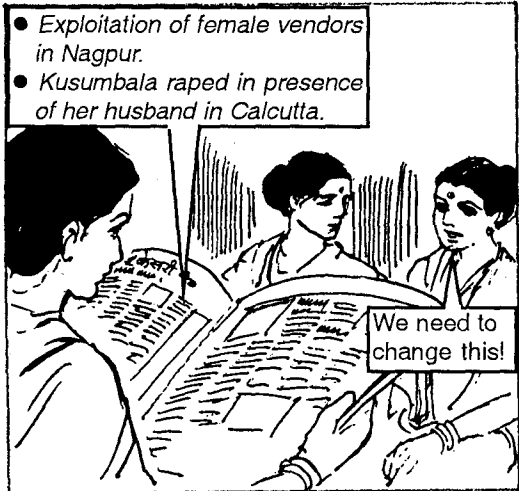
As there was no Girl's school in Wardha. Laxmibai's daughters had to study upto the Matriculation through a home tutor.

A Girls' school was opened in Wardha in July 1932, with the help of sister in law Shantabai.



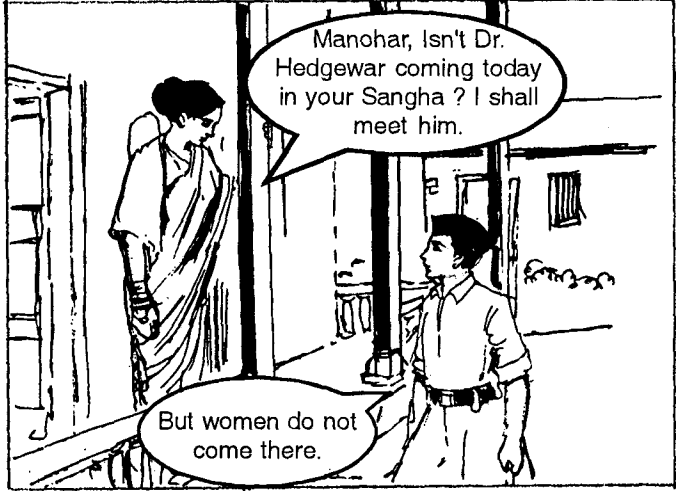
Mischievous boys tease the girls, let us fence our school.

How far will fencing help? We ought to make the girls self-defensive.



- Exploitation of female vendors in Nagpur.
- Kusumbala raped in presence of her husband in Calcutta.

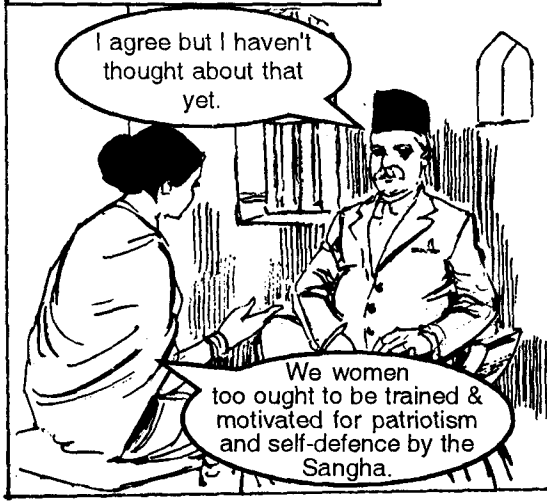
We need to change this!



Manohar, Isn't Dr. Hedgewar coming today in your Sangha? I shall meet him.

But women do not come there.

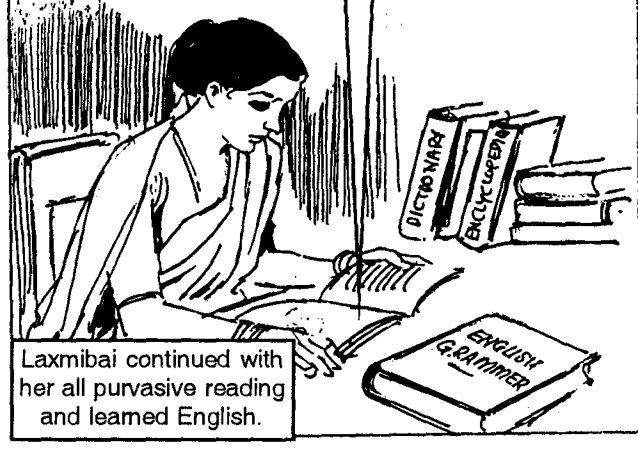
Laxmibai meets Dr. Hedgewar.



I agree but I haven't thought about that yet.

We women too ought to be trained & motivated for patriotism and self-defence by the Sangha.

If prosperity is to be accomplished for the eagle-like Bharat, it is extremely necessary to have both the male and female wings powerful. - Swami Vivekanand



Laxmibai continued with her all purvasive reading and leaned English.

Evening-prayer of Gandhiji.

Whom should we women follow as our ideal ?



If you follow the ideal of Sita in your life then I am confident that Ram will be born in every house.

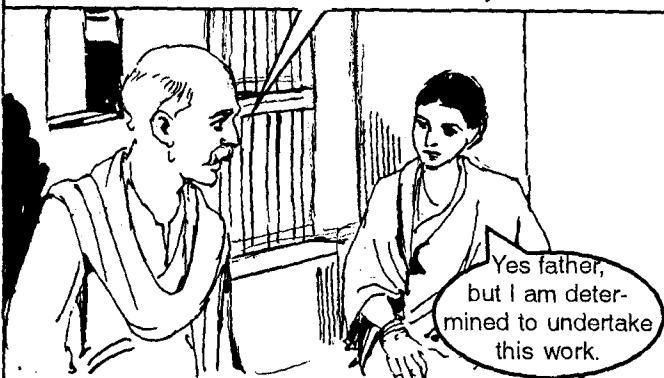


I am pondering over organising Hindu women. Sangha swayamsevak should please be deputed for the physical training of our volunteers.



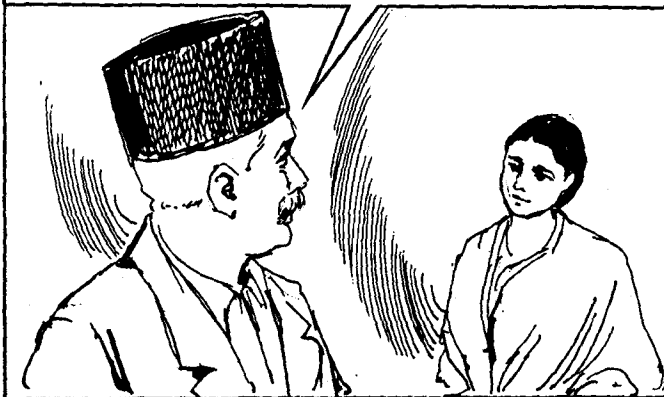
During Gandhiji's stay in Wardha, prominent leaders visited him frequently. Laxmibai attended their lectures without fail.

Your idea of women's organisation is excellent but remember that it is a long drawn and hard work and you cannot leave it half way.

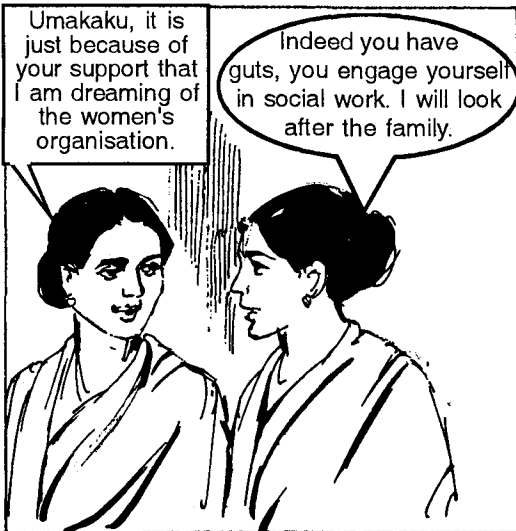


Yes father, but I am determined to undertake this work.

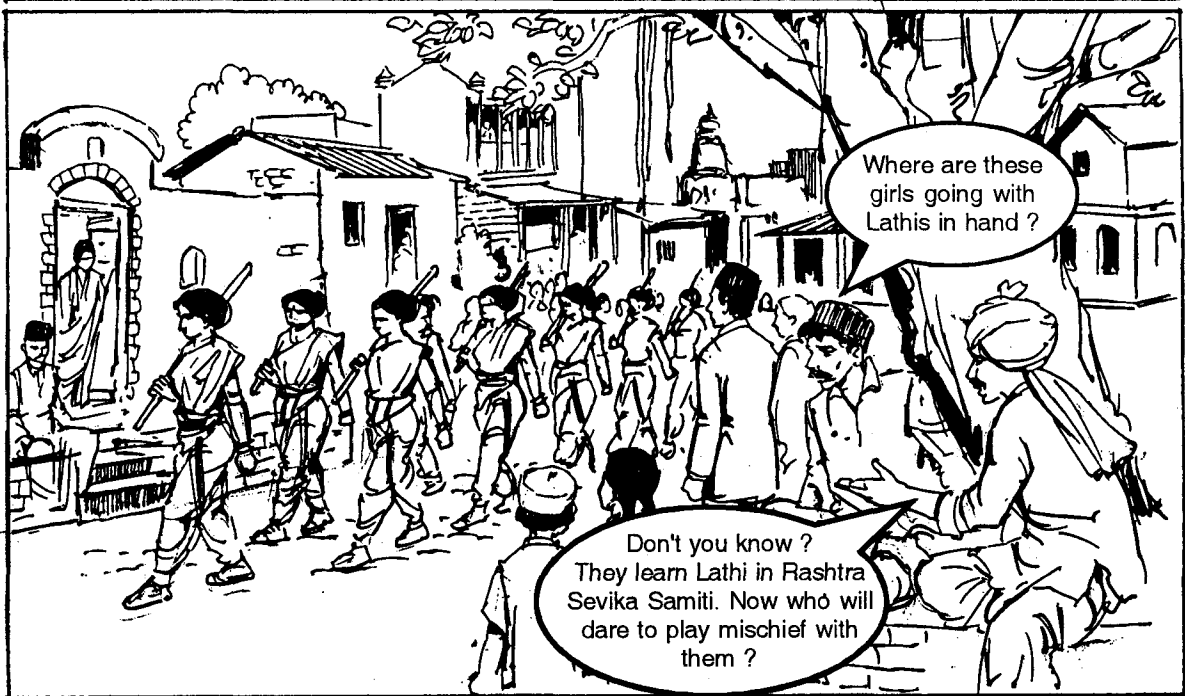
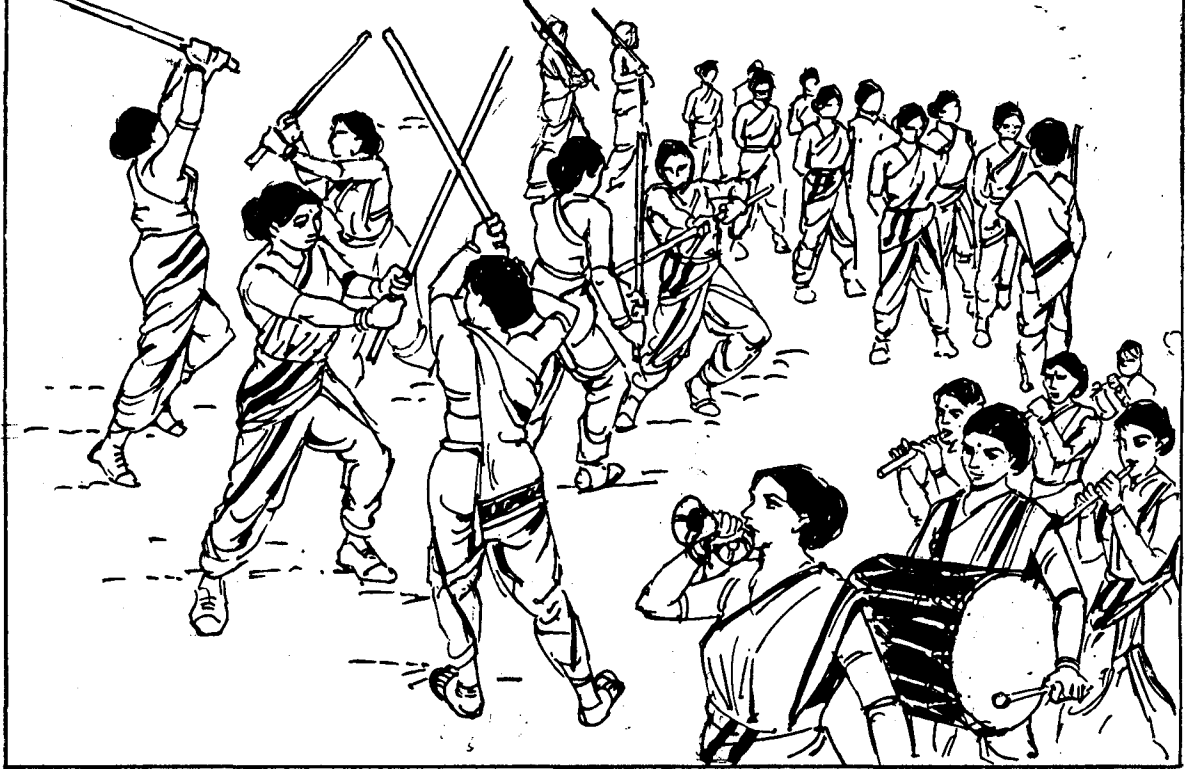
Your women's organisation shall not be a women branch of Sangha even though our common goal will be national upliftment. You need to emphasize on developing inner strength of women. I think that the initials of the Sangha and Samiti should be identical!

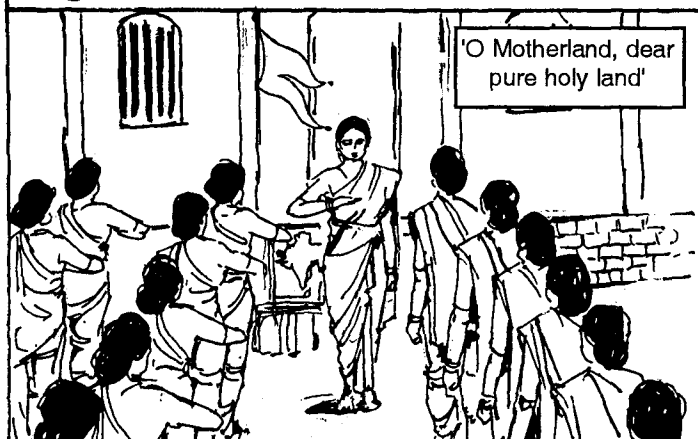


Thus 'Rashtra Sevika Samiti' was founded at Wardha on 25th October 1936, on Vijaya Dashmi. Dr Yadavrao Kale presided over the inaugural ceremony.



Laxmibai and her college women learnt Lathi, Lejim and other self defence techniques from Sangha volunteers. Women started gathering in large numbers.





'O Motherland, dear pure holy land'

As Samiti expanded its work, a Sanskrit prayer workable in other provinces was composed.

Dr. Hedgewar specially came for the wedding of Vatsala,



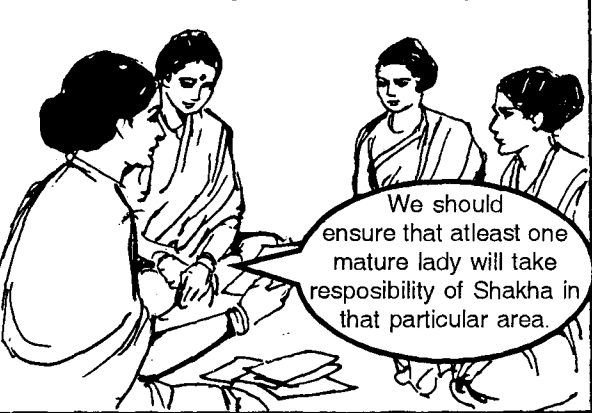
Laxmibai, I will come to my sister's house. It is my duty.

Teachers training camp was organised to bring uniformity in the same organisation.



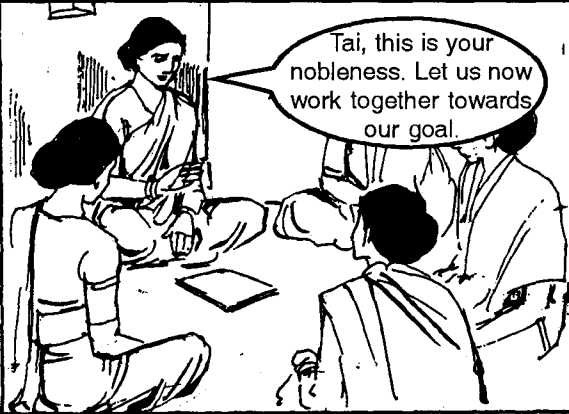
Every class must be imparted with scientific education about diet and health.

With the growing number of shakhas women started calling Laxmibai as 'Mavsiiji'.



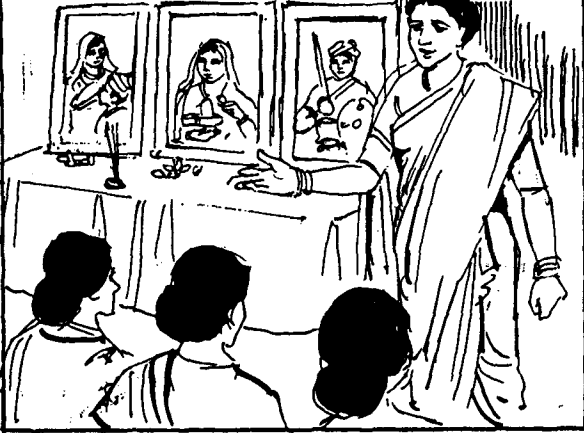
We should ensure that atleast one mature lady will take responsibility of Shakha in that particular area.

Laxmibai meets Saraswatibai alias Tai Apte in Pune who wished to merge her organisation doing similar activity in Samiti.




Tai, this is your nobleness. Let us now work together towards our goal.

Samiti was not confined to mere games, songs & stories. Consicous efforts were made towards character building.




Mavsiji, we wish to expand Samiti's work and remain unmarried.



No, you should marry, if people see that we are breaking social norms, they will not respond to Samiti.

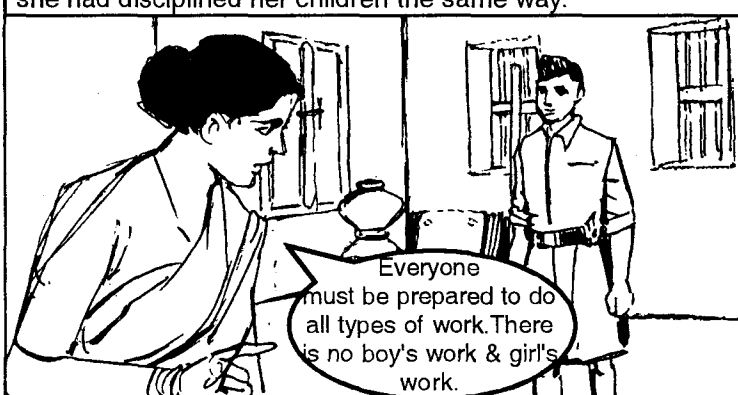
We have to develop an organisation of strong Hindu women having reputation and moral character. Here we have a tradition of Hindu culture. Hinduism is the nationality, Saffron is the national flag and single leadership backed by collective decisions is the system.



Now I must learn Hindi. How would I communicate with the Sevikas throughout country without knowing Hindi language?




Mavsiji used to attend to the education, hobbies, likes and dislikes of her children. Tidiness was her inborn habit and she had disciplined her children the same way.




Everyone must be prepared to do all types of work. There is no boy's work & girl's work.

Mavsiji sent 14 year old Ratnakar for Navy education.



Inspired by this, younger son Anand and six other boys from Wardha also opted for the Navy.

Independence was proclaimed and Hindu-Muslim riots broke out. Mavsiji, one day received a letter from Jethi Devani of Karachi.



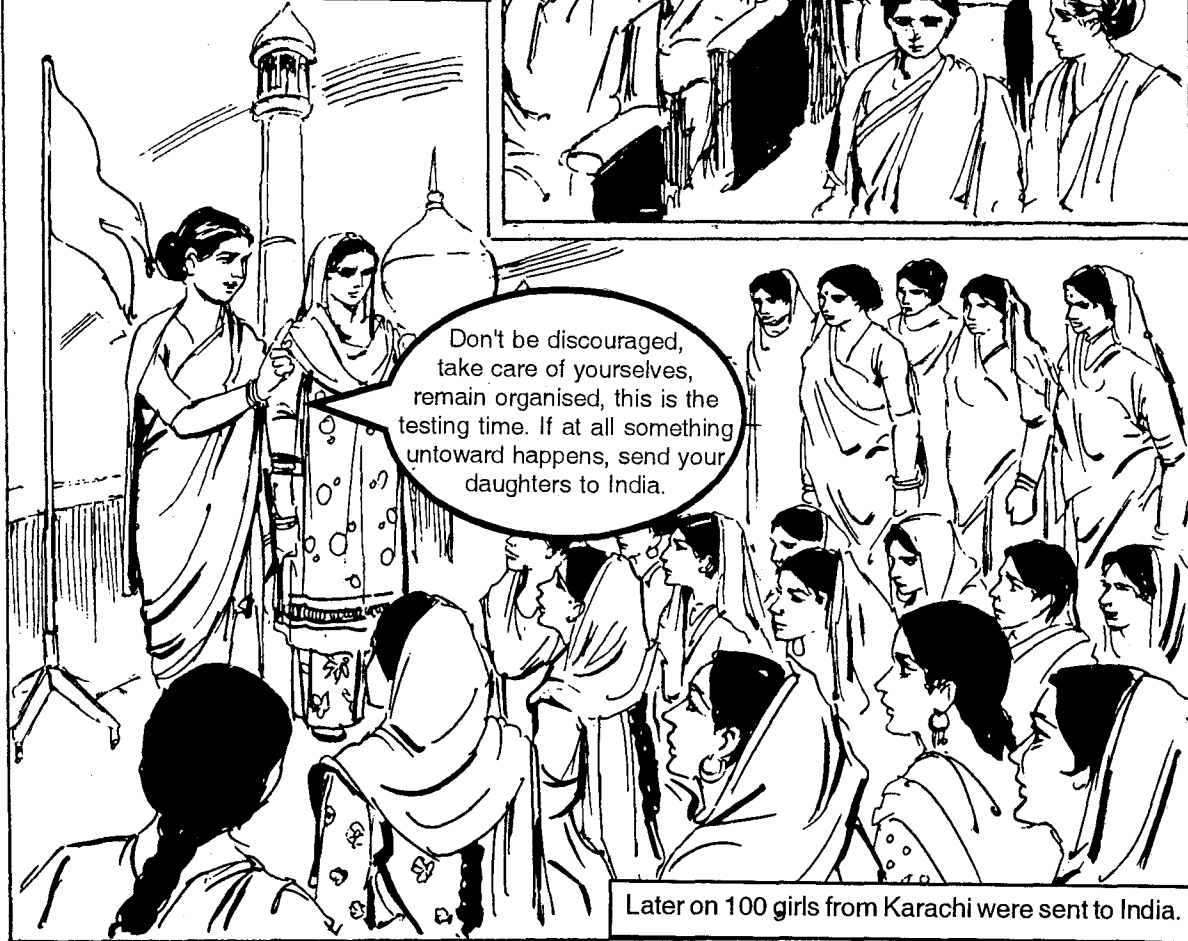
Respectful Mavsiji, modest wishes to you... Now we will have to leave Sindh province please visit us once before the partition.



On the 14th August 1947, Mavsiji held a meeting on a terrace in Karachi. About 1200 sevikas had gathered there.



There were only two women in the plane - Mavsiji and Venutai.

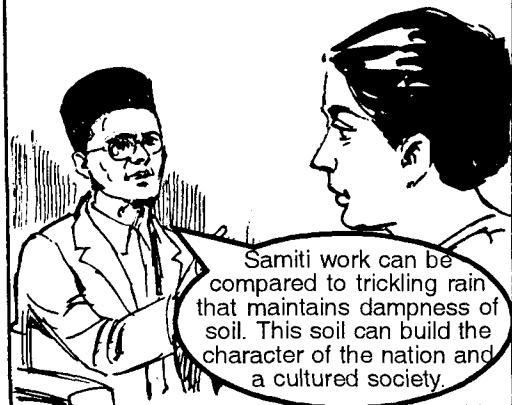


Later on 100 girls from Karachi were sent to India.

Bakultai took responsibility to shelter the hundred girls arrived from Karachi in various houses of Mumbai. They returned to their own homes after one year.



Mavsji meet Veer Savarkar

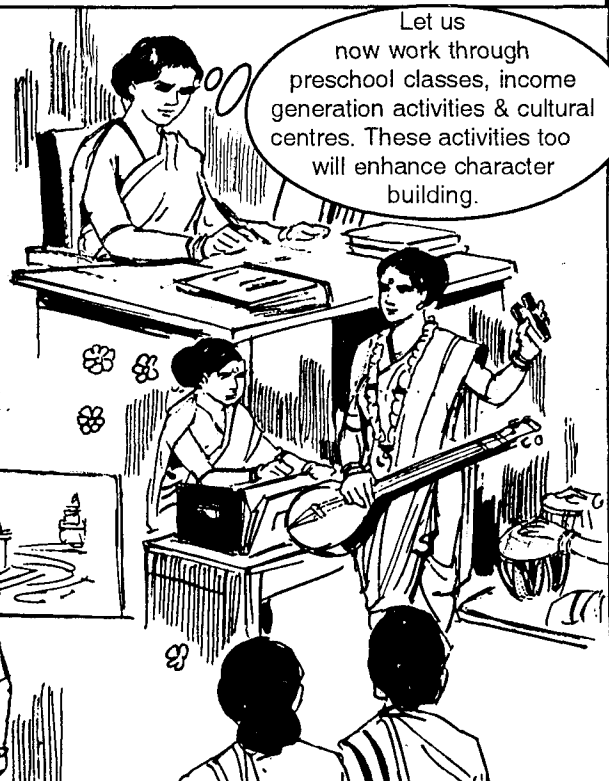


Samiti work can be compared to trickling rain that maintains dampness of soil. This soil can build the character of the nation and a cultured society.



The women were motivated through the visionary biographies of Jijabai, Laxmibai & Ahilyabai. These women were worshipped for their motherhood, leadership & statesmanship respectively

After the assassination of Gandhiji there was ban on Samiti. As a precautionary measure, Samiti began in different form.

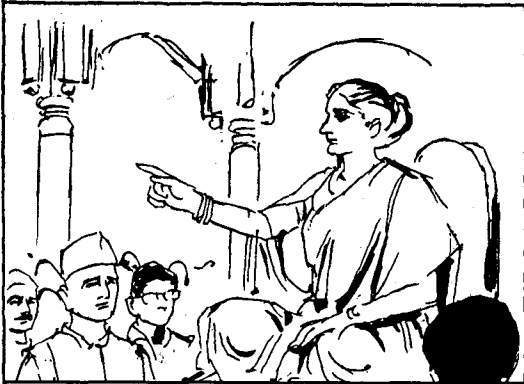
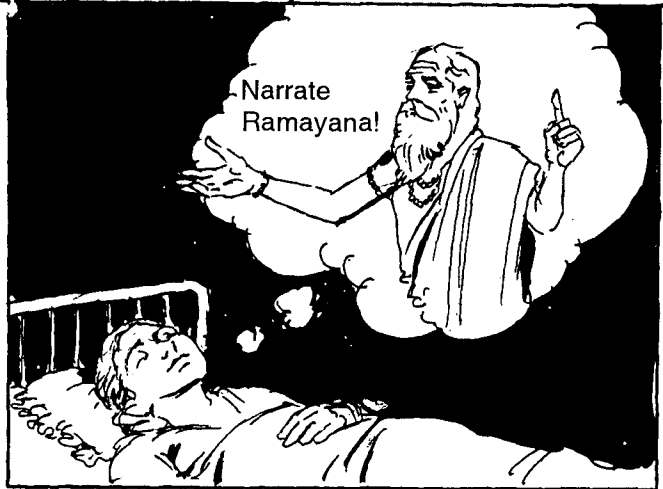


Let us now work through preschool classes, income generation activities & cultural centres. These activities too will enhance character building.



Kashitai Kulkarni started Bhajan shakhas. Cotton art-works prepared by Miss Ranade won popularity, Pramilitai Munje held exhibitions of her arts & paintings.

Mavshi used to tell Ramayana stories to her grand children

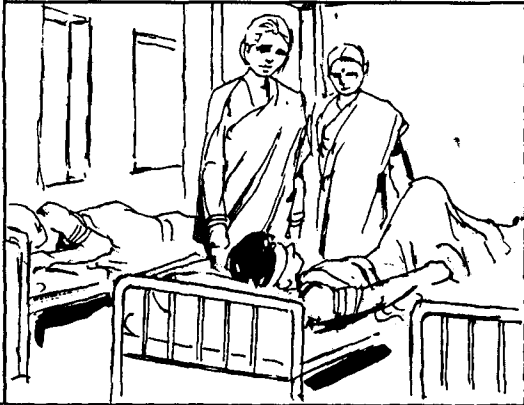


Due to Mavsiji's deep study of Ramayana, Umakaku insisted that she should narrate Ramayana to people.

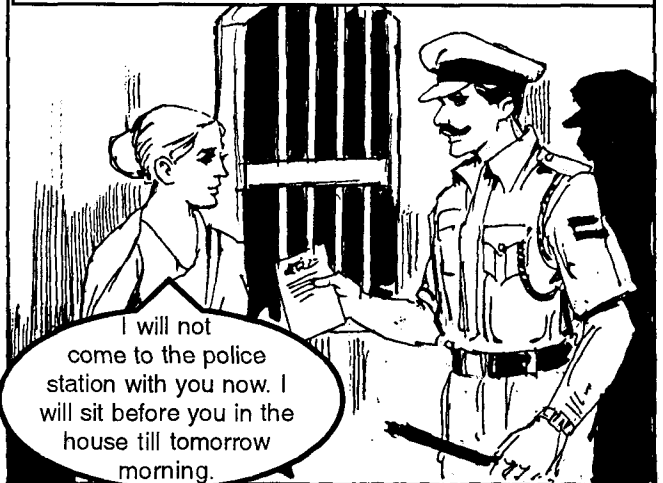


In the 'Streejeevan Vikas Parishad' convection publication of the annual issue of 'Sevika' magazine took place. Maharshi Karve was impressed by Mavsiji's work

Tai Apte of Pune actively participated in the 'Goan Freedom Struggle' - Sevikas were day and night, catering food and water for the satyagrahis and nursing the wounded ones.



'Arrest Warrants' were issued on Sevikas.



In 1958, Death anniversary of the queen of Zashi was marked by the establishment of the memorial Ranibhavan, Nasik.

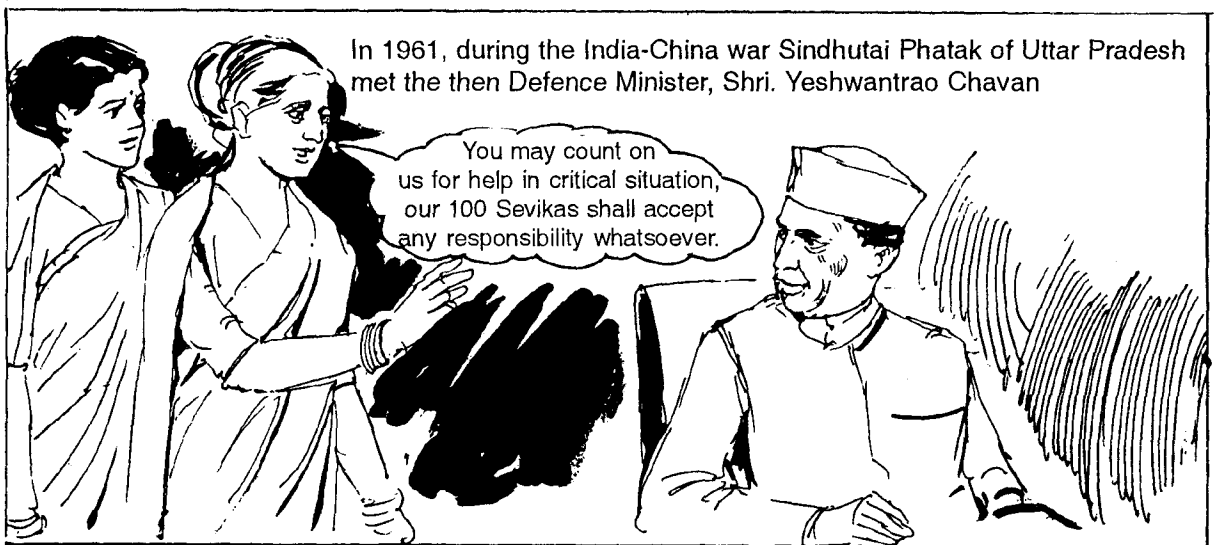


This edifice should be devoted to womens studies and should be developed as Women Research center.

Later on, Samiti expanded in its own premises at Thane, Nagpur, Jabalpur, Pune, Solapur, Hyderabad, Delhi etc. with shrines of Goddesses Ashtabhuj.



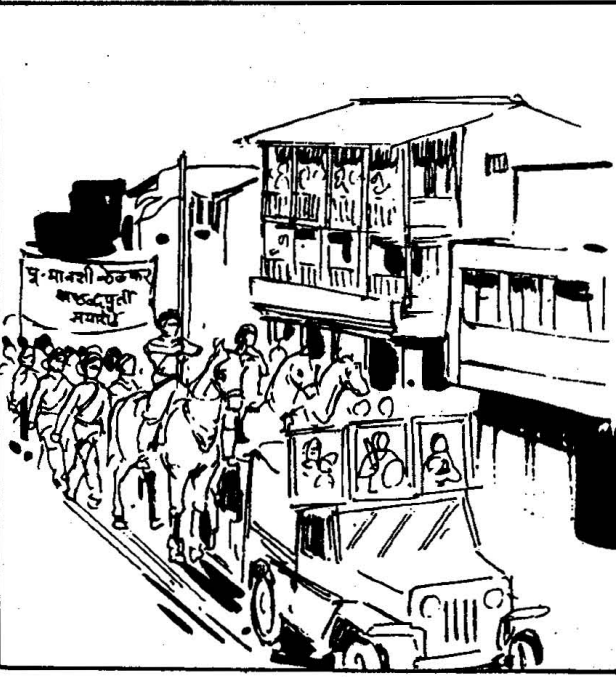
Our attire, behaviour and speech should all reflect self-respect. The clothing, utensils, photo exhibits and other things in our house should display our aesthetic taste.



In 1961, during the India-China war Sindhutai Phatak of Uttar Pradesh met the then Defence Minister, Shri. Yeshwantrao Chavan

You may count on us for help in critical situation, our 100 Sevikas shall accept any responsibility whatsoever.

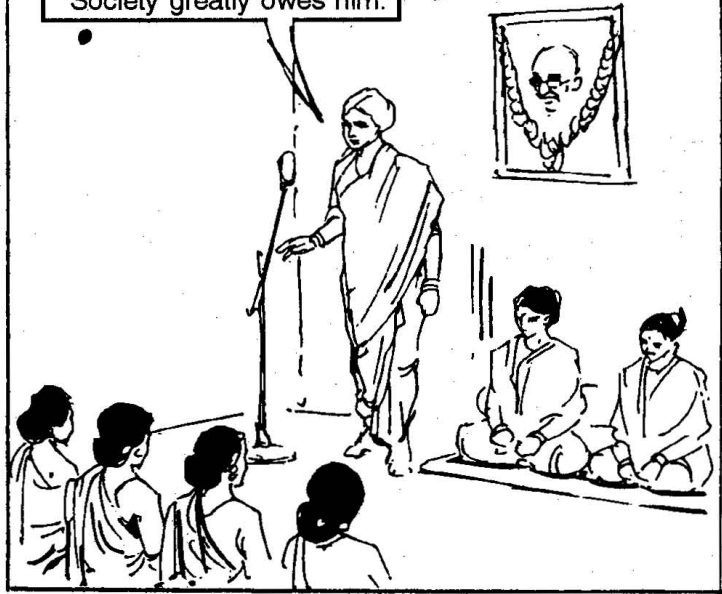
A grand gathering was arranged in 1964 at Nagpur to mark the 60th birthday of Mavshi. Mavshi was honoured by a momento. Subsequently, triennial gatherings started at India's prominent places, every third year.



Birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi.

I was inspired to establish women's organisation by Bapuji's one single sentence. He defined female-empowerment not just in words but in deeds. Society greatly owes him.

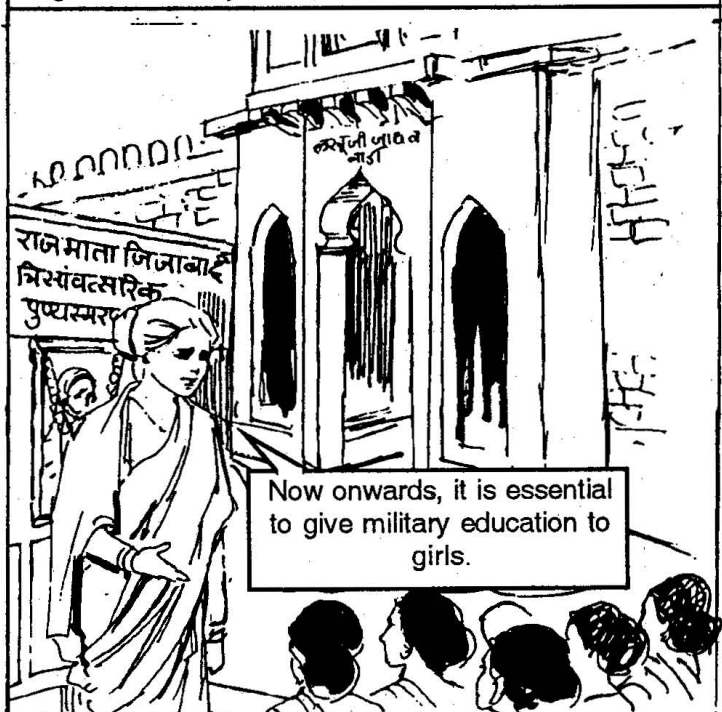
गांधी जन्मशताब्दी



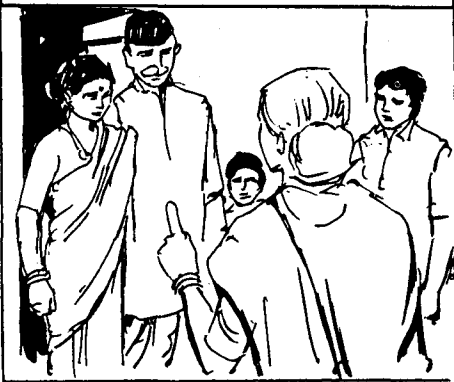
Mavsiji and Sevikas from all over India sent letters of congratulations to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during the Bangladesh war period of 1972.



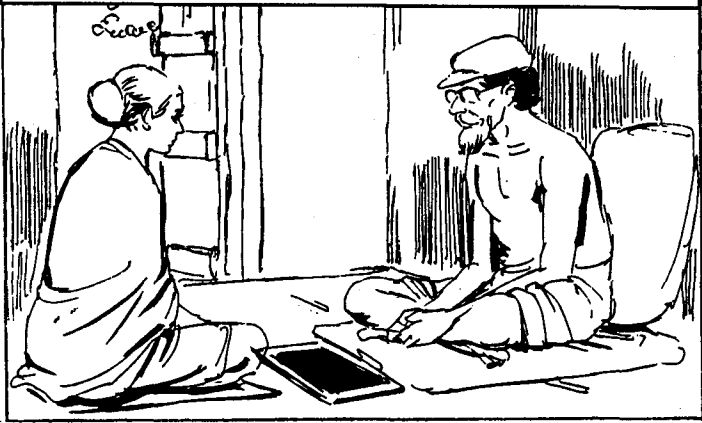
To mark the 300th death - anniversary of Jijabai, Sevikas in Bombay, went to 300 villages and got acquainted with the lifestyles of the local womenfolk. Big event took place at Sindhkhed Raja



In 1975, Emergency was declared throughout the country. Several activists went to jails. Sevikas did the work of giving fortitude to the families of such activists.



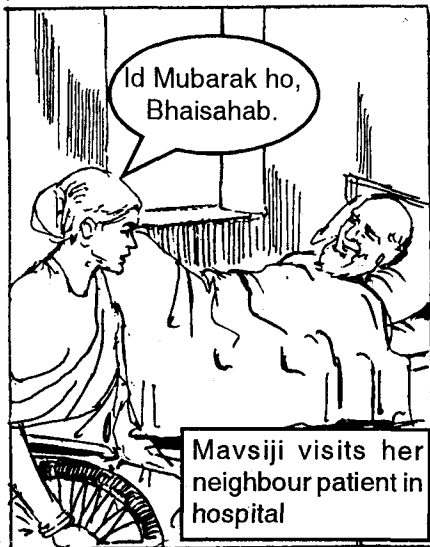
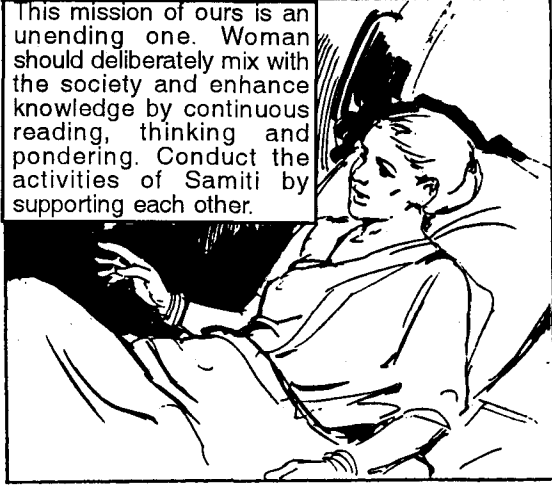
Mavsiji meets Vinobaji Bhawe to discuss the Emergency situation.



The triennial gathering was held at Hyderabad in 1978. Vijayaraje Shinde was the Chair person. Mavsiji suddenly started feeling uneasy on the dias itself. She had a heart stroke and was rushed to hospital at Nagpur.



This mission of ours is an unending one. Woman should deliberately mix with the society and enhance knowledge by continuous reading, thinking and pondering. Conduct the activities of Samiti by supporting each other.



Mavsiji visits her neighbour patient in hospital



Mavshi breathed last on 27th November 1978. Mavshi strived for empowerment of helpless & oppressed women till her last breath. We, the citizens of the Rising Nation salute and bow to the inspiring personality Vandaneyya Mavshi Kelkar.

*** सभी ग्राहकों व हितधारकों को दीपावली की हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं ***

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महाबँक
गृहलक्ष्मी

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- वाहन ऋण
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