

Hosabale is RSS general secretary

The 66-year-old replaces Suresh 'Bhaiyyaji' Joshi, who held the post for 12 years

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Dattatreya Hosabale was elected the *Sarkaryavah* or general secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) at the All India Pratinidhi Sabha (AIPS) meet of the organisation in Bengaluru on Saturday. Mr. Hosabale now holds the second highest office in the RSS, the ideological mothership of the Sangh Parivar and the ruling BJP.

Mr. Hosabale, 66, replaces Suresh "Bhaiyyaji" Joshi, who held the post for 12 years or four terms.

The *sarkaryavah's* position in the RSS hierarchy is much like that of a chief executive officer (CEO) who handles the hands-on issues of running the organisation and coordinating within the Sangh Parivar and its more than 30 affiliated outfits including the BJP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh.

Born in Shivamogga in Karnataka in 1954 into an RSS family, Mr. Hosabale joined the RSS in 1968, and



Dattatreya Hosabale

its student organisation, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). He is a graduate in English literature from Bangalore University.

His stint in the ABVP encouraged the RSS higher-ups to appoint him general secretary of the ABVP in 1978 and he held the post for over 15 years.

He remained under detention under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during the Emergency for 12 to 14 months while with the ABVP. He has been credited with helping set up the Youth Develop-

ment Centre in Guwahati, and was, before his appointment as *sarkaryavah*, one of several joint general secretaries in the RSS.

The reasons why Mr. Hosabale was picked from other candidates was not just that he was the senior-most but because he also ticked all the right boxes as far as the RSS was concerned.

He is said to have cordial relations with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, and has helped in coordinating many issues that may have turned relations sour.

Just after the election of Prime Minister Modi in his first term, the RSS held a three-day coordination meeting for its affiliate organisations in New Delhi in September 2015, where the government's then outreach to Pakistan was also discussed and various views were aired. Mr. Hosabale, on being asked about the RSS views on such an outreach, termed Pakistan and other SAARC countries as "brothers", and said, "Sometimes

relations (go bad), like it happens between brothers and so we also discussed how we can improve our relations with those who are historically and geographically attached to us." The statement made sure that the RSS backing to Mr. Modi was demonstrably incontrovertible even on contentious issues.

Work with youth

His work in the ABVP for many years meant that he has experience of working with young people, especially in areas such as the northeast, not the traditional stomping ground of the RSS. The young cohort group of BJP MPs, more than 100 out of the 300 BJP MPs, have dealt with him as members of the ABVP when he was their general secretary.

His replacement of Suresh "Bhaiyyaji" Joshi who held the post for 12 years will signal a change in the RSS and its relationship with its affiliates and expectations in the organisation are that this change will mean a more closely aligned Parivar.