

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar the Viberant Nationalist Of India

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Abstract

V.D. Savarkar was immensely influenced and inspired by the ideas and philosophy of B.G. Tilak. He actively supported the Swadeshi movement. He used to propagate his anti-British ideas in his speeches and articles, resulting in the withdrawal of his graduation degree by the British government. In 1906, he went to England for higher studies. Now he made London the center of his Indian freedom movement activities. He wanted to purge his motherland of the curse of British rule by any means. He even backed the use of arms to uproot the cruel British rule. He organised a group of armed revolutionaries to fight against British rule. Savarkar's India would have unbounded faith in a World Commonwealth as his political philosophy conceived that the Earth is the Common Motherland and humanism; the patriotism of man, but his India 'would not go under during the process which leads to the welding of humanity into a World Commonwealth. In international politics, Savarkar's India would help to build world peace and prosperity. Nationalism, according to him, was but an inevitable step towards the goal of humanity and Pan-Human State.

Keywords:- National Liberation , Social Reformer, Freedom Struggle, Hindu Mahasabha

Introduction

Shri Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born on 28 May 1883 at Bhagur, a village near Nasik. His parents, Shri Damodarpant and Smt. Radhabai belonged to a middle class family. He joined the village school at the age of six. Vinayak grew up listening to passages read out by his father from the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana and Ballads and Bakhars on Maharana Pratap. Chhatrapati Shivaji and the Peshwas. He was a

voracious reader and read any book or newspaper from cover to cover, page to page. An inborn genius that he was, Savarkar had a rare talent in poetry and his poems were published by well-known newspapers when he was hardly ten. Even as a young boy, Vinayak was very conscious of the sufferings of people. Thus, he was emotionally stirred by the miseries caused by famine and plague. To add to this was the harsh treatment and excesses committed by the British Raj. In such an atmosphere, the assassination of two British Plague Commissioners by the Chapekar brothers in Poona on 22 June 1897 and the subsequent execution of Damodarpanth Chapekar disturbed the young Savarkar. He took a vow in front of Goddess Durga, of sacrificing his nearest and dearest, to fulfil the incomplete mission of the martyred Chapekar. He vowed to drive out the British from his Motherland and to make her free and great once again. Ever since, Savarkar earnestly strove to spread this mission of his life.

Strategy For National Liberation

According to Savarkar, the liberation of the Motherland was to be achieved by a preparation for war which included the teaching of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods; imparting national education and creating a revolutionary spirit; and carrying patriotism into the rank of the military forces. With clear indications of an imminent war in Europe, Savarkar wanted to utilize the opportunity. Savarkar and his Abhinava Bharat started writing, printing, packing and posting revolutionary literature. He wanted to impart military training to his comrades. A resolution demanding Swaraj was unanimously passed at a Conference held in December 1908. Conscious of the hardships that could follow, Savarkar warned his audience: "Before passing this resolution, just bring before your mind's eye the dreadful prison walls, and the dreary dingy cells". The resolution was passed unanimously.

Savarkar's Dream State

Savarkar was of the view that a nation is a group of mankind which is bound together by some or all of the common ties such as common religion and culture, common history and traditions, common literature and consciousness of common rights and wrongs. occupying a territory of geographical unity, and aspiring to form a political unit. Savarkar was for Hindu-Muslim unity and visualized a non-sectarian State. In his

Presidential Address at the Hindu Mahasabha Session in 1937 at Ahmedabad, Savarkar declared:

Let the Indian state be purely Indian. Let it not recognise any invidious distinctions whatsoever as regards the franchise, public services, offices, taxation on the grounds of religion and race. Let no cognizance be taken whatsoever, of man's being Hindu or Mohammedan, Christian or Jew. Let all citizens of that Indian State be treated according to their individual worth irrespective of their religious or racial percentage in the general population. Let that language and script be the national language and script of that Indian state which are understood by the overwhelming majority of the people as happens in every other state in the world, that is, in England or the United States of America and let no religious bias be allowed to tamper with that language and script with an enforced and perverse hybridism whatsoever. Let 'one man one vote' be the general rule irrespective of caste or creed, race or religion.

Savarkar's India would have unbounded faith in a World Commonwealth as his political philosophy conceived that the Earth is the Common Motherland and humanism 'the patriotism of man, but his India 'would not go under during the process which leads to the welding of humanity into a World Commonwealth. In international politics, Savarkar's India would help to build world peace and prosperity. Nationalism, according to him, was but an inevitable step towards the goal of humanity and Pan-Human State.

Savarkar's vision of India was one in which all citizens would have equal rights and obligations irrespective of caste, creed, race or religion, provided they avow and owe an exclusive and devoted allegiance to the State. All minorities were to be given effective safeguards to protect their language, religion, culture, etc. but none of them would be allowed to create a State within a State or to encroach upon the legitimate rights of the majority. Further, the fundamental rights of freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, of worship, of association, etc. were to be enjoyed by all citizens alike. In the event of any restriction imposed, the interest of public peace and order or national emergency would be the guiding principle. There would be joint electorates and 'one man one vote' would be the general rule. Services would go by merit alone. Primary education would be free and compulsory. Nagari would be the national script, Hindi, the lingua franca and Sanskrit, the Devabhasha of India.

Savarkar's Contributions As A Social Reformer

Savarkar built Patit Pavan Mandir in the Ratnagiri district to allow entry to all Hindus, including Dalits. According to Savarkar, the rigid caste system “deserves to be thrown into the dustbins of history”. Savarkar wanted to break away from caste-based vocational rigidity and encourage persons to pursue any vocation of their choice based on aptitude and ability. In the absence of motivation of competition, or lack of aptitude, Savarkar believed, “merely following what one’s father did, will make one both complacent and unproductive.” Savarkar wanted to break away from the taboo on inter-caste dining. He had said, “Religion is in the heart, the soul, the spirit; not the stomach!” He also promoted inter-caste marriage.

Veer Savarkar wanted to popularize Vedic literature to everyone, not only to a particular caste. He called Vedic literature civilizational knowledge for the entire human race and India’s unique gift to mankind. Savarkar believed in global mobility and the need for Indians to venture out into foreign lands so as to “bring back the best of the world and carry the fragrance of India and her culture to every corner of the globe.” Veer Savarkar underscored was the need to develop a scientific temper. “We are 200 years behind Europe”, he had remarked adding, “It is through science, modern thoughts and industrialization that we can ensure that every man woman in India will have a job to do, food to eat, clothes to wear and a happy life to lead.”

Contributions To National Freedom Struggle:

Veer Savarkar was influenced by his elder brother Ganesh who had played an influential role in his teenage life. He also became a revolutionary young man. Savarkar began his political activities as a high school student and continued to do so at Fergusson College in Pune. He had convened in 1904 a meeting of some two hundred selected members of the Mitra Mela- a revolutionary party. The name of his party was later changed to Abhinava Bharat. He was against foreign goods and propagated the idea of Swadeshi. In 1905, he burnt all the foreign goods in a bonfire on Dussehra. When he went to England for higher studies, he continued his revolutionary activities and set up a front organization named 'Free India Society'. He founded this Society to Mobilize youths against colonial rule in India. In 1908, he brought out an authentic informative researched work on The Great Indian Revolt, which the British termed as “Sippy

Mutiny” of 1857. The book was called “The Indian War of Independence 1857”. The British government immediately enforced a ban on the publication in both Britain and India. Later, it was published by Madame Bhikaiji Cama in Holland and was smuggled into India to reach revolutionaries working across the country against British rule. When the then British Collector of Nashik A.M.T. Jackson was shot by a youth, Veer Savarkar finally fell under the net of the British authorities. He was implicated in the murder citing his connections with India House. Savarkar was arrested in London on March 13, 1910, and sent to India. In 1937 he was unconditionally released from Ratnagiri Jail by the newly elected government of Bombay presidency. From 1937 to 1947 he had strained every nerve to keep India united.

A committed social reformer

After his release from jail in 1924, Savarkar took up the task of social reform with full earnestness. He waged a war against casteism and untouchability and fervently wrote against the taboos regarding inter-caste marriages, sea-crossing and re-conversion. He carried on an intense propaganda in favor of mixed-caste schools through the Press and appealed to the authorities to set up such mixed-caste schools. In the event, he was able to ensure just, civic, humane and legitimate rights for 'untouchable' children and made them sit along with upper caste Hindu children in public schools. Then came the question of temple entry for the 'untouchables'. The stand of the orthodox Hindus collapsed in the face of Savarkar's arguments. "He is not God who can be desecrated", he remarked. He transformed the Ganesh festival started by Tilak into a Pan-Hindu festival where the issue was discussed threadbare. Thanks to Savarkar's efforts, the Vithoba temple of Ratnagiri at last witnessed the historic entry of 'untouchables'. Later, the Patit Pavan temple was constructed which became the centre of Pan-Hindu activities. Savarkar fearlessly and whole-heartedly supported Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's struggle for liberation of the 'untouchables'. Removal of Untouchability, he maintained, implied purification and salvation of misguided orthodox 'touchables' also. Savarkar distributed sacred threads among the so-called 'untouchable' Hindus and declared: "The people who regard Untouchability which has been a disgrace to humanity as a part of their religion are really the fallen people". As part of his efforts, he successfully Organised Sahabhojan, the first Pan-Hindu dinner. At the same time, Savarkar urged the

'untouchables' not to abandon their occupations as every occupation had its value. Along with his supporters, he visited the slums and towns where the 'untouchables' lived, guided them, and worshipped with them.

Savarkar Believes Nationalism

Savarkar believes that nationalism is but an inevitable step towards the goal of humanity and Pan-Human state. In 1920 he wrote that he believed in a universal state embracing all mankind and where all men and women would be citizens working for the fruits of the earth, the sun and the land which constitute the real Motherland and Fatherland of Man. In fact he said, the world was our country and humanity was our religion and patriotism. In his youth he wrote that history was to be studied to weld humanity into a World Commonwealth. But while the process and struggle, he said, was going on for welding humanity into a World Commonwealth, the weak people had gone under and the fittest had survived.

"Therefore," Savarkar warned the Hindus, "before you make out a case for unity, you must make out a case for survival as a national or a social human unit." This made him devote all his energy to Hindu Nationalism as he believed that Hindu consolidation was a step inevitable in the realization of the ideal of a Human State or a World Commonwealth. Savarkar stressed this point in a letter to Guy A. Aldred, editor of *The Word*, Glasgow. He said: "I hold that although mankind must march on through nationalism and federalism, through larger and larger statal incorporations to their ultimate political goal, yet the goal is not and cannot be nationalism but humanism, neither more nor less. The ideal of all political science and art must be Human State." This was a message sent by Savarkar to the World Fellowship over their annual session in 1944, which he could not do for reasons of health.

So from the point of view of nationalism, humanism and universalism, Savarkar gave his immortal message to the land of Ram, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavir, Vikramaditya, Maharana Pratap. Shivaji, Guru Gobind Singh, Swami Vivekananda and Tilak: "Therefore, ye, O Hindus, consolidate and strengthen Hindu nationality: not to give wanton offence to any of our non-Hindu compatriots, in fact to anyone in the world but in just an urgent self- defence of our race and land; to render it impossible for others to betray her or to subject her to unprovoked attacks by any of those 'Pan-isms' that are struggling forth from continent to continent". "As long as other communities in India or in the World" Savarkar concluded, "are not respectively planning India first or mankind first, but all are busy in organizing offensive and defensive alliances and combinations

on entirely narrow racial or religious or national basis, so long, O Hindus, strengthen if you can those subtle bonds that like nerve-threads bind you in one organic social being. Those of you in a suicidal fit try to cut off the most vital of those ties and dare to disown the name Hindu will find to their cost that in doing so they have cut themselves off from the very source of our racial life and strength.

The independence of India for Savarkar was "the independence of our people, our race, our nation." Therefore Indian Swarajya or Indian Swatantrya meant as far as the Hindu Nation is concerned, the political independence of the Hindus, the freedom which would enable them to grow to their full height. But, at the same time, he declared at the 19th Session of the Hindu Mahasabha held in Ahmedabad in 1937, from the Presidential platform, "Let the Indian State be purely Indian. Let it not recognise any invidious distinction, whatsoever as regards the franchise, public services, offices' taxation on the grounds of religion and race. Let no cognizance be taken whatsoever of a man being Hindu or Mohammedan, Christian or Jew. Let all citizens of that Indian State be treated according to their individual worth, irrespective of their religious or racial percentage in the general population. Let that language and script be the national language and script of that Indian state which are understood by the overwhelming majority of the people as happens in every other state in the world, that is, in England or the United States of America, and let no religious bias be allowed to tamper with that language and script with an enforced and perverse hybridism, whatsoever. Let 'one man one vote' be the general rule irrespective of caste or creed, race or religion. If such an Indian State is kept in view, the Hindu Sanghatanists will, in the interest of the Hindu Sanghatan itself, be the first to offer their whole hearted loyalty to it.

To Savarkar, no academic and empty slogans of Democracy or Nazism or Fascism could be the guiding principle to India's foreign policy. He said we should never hate or love Fascists or Bolshevists or bookish reasons. There was no reason, he said, to suppose that Hitler was a human monster because he passed off as a Nazi or that Churchill was a demi-God because he called himself a democrat. Savarkar wanted Hindustan to maintain a policy of neutrality towards all nations in the world in respect of their internal affairs or mutual relations with each other. To him the ideal of Democracy and the ideal of Fascism made no difference. He measured the forces of

liberty and freedom and the forces of Nazism and Fascism by the same standard. He had, it seems, no clearer and deeper conception of a new state; nor had he faith or interest in a new world order.

The joy of independence was almost delirious but lasted hardly 48 hours. Soon the news of communal troubles began to cast deep gloom. The whole of the Punjab, East and West, was becoming a graveyard of destruction and death. The magnitude of the carnage stunned all. The Policy inactivity cost thousands of lives during the communal killings of 1946-47. Both in Bengal and Punjab, officials from the highest to the lowest remained passive, inactive indifferent, irresolute and supine in the face of massive killings, butchery and one side pogroms, when elementary administrative integrity and activity could have saved thousands of lives. Since people could not get police protection during communal riots, they were forced to organize self-defiance along Hindu or Muslim lines."

And then history took an unexpected and different turn! In the midst of an atmosphere of extreme gloom, confusion and disaster, Nathuram Vinayak Godse shot Gandhi with a revolver while Gandhi was going to the prayer ground in the compound of Birla House, at Delhi in the evening at 5.30, on Friday, 30 January 1948, just five minutes after the talks Gandhi had with Sardar Patel for settling the differences between Patel and Nehru on the question of Muslim loyalty to India.

London:

Savarkar passed his B.A examination, and errand Indian resident of London, Pandit Shyamji Bokrishnavarma, offered him a scholarship to study further in Europe. He studied law at Grays Inn, One of the four Inns of court in London. Savarkar also translated the autobiography of the revolutionary, Mazzini into Marathi. Many of his political writings were translated into German, French, Italian, Russian and Portuguese. In 1908 he completed, "The History of the War of Indian Independence". It was later published in France and Germany. Although Savarkar qualified as a lawyer from Grey's Inn, he was not called to the Bar till he gave up politics, which he refused to do. Once back on Indian shores, he led a movement against Minto -Morley reforms, and was sentenced to transportation for life on March 13, 1910 he wrote his last will and testament as his trial was soon to begin and he knew his end was near. He faced three

trials in Mumbai on different charges. He was found guilty of waging war through printed matter, and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. He was given another 25 years for planning and to be involved in the murder of Mr.A.M T.Jackson, the British Collector of Nashik. More than fifty years in the Andaman prison that anyone could bear, yet this young 27 years old man bore it bravely and that of his relatives were taken. and all his personal possessions auctioned. The only thing that was given to him was his spectacles.

Jail Life:

Savarkar was placed in a bar with heavy iron bars, on the third floor of the dreaded cellular jail. His day began at 5 am, with hard labour, rotten food, and complete seclusion. Under these harsh conditions several prisoners committed suicide. He secured permission to start a library with each prisoner being sent a parcel of a new books room by his family. He even taught illiterate convicts to read and write. When the First World War broke out in 1914 he was moved into the tower of the central jail Ts where there was heavy guarding. As the years went by, locked behind bars with no release, his health gradually broke down. 1920 Vitthalbhai Patel demanded the release of Savarkar and his brother who was also housed in the same jail. Tilak urged Mr. Montague, secretary of state for India to release him as no crime was proved. On may 2, 1921, at last, the two brothers were freed from Andaman and were back on Indian shores. A miracle had taken place. Savarkar returned to India imprisoned in Ratnagiri jail, where he wrote his work called 'Hindutva'. It was smuggled out, but in p bargain, he was transferred to Yervada jail. In 1923, the Indian National Congress in Kakinada passed a resolution demanding the immediate release of Savarkar. Savarkar was freed on January 6, 1924 with the assurance that he would not live anywhere other than Ratnagiri district and would refrain from political activity for 5 years. His Service for Untouchables: Savarkar founded the Ratnagiri Hindu Sabha on January 23,1924 which preserved India's old culture and worked for the upliftment of the downtrodden. worked for the untouchables asking others to defy norms that advocated untouchability. He opened a mixed caste.

schools, arranged inter-caste marriages, and had temple doors opened to one and all regardless of caste or creed. He launched a movement for the development and

purification of Hindi. He began to write an even greater arduous work than he had before, and wrote 'Hindu in padpadashahi' and 'My transportation for life'. He was 23, also wrote poems, plays and novels. The British Government, who wanted to cause trouble for Savarkar, raided his houses to look for a copy of 'The history of the war of Indian Independence'. Bhagat Singh had printed 20,000 copies to raise money for the revolution. In 1937 Bheer Savarkar was elected as President of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Leader of the Hindu Mahasabha

Savarkar as president of the Hindu Mahasabha, during the Second World War, advanced the slogan "Hinduism all Politics and Militarize Hindudom" and decided to support the British war effort in India seeking military training for the Hindus. When the Congress launched the *Quit India* movement in 1942, Savarkar criticised it and asked Hindus to stay active in the war effort and not disobey the government; he also urged the Hindus to enlist in the armed forces to learn the "arts of war". Hindu Mahasabha activists protested Gandhi's initiative to hold talks with Jinnah in 1944, which Savarkar denounced as "appeasement". He assailed the British proposals for transfer of power, attacking both the Congress and the British for making concessions to Muslim separatists. Soon after independence, Syama Prasad Mookerjee resigned as vice-president of the Hindu Mahasabha dissociating himself from its Akhand Hindustan (Undivided India) plank, which implied undoing partition.

Quit India movement

When Gandhiji declared the Quit India Movement, Savarkar announced the Hindu Mahasabha joining in with the congress so long as they worked to keep the unity of the country intact. On his Sixteenth birthday, recognition for work came in the form of a doctorate, which Nagpur University conferred on him. Hard as Savarkar worked to keep the unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, Pakistan was fast becoming a reality.

In 1947, the British Government decided to transfer power to Indian hands, and Lord Mount Batten arrived in India as the last viceroy. On August 15, 1947 with great pride Savarkar hoisted the flag of Independent India and the saffron Mahasabha flag. A chain of events followed that shook the nation. In October, 1947, Pakistan invaded Kashmir.

On January 13, 1948 Gandhiji began a fast for peace and Muslim rights, and on January 30, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Nathoram Godse.

Mass arrests were made of the Hindu Mahasabha workers including Savarkar on the charge of conspiring the murder of Gandhiji. A long trial at Delhi's Red fort where 149 witnesses were cross examined took place. Godse denied. Savarkar was involved in the assassination. In his 52- pages statement Savarkar assured the court that he had no hand in the killing. After 84 sittings and graveling cross examination, Savarkar was acquitted with dignity on February 10,1949.

The Last Journey

With the jail confinements and long periods of neglect and exhaustion, Savarkar's health failed In 1949, the first part of his autobiography in Marathi appeared. It was called, 'Mazya Athavani' On Savarkar's suggestion to the President of the constituent assembly, the name 'Bharat' was given to free India as the nation's new name with Hindi as the national language and Devanagiri, the official script.

Conclusion

In Savarkar India all citizens would have equal rights and obligations irrespective of caste, creed, race or religion, provided they avow and owe an exclusive and devoted allegiance to the State. All minorities would be given effective safeguards to protect their language, religion, culture, etc, but none of them would be allowed to create a State within a State or to encroach upon the legitimate rights of the majority, The fundamental rights of freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, of worship, of association, etc. would be enjoyed by all citizens alike; whatever restrictions would be imposed on them in the interest of the public peace and order or national emergency would not be based on any religious or racial considerations alone but common national grounds. One man one vote' would be the general rule irrespective of caste, creed, race, or religion. There would be joint electorates. Services would go by merit alone. Thus Savarkar India would be a democratic State in which the countrymen belonging to different religions, sects or races would be treated with perfect equality, and none would be allowed to dominate others or would be deprived of his just and equal rights of free citizenship, so long as everyone discharges the common obligation which one owes to the State as a whole. Hindustan, the Motherland and Holy land of the Hindus, from the Indus to the Seas, would be an organic undivided State. The appellation of this Bharat Bhoomi would remain as Bharat or Hindustan. In Savarkar India, none would dare convert Hindus by fraud or force. Everywhere the Indians would be respected as citizens of a great nation. In that India, relative non-violence would be regarded as a virtue. The Hindus would be a casteless socket, a consolidated, modernized and up-to-date nation. Savarkar India would have unbounded faith in a World Commonwealth as his political philosophy conceives the Earth as the Common Motherland and humanism the patriotism of man, but his India would not go under during the process which leads to the welding of humanity into a World Commonwealth. In international politics Savarkar India would help to build world peace and prosperity.

India became a republic on January 26, 1950. In 1950 riots broke out in Bengal and frail as Savarkar was, he was arrested yet again along with many Mahasabha workers in Mumbai under the preventive detention Act. Three months later, he was set free, but on

a condition that he would abstain completely from any involvement in politics for one year. In 1958, the Pune University honoured him by conferring the degree of doctor of letters on him

In 1962 China invaded India, and in 1965 Pakistan too invaded India. Savarkar had prophesied that would happen. The last part of his autobiography was published in 1965 and read by thousands of people who acclaimed his endless struggle for cause. On February 27, 1966 veer Savarkar breathed his last.

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