

HINDUTVA

SAVARKAR UNMASKED



SHAMSUL ISLAM

HENRY DUNN JAMES SHEPHERD



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Vinayak Damodar Savarkar today shares national eminence with M. K. Gandhi; their portraits hang side by side on the walls of Indian Parliament. This is despite the fact that Sardar Patel, the first Home Minister of India, held Savarkar responsible for the murder of the Father of the Nation. In a letter, dated February 27, 1948, to Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, Patel wrote: 'It was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha directly under Savarkar that hatched the conspiracy (to kill Mahatma) and saw it through.'

This book is the outcome of a sincere urge to separate facts from myths and present facts as they unfolded in the history of India's Freedom Struggle. In order to know the real Savarkar, author has mainly relied on original documents available in the archives of Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS, the Government of India and the memoirs of revolutionaries who were in the Cellular Jail with Savarkar. These documents, astonishingly, show that he not only kept aloof from the Freedom Movement but also openly helped the British war efforts during the World War II at a time when Subhash Chandra Bose was trying to liberate India militarily. Savarkar remained a diehard believer in Casteism, Racism and Imperialism throughout his life. He called it Hindutva. This book also evaluates the original 1923 edition of *Hindutva* authored by Savarkar so that all those who cherish a democratic-secular India are able to understand the gravity of ideas which originated to undo India.

[Savarkar] in his presidential speech at the Mahasabha conference in Ahmedabad in 1937, said: 'As it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India...The Hindu Mahasabha had no problem in joining the Muslim League Government in Sind and Bengal. He was also the supporter of the princely order and thought it would not be a bad idea if the King of Nepal became the Hindu emperor of India...If you want to recheck what I have written, take a look at Shamsul Islam's book on Savarkar published by Media House.

—Khushwant Singh.

About the Author

Shamsul Islam taught Political Science at the University of Delhi. As an author, columnist and dramatist he is known for his unrelenting opposition to religious intolerance, dehumanization, totalitarianism, persecution of women, Dalits and minorities.



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Shamsul Islam



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To Dr. Mohit Kumar Haldar, my teacher then colleague, who helped me discover the debased, anti-people and anti-national legacy of the Hindutva brigade.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I am glad that the second revised edition of this book is out sooner than expected. I am thankful to readers of the Hindi, Marathi and Telugu editions for the encouraging response I received from them. I would like to thank all friends, teachers and colleagues who contributed towards the research and helped with their critical comments. In particular, the constant guidance of Professor Randhir Singh, Professor Manoranjan Mohanty and Professor Z. M. Khan is deeply appreciated. I am grateful to Dr. D. R. Goyal, a great warrior against communal politics, for the Foreword. Thanks are also due to Dr. Yatinder Kumar, Mr. Anil Nauriya, Dr. Ram Puniyani, Dr. John Dayal, Dr. Anand Teltumbde, Dr. Amar Farooqui and Mr. Ateeque Siddiqui for their comments.

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Shamsul Islam

Delhi

March 2006

PREFACE TO THE 3RD EDITION

A revised 3rd edition of the book is before the readers. It contains additional facts on V. D. Savarkar. On the basis of feedback from scholars, readers and the publisher this new edition is titled as *Hindutva: Savarkar Unmasked*.

It is sad that one of the greatest authors on communal politics, Dr. D. R. Goyal who wrote a foreword for this book is no more with us. He was a great source of strength. Hopefully this book will carry his legacy further. Last but not the least, I thank the Media House team specially Mr. Manish Savier who created the book in the present form.

Shamsul Islam

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October 2015

FOREWORD

Dr. D. R. Goyal

Mr. L.K. Advani was acting too clever by half when he tried to raise Vinayak Damodar Savarkar to the high pedestal of a hero of the freedom struggle by naming after him the Port Blair airport and installing his portrait in the Central Hall of Parliament opposite that of Mahatma Gandhi. He probably thought that the five years of the BJP-led government in power had sufficiently tortured the people's memory to develop amnesia. The rather soft and supine attitude of the secular parties to the ravages of the values of freedom struggle, especially the outrageous assault on Indian history and tradition, also might have encouraged him to imagine that time had come to create a mythology in which the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) should appear as the spearhead of the struggle for India's independence and thus prepare ground for realizing the quixotic dream of recasting secular democratic India into a Hindu Rashtra.

The government headed by self-confessed committed swayamsewaks had actually been audacious enough to appoint a commission for reviewing the Constitution of India so that it could be purged of 'foreign' values like liberty, fraternity, equality and justice. The leading lights of VHP, another member of the Sangh Pariwar, like Acharya Dharmendra and Giriraj Kishore had come out with suggestions for the change. The attempt however failed because the members of the Commission did not fall in line and the realization dawned that

the time for constitutional change has not yet come and they must wait for winning the next election. Of course, they had no doubt about their future because, in their fantasies, they had already brought India on the verge of 'eternal glory' with their 'successful experiment in Gujarat under Modi', as indicated in the Bharat Uday (India Shining) slogan.

To their dismay, the election 2004 proved their dreams were no more than castles in the air. Meanwhile, some intrepid academics who were free from the exigencies of frequent electioneering looked into facts about Savarkar's 'heroic deeds' and found that the hero had in reality turned a traitor and saboteur of the united struggle for national independence. Of course the author of the concept 'Hindutva' could not but be a hero for the ardent followers of the divisive creed.

V.D. Savarkar in his youth was one of the romantic revolutionaries who had taken to the creed of 'bomb and pistol' in order to frighten the British out of India. He was arrested for instigating and helping a Youngman Madan Lal Dhingra to assassinate a British officer. He even undertook the heroic adventure of jumping out of the ship that was bringing him from England to India for trial. He was rearrested and sent to Kala Paani where several other 'dangerous enemies' of the British imperialist rulers were languishing. There Savarkar earned the distinction of being a beggar for mercy; within a few months of suffering the hardship, he started pleading for mercy and submitted three petitions one after another promising to do the bidding of the merciful British rulers, calling himself a prodigal son desirous of returning to the lap of the mother against whom he had revolted out of ignorance.

The wily British tested for a few years whether the change of heart was genuine or fake. He was transferred to India only when Indian National Congress under Gandhi began to assume a

mass character, drawing into its fold all classes and communities. This reminded the imperialist rulers of the warning sounded by George William Forrest in his introduction to *State Papers* where he had remarked:

“Among the many lessons the Indian mutiny conveys to the historian, none is of greater importance than the warning that it is possible to have a Revolution in which Brahmins and Sudras, Hindus and Mohammedans, could be united against us and that it is not safe to suppose that peace and stability of our dominions, in any great measure depends on the continent being inhabited by different religious systems for they mutually understand and respect and take part in each others’ modes and ways and doings.”

The sapling of disunity that was planted in the wake of that experience was withering away under the impact of Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements. The imperialist rulers, feeling threatened by the scenes of unity among various religious communities, were looking for instruments to disrupt that unity. The Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were proving helpless in the face of exhortations by Khilafat leaders, especially Maulana Azad who, through the columns of his weekly *Al-Hilal*, had awakened the Muslims to the need for joining hands with Hindus in the anti-colonial struggle and Gandhi who had brought in the various shades of Hindus into the struggle.

The petitioner Savarkar had provided evidence by manifestly deviating from his opinion expressed in his book on the 1857 uprising and espousing the concept of Hindu Sangathan. His concept of Hindutva which conceived nationalism as exclusively Hindu to the exclusion of all whose religion had origin outside the boundaries of Hindustan. The concept could provide sufficient provocation to the Muslim elite which had been made

to feel that their interest were best served by the British rulers and could be threatened by Hindu majority. That is why Savarkar was brought and kept in prison but provided all facility to write his thesis and communicate with people like Moonje and Hedgewar who were feeling sore at the rise of Gandhi who posed a serious threat to the so-called Hindu-minded (or Mahasabha) elements then in Congress. The Nagpur Congress of 1920 that set in motion the process of transforming the Congress from an elite outfit to a mass organisation led to the alienation from it of both the Muslim and Hindu elite. Mr. Jinnah actually resigned from Congress and the 'Hindu-minded' began to devise ways of making the Hindus take to aggressive anti-Muslim stance. Thus the communalists in both communities began to serve the British policy of 'Divide and Rule'.

Mr. Shamsul Islam has done a yeoman's service by exposing how the revolutionary Savarkar, the author of *The Indian War of Independence 1857* got transformed into the agent of the imperialist policy to disrupt the mainstream national movement that was taking shape under the leaders like Gandhi and Azad. He has taken meticulous care to precisely document every word in this exposure. It is a mine of information that readers may find startling and surprising but which is nothing but truth.

It is the duty of every patriotic Indian to bring these facts to the notice of all people so that the future of the country is not darkened by Savarkarites.

INTRODUCTION

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, known as 'Veer' (Brave) Savarkar, now shares national eminence with the Father of the Nation, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, as their portraits hang side by side on the walls of the Central Hall of Indian Parliament. It is relevant here to know what Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister of India, said about Savarkar's role in the killing of Gandhi. In a letter to Nehru dated February 27, 1948, Sardar wrote, "It was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha directly under Savarkar that hatched the conspiracy and saw it through."

Savarkar's portrait finding a place beside Gandhi's is the result of an aggressive campaign of idolizing Savarkar by the present day followers of Hindutva. This glorification of Savarkar is of very recent origin, being initiated with the coming to power in late 1990s of the National Democratic Alliance government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, two seasoned *swayamsewaks* (volunteers/formal members) of the RSS. Turning the propounder of the theory of Hindutva into an icon of India's freedom struggle is part of a process to legitimise RSS philosophy of Hindu nation. While renaming the Port Blair airport after V. D. Savarkar on May 4, 2002, the then Home Minister L. K. Advani echoed the RSS view that "Hindutva propounded by Savarkar was an all-encompassing ideology with its roots in the country's heritage". The glorification of the prophet of Hindutva did not stop there. On February 26, 2003, a portrait of Savarkar was unveiled at Parliament. Savarkar thus came to share the eminence accorded to Gandhi and other

prominent leaders of the freedom struggle in the Central Hall of Parliament. However, we need to have a convincing answer to the question that if Savarkar with his eternal love for the two-nation theory and his conscious aloofness from the Indian freedom struggle can be glorified as an Indian nationalist and patriot, then who can stop Mohammed Ali Jinnah from claiming this status?

Not many are aware that Savarkar died in 1966 without much mourning. He died a quiet death after keeping low profile at the ripe age of 83. In his lifetime he could never overcome the scar that he was part of the conspiracy that claimed the life of Mahatma. Vir Sanghvi, a noted columnist, rightly says that little was heard of him till 1990s when a huge attempt was initiated “to elevate Savarkar to the pantheon of great freedom fighters. He had invented the term Hindutva, we were told, and was a champion for India’s fight for liberation... By the time the BJP took office the ‘Rehabilitate Savarkar’ movement was official policy.”

This is perfectly true. Prior to 1998, the Hindutva brigade showed no inclination to make Savarkar into a national icon. The BJP-Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra, which ruled the state for many years prior to 1998, never thought of displaying a portrait of Savarkar on the walls of the Legislative Assembly in Mumbai. It was only in 2003 after a portrait was put up in the Parliament House that a Congress-led government in Mumbai hung his portrait there too.

Lately, a section of the Congress leadership joined the ‘Rehabilitate Savarkar’ campaign. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his maiden press conference (August 4, 2004) in New Delhi described Vinayak Damodar Savarkar as “a patriot and freedom fighter”. He was responding to a question asked about the statement of Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyer in

which he was stated to have questioned patriotic credentials of Savarkar. Prime Minister said: "As far as the Savarkar controversy is concerned, these are Aiyer's personal views and not of the government... It is an unnecessary controversy." He was at his philosophical best in defence of Savarkar when he said, "Though history gives us luxury of interpreting events in different ways, I do not think any good can be achieved by speaking ill of dead." It was for the first time that a Congress Prime Minister came forward to defend Savarkar. Earlier, Parliamentary Affairs minister in his Cabinet, Ghulam Nabi Azad, had publicly announced that Aiyer's comments on Savarkar were his personal view and government did not "agree with him". In Maharashtra, it was not only Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde who reacted angrily to Aiyer's critical opinion about Savarkar, another prominent Congress leader R. Adik wrote a front pager signed article in praise of Savarkar for Shiv Sena Marathi organ, *Saamna*.

It was unfortunate that even the Congress had joined the Savarkarite bandwagon. According to Veer Sanghvi, "It is hard for anybody who subscribes to a Congress ideology—or even, to basic secularism—to venerate Veer Savarkar. It is fine for those who disagree with that ideology—such as the RSS or the Shiv Sena—to honour him. And yet, Congress leaders...are suddenly praising Savarkar." It was atrocious to find Congress as a party and Congressmen coming out in defence of a person who not only betrayed the Freedom struggle but was also instrumental in killing Gandhi.

The present-day Congress leadership has forgotten that the Congress Working Committee under the leadership of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel passed a resolution prohibiting its members from associating with the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS in June 1934. That directive of the Congress stands valid even today as it has never been rescinded.

Unfortunately, we are faced with a situation in which Congress with a memorable heritage of challenging fascist and sectarian ideas is led today by a leadership which is totally oblivious of its glorious past. This is the reason why the Savarkarites have succeeded in confusing the great liberal, democratic, and secular heritage of India's Freedom struggle with thoughts and works of personalities like Savarkar who never wanted a democratic-secular India. With Bhartiya Janata Party (political wing of the RSS) coming to power in 2014 at the national level, glorification of Savarkar got further impetus. The Prime Minister who publically declares himself to be a member of RSS while praising Savarkar said, "Veer Savarkar was a Veer Purush [brave personality] who was not scared of death".¹ Modi went to the extent of calling Savarkar as his mentor.² On Hindutva icon Savarkar's 131st birth anniversary Narendra Modi led his cabinet and members of Parliament in saluting the portrait of Savarkar in Parliament's Central Hall. Modi became the second Prime Minister after Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to pay homage to the portrait of Savarkar.³ The matter did not end here. A leading BJP member of the Parliament, Sakshi Maharaj, went on to describe Nathu Ram Godse, Savarkar's confidante who killed Father of the Nation Gandhi and was hanged for the same, as a personality to be revered. Praising Godse and equating him with Gandhi, he said: "I believe Nathuram Godse was also a nationalist and Mahatma Gandhiji also did a lot for the nation. Godse was an aggrieved person. He may have done something by mistake but was not an anti-national. He was a patriot."⁴

It is sad that more than half a century after the formation

1 <http://www.narendramodi.in/veer-savarkar-was-a-veer-purush-who-was-not-sacred-of-death-he-was-a-shastra-upasak-and-shaasrta-upasak-shri-narendra-modi/>

2 *The Economist*, Dec 20th 2014.

3 *The Telegraph*, May 29, 1914.

4 *The Times of India*, December 12, 2014.

of a democratic-secular India, a national fraud continues to be committed by the Savarkarites by playing havoc with the history. He is being touted as a great revolutionary, indomitable freedom fighter, outstanding rationalist and what not. These are the claims which are surely going to be proved wrong if Savarkar's own writings and actions are taken into account.

This book is the outcome of a sincere urge to present historical facts as they unfolded in the history of India's freedom struggle. In order to know the real Savarkar of pre-independence India, the author has mainly relied on the original documents available in the archives of Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS and the Government of India. The memoirs of revolutionaries who were in the Cellular Jail with Savarkar have also proved to be a great source of information. The anti-national legacy of Savarkar is mainly available in publications such as *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya: Hindu Rashtra Darshan* (Collected works of Savarkar in English published in 1963), and, *Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's Whirlwind Propaganda: Extracts from the President's Diary of his Propagandist Tours Interviews from December 1937 to October 1941*, both published by the Hindu Mahasabha. The second book is especially crucial for knowing the real Savarkar. It was published in 1941 and was edited by A. S. Bhide, a close confidant of Savarkar. This book, according to its Preface, was "primarily meant to serve as an authoritative text and faithful guide to the propagandists, workers and leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha movement in particular, and the Hindu public in general, enlightening the lines of practical application of the fundamental ideology of the Hindu Sangathan Movement to the various detailed questions and problems which face the Hindus today".

It was mandatory for every unit of the Hindu Mahasabha to keep it as a help book not only for political education of the cadres but also for articulating stands on different issues. If the

Hindutva brigade is so convinced about Savarkar's greatness and credentials in the freedom struggle, it is high time that it should reproduce these works so that people of this country hear from the horse's mouth and are able to objectively judge the Hindutva's latest icon.

The documents available in the Hindu Mahasabha archives are so startling and make it very clear that Savarkar, like the Muslim League, believed and practised the two-nation theory. While delivering presidential address to 19th Hindu Mahasabha session at Ahmedabad in 1937, Savarkar said: "As it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India, several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These were well meaning but unthinking friends take their dreams for realities. That is why they are impatient of communal tangles and attribute them to communal organizations. But the solid fact is that the so-called communal questions are but a legacy handed down to us by centuries of cultural, religious and national antagonism between the Hindus and Moslems...Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India cannot be assumed today to be a Unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Moslems, in India."

The Hindu Mahasabha under his sole leadership ran coalition governments with the Muslim League in 1940s. Publicly defending this collusion with the Muslim League, Savarkar declared in his presidential speech to the 24th session of Hindu Mahasabha at Kanpur in 1942: "In practical politics also the Mahasabha knows that we must advance through reasonable compromises. Witness the fact that only recently in Sind, the Sind-Hindu-Sabha on invitation had taken the responsibility of joining hands with the League itself in running coalition

Government. The case of Bengal is well known. Wild Leaguers whom even the Congress with all its submissiveness could not placate grew quite reasonably compromising and socialable as soon as they came in contact with the HM and the Coalition Government, under the premiership of Mr. Fazlul Huq and the able lead of our esteemed Mahasabha leader Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerji, functioned successfully for a year or so to the benefit of both the communities.”

He not only kept aloof from the freedom struggle but also helped the British rulers in suppressing any challenge to their interests. During 1942's Quit India Movement, when whole country was facing brutal repression of the colonial masters, Savarkar declared: “The Hindu Mahasabha holds that the leading principle of all practical politics is the policy of responsive co-operation. And in virtue of it, it believes that all those Hindu Sanghatanists who are working as Councillors, Ministers, Legislators and conducting any municipal or any public bodies with a view to utilize those centers of Government power to safeguard and even promote the legitimate interests of the Hindus without, of course, encroaching on the legitimate interests of others are rendering a highly patriotic service to our Nation. Knowing the limitations under which they work the Mahasabha only expects them to do whatever good they can under the circumstances and if they do not fail to do that much it would thank them for having acquitted themselves well. The limitations are bound to get themselves limited step by step till they get altogether eliminated. *The policy of responsive co-operation which covers the whole gamut of patriotic activities from unconditional co-operation right up to active and even armed resistance, will also keep adapting itself to the exigencies of the time, resources at our disposal and dictates of our national interest.*” [Italics as in the original]

He went to the extent of openly helping the British war efforts during the World War II at a time when Subhash Chandra

Bose was trying to liberate India militarily. How Savarkar joined the British bandwagon and decided to help its war machinery will be clear from his following words. "So far as India's defence is concerned, Hindudom must ally unhesitatingly, in a spirit of responsive co-operation with the war effort of the Indian government in so far as it is consistent with the Hindu interests, by joining the Army, Navy and the Aerial forces in as large a number as possible and by securing an entry into all ordnance, ammunition and war craft factories... Again it must be noted that Japan's entry into the war has exposed us directly and immediately to the attack by Britain's enemies. Consequently, whether we like it or not, we shall have to defend our own hearth and home against the ravages of the war and this can only be done by intensifying the Government's war effort to defend India. Hindu Mahasabhaites must, therefore, rouse Hindus especially in the provinces of Bengal and Assam as effectively as possible to enter the military forces of all arms without losing a single minute."

Savarkar remained a die-hard believer in Casteism and Racism and a supporter of imperialism throughout his life. He called it Hindutva. The reality which cannot be missed here is that Savarkarites keep these documents related to Savarkar hidden in libraries, knowing well that if the real Savarkar is made known to the people of this country, there will be a catastrophe for Hindutva brigade and it would be assigned to the dustbin of history. No Indian with self-respect and even an iota of belief in anti-colonial legacy is going to tolerate glorification of 'Veer' Savarkar. Why Hindutva brigade keeps this degenerated legacy under wraps is thus understandable. But why those who claim to stand for a democratic-secular Indian polity have not bothered to make these documents public in more than half a century of India's freedom is really puzzling.

These documents are surely going to unnerve the Hindutva brigade who relies on deception and disinformation. It is hoped that these facts will help uninformed leaders and persons who glorify to distinguish facts from myths. This book in chapter 7 also evaluates the original 1923 edition of *Hindutva* authored by Savarkar so that all those who cherish a democratic-secular India are able to understand the gravity of ideas which originated to undo India.

MYTH 1

Savarkar was a Legendary Freedom Fighter.¹ Savarkar Displayed Rare Courage. He Never Collaborated with the British Rulers.²

Savakarites claim that Savarkar should be held in high esteem 'because of his integrity, the passion with which he pursued the cause of India's freedom and the sense of sacrifice which marked his public life'.³ It is not Savakarites only who vociferously declare him to be the greatest icon of India's resistance to the British rule. As we have seen above even a Congress Prime Minister joined the bandwagon of Savakarites by declaring him 'a patriot and freedom fighter.'⁴ There has been a concerted attempt to identify the persecution at the dreaded Cellular Jail—also known as *Kala Pani* or Dark Waters—in the Andamans to the incarceration of Savarkar only. The BJP-led Government appeared determined to portray Savarkar as the only victim of Cellular Jail cruelties. During 2002-3, a number of steps were taken in this direction: a Savarkar portrait was unveiled in the Central Hall of Parliament by the then Speaker of Lok Sabha Manohar Joshi (Shiv Sena); the Port Blair Airport was renamed Veer Savarkar Airport by Lal Krishna Advani; and, worst, only Savarkar's name was mentioned on the memorial torch erected in the compound of the Jail by Ram Naik (Bhartiya Janata Party). A visit to Cellular Jail presents a shocking scenario. All visuals and programmes like sound and light focus on Savarkar only. He is represented as the only great sufferer there. In order to discourage any critical evaluation of Savarkar's role in the freedom struggle, there's an attempt to turn the whole

debate into an emotive issue by arguing that ‘he has been in the pantheon of India’s honoured freedom fighters long enough to not be dragged into a mudfight.’⁵

FACTS

However, facts are not so simple and tell a different—and startling—story. It is important to begin with few significant physical as well as historical details of the Cellular Jail. It got its name from the fact that prisoners were always incarcerated in cells—there were no barracks—thus keeping them in solitary confinement all the time. The Jail consisted of 690 cells in total.

According to R. C. Majumdar’s painstaking work on the jail,⁶ 1857 uprising against the East India Company rule supplied the first batch of political prisoners to the Cellular Jail. According to him, though a large number of mutineers must have been transported to the Andamans, their total number is not known and no reliable record of individual prisoners is available. It is known, however, that two important leaders of the Mutiny, well known for their moral character and high learning, lived and died in the Andamans as prisoners. These were Alama Fazli Haq Khairabadi and Maulana Liaqat Aly [*sic*]. Another mutineer, Mir Jafar Ali Thaneshwari, spent twenty years of penal servitude in the Andamans.⁷

The next class of important political prisoners sent to the Andamans consisted of the Muslim Wahabi revolutionaries (Wahabi revolt was led by anti-British rule Moulvies and is regarded as a milestone in the anti-colonial history of India). They also joined the 1857 Uprising in large numbers. Unfortunately, neither the total number nor details of individual prisoners belonging to the Wahabi Movement are available but the British Indian archives do refer to an incident in which Sher Ali Afridi, a Wahabi convict in the Andamans, stabbed Lord

Mayo, Viceroy of India during latter's visit to the Islands.⁸ The flow of revolutionaries to the Cellular Jail increased in the early 20th century with the mounting revolutionary resistance to the British rule and the first of the batches which arrived belonged to the Alipore Bomb Case of 1908.

So, obviously, Cellular Jail is not all about Savarkar. Now, it would be pertinent to know a few details about Savarkar too. He was born in 1883 into a family of landlords of Maharashtrian Chitpavan Brahmins. From his school days, he was attracted towards anti-British movements and in May 1904, helped in establishing the *Abhinav Bharat* (Young India) Society, drawing inspiration from Mazzini's *Giovanni Italia* (Young Italy) Movement. He went to England (1906-1910) to study law but became involved in activities against the British rule in India. In England, he founded the *Free India Society*, which organised secret activities for trying to overthrow British rule in India. After a member of the *Free India Society*, Madan Lal Dhingra, killed an official in India Office (London), Savarkar was arrested and brought to India. On the way to India, he made a daring but unsuccessful attempt to escape from the ship in which he was in captivity at Marseilles, France. In India, he was tried and sentenced in two different cases to two transportations of life which meant 50 years in jails. He was shifted to the Cellular Jail on July 4, 1911, to go through the sentence. Despite his five mercy petitions to the British rulers in 1911, 1913, 1914, 1918 & 1920 he was not released, though gradually he became a favourite of Cellular Jail authorities and by 1920 was assigned the work of a clerk and afterwards allowed to work as the foreman of the oil depot of the jail. As part of pardoning him, the British government first shifted him to the Indian mainland in May 1921. After keeping him in different jails, he was finally released on January 6, 1924, from Yerwada Jail, Pune in Western India on the condition that he would reside in Ratnagiri district

only and “will not engage publicly or privately in any manner of political activities without the consent of the government for a period of five years...”⁹ These conditions imposed on Savarkar were removed only in 1937. However, in the period when these conditions were in force, he was allowed to carry on with his communal political activities which fitted perfectly into the British masters’ divide and rule policy.

A Freedom Fighter for All-Inclusive India

Savarkar’s role as an activist, writer and orator can be divided into two distinct and diametrically opposite phases. Savarkar began his political career in 1904 as a true revolutionary who stood for a free India where there would be no religious and political discrimination. Until his incarceration in the Cellular Jail in 1911 he remained a committed protagonist for a free India caring least about religious differences. Though his whole thinking was ingrained into Hindu mythology and history, he firmly believed that liberation of the Motherland, India, solely depended on the united resolve of Hindus and Muslims of the country.

This thinking was clearly visible in his magnum opus on the 1857 uprising, *The Indian War of Independence 1857* that he penned while he was in England in 1907. Despite being proscribed by the British government, this book went into many editions world over. In the introduction of this book itself Savarkar warned against any feeling of animosity towards Muslims, emphasizing that the unity of Hindus and Muslims was a prerequisite for the liberation of the Motherland. He wrote:

The nation that has no consciousness of its past has no future. Equally true it is that a nation must develop its capacity not only of claiming a past but also of knowing how to use it for the furtherance of its future. The nation ought to be the master and not the slave of its own history... The feeling of hatred against the

Mohemadans [*sic*] was just necessary in the times of Shivaji—but, such a feeling would be unjust and foolish if nursed now simply because it was the dominant feeling of the Hindus then.¹⁰

This monumental work of Savarkar ended by declaring that the Revolution of 1857 was a test to see how far India had imbibed the spirit of unity, independence and popular power. He went to exhort his countrymen:

The real glory belongs to those heroes who thoroughly understood that foreign domination is worse than Swaraj—Swaraj, democratic or monarchic, or even anarchical—and thus came out to fight for independence... Those who understood this principle, those who fulfilled their duty to their religion and to their country...let their names be remembered, pronounced with reverence!¹¹

It was to honour these heroes that *The Indian War of Independence 1857* was dedicated to the 'Martyrs of 1857' by Savarkar. And his list of heroes who laid down their lives for the Motherland in the book included names like Mangal Pandey, Rani Laxmi Bai, Nana Saheb, Maulvi Ahmed Shah, Azimullah Khan, Tatia Tope, Bahadurshah Zafar, Begum Zeenat Mahal and many others, both Hindus and Muslims.

In the first phase of his political life, Savarkar neither subscribed to the thesis that India was a conflict arena between Hindus and Muslims nor believed that Hindus were the only natural patriots. In his work on 1857 he cited examples after examples exposing the treachery by a section of Hindus. While underlining one such example of Baji Peshwa who helped the British in capturing Punjab, he wrote:

This Baji—this Peshwa of Shivaji and his descendants—spent money out of his own pocket and sent one thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry to the assistance of the English! This Bajirao had not troops to protect his own Shanwar Wada, but he

could spare troops enough to help the enemy to discrete the house of Guru Govind Singh.¹²

In this phase, Savarkar believed that Hindus and Muslims,

were both children of the soil of Hindusthan. Their names were different, but they were all children of the same Mother; India therefore being the common mother of these two, they were brothers by blood. Nana Sahib, Bahadur Shah of Delhi, Moulvi Ahmed Shah, Khan Bahadur Khan, and other leaders of 1857 felt this relationship to some extent and, so, gathered round the flag of Swadesh, leaving aside their enmity...¹³

Savarkar was all praise for the policies of Nana and Azimullah which aimed at uniting Hindus and Muslims so that both of them could fight,

shoulder to shoulder for the independence of their country and that, when freedom was gained, the United States of India should be formed under the Indian rulers and princes.¹⁴

He gave full credits to Azimullah Khan, a close confidant of Nana and a great military strategist for preparing a blue print of resistance to the East India Company rule in the following words:

Of the important characters in the Revolutionary War of 1857, the name of Azimullah Khan is one of the most memorable. Among the keen intellects and minds that first conceived the idea of the War of Independence, Azimullah must be given a prominent place. And among the many plans by which the various phases of the Revolution were developed, the plans of Azimullah deserve special notice.¹⁵

Savarkar hailed the unity of Hindu-Muslim freedom loving revolutionaries. He went to the extent of praising the *Jehadi* spirit of Moulvi Ahmed Shah. Savarkar wrote:

The great and saintly Ahmed Shah had woven fine and cleverly the webs of the *Jehad*—the War of Independence—through

every corner of Lucknow and Agra. Kumar Singh, the hero of Jagadishpur, had taken the leadership of his province and, in consultation with Nana, had been busy gathering materials for war. The seeds of the *Jehad* [holy war] had taken such root in Patna that the whole city was a regular haunt of the Revolutionary party. Moulvies, Pundits, Zemindars [*sic*], farmers, merchants, vakils, students of all castes and creeds, were ready to give up their lives for the sake of Swadesh and Swadharma.¹⁶

Delhi was liberated from the British control on May 11, 1857 and by May 16 all remnants of the foreign rule were erased from the city after declaring Bahadur Shah Zafar as the ruler of India. Savarkar while celebrating those times said:

The five days during which Hindus and Mohamedans [*sic*] proclaimed that India was their country and that they were all brethren, the days when Hindus and Mohamedans unanimously raised the flag of national freedom at Delhi. Be those grand days ever memorable in the history of Hindusthan!¹⁷

Savarkar's Adoration of Muslim Heroes

According to Savarkar, the person who symbolized this great spirit of resistance to the foreign rule was none other than Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Muslim king of Mughal Dynasty. Savarkar gave full credit to him for organizing the uprising of 1857 when he wrote that "it was in the Diwan-i-Khas of Delhi, more than in any other Durbar, the seeds of Revolution began to take root". He fully sympathized with the Mughals in their fight against the British and wrote:

The English had not stopped at merely taking away the *Padshahi* of the *Padshah* of Delhi, but had recently decided even to take away the title of *Padshah* from the descendants of Babar. The Emperor, though reduced to such an extremity, and Zinat Mahal, the beloved, clever, and determined Begum of the Emperor, had already decided that this last opportunity of regaining the lost

glory should not be allowed, to go by, and, if dying was the only resource, then, they should die the death which would only befit an Emperor and an Empress.¹⁸

Savarkar concluded his monumental work with the following description of two couplets of Bahadur Shah Zafar:

Emperor Bahadur Shah was a great poet. During the heat of the Revolution he composed a *Gazal* [*sic*]. Someone asked him:

Dumdumay men dam nahin khair mango jaanki/

Ai Zafar thandi bui shamsher Hindustan ki.

[Now, that every moment, you are becoming weaker, pray for your life (to the English)/For, Oh! Emperor, the sword of India is now broken.]

He [Zafar] responded through the following couplet,

Ghaziomen bu rahegi jaltalak imanki/

Takhte London tak chalegi tegh Hindusthan ki.

[As long as there remains the least trace of love of faith in the hearts of our heroes, so long, the sword of Hindusthan shall reach up to the throne of London.]¹⁹

The question in the first couplet, in fact, conveyed the feelings of an acquaintance of Zafar, expressed after the defeat of revolutionaries [1857]. The second couplet expressed the resolve of Zafar even after this defeat.

It is often argued by Hindu communal elements that revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh accepted Savarkar and his philosophy in totality and it was Savarkar who symbolized the national fight against the British rule. This is true in the case of his first phase when he stood for a composite nation and united fight by both Hindus and Muslims against the colonial

rule. Revolutionaries adored this phase of Savarkar and that was the reason when Bhagat Singh and his other comrades were arrested, police found copies of the 4th edition of Savarkar's book on 1857 from their hideouts. Savarkar, who turned to Hindutva and confined himself to organizing Hindus only in the second phase of his political career, was open to all-inclusive nationalist activities in the first phase. This is to be noted here that the first revolutionary organisation, 'Abhinav Bharat' (New India) which he created in 1904 attracted people from all religions. It may be worthwhile to note that when due to the ban by the British government this book was clandestinely printed in Holland, one of the persons who dared to smuggle it into India was a youthful member of Abhinav Bharat, Sikander Hayat Khan who later became chief minister of Punjab in the undivided India. He carried few copies of it in a false bottom of his bag while coming from abroad.²⁰

Second Phase: Surrender before the British as Prophet of Hindu Separatism

But the incarceration in Cellular Jail and the terrible hardships that Savarkar had to go through there broke him completely and initiated the second phase in his active life. By 1913, he was ready to help his British masters in their game of 'Divide and Rule'. It took concrete shape when Sir Reginald Craddock, Home Member of the Government of India, came to visit Cellular Jail in 1913. Savarkar presented a mercy petition to him personally on November 14, 1913 (the full text is available in chapter 3), the concluding part of which is a living testimony how he offered himself for serving the British masters in their dirty design of ruling India. It read,

I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future

conduct would be. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?²¹

Unfortunately, he took this pledge of loyalty to the British, a little too seriously by embarking on a sectarian communal path and keeping aloof from the anti-colonial struggle. Transportation to the Andamans was intended to break the resolve of the political prisoners, and Savarkar's is a tragic success story of this policy.²² Underlining this aspect of Savarkar's life, well-known columnist, Manini Chatterjee wrote:

On being freed from prison, Savarkar repudiated his past and devoted himself to preparing the blue print of a Hindu Rashtra. His earlier anger against foreign rule was replaced by a pernicious thesis of 'Punyabhoomi' [holy land] and 'Pitrabhoomi' [fatherland] that rendered all non-Hindus 'aliens' to India. And unlike Khudi Ram Bose, or Surya Sen, Ashfaqullah Khan or Bhagat Singh, who inspired generations of youth to join the freedom struggle, Savarkar, post-Andamans, is known to have inspired only the Nathuram Godses of this land.²³

Now Savarkar was no more a revolutionary subscribing to the ideal of a free India in which all religious communities would live harmoniously. According to the official biographer of Savarkar, this change in his thinking was visible on the eve of his departure from the Andamans itself as before bidding good-bye to the inmates of Cellular Jail he gave the following sacred oath to a chosen few:

One God, one country, one goal,
One race, one life, one language.²⁴

The Hindutva camp tries to justify Savarkar's conversion into a die-hard opponent of composite nationalism and Muslims by arguing that it was the outcome of persecution he received at the

hands of Muslim jail officials in the Cellular Jail. A prominent Savarkarite, Y. D. Phadke says,

The inhuman treatment meted out to him by the Pathans at the Cellular Jail forced a sea-change in Savarkar's thinking. There are harrowing accounts of physical and mental torture in his autobiography *Majhi Janmathep* (My Lifer).²⁵

Savarkar's own writings seem to be corroborating this fact:

A large number of the wicked warders consisted of Mussalmans [*sic*] from Sindh, Punjab and the North West Frontier [N.W.F.P]. And the prisoners under them were mostly Hindus. The Hindu prisoners were persecuted ...²⁶

Barindra Kumar Ghose who was a contemporary of Savarkar in the Cellular Jail (convicted in the Alipore Bomb Case) also wrote his memoirs (*The Tale of My Exile*) and discussed torture by Muslim warders. He cited examples clearly showing that Muslim prisoners too were persecuted in the same manner as the Hindus. According to him,

In the Andamans it is they [warder, petty officer, jamadar etc.] who are in charge of everything and have the authority. They are the bodyguards of the supreme lord, the Jailor. And what perfect adepts they are in the art of beating and abusing! Ramlal sits a little cross-wise in the file [line], give him two blows on the neck. Mustafa did not get up immediately he was told to, so, pull off his moustache. Baqaullah is late in coming from the latrine, apply the baton and unloose the skin of his posterior—such were the beautiful proceedings by which they maintained discipline in the prison.²⁷

Barin was witness to the fact that there were kind-hearted Pathan warders too, who on many occasions “secretly brought out a dish of meat...I do not know whether any food prepared by the famous Draupadi herself could have been as savoury as that dish with such a gusto did I devour it”.²⁸

Upendra Nath Bannerji was also jailed with Barindra Kumar Ghose in the same Alipore Bomb Case. He too wrote his memoirs in Bengali (*Nirvasiter Atmakatha*-Autobiography of an Exile) describing the terror unleashed by the Pathan and Baluchi warders. There are available other Cellular Jail accounts also penned by Trailokyanath Chakravarty and Ullaskar Dutt which, did not give communal interpretation to the behaviour of jail officials which Savarkar readily gave in his memoirs, *The Story of my Transportation of Life*.

The reality is that Savarkar and his followers raised this issue of persecution by Muslim warders of the Cellular Jail as an alibi to legitimise their aggressive anti-Muslim politics to which they got welded in order to keep aloof from the freedom struggle. This kind of argument is beyond comprehension and common sense. It conveniently overlooks the fact that there were also Hindu, Sikh and Christian warders and officials. It is really surprising that a highly educated person like Savarkar would become anti-Muslim just because a few warders who happened to be Muslims indulged in criminal and inhuman activities. If the same logic is carried to the cases of Ravana who kidnapped Sita and Kauravas who caused Mahabharata, all Hindus will have to be declared enemies!

In fact the British rulers decided to reward Savarkar for developing this kind of anti-Muslim ideology by releasing him at a juncture when,

Non-Cooperation Movement was at its peak, bringing a high watermark of Hindu-Muslim unity. The British rulers, terrified by this development, were looking for leaders who could dent this unity. Savarkar who had been working on his theory of Hindutva was a good option.²⁹

Once out of Cellular Jail in 1921, Savarkar devoted himself solely to serve the cause of a Hindu nation. Surprisingly, though

there happened to be a blanket ban on his participation in political activities as per the official conditions, he was allowed to organise Ratnagiri Hindusabha which took up the cause of *Shuddhi* [purification or conversion of Muslims/Christians to Hinduism] and playing of music before mosques. He held long meetings with K. B. Hedgewar which resulted in the formation of RSS. The British rulers naturally overlooked these political activities as the future of colonial rule in India rested on communal divide and Savarkar was leaving no stone unturned in aggravating the communal scene.³⁰

Earlier, while imprisoned in Ratnagiri Jail in 1923, Savarkar was able to write his controversial work *Hindutva* and smuggle it out, a deed that would have been impossible without the complicity of the British administration. It was published under the pen name 'A Maratha' as Savarkar was in jail and was not allowed to produce such works. Interestingly though the author and contents of the book stressed only on the Hindu identity of the Indians, the pen name chosen signified a regional identity and not religious identity. This book not only denigrated minorities like Muslims and Christians but also justified violent cleansing of Buddhists in the ancient past of India. Surprisingly, though the author's real identity was no secret, the British government took no punitive action against Savarkar. It was understandable as the rulers were greatly perturbed by the unity of Hindu-Muslim masses in the course of Non-Co-operation and Khilafat movements and communal interventions like that of Savarkar's surely could help in widening the communal divide.

Savarkar was Allowed to Reorganize Hindu Mahasabha Despite Ban on His Political Activities

Savarkar was released from the Yerwada Jail (January 6, 1924) on two conditions. According to the first condition, "Savarkar shall reside in Ratnagiri district and shall not go beyond the

limits of that district without permission of Government". The second condition said, "he will not engage publicly or privately in any manner of political activities without the consent of Government for a period of five years".³¹ However, the following description from Keer's biography of Savarkar will prove that he was allowed complete freedom in so far as organizing Hindu Mahasabha and carrying on propaganda against Muslim and Christian was concerned. The biography goes on to tell that within two weeks of his release,

Ratnagiri Hindu Sabha was established ostensibly through the influence and attempts of Babarao Savarkar, but, in fact, inspired by Savarkar himself. The main objective of the Sabha was to organise, consolidate and unite the Hindus into one organic whole and enable them to oppose effectively any unjust aggression.³²

Importantly, the reference to 'unjust aggression' did not mean the British rule but Muslim menace. On August 24, Savarkar was allowed to attend a felicitation programme in Nasik (where he was permitted to move after plague broke out in Ratnagiri) organised by B. S. Moonje and N. C. Kelkar two prominent leaders who opposed call for Hindu-Muslim unity. In this function he was presented with a purse and significantly, "Shankaracharya sent his blessings on the occasion by presenting a dress of Honour to the great patriot".³³

If Savarkar's Hindutva agenda had no ambiguity so did the British designs. It is clearly made out in Keer's following description of Savarkar's stay in Nasik. According to Keer,

Savarkar carried on his work for the uplift of the Hindu society in Nasik too. During his stay at Nasik, he rescued some Mahar Hindus from the snare of Agha Khani Mohammedans. With the permission of the government, he visited Bhagur, Trimbak, Yela and Nagar, and propagated his new Hindu Sanghatanist ideology among the people.³⁴

There was no stopping to Savarkar's sectarian political activities despite a legal ban on his political activities. Keer goes on to tell us that,

gradually Savarkar began to initiate the people into his new ideology through the Hindu Sabha. Afire with the new ideology, the Hindus in Ratnagiri began to worship strength, consolidation and unity. It was inevitable that such an unadulterated Hindu movement should upset the mental balance of the Gandhian pro-Muslim zealots.³⁵

Savarkar justified Hindu communalism as 'righteous' and Hindu separatism as 'nationalist' and why he was allowed to embark on this course of political activities unhindered by the British was soon clear. When the Indian freedom struggle desperately needed Hindu-Muslim unity newer and newer issues of friction were being dug out. It was in Ratnagiri that first of the serious conflicts on playing music before mosques came to be witnessed. The invention of this latest cause of Hindu-Muslim conflict became a perennial cause of rioting between the two communities for all the times to come. Savarkar stood in the forefront of the Hindu movement to claim right to play music outside mosques when prayers were on.

The public *Shuddhi* or conversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism also played havoc with the attempts to unite people of all religions into a composite freedom struggle. This issue, to the joy of the British rulers, became a bane that finally killed the spirit of the Non-Co-operation Movement of 1920s. Savarkar believed that "reconversion (*Shuddhi*) consolidated and strengthened the Hindu society".³⁶ We also come to know through Keer that "*Shuddhi* or the reconversion movement, the main spring of Sanghatanism, was also inaugurated by Savarkar in Ratnagiri and was coming to a head despite heavy odds".³⁷ Keer's statement that Savarkar led the *Shuddhi* movement 'despite heavy odds' should be understood in context of the

fact that such sectarian movements were able to communalize the contemporary national political scene to the extent that competitive communal groups left no space for a united freedom struggle .

Apparently, there happened to be a ban on Savarkar's political activities but his sectarian Hindu Separatist activities were left untouched. Moreover, he was regularly writing against Gandhi's "obsession for Hindu-Muslim unity and he did not spare Pandit Motilal Nehru also".³⁸ Keer also informs us that despite total ban on his political activities,

Savarkar's stay in Ratnagiri attracted several pundits and patriots of all-India fame. One of the early visitors to Savarkar was the great founder of the R.S.S., Dr. K. B. Hedgewar. The interview took place in March 1925 at Shirgaon. Savarkar's monumental work *Hindutva* giving ideas of the principles of Hindu nationalism and Hindu state had just appeared on the scene and captivated and inspired many great brains and great hearts.³⁹

Savarkar Betrayed Quit India Movement by Helping the British

Hindu Mahasabha under the leadership of Savarkar played a highly dubious and divisive role in the Quit India Movement of 1942. While Congress cadres and large sections of Indian masses were facing immense repression of the colonial rulers and decided to boycott the state institutions, Hindu Mahasabha decided to cooperate with the British rulers. While addressing the 24th session of Hindu Mahasabha at Cownpore (now Kanpur) in 1942, Savarkar outlined the strategy of Hindu Mahasabha of co-operating with the rulers in the following words:

The Hindu Mahasabha holds that the leading principle of all practical politics is the policy of Responsive Co-operation. And

in virtue of it, it believes that all those Hindu Sanghathanists who are working as councillors, ministers, legislators and conducting any municipal or any public bodies with a view to utilize those centres of government power to safeguard and even promote the legitimate interests of the Hindus without, of course, encroaching on the legitimate interests of others are rendering a highly patriotic service to our nation. Knowing the limitations under which they work, the Mahasabha only expects them to do whatever good they can under the circumstances and if they do not fail to do that much it would thank them for having acquitted themselves well. The limitations are bound to get themselves limited step by step till they get altogether eliminated. *The policy of responsive co-operation which covers the whole gamut of patriotic activities from unconditional co-operation right up to active and even armed resistance, will also keep adapting itself to the exigencies of the time, resources at our disposal and dictates of our national interest.* [Italics as in the original]⁴⁰

He went to the extent of declaring that he was not bothered “of breaking up the so-called united front against the British Imperialism”. By this he meant that he would have no hesitation in sabotaging the Quit India Movement which he in fact did.

Savarkar Sided with the British Imperialists against Subhash Chandra Bose

Hindutva brigade continues to pretend to have great admiration for Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose who attempted to organise a military campaign to force the British out of India. But very few people know about the terrible betrayal of his cause by Hindu Mahasabha under the leadership of Savarkar. When Netaji during World War II was trying to secure foreign support for liberation of the country and trying to organise a military attack on the northeast of the country which finally culminated in the formation of ‘Azad Hind Fauj’ (Indian National Army), it was Savarkar who offered full military co-operation to the British masters. While addressing 23rd session

of Hindu Mahasabha at Bhagalpur in 1941, he said:

The second most important and urgent item on which the Hindu Sanghatanists [Hindu Mahasabhaitis] all over India must bend all their energies and activities is the programme for the militarization of Hindus. The war which has now reached our shores directly constitutes at once a danger and an opportunity which both render it imperative that the militarization movement must be intensified and every branch of the Hindu Mahasabha in every town and village must actively engage itself in rousing the Hindu people to join the army, navy, the aerial forces and the different war-craft manufactories.⁴¹

To what extent Savarkar was willing to help the British would be clear by the following words of his:

So far as India's defence is concerned, Hindudom must ally unhesitatingly, in a spirit of responsive co-operation with the war effort of the Indian government in so far as it is consistent with the Hindu interests, by joining the Army, Navy and the Aerial forces in as large a number as possible and by securing an entry into all ordnance, ammunition and war craft factories... Again it must be noted that Japan's entry into the war has exposed us directly and immediately to the attack by Britain's enemies. Consequently, whether we like it or not, we shall have to defend our own hearth and home against the ravages of the war and this can only be done by intensifying the government's war effort to defend India. Hindu Mahasabhaitis must, therefore, rouse Hindus especially in the provinces of Bengal and Assam as effectively as possible to enter the military forces of all arms without losing a single minute.⁴²

Savarkar called upon Hindus "to flood the [British] army, the navy and the aerial forces with millions of Hindu warriors with Hindu Sanghatanist hearts" and assured them that if they,

stick to this immediate programme and take advantage to the fullest extent possible of the war situation with the Hindu Sanghatanists ideal full in view, pressing on the movement for

the militarization of the Hindu race, then our Hindu nation is bound to emerge far more powerful, consolidated and situated in an incomparably more advantageous position to face issues after the war— whether it be an internal anti-Hindu Civil War or a constitutional crisis or an armed revolution.⁴³

While concluding his address at Bhagalpur, Savarkar once again stressed upon the Hindus of India to join war efforts of the British government. He categorically stated:

Whatever, again, be the position and the fate of nations after the war, today under the present circumstances taking all things together, the only feasible and relatively beneficial attitude which the Hindu Sanghathanists can take up is doubtless to ally ourselves actively with the British government on the point of Indian Defence, provided always that we can do so without being compelled to betray the Hindu cause.⁴⁴

The following concluding words of his Bhagalpur address made it clear that as per his wisdom, sub-serving the British war efforts would herald a great future for the country:

If ever the saying was true that the darkest hour of the night is nearer the golden rise of the morn, it holds good today. The war that has approached our shores from the East and may threaten us in due course even from the West is a danger which may prove unparalleled in its magnitude, ravages and results. But it is also bound to break into a new day for the world and there are no signs wanting to show us that not only a newer but a better Order [*sic*] may ensue out of this world chaos. Those who have lost all may gain much in the end. Let us also bide our time and pray and act for the best.⁴⁵

Savarkar's total support to the British war efforts when leaders like Subhash Chandra Bose were trying to chalk out a strategy to throw out the British rule from India through armed struggle was the result of a well-thought-out Hindutva design. It was in Madura (22nd session of the Hindu Mahasabha, 1940) that he made his choice clear. His support to the British rested on the

logic that “it is altogether improbable that in this war England will be defeated so disastrously as to get compelled to hand over her Indian Empire, lock, stock and barrel into German hands”⁴⁶ thus believing in the invincibility of the British Empire.

His presidential address at Madura is a living testimony to his unabashed support to the British imperialistic designs. He rejected outright Netaji’s attempts to liberate India. He declared:

Not only on moral grounds but on the grounds of practical politics we are compelled not to concern ourselves on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha organisation with any programme involving any armed resistance, under the present circumstances.⁴⁷

There was absolutely no ambiguity in his support to the British military designs. He presented a strange alibi in order to justify the unashamed support to the colonial masters. According to his logic,

Thus after taking stock of all other courses and factors for and against us, I feel no hesitation in proposing that the best way of utilizing the opportunities which the war has afforded to us cannot be any other than to participate in all war efforts which the [British] government are compelled by circumstances to put forth in so far as they help in bringing about the militarization and industrialization of our people.⁴⁸

When the British government in the wake of the World War II decided to raise new battalions of its armed forces, it was Hindu Mahasabha under direct command of Savarkar which decided to enroll Hindus in a big way in this venture. This is what Savarkar reported to the delegates at the Hindu Mahasabha session at Madura:

Naturally, the Hindu Mahasabha with a true insight into a practical politics decided to participate in all war efforts of the British government in so far as they concerned directly with the question of the Indian defence and raising new military forces in India.⁴⁹

It was not as if Savarkar was unaware of the strong resentment which was brewing in the ranks of common Indians against such an approach. He brushed aside any criticism of Hindu Mahasabha's decision of co-operating with the British in war efforts as,

political folly into which the Indian public is accustomed to indulge in thinking that because Indian interests are opposed to the British interests in general, any step in which we join hands with the British government must necessarily be an act of surrender, anti-national, of playing into the British hands and that co-operation with the British government in any case and under all circumstances is unpatriotic and condemnable.⁵⁰

If on the one hand, Bose was working on the military strategies to take help of the German and Japanese forces to liberate India, on the other hand, Savarkar was busy in directly assisting the British colonial masters. This amounted to the betrayal of the cause espoused by Netaji. Savarkar and Hindu Mahasabha openly stood with the British government which later was able to kill and maim thousands of brave cadres of the Indian National Army (INA). While greatly eulogizing the British masters, Savarkar told his followers at Madura that due to the ever-advancing forces of Japan with a declared objective of freeing Asia from European influence, the British government needed Indians in large numbers in its armed forces which must be helped. While praising the British war strategy, he said:

The British statesmanship, far sighted as it usually is, realised this also that if ever war broke out with Japan, India itself must be the centre of gravity of all war preparations...chances are that an army with the strength of a couple of millions shall have to be raised, manned by Indians under Indian officers as rapidly as Japan succeeds in advancing near our Frontiers.⁵¹

Savarkar spent the next few years in organizing recruitment camps for the British armed forces which were to slaughter

the cadres of INA in different parts of North-East later. The Madura conference of Hindu Mahasabha concluded with the adoption of an 'immediate programme' which stressed "to secure entry for as many Hindus recruits as possible into army, navy and the air forces".⁵² He also informed them that through the efforts of Hindu Mahasabha alone, one lakh Hindu's were recruited in the British armed forces in one year.

Astonishingly, despite all these terrible anti-national ideas and practices of Savarkar, there are people who continue declaring him as a great patriot. How sturdily Savarkar and Hindu Mahasabha rode the British bandwagon can be known by simply peeping into a pre-Independence publication of the Hindu Mahasabha. This book published in 1941, had rather a longish title *Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's Whirlwind Propaganda: Extracts from the President's Diary of his Propagandist Tours Interviews from December 1937 to October 1941* and was edited by A. S. Bhide, a close confidant of Savarkar himself. This book, as stated in the preface,

was primarily meant to serve as an authoritative text and faithful guide to the propagandists, workers and leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha movement in particular and the Hindu public in general, enlightening the lines of practical application of the fundamental ideology of the Hindu Sangathan Movement to the various detailed questions and problems which the Hindus face today.

It was mandatory for every unit of the Hindu Mahasabha to keep it as a help book not only for political education of the cadres but also for articulating stands on different issues. The crucial fact should not be overlooked here that this 'Hindutva Guide' contained material written and spoken exclusively by Savarkar. The excerpts from the book show the real face of Hindutva which stood as a stooge of the British under the leadership of Savarkar. The Savarkarites complain that 'pseudo-

secularists' after independence conspired to sideline Savarkar, who in the Hindutva brigade's opinion was a great thinker and nationalist. If they are so sure about the greatness of Savarkar, it is high time that they should reprint this book so that the present generation too, comes to know about his greatness! According to documents available in this book, Savarkar, while emphasizing the need to join the British war efforts, gave following direction to the Hindu Mahasabha cadres:

Turn this inevitable co-operation with the British as profitable to your own country as it is possible under our present circumstances to do. Because let it not be forgotten that those who fancy that they can claim of not having co-operated with the government and helped the war-efforts either on account of the demoralising and hypocritical fad of absolute non-violence and non-resistance even in face of an armed aggression or as a matter of policy simply because they do not join the fighting forces, are but indulging in self-deception and self-complacency.⁵³ [Underlined as in the original text.]

His call to the Hindus had no ambiguity: "Let the Hindus therefore come forward now and enter the army, the navy and the air-forces, the ordnance and other war-crafts factories in their thousands and millions."⁵⁴ Hindu Mahasabha under Savarkar's leadership organised high-level Boards in different regions of the country to help the Hindus seeking recruitment in the British armed forces. We come to know through the following words of Savarkar that these Boards were in direct contact with the British government. Savarkar informed the cadres,

To deal with the difficulties and the grievances which the Hindu recruits to the Army find from time to time, a Central Northern Hindu Militarization Board has been formed by the Hindu Mahasabha at Delhi with Mr. Ganpat Rai, B.A., L.L.B Advocate, 51, Panchkuin Road, New Delhi, as convener. A Central Southern Hindu Militarization Board is also formed under the

Chairmanship of Mr. L.B. Bhopatkar, M.A., LL.B., President Maharashtra Provincial Hindusabha, Sadashiv Peth Poona. All complaints or applications for information etc. should be addressed by those Hindus who want to enter the forces or have already enlisted themselves in them, to the above addresses. Sir Jwala Prasad Shrivastav; Barrister Jamnadasji Mehta, Bombay; Mr. V.V. Kalikar, M.L.C., Nagpur and other members on the National Defence Council or the Advisory War Committee will certainly try their best to get these difficulties removed so far as possible when they are forwarded by these Militarization Boards on to them.⁵⁵

This clearly shows that the British Government had accommodated leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha on its official war committees. Those who declare Savarkar as a great patriot and freedom fighter must bow their heads in shame when they read the following instruction from Savarkar to those Hindus who were to join the British forces:

One point however must be noted in this connection as emphatically as possible in our own interest that those Hindus who join the Indian [read the British] Forces should be perfectly amenable and obedient to the military discipline and order which may prevail there provided always that the latter do not deliberately aim to humiliate Hindu Honour.⁵⁶

Astonishingly, Savarkar never felt that joining the armed forces of the colonial masters was in itself a great humiliation for any self-respecting and patriotic Indian. Bhide's book also tells us that he alone drafted the following resolution titled 'Maha Sabha and the Great War' which read:

As the task of defending India from any military attack is of common concern to the British government as well as ourselves and as we are unfortunately not in a position today to carry out that responsibility unaided, there is ample room for whole-hearted co-operation between India and England.⁵⁷

World War II was also the period when different groups of

revolutionaries and Subhash Chandra Bose were trying to secure help from countries like the USSR. But here we find Savarkar advising the British masters to beware of such dangers. We also find him offering total support to the British in this venture unabashedly. His main aim seemed to eliminate Muslims and not the British rule. How he twisted facts to serve his anti-Muslim rhetoric will be clear from the following words of his:

The probable entry of Russia in the war against England may threaten India with a far more serious danger of an invasion through Afghanistan [*sic*]. The treacherous conduct of a very large section of the Moslems in India in the Khilaphat (*sic*) agitation during the last Great War in 1914 has taught us a lesson never to be forgotten as it is almost sure to be repeated in any future attack on India on the North Western Frontier by any alien power. The tribesmen and the Moslem forces throughout Punjab, Sindh etc. are very likely to betray the Hindus and rise en masse in pursuance of the pan-Islamic designs to carve out an independent Moslem State or Federation stretching out from Baluchistan—to Kashmir—to Delhi. In view of the attitude of many a responsible Moslem Organisation in India as revealed by their resolutions passed in their open sessions betraying their extra territorial sympathies it would be nothing short of a suicidal and purblind step on the part of the Hindus to make light of this serious danger threatening them. Under such an emergency they will have to ally themselves with the British forces in the common objective to avert this National calamity.⁵⁸

A. S. Bhide's book containing the authentic official Hindu Mahasabha position on different issues brings out a fact repeatedly that the British military recruitment agencies were in direct contact with Savarkar and Hindu Mahasabha. Savarkar informed the Hindu Mahasabha cadres about this welcome development in the following words:

The recruiting commissioners and officers for example in Bombay Presidency are actually establishing a contact with Hindu

Militarization Boards started by the Hindu Mahasabha and trying to help to some extent at any rate to enable Hindu candidates to enter the navy, secure commissions and in training in the aerial, naval and land forces. The Bevin scheme is actually working and Hindu mechanics in larger proportion are getting into it.⁵⁹

His precise advice to Hindus in Sind (now in Pakistan) was to join the British armed forces. He also shared with them the information that he was in contact even with the Viceroy on this issue. Providing all such details he said:

Let the Hindus in Sindh [*sic*] enter the army, the navy and the air forces in as large a number as they find practicable...If anyone wants any definite information regarding the rules or address, let him write to Dr. N. D. Savarkar, Hindu Militarization Board, Dadar Hindusabha office, Lady Jameshetji Road, Dadar Bombay, 14 Or to Syt. Shivrampant Damle, Secretary Maharashtra Mandal, Poona 2. These two centres have already succeeded in securing entry into the navy, air-forces and the army in cases of several patriotic Hindus youths and have also secured the Vice regal and the King's Commissions for able and talented Hindus.⁶⁰

Savarkar used the occasion of his 59th birthday also for promoting Hindu Mahasabha's call for large-scale Hindu recruitment to the British military forces. In his birthday message, he called upon every,

Hindu who is capable to put in military service, join the land forces and the air forces or secure entry into the ammunition factories and such other manufacturing workshops in connection with war crafts.⁶¹

Bhide's book also informs that a senior leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, Sir Jawala Prasad Shrivastav, on the instruction of Savarkar, met the Commander-in-Chief of the British armed forces in May, 1941. According to the records available in the Hindu Mahasabha archives, the press note released by the Hindu Mahasabha after this meeting was titled 'His Excellency the

Commander-in-Chief & Shri Jwala Prasad' and read as follows:

As announced previously, the interview between Sir Jwala Prasad Shrivastav and His Excellency the Commander-in-chief took place at Delhi Sir Jwala Prasad represented the view point of the Hindu Mahasabha under instructions of Veer Savarkarji, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha in connection with the general political and military policy and the special difficulties which confronted the Hindus in the army, the navy and the air-forces. His Excellency gave a very sympathetic hearing and promised to do all he could to remove Hindu grievances regarding military service and expressed his grateful appreciation of the lead given by Barrister Savarkar in exhorting the Hindus to join the forces of the land with a view to defend India from enemy attacks.⁶²

The British Government was in regular touch with Savarkar so far as the organisation of its highest war bodies was concerned. It included individuals whose names were proposed by Savarkar. This is made clear from the following thanksgiving telegram Savarkar sent to the British government. Bhide's volume tells us that,

The following Telegram was sent by Barrister V.D. Savarker [*sic*], the President of the Hindu Mahasabha to (1) General Wavell, the Commander in-Chief; and (2) the Viceroy of India on the 18th instant (July 18, 1941).

YOUR EXCELLENCY'S ANNOUNCEMENT DEFENCE COMMITTEE WITH ITS PERSONNEL IS WELCOME. HINDUMAHASABHA VIEWS WITH SPECIAL SATISFACTION APPOINTMENT OF MESSERS KALIKAR AND JAMNADAS MEHTA.⁶³ [As per the original text.]

It is important to note here that even Muslim League, subserving the interests of the British rulers, refused to align in these war efforts or join Defence Committees established by the government.

That Savarkar was also involved in secret parleys with the

British Government is made clear from the following passage in Bhide's book which reports that he met the viceroy in Simla on July 5, 1940:

(Viceregal Interview) Veer Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha after his return from H.E. the Viceroy was surrounded by group of Press representatives to know the details of his interview. Veer Savarkar informed them that he agreed with H.E. the Viceroy that the talk of the interview was to be kept absolutely confidential.⁶⁴

Savarkar was not willing to share information about whatever transpired in the meeting with anyone, not even with his followers. This also becomes clear from the following description in the book:

After interviewing H.E. the Viceroy on Friday the 5th of July, 1940 Bar. V.D.Savarkar, the President of the Hindu Maha Sabha was pressed by Simla public reception programme. But important political interviews left him no time. Only a programme of five minutes 'Darshan' was arranged on his way to station.⁶⁵ [As per the original text]

Extra-Territorial Loyalty: Savarkar wanted Nepal King to Rule India

Savarkar had been highly critical of Indian Muslims' so called 'extra-territorial' loyalties. While addressing the 19th session of Hindu Mahasabha in 1937, he said:

A Mohammedan is often found to cherish an extra-territorial allegiance, is moved more by events in Palestine than what concerns India as a nation, worries himself more about the well-being of the Arabs than the well-being of his Hindu neighbours and countrymen in India.⁶⁶

He refused to accept Muslims and Christians as Indian nationals because their 'Holy Lands' were far away from India.

However, the same Savarkar had no qualms in declaring Nepal King as the King of India and Hindus of the world. He believed, like other Hindutva leaders, that Hindus throughout the world were under the suzerainty of Nepal King. It was mandatory to display prominently a photograph of the Nepal King in every Hindu Mahasabha session. Each session used to begin with greetings to the Nepal King and end with declaration of loyalty to him.

Savarkar was elected president of Hindu Mahasabha in its 19th session at Ahmedabad, on December 30, 1937. As per the proceedings of the session published by the Hindu Mahasabha while delivering presidential address, he first paid respects to the Nepal King in the following words:

I feel it my bounden duty to send forth on behalf of all Hindus our loyal and loving greetings to His Majesty the King of Nepal, His Highness Shree Yuddhsamasher Ranajee—the Prime Minister of Nepal and all of our co-religionists and countrymen there, who have even in the darkest hour of our history, been successful in holding out as Hindu Power and in keeping a flag of Hindu Independence flying unsullied on the summit of Himalayas... Amongst some twenty five crores of our Hindus in this generation, His Majesty the King of Nepal is the first and foremost and the only Hindu today who can enter into the assemblage of Kings, Emperors and Presidents of all the independent nations of the world, with head erect and unbent, as an equal amongst equals... Nepal is bound to Hindudom as a whole by the dearest ties of common race and religion and language and culture, inheriting with us this our common Motherland and our common Holy land. Our life is one.⁶⁷

According to Bhide's book, Savarkar even preached that it was legitimate to have the King of Nepal as 'Free Hindusthan's Future Emperor'.⁶⁸ To quote Savarkar,

Even Gandhiji dare not deny that the Imperial Rule of the Hindu King of Nepal can be at least as much a 'Cent Percent Domestic

Rule, a Veritable Home Rule' as the sway of a Nizam seems to him to be! If an academical [*sic*] probability is at all to be indulged in of all factors that count today, His Majesty the King of Nepal, the scion of the Shisodias [*sic*], alone has the best chance of winning the Imperial crown of India. Strange as it may seem, the English know it better than we Hindus do.⁶⁹

Quoting the words of a prominent conservative British historian, Persiva Langdon in support of his thesis he said:

The communal strife from one end of India to the other invests Nepal with an importance that it would be foolish to overlook. Englishmen should attempt to understand the high position which Nepal holds in the Southern Asiatic balance and the great and growing importance which she will possess in the future in the solution of the problems which beset the present state of India. Nepal today stands on the threshold of a new life. Her future calls her in one direction and one only. It is not impossible that Nepal may even be called upon to control the destiny of India itself.⁷⁰

Savarkar even went to the extent of urging the Queen of England to hand over India to her ally King of Nepal before it slips out of her hand. In his unique 'Hindu' solution to the problem of India's freedom, he suggested to the British Queen that lest the Indian Empire slips out of her grip, it "should be handed over to an equal and independent ally of Britain like His Majesty the King of Nepal..."⁷¹

So Savarkar wanted India to be part of the kingdom of Hindu rulers of Nepal. These were the same rulers who during the First war of Independence of 1857 sided with the British rulers and played prominent role in defeating the liberation war. The contemporary British documents of the 'Mutiny' contain ample proofs to show that the British won Delhi, Rohilkhand and Oudh due to the timely help of the Nepal ruler Jang Bahadur who dispatched around 50 thousand Gorkha sepoys for the British military campaign against the rebellion. The British

gazetteers of the period tell us that this Gorkha force played decisive role in defeating native revolutionaries in Azamgarh, Barabanki, Gorakhpur, Basti, Bahraich, Bulandshahar, Badaun etc. According to the British gazetteers, “hundreds of rebels were killed by the Nepal army”.⁷² According to another contemporary British document when after crushing the rebellion the Nepal army led by Jang Bahadur was returning to Nepal via Ayodhya and Gorakhpur its return journey was very slow. The reason was that they had innumerable carts overloaded with the looted wealth from India.⁷³ We also come to know through these contemporary British documents that for the services which the Nepal ruler rendered in suppressing the 1857 War of Independence, the British rulers gifted a large area of India’s *terai* region gifted to Nepal.⁷⁴ Familiar with these facts, one of the leading commanders of the Indian rebellion, Nana Saheb of Bithoor in his last letter to the nation wrote it very clearly that the British were not capable of suppressing the rebellion but it was due to the Gorkhas and Native Princes that the British could win.

The Hindutva brigade even today has not lost interest in its design to treat the Nepal King as the Emperor of Hindus throughout the world. In a programme organised by the *Vishwa Hindu Mahasangh* (World Hindu Federation) in Kathmandu, on January 23, 2004, Nepal King Gyanendra Veer Vikram Shah was deified as the only Emperor of the Hindus world over. He was glorified as a form of God as mentioned in *Gita* and *Puranas*. This programme was attended by RSS leaders including Ashok Singhal, the then working president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Addressing the deification ceremony, Singhal said: “It is the responsibility of 900 million of the Hindus world over to protect the Hindu *Samrat*...God has created him to protect *dharma*.” The programme concluded with the Hindu emperor honouring Singhal for his services to the Hindu cause.

Savarkar's Hatred for the Tricolour

Savarkar, like the RSS, abhorred every symbol of the Indian people's united struggle against the British rule. He refused to accept the Tricolour (at that time there used to be a *charkha* or spinning wheel in the middle of it) as national flag or flag of the freedom struggle. In a statement issued on September 22, 1941 for the benefit of Hindu Mahasabha cadres, he declared,

So far as the flag question is concerned, the Hindus know no flag representing Hindudom as a whole than the 'Kundalini Kripanankit' Mahasabha flag with the 'Om and the Swastik' the most ancient symbols of the Hindu race and policy coming down from age to age and honoured throughout Hindusthan. It is actually sanctioned and owned by millions on millions of Hindus today from Hardwar to Rameshwaram and flies aloft on every Hindusabha branch office at thousands of centres. Therefore, any place or function where this Pan-Hindu flag is not honoured should be boycotted by the Hindusanghatanists at any rate... The Charkha-Flag in particular may very well represent a Khadi-Bhandar, but the Charkha can never symbolize and represent the spirit of the proud and ancient nation like the Hindus. Nevertheless, those who like it may stand by it! But we Hindu Sanghatanists cannot but rally round and defend the honour of our ancient Hindu Flag.⁷⁵

Well-known socialist leader N. G. Goray was witness to an incident in 1938 when the Hindutva cadres tore up the Tricolour and he squarely held Savarkar and Hedgewar responsible for it. According to Goray,

Who attacked the May Day procession? Who assaulted men like Senapati Bapat and [Gajanan] Kanitkar? Who tore up the national flag? The Hindu Mahasabhaites and the Hedgewar boys did it all... They have been taught to hate the Muslims in general as Public Enemy Number 1, to hate the Congress and its flag... They have their own flag, 'the Bhagwa', the symbol of Maratha Supremacy.⁷⁶

Savarkar as Defender of Hindu Princes Who Were British Henchmen

Savarkar was a great defender of the Hindu princes ruling native India. According to Savarkar, the Hindu princes were not only co-religionists but also descendants of the brave Hindu kings in the past and thus their 'power in emergency'. In fact, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS both proudly described the Hindu princes ruling native India in league with the British rulers as '*Shakti-sthan*' (centres of power) of Hinduism. It surely meant that Hindu sectarian leadership had neither any idea about the aspirations of toiling Hindu masses nor believed that Hindu princes were nothing but fifth column of Britain in India. The crucial fact should not be missed here that only those princes (both Hindu and Muslim) who remained absolutely loyal to foreign rulers by contributing men and material in suppressing the 'Mutiny' were retained as native rulers by the colonial masters in the post 1857 period. These Hindu rulers as true and committed henchmen of the White masters never allowed any democratic activity in their kingdoms. There were endless instances of rape, killing, maiming and terrible persecution of political activists demanding basic human rights in these native states. Indian freedom struggle is witness to innumerable cases when subjects in these states were not allowed even to unfurl Tricolour. In one such gory incident in the Mysore state, 26 people were massacred and innumerable wounded by the armed forces of Hindu ruler merely for daring to salute publicly the Tricolour.⁷⁷

Sardar Patel had long familiarity with the de-humanizing reigns of these princes. As a leader of the freedom struggle, he had personally suffered at their hands. He thus underlined the real autocratic nature of these princely states in a letter dated July 24, 1946 to the ruler of Bikaner.

The real question which comes in the way of establishment of

cordial relations between states and their people is the reluctance on the part of most of the states to recognize the fundamental rights or civil liberties and to meet with the people's natural demands for responsible government.⁷⁸

The commitment of these Hindu rulers to a united India can be judged by the fact that Maharaja of Navanagar (Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes) in 1947 was reported to have been negotiating with Muslim League for maintaining their native rules. This leader of the princes argued: "Why should not I support the League? Mr. Jinnah is willing to tolerate our existence, but Mr. Nehru wants the extinction of the princes..."⁷⁹

The criminal and sinister linkage between Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS on the one hand and Hindu princes on the other hand surfaced once again after Gandhi's assassination in 1948. These were princely states like Gwalior, Bharatpur and Alwar, friendly with RSS and Hindu Mahasabha, where Gandhi's assassination was celebrated with distribution of sweets. Jawaharlal Nehru highlighted this linkage six days after Gandhi's assassination in a letter to his Home Minister, Sardar Patel in the following words,

It appears that considerable numbers of prominent RSS people have gone to some of the states (native), notably Bharatpur and Alwar. They have also taken a good deal of material with them of various kinds. It is possible that they might organise bases there for the purpose of carrying on secret activities elsewhere.⁸⁰

The amelioration of the Indians who mainly consisted of Hindu masses and freedom of the country both depended on the destruction of colonial rule and its henchmen. But Savarkar and the RSS by aligning with these autocratic feudal elements and demanding restoration of their sovereignty were in fact siding with the British rulers who were the real patrons of

these princes. This linkage between the Hindu Mahasabha and native rulers once again proved the inimical attitude of Savarkar towards freedom struggle.

A. S. Bhide's official Hindu Mahasabha documentation of the era provides with a plethora of Savarkar's writings and official communications showing close affinity with these wretched autocrats. Savarkar issued a signed statement on July 19, 1938:

The policy of the Hindu Mahasabha has ever been of goodwill to all Hindu states and the people therein for their well-being and patriotic progress and of non-intervention so far as their internal affairs.⁸¹

When Congress initiated a movement for restoration of civil rights to the people in the princely states, this was how Savarkar reacted angrily, siding with the autocratic native Hindu rulers on April, 27, 1939, he declared:

In view of the misrepresentation indulged in by some newspapers regarding my views about the Congress Civil Resistance Movement in Rajkot, Jaipur, Travancore and some other Hindu States, I am constrained to issue this statement that I, as the President of the Hindu Maha Sabha, am bound to and do stand by the resolution regarding the Hindu States passed by Hindu Maha Sabha. The policy of the Hindu Maha Sabha towards the Hindu States is of benevolent nonintervention. It cannot therefore, countenance any movement aimed at the Hindu States only and jeopardizing their existence or strength so long as the Hindu interests on the whole are not adversely affected by any event in the States.⁸²

Mysore was a Hindu princely state where 26 patriotic Indians were massacred by the police of the ruler for daring to salute Tricolour. Shockingly, it was in defence of this massacre which had sent a wave of indignation throughout India that Savarkar

sent the following message to the Mysore Hindu Sabha session at Shimoga on April, 17, 1941:

The chief aim of the Mysore State Hindu Sabha must be to consolidate and strengthen the Hindu power in the Hindu State and to stand by the Maharaja and the Hindu State in weal and woe extending the most loyal and patriotic support to them in defending the Prince and the State against any subversive activities carried on by any non-Hindu forces or by the Hindu dupes of the Pseudo Nationalistic organisations.⁸³

So offering a salute to the Tricolour by the nationalist Indians in the princely state of Mysore was held to be part of 'subversive activities' by Savarkar and he offered unstinted 'most loyal' support to the ruler in suppressing such activities.

Savarkar welcomed the development that the Hindu princely states were in league with his Hindutva project. It once again underlined a clear linkage between the British rulers and the Hindutva project of dividing India on communal lines. Savarkar, while delivering the presidential address to the 22nd session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Madura in 1940, said:

It is encouraging...that a lively interest is being evinced by the Hindu Princes in the Mahasabha activities. The Pan-Hindu ideology was sure to stir up, sooner or later, the latent fire in the blood of our historic forefathers which flows in the veins of our Hindu Princes and make them realize that their duty required them not only to sympathize with but to lead the Hindu movement.⁸⁴

It is to be noted here that these Hindu princes dear to Savarkar were those stooges of the British rulers who supported the foreign rulers in 1857 which resulted into the defeat of Indian rebels. It was underlined by one of the leading leaders of the First war of Independence, Nana Saheb of Bithoor. In a letter dated 7th Sudi of Kartik, Samvat 1915 (1858) addressed to common people of India he wrote, "This was the defeat of

the entire country not mine (alone). It was because of Gorkhas, Sikhs and the princely order”.⁸⁵

Incidentally, most of the rulers of Muslim princely states were at the same time busy in patronizing the Muslim League.

Savarkar and Revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh

It is often argued by Hindutva organizations that Bhagat Singh and his comrades imbibed the ideas of Savarkar and treated the latter as symbol of anti-imperialist struggle. This is true of first phase of Savarkar’s political life when he believed and fought for an all-inclusive united freedom struggle. It is to be noted that the first revolutionary organization which Savarkar founded, *Abhinav Bharat* enrolled Muslims also as members. Savarkar’s 1857 book was not allowed to be published in the British Kingdom. It was clandestinely published in Holland. It was a Muslim member of *Abhinav Bharat*, Sikander Hyat Khan (later became chief minister of undivided Punjab Province) who smuggled its copies hiding in the false bottom of his bag.⁸⁶ Thus it was this shade of Savarkar was acceptable the revolutionaries. It was the reason that when the British police arrested Bhagat Singh and his companions, the latter were caught with the 4th edition of Savarkar’s book on 1857. Bhagat Singh and his comrades never subscribed to Hindutva politics.

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MYTH 2

Savarkar Spent Most of His Life in the Cellular Jail

There is a concerted attempt to misinform that Savarkar had to undergo two life sentences (50 years) during the British Raj.¹ There are others who would claim that he sacrificed, ‘the best years of his life—over a quarter of a century—in the jails of the British Raj’.²

FACTS

By spreading this kind of misinformation, the Hindutva brigade is committing a terrible fraud as Savarkar, who was awarded two life sentences, spent only 10 years at the dreadful Cellular Jail in the Andamans and in total less than 13 years under the British captivity. Let’s go back to history.

Savarkar’s Conviction

Savarkar was arrested in London on March 13, 1910, and extradited to India to stand trial on July 1, 1910. He was sentenced for two life transportations by two different Special Tribunals in two different cases on December 23, 1910, and January 30, 1911, respectively. The British police delivered him at the Andamans on July 4, 1911 to be incarcerated for two life terms amounting to a total of 50 years. On May 2, 1921, he was transferred along with his elder brother Babarao to the Indian mainland. Here he was interned in Ratnagiri and Yerwada jails in western India. He was finally released though conditionally

on January 6, 1924. He was, however, taken in custody for two weeks in May 1934, in connection with shots fired at a military officer Sweetland in Bombay by Wamanrao Chavhan who was a Hindu Mahasabha firebrand from Ratnagiri. Savarkar disclaimed any connection and pleaded to keep further aloof from any agitation. On May 10, 1937, all conditions attached to his release were withdrawn. Thus out of the 50 years' jail term he spent only 13 years in jail. In fact, he was able to secure remission of 37 years from the colonial masters. Also, after his release in 1924, Savarkar kept away from anti-colonial struggle.

According to Manini Chatterjee the 'saddest part' of such claims is that 'the real heroes and martyrs of Cellular Jail have once again been denied their place in history'.³ She laments the fact that "for Ram Naik and the Sangh Parivar [the RSS brigade] as a whole, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is the only memorable hero among the thousands who lived and died in Cellular Jail".

While also disagreeing with the Congress leader, Mani Shankar Aiyer's argument that Gandhi should replace Savarkar as the singular Cellular hero, she says:

The choice of Savarkar is a much greater travesty...as far as Cellular Jail is concerned, Savarkar's 11 years spell there [Manini needs to correct her fact here. Savarkar was there for less than 10 years—nine years and ten months to be exact] did not enhance or deepen his early anti-imperialist inclinations: it ended it. The conditions in jail...were inhuman. But unlike Savarkar, few of the Ghadr revolutionaries or Bengal 'terrorists' pleaded with the British authorities for mercy. Nor did they agree to give up their struggle for India's liberty in exchange of their own personal liberty.⁴

Revolutionaries who Defied Colonial Rulers

There were unbending heroes and great revolutionaries, many of whom became martyrs, among the early 1857 and

Wahabi prisoners at the Cellular Jail. But not much information is available about the saga of those revolutionaries. However, there is a long list of brave prisoners who were contemporaries of Savarkar but were not fortunate like him to secure remission in their sentences. According to Manini,

There were hundreds of young men who turned prematurely old in Cellular Jail, men who suffered together, who organised hunger strikes and bitterly fought for better conditions, who set up their own library and even a 'university' against great odds.⁵

There is an unending list of such heroes who despite inhuman treatment at the Cellular Jail neither compromised with their ideology nor begged for mercy. It is difficult to know whether Savarkar's fans are even familiar with these names. The stories of some of these heroes are worth remembering.

Trailokyanath Chakravarti

Chakravarti, known as *Maharaj*, was a revolutionary leader who passed away in Delhi on August 9, 1970. He was a prisoner in the Andamans from 1916 to 1921 and has left behind his memoirs, *Jaile Trisa Vachara, or Thirty Years in Jail*, in Bengali. It was published in 1948, the rare copy of which is available at the National Library, Calcutta. It tells the harrowing tale of,

brutality with which the political prisoners were made to do hard work, particularly in oil mill, resulting in individual suicides, insanity and mass strike, followed by harsher treatment and penalty on an ever increasing scale...⁶

Chakravarti's career as a revolutionary was thus described in the ticket which every prisoner in the Andamans had to wear round his neck:

Previous History. The accused was one of a gang of Bengali students concerned in a conspiracy: a conspiracy to wage war

against the King 1914. He was a member of Anushilan Samity, a society whose object was to overthrow the British rule in India and whose members committed several dacoities to procure money for the purchase of arms and ammunitions and the carrying out of the business of the society. He was one of the earliest members. Took training from the arch anarchist P. Das. He absconded while the Dacca Conspiracy case was started. He was one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Party was suspected in 14 murders and dacoities. Very dangerous.⁷

The hardships faced by Chakravarti and his fellow political prisoners can be gauged from the following description in R. C. Majumdar's book:

Chakravarti was allotted the hard work of extracting fibers of coconuts. When he told the superintendent, who medically examined him that he had been suffering from asthma, the latter curtly reminded him: 'This is Andaman'. One day, he was so much weakened by the asthmatic hard breathing that he had to be carried by a few bystanders to the hospital and left there. The doctor admitted him as an indoor patient. Next day, the superintendent grew furious when he found Chakravarti in the hospital. He not only ordered him to be removed from the hospital but also told him to his face. 'Don't you remember that you created disorder in the country? Now you want to drink milk here. Do you?' Chakravarti has given a very pathetic description of his health. He coughed the whole night and asked for a spittoon, but it was refused. If he had some sleep after coughing the whole night, the warder often came and touched his body to find out whether he was dead or alive.

No political prisoner was allowed to sit by the side of another during meals or talk to another even though they lived on the same floor. According to Chakravarti's information, corroborated by official records, on an average, three prisoners in the Cellular Jail committed suicide every month. This was simply due to the brutal treatment meted out to the prisoners.

But there were a large number of revolutionaries who refused to submit to this inhuman treatment.

The political prisoners, like their predecessors, decided to remedy this state of things by open defiance. In this connection, Chakravarti has made the following observation: 'This caused a split in the rank of political prisoners and they were divided into 'moderates' and 'extremists'. The Savarkar brothers, Barin Babu (Ghosh) and a few others, who came long before us and suffered the same miseries, had wrung some concessions and privileges after a hard fight and were now favourites of the superintendent; so they were not prepared to renounce them and join us in our struggle.'⁸

Chakravarti's memoirs are a testimony to the terrible repression carried out by the officials of the colonial masters and the spirit of defiance shown by the incarcerated revolutionaries. Chakravarti's memoirs go on to tell,

In spite of the protests of my friends for reasons of my ill health I joined the movement for disobeying the rules of the jail and orders of the authorities. We did not cease to perform the routine work allotted to us but regarded ourselves free, and did not care for any orders or nay punishment. We talked with one another, made loud riotous protests against bad quality and insufficient quantity of food, and gathered together to obstruct any officer beating a prisoner. The usual penalties followed: handcuff, fetters, bar-fetters, solitary confinement in a cell day and night except for taking bath and meals. The Sikh prisoners were all above forty and some about fifty or sixty in age, but they all heroically bore up with all the tortures. One afternoon, when Amar Singh, after the day's work was over, was walking in the verandah, the jailor scolded him and asked him, 'why are you walking?' For this he was punished with usual severity for a period of three months.⁹

Chakravarti's memoirs further tell us that,

At the instigation of the jailor the *Jamadars*, *Tindals*, petty officers and warders etc. also struck blows on the political prisoners

whenever they found any opportunity. One day Bhan Singh was so mercilessly beaten that we feared he would die. In consequence about seventy of us declared a general strike—we would not do any work and those amongst us who were able, would take no food. Each of us was penalized with bar-fetters (*danda-veri*) for six months, solitary cell for six months and, standing handcuffed, with short rations for a week.¹⁰

Chakravarti's narration is full of horrible incidents and debased attitude of the Jail officials like the following:

One day, the chief commissioner came to visit the Cellular Jail. He rudely asked me, 'Why are you creating all these troubles?' I saluted and gently told him about the merciless beating of Bhan Singh. At first, the chief commissioner denied it but when Chakravarti requested him to go to the hospital and see with his own eyes the condition of Bhan Singh, the chief commissioner flared up and said 'What is that to you?', 'He is neither your *Chacha* nor your *Nana*. What about yourself?' I told him about my Asthma and how I was taken to the hospital and sent back by the superintendent.' The superintendent, who was present, said, 'It is a lie. I distinctly remember he was quite all right on that date'. When I showed the ticket of the hospital describing illness on the day, the chief commissioner simply said, 'This is your *bahana*', and went away.

But the chief commissioner met with a rude reception as he proceeded on his visit. A Sikh prisoner was sitting in his cell turning his back towards the door. The Jailor asked him to stand up but he did not care. A little further on, the jailor found another Sikh lying down. When he was called up he rudely told him not to disturb his sleep but to go away. Such things happened in almost every barrack...¹¹

The worst case was that of Chhattar Singh who had assaulted the superintendent. For this, he had to remain for five years with fetters and hand-cuffs in a solitary cell. Majumdar while continuing with the narration of persecution at the Cellular Jail

tells that when some prisoners from Punjab and Ahmedabad convicted in the Martial Law case came there,

They were allotted oil mill grinding, which they refused in pursuance of the policy of *Satyagraha*. Under jailor's orders, they were bound hand and foot and tied to the handle of the mill which was then turned round and round by others. The convicts were consequently dragged on the ground in such a manner that their hands and back were seriously bruised. A few of the old prisoners among the strikers rushed to the spot and raised such a hue and cry that the jailor freed the unfortunate men tied to the oil mill and confined them in the cell..

Next day, when the superintendent came to visit the jail, Chakravarti narrated to him the inhuman treatment of the prisoners attached to the oil mill. He asked Chakravarti, 'Who is the superintendent, you or I?' The latter replied, 'Certainly you, and that is why I have asked you why the prisoners were tortured in such a manner'. The superintendent thundered forth: 'Hold your tongue, son of a hog'. This was unbearable for Chakravarti and he retorted back: 'You hold your tongue son of a bitch.'¹²

According to Majumdar, Chakravarti

continued abusing all the officials in Hindi and Punjabi and they had to retreat. The superintendent left in a hurry but subsequently Chakravarti was punished by Penal Diet (one pound of the liquid portion of boiled rice and nothing else for 24 hours) for four days.¹³

Chakravarti has also mentioned in his memoirs that,

The Sikh Prisoners were robust and healthy and the small quantity of food particularly affected them; the weight of many of them was reduced by 40 to 60 lbs... One day, while the prisoners were taking their food, the jailor asked an old Sikh prisoner Nadhan Singh, 'how are you' (*kyaysa hai ji*)?' Nadhan Singh retorted in an angry voice: 'Are you going to give your daughter in marriage to me? With fetters on, confined in a cell day and night, and starvation diet to live upon, you dare ask, how am I? Are you joking? Get out

you shameless wretch.' The Jailor quietly left; he had exhausted the armoury of penalties and punishments which had ceased to be terrors to the prisoners and had been accustomed to meet with defiant spirits.¹⁴

Baba Gurmukh Singh

He was convicted in the first Lahore Conspiracy case and arrived in the hell of Cellular Jail in 1916. Manini has thus described the heroic deeds of Baba:

After the royal amnesty to selected political prisoners announced in December 1919, Gurmukh Singh was sent back to the mainland but managed to escape from captivity. Undeterred by the horrors he had faced in *Kala Pani* (Cellular Jail), he continued to be the part of the national liberation movement, was caught in 1937 and sent back to the Cellular Jail. There, he played a central role in educating the bulk of 'revolutionary terrorists' in the then nascent ideas of scientific socialism.¹⁵

Pandit Ramraksha

According to Majumdar's description,

Pandit Ramraksha was one of the revolutionaries brought to the Cellular Jail after being convicted in the Burma Conspiracy case. It was mandatory for every newcomer—if he was wearing 'sacred thread' (janeoo—a thread worn by high caste Hindus)—to remove the same. But Pandit Ramraksha refused to submit to this rule. When his 'sacred thread' was taken away forcibly, he protested by resorting to hunger strike. He continued with his hunger strike for three months and eventually laid down his life demanding the restoration of this thread.¹⁶

Indu Bhushan Roy

Indu Bhushan Roy, a revolutionary from Bengal who was sentenced for transportation to life for his role in the Alipore Bomb case, was forced to commit suicide. The circumstances,

which led to his suicide, have been movingly described in the memoirs of Barindra Ghose in the following words,

He was of strong and robust constitution and was never frightened by physical labour. But the petty insults of jail life exhausted his patience day by day. He said now and then, 'It is impossible for me to pass ten years of my life in this hell'. One night he tore his shirt, made a rope out of it and hung himself from the skylight. The superintendent was telephoned that very night, but he did not turn up till 8 o'clock next morning. Many of the guards who accompanied the Jailor to Indu's room on that night gave out that there was a piece of writing tied to his neck-ticket. The truth of the matter cannot be known; the writing was never found.¹⁷

Ullaskar Dutt

Ullaskar Dutt was sentenced for 14 years in Alipore Bomb case. What terrible life he underwent in the Cellular Jail has been described in his memoirs in the following words:

I was yoked to the oil-mill [known as kohlu in Northern India] similar to those we see in India for crushing oil from coconut and sesame. It is the bullock that is made to run the grinding mill in India. And even the bullock cannot turn out more than 16 lbs. of mustard seed oil during the day. In the Andamans Jail men were yoked to the handle of the turning wheel instead of bullocks, and it was imposed upon them to yield by their hard day's work 80 lbs. of coconut oil: Three prisoners were yoked to the handle of one mill. And they had to work continuously from morning to evening with a brief interval for their bath and morning meal. The interval actually given us came to no more than a few minutes. We were made to run round the oil-mill unlike the beast which could plod on slowly. We had to fear in our hearts that, otherwise, we shall not be completing our daily quota of oil. If any one of us was found to slacken his pace, the Jamadar was in attendance to belabour him with his big stick. If that bludgeoning did not hasten the pace, there was another way of compelling him to do so. He was tied hand and foot to the handle of the turning wheel and

others were ordered to run at full speed. Then the poor man was dragged along the ground like a man tied to the chariot wheel. His body was scratched all over and blood came out from it. His head was knocked on the floor and was bruised. I have seen with my own eyes the effect of this mode of getting work done. What man can make of man?¹⁸

One day, Ullaskar was found to have gone insane with fits, convulsions and lock-jaws. He was not released but put into lunatic asylum in Madras (now Chennai) where he was discharged after the completion of his full term of 14 years of conviction. Later he was able to write his memoirs.¹⁹

Jyotish Chandra Pal

Jyotish was an accused in the Baleswar case. Since he resisted inhuman treatment, he was often bashed up mercilessly. There came a time that his patience reached a breaking point. He was completely shattered and became insane like Ullaskar. He was removed to a mental hospital and died in the Berhampore Jail in Bengal [now in Orissa] on December 4, 1924. Before dying he left the following message for his friends and relatives:

Do not think that my soul is fast asleep in heaven. If my love for the country is passionate and sincere, I shall take birth immediately and return to my country to serve her. Be sure of it.²⁰

Parmanand

(Not to be confused with Bhai Parmanand/Professor Parmanand of Arya Samaj whose anti-British credentials were questioned and hobnobbing with the jail officials disliked by his contemporary prisoners in the Cellular Jail.)

Trailokyanath Chakravarti has given a heart-chilling account of this young revolutionary's defiance to the repression in the Cellular Jail. According to this account,

One day, the jailor abused him in vile terms for not keeping his regular place in the 'file' of prisoners. When it became intolerable for Parmanand, he brushed aside his warders on either side, rushed forward and gave a sharp slap in the face of the jailor and kicked him and felled him on the ground. The cry went around that a bomb thrower had thrashed the warders and had beaten Berrie. Parmanand was overpowered and beaten with sticks and fists till his whole body started bleeding. He was awarded punishment of twenty stripes with the cane. Every stroke made a deep cut on his body and blood oozed from the wounds, yet Parmanand did not wince or utter a word.²¹

Chhatra Singh

Before being incarcerated in the Cellular Jail Chhatra Singh, was a teacher with Khalsa School at Layalpur (now in Pakistan). Barindra Ghose wrote in his memoirs that he was locked up in a cell from the very beginning because,

he attempted to attack the superintendent sometime when the strike trouble was going on. So the warders thrashed him till he fell senseless. And from that time he was shut in a cell and was not taken out till after two years. A cage was made for him by enclosing one corner of a veranda with wire netting. There he had to eat, there to answer call of nature and there also to sleep. Needless to say, the consequent was that his health broke down and he was almost a dying man. Another Sikh, Amar Singh, had almost the same fate.²²

Pulin Behari Das

He was incarcerated in the Cellular Jail for a seven-year term for his role in the Dacca Conspiracy case. When Sir Reginald Craddock, the Home Member of the Governor General's Council visited the Andamans, we found two senior revolutionaries, namely V. D. Savarkar and Barindra Kumar Ghose, begging for mercy. However, Craddock in his notes on

the visit to the Jail wrote: "Pulin Behari, the leader of the Dacca gang, had not a word to say."²³ When it was decided in 1914 to shift most of the revolutionary prisoners to the mainland jails, Craddock made an exception for Pulin. He wrote in his order dated January 6, 1914: "The only exception I would make is to keep Pulin Behari in the Andamans."²⁴

Nand Gopal

Nand Gopal, the editor of *Swaraj*, Allahabad, was tried in the *Swarajya Case* and sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. Barindra Kumar Ghose has given the following details of Nand Gopal's heroic struggle against the jail tyranny in his memoirs, *The Tale of My Exile*,

He created a scene when taken to the oil mill. At the very outset, he said point-blank, 'It will not suit me to turn the mill so quickly as all that.' So the machine moved as slowly as possible. Consequently, not even a third of the required amount was done before 10 O'clock. At that hour, the ordinary convicts came down, finished their meal in 5 or 6 minutes and then ran up again to continue the work. According to the rules, the time between 10 and 12 was meant for dinner and rest, but as a matter of fact the prisoners dared not take rest, lest their day's work should remain undone. They wanted to finish their jobs quickly and then rest with a tranquil heart. But Nand Gopal had no such fear. The petty officer came and ordered him to finish his meal quickly. Nand Gopal smiled a little and began to explain the theories of hygiene, that eating quickly is of great danger to the stomach and that since he had to remain as a guest of the Sarcar [means government] for ten years, he could on no account consent to spoil his health and thus bring the Sarcar to ill-repute. The matter was reported to the jailor, who came and saw Nand Gopal slowly manipulating his food and leisurely chewing and swallowing each morsel, engaging in the operation each and every one of his 32 teeth. The jailor fumed and raged and gave him to understand that he would be horse-whipped if the work was not done in due time. Nand Gopal

smiled again sweetly and very politely repeated the hygienic lesson. Moreover, he said, it was the government that had fixed the hours between 10 and 12 for rest and he would be no party to any breach of that rule. Not only that, he would take particular care that the jailor also did not break that rule. The entire being of the jailor also welled up in gratitude! He shot up in fury, but thought better of it and retreated with a good grace. Nand Gopal took his own time to finish his meal and retired to his cell. The nonplussed petty officer thought that now the work would be commenced. But, lo, the incorrigible Nand Gopal took up a blanket, spread it on the floor and lay down. Showers of abuse did not in any way disturb his siesta. As regards passive resistance, he was even a Guru to Mahatma Gandhi. He got up, however, at 12 and turned the mill for an hour... Only half the work was done, who would now do the rest? Nand Gopal said, 'Whoever likes let him do it. I am not a bullock certainly that I should turn the mill the whole day. The ration I get per day is not worth even one anna and a half, then how should I grind 30 lbs. of oil?'... The Superintendent saw that there was no hope of getting 30 lbs. Of oil out of Nand Gopal, so he sent the culprit to the shut up in the cell till further orders.²⁵

It is important to note that Nand Gopal's fortitude led to the first strike of the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail. But the authorities also were not sitting idle and a series of punishment quickly followed. Nand Gopal was singled out for the most inhuman treatment. But he never let the repression go unchallenged.

It is true that Nand Gopal and Hrishikesh Kanjilal (Alipore Bomb case, sentenced for 10 years term) submitted petitions to Craddock on November 15, 1913. However, these were in no way mercy petitions, as therein they only legitimately demanded humane treatment and application of the Indian prison rules in the Cellular Jail also.

Nani Gopal

Nani Gopal Mookerjee, a young boy of sixteen was tried for

his role in Dalhousie Square Bomb case and was sentenced to a 15-year term. Despite being very young, he was put on the hard labour of the oil-mill. He was a prominent participant in the first ever hunger strike in the Cellular Jail. He was kept standing with manacles on. The more Cellular Jail authorities punished him, the wilder he became. He was given clothes made of gunny bags. He stopped wearing clothes altogether. They tried to force clothes upon him by sewing the same on his body, but he tore them off. He was put in chains hands and feet tied up as a punishment. But he often managed to break the lock. He did not bother to answer any question and refused to stand up before the officers. When he was ordered to be in solitary confinement, he refused to come out of his cell. He refused to take bath and as a consequence was given forced bath rubbing his body with a piece of dry coconut shreds. And they rubbed it so hard that the skin was almost blood-red with the rubbing. But he did not surrender. Nani Gopal went stayed naked during the day and they deprived him of one of his blankets at night. He threw off the other along with the first. So he remained day and night stripped in body and at night shivering with cold on the bare floor of his prison cell. His contention was that the prison authorities should rank him among political prisoners.

That was his contention all along. He never cared, he said, what kind of food they gave him, for that was with him a minor matter. But the question of rank was not so insignificant for it was a question of honour with him. We are, he said, political prisoners and not thieves, robbers and dacoits. And the matter had to be decided once for all. The chief commissioner informed him that that status would "never be given to him". He was put on a frame for caning. He was taken to a smaller jail with the belief that they would be able to tame him down in the new prison. Soon they discovered how mistaken they were in this belief. For, in that new place he at once went on hunger-strike...he went in that prison without a particle of food. But none paid the slightest attention

to him. He did not eat and he did not speak. He lay on the ground without food and water. He was brought back to the Silver Jail, but he would not give up. Some five or six days it had continued like this, when they forced the food into him through a tube, as was allowed by the regulations of the prison. He was made to inhale milk through the nose.²⁶

The above is an account of the actions of only a few of the heroes who remained steadfast in their resolve to challenge the mightiest power on this earth. It could be an unending list. There were many more like Shiv Kumar of Bhagat Singh's Socialist Republican Army who was transported to the Andamans after Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged in Lahore Jail on March 23, 1931. And those like Subodh Roy who was sent to the Cellular Jail for participating in the famous Chittagong Armoury Raids on April 18, 1930 as the youngest member of Indian Republican Army. Hundreds of such heroes remain unsung even today. It is unfortunate that Savarkar, who surrendered before the colonial masters and when freed (only after completing 1/5 of his Cellular Jail term), kept himself busy serving the strategic goals of the British rulers, is presented as the face of defiance. This is tantamount to second killing of those martyrs who actually sacrificed their lives while challenging British imperialism and further humiliating those revolutionaries who did not surrender to the terrible repression of the colonial masters.

Myth 2: References and Notes

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MYTH 3

Savarkar's Mercy Petitions Were a Ruse to Secure Freedom in Order to Work for the Liberation of the Motherland

Savarkarites argue, “there are no evidences to prove that Savarkar collaborated with the British for his release from jail. In fact, his appeal for release was a ruse. He was well aware of the political developments outside and wanted to be part of it. So he kept requesting for his release. But the British authorities did not trust him a bit”.¹

According to a prominent RSS functionary, “as an ardent follower of Shivaji, Savarkar wanted to die in action. Finding this the only way, he wrote six letters to the British pleading for his release”.²

The RSS organ, *Organizer* while defending Savarkar's mercy petitions wrote, “He was a master strategist. He felt he was wasting the prime of his life in the jail being tortured by the British when the country was raging ahead to fight colonialism... He was entirely justified in writing those letters to get out of the wretched jail so that he could come back to active politics and freedom struggle”.³

FACTS

There cannot be a lie worse than the claim that Savarkar's mercy petitions were in league with the tricks which Shivaji used to hoodwink the Mughal rulers successfully. It is unfortunate

that the Hindutva camp, which swears by Shivaji's name, is drawing a parallel between the two. If we go through the original text of Savarkar's 1913 and 1920 mercy petitions, we will realize the brazen dishonesty of the Hindutva camp in advancing such an argument. It would be sheer stupidity and open denigration of Shivaji if any one claims that the following mercy was like Shivaji's letters to Mughals.

The original text of the mercy petition which V D Savarkar (Convict No. 32778) presented personally to the Home Member of the Governor General's Council, Sir Reginald Craddock, when he came to visit the Andamans (October-November, 1913) on November 14, 1913, reproduced in the following, makes a startling reading:

I beg to submit the following points for your kind consideration:

(1) When I came here in 1911 June, I was along with the rest of the convicts of my party taken to the office of the Chief Commissioner. There I was classed as 'D' meaning dangerous prisoner; the rest of the convicts were not classed as "D". Then I had to pass full 6 months in solitary confinement. The other convicts had not. During that time I was put on the coir pounding though my hands were bleeding. Then I was put on the oil-mill — the hardest labour in the jail. Although my conduct during all the time was exceptionally good still at the end of these six months I was not sent out of the jail; though the other convicts who came with me were. From that time to this day I have tried to keep my behaviour as good as possible.

(2) When I petitioned for promotion I was told I was a special class prisoner and so could not be promoted. When any of us asked for better food or any special treatment we were told "You are only ordinary convicts and must eat what the rest do". Thus Sir, Your Honour would see that only for special disadvantages we are classed as special prisoners.

(3) When the majority of the casemen were sent outside I

requested for my release. But, although I had been cased (caned?) hardly twice or thrice and some of those who were released, for a dozen and more times, still I was not released with them because I was their casemen. But when after all, the order for my release was given and when just then some of the political prisoners outside were brought into the troubles I was locked in with them because I was their casemen.

(4) If I was in Indian jails I would have by this time earned much remission, could have sent more letters home, got visits. If I was a transportee (*sic*) pure and simple I would have by this time been released, from this jail and would have been looking forward for ticket-leave etc. But as it is, I have neither the advantages of the Indian jail nor of this convict colony regulation; though had to undergo the disadvantages of both.

(5) Therefore will your honour be pleased to put an end to this anomalous situation in which I have been placed, by either sending me to Indian jails or by treating me as a transportee just like any other prisoner. I am not asking for any preferential treatment, though I believe as a political prisoner even that could have been expected in any civilized administration in the Independent nations of the world; but only for the concessions and favour that are shown even to the most depraved of convicts and habitual criminals? This present plan of shutting me up in this jail permanently makes me quite hopeless of any possibility of sustaining life and hope. For those who are term convicts the thing is different, but Sir, I have 50 years staring me in the face! How can I pull up moral energy enough to pass them in close confinement when even those concessions which the vilest of convicts can claim to smoothen their life are denied to me? Either please to send me to Indian jail for there I would earn (a) remission; (b) would have a visit from my people come every four months for those who had unfortunately been in jail know what a blessing it is to have a sight of one's nearest and dearest every now and then! (c) and above all a moral - though not a legal - right of being entitled to release in 14 years; (d) also more letters and other little advantages. Or if I cannot be sent to India I should be released and sent outside with a hope, like any other convicts,

to visits after 5 years, getting my ticket leave and calling over my family here. If this is granted then only one grievance remains and that is that I should be held responsible only for my own faults and not of others. It is a pity that I have to ask for this - it is such a fundamental right of every human being! For as there are on the one hand, some 20 political prisoners - young, active and restless, and on the other the regulations of a convict colony, by the very nature of them reducing the liberties of thought and expression to lowest minimum possible; it is but inevitable that every now and then some one of them will be found to have contravened a regulation or two and if all be held responsible for that, as now it is actually done - very little chance of being left outside remains for me.

In the end may I remind your honour to be so good as to go through the petition for clemency, that I had sent in 1911, and to sanction it for being forwarded to the Indian Government? The latest development of the Indian politics and the conciliating policy of the government have thrown open the constitutional line once more. Now no man having the good of India and Humanity at heart will blindly step on the thorny paths which in the excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906-1907 beguiled us from the path of peace and progress. Therefore if the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress. As long as we are in jails there cannot be real happiness and joy in hundreds and thousands of homes of His Majesty's loyal subjects in India, for blood is thicker than water; but if we be released the people will instinctively raise a shout of joy and gratitude to the government, who knows how to forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge. Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The Mighty

alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government? Hoping your Honour will kindly take into notion these points.⁴

It is true that there was nothing wrong on part of the Cellular Jail detainees in writing petitions to the British officials. It was, in fact, an important legal right available to the prisoners. There were other revolutionaries too, who wrote petitions to the British Government. When Craddock came to visit the Cellular jail, Savarkar was not the only one who presented a petition to him. Apart from Savarkar, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Barindra Kumar Ghose and Nand Gopal too wrote petitions. However, these were only Savarkar and Barindra Ghose (Aurobindo Ghose's brother) who pleaded to renounce their revolutionary past in order to secure personal freedom. Barindra like Savarkar made the following plea to Craddock:

Hoping that you will be graciously pleased to lay this humble petition before His Excellency Lord Hardinge's Government for kind consideration, with due respect and humble submission... I beg to state that this sentence of 20 years' transportation for me amounts to a death sentence...I have besides suffered most acutely from the rigours of this jail life both here as well as in Alipur jail, a thing from which no jail official, however kind hearted and sympathetic, can save me unless His Excellency is graciously pleased to relent. During His most Gracious Majesty's Coronation our fondest hopes of receiving pardon was not fulfilled. The presence of an honoured visitor like you has revived that dead hope again in our hearts. The autocratic Government of Russia again and again extended political amnesty to all her political prisoners, and we are confident our Government being the leading light of civilization and culture will not fail to overlook the past indiscretions of some misguided young men. I for one shall bind myself down to remain just where His Excellency wishes me to remain, abstain from all movement and obeying his slightest wishes. More than this I cannot say in a petition like this.⁵

It is to be noted here that though Barindra Ghose's petition

was also a personal mercy petition but still it was nothing in comparison to that of Savarkar's whose surrender was total and exhaustive, as we have already seen.

Unlike Savarkar and Barin, the other two revolutionaries, Hrishikesh Kanjilal and Gopal, instead of pleading for personal favours, demanded a humane treatment for the whole lot of political prisoners. They showed no remorse for their past. Kanjilal, while referring to the general persecution of political prisoners in the Cellular Jail, wrote that though he himself suffered immensely,

many of my casemen [sic] suffered much more inside the jail. One of my caseman [fellow convicts] had to commit suicide. So harsh was the treatment and so great were the troubles we had to undergo, that one of my caseman turned mad.⁶

If there was anything personal in his petition, it was the following plea, "If the Government is not pleased to send me to Indian jails, Government ought to grant me those privileges, which convicts in Indian jails always get..."⁷

Nand Gopal, Editor of the newspaper *Swaraj* of Allahabad, was sentenced to transportation to life for seditious writing. He too, did not make any personal plea but like Kanjilal raised the issue of terrible persecution of the political prisoners in the Cellular Jail. He wrote:

I request the officers of the most powerful Government of the world, and to the Indian Government specially, not to render our condition wretched and miserable in order to kill the germs of sedition within us. If the religious martyrdom practised by the enemies of Christianity against Christianity has not destroyed Christianity from the face of the Globes, surely, political martyrdom shall not extirpate the Indian nationalism from the Holy soil of Bharatvarsha.⁸

R. Ravishanker, a keen researcher of Savarkar and his politics says,

A clemency appeal *per se* doesn't make him any less of a hero. Maybe he was trying to trick the British to release him so that he could once again actively devote himself to the freedom struggle, just as one of his heroes, Chatrapathi Sivaji [*sic*], tricked his enemy. Such hopes were quashed in October 1939, when he made a stunning *volte-face* during his meeting with Lord Linlithgow: 'But now that our interests were so closely bound together the essential thing was for Hinduism and Great Britain to be friends; and the old antagonism was no longer necessary.'... Thus, his excuse for not participating in the struggle of the political prisoners—to protect himself so that he could participate in the freedom struggle after his release from prison—falls flat on its face.⁹

Savarkar Willingly Accepted Conditions of his Release

Savarkar's biography *Veer Savarkar* by Dhananjay Keer can be described as the official biography as Keer made it clear in the preface of the book itself that he was relying for writing this biography on 'a plethora of material which was kindly made available to me by Savarkar himself and his kind interviews...'¹⁰

This biography, while presenting actual details of Savarkar's release, also throws light on unsavoury deals struck between the British and Savarkar. While referring to Savarkar's release in 1924 biography reads:

Now helpful winds began to blow in his direction. Sir Rufus Isaacs, now Lord Reading, who as Solicitor General had led for the Crown in Savarkar's extradition trial in England, was Governor General in India. He must have felt sympathy for Savarkar. His Excellency Sir George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, came with his Councillors to interview Savarkar. Lt. Col. J. H. Murray, I. M. S., who was the Jail Superintendent in the Cellular Jail, was now at Yeravda as the Jail Superintendent. The conditions of

release were prepared in the light of the discussions held between Savarkar and H. E. the Governor who was accompanied by Mr. A. Montgomerie, the then home member. After substituting a few words, Savarkar accepted the conditions; signed the terms on December 27, 1923...Savarkar was released conditionally on January 6, 1924, from Yeravda Jail. The terms read:

That Savarkar shall reside in Ratnagiri district and shall not go beyond the limits of that district without the permission of Government or in the case of emergency of the District magistrate;

that he will not engage publicly or privately in any manner of political activities without the consent of Government for a period of five years. Such restrictions being renewable at the discretion of government at the expiry of the same term.¹¹

This was not the last written undertaking that Savarkar gave to the British rulers. His biography by Keer gives details of another one submitted by him in 1934:

In May 1934, Savarkar was arrested again and detained for two weeks in connection with shots fired at a military officer Sweetland in Bombay by Wamanrao Chavan, who was a Sanghatanist [member of the Hindu Mahasabha] firebrand from Ratnagiri. Savarkar wrote from Ratnagiri prison on May 8, 1934, that he had nothing to do with the boys Waman Chavan and Gajannan Damle; the latter had been arrested because Chavan had kept his trunk at his place...He further said that he was prepared to cease taking part in any agitation, social or political without the previous sanction of the Government.¹²

Savarkar's Change of Heart

R. C. Majumdar is regarded as a true *Bhartiya* (read Indian) historian by the Hindutva brigade. He must have been shocked to find mercy petitions of Savarkar and Barindra Kumar Ghose while sifting through heaps of official papers relating to the Cellular Jail in the course of writing his landmark book on the

Cellular Jail, *Penal Settlement in Andamans*. He could not avoid commenting,

These undoubtedly indicate that the incarceration in the Andamans had produced a great change on the great revolutionary leaders and their attitude towards the British Government and their view of destroying it by revolution or secret conspiracies had suffered a radical change.¹³

R. C. Majumdar, after in-depth study of the British archives concerning the Cellular Jail, compared the same with the Savarkar memoirs which he penned after coming out of the jail. He paid special attention to the minutes of the meeting, which took place between the Home Member of the Governor General's Council, Sir Reginald Craddock and Savarkar. (It was during this meeting that Savarkar presented his mercy petition to the British Government personally to Craddock.) after going through all these documents, Majumdar straightforwardly concluded:

While Savarkar had changed his views, the Government view remained the same as before. Savarkar for example, said that 'if Gokhale's resolution on compulsory education in the Legislative Council is accepted by the Government, and if such measures of progress are assured to the Indians that they may rise as a nation, then all the revolutionaries will turn to the path of peace'. 'If we advance definitely through methods of peace, it is immoral for us to enter on methods of violence'. To this Craddock replied: "I am sorry you are entirely wrong there, for they are still advocating terrorism and they still swear by you. In India and in America your followers are still busy with their plans of secret societies and revolutionary activities."¹⁴

Craddock's description of the above reality when Savarkar was in attendance also provides answer to the question that why despite Savarkar's begging for mercy from the British masters, he was not released. The Hindutva brigade often claims that

Savarkar's mercy petitions were a tactical move to get freedom in order to secure another opportunity for fully working for the freedom of the country. It is further argued by them that the British Government understood this ruse of Savarkar and it was for this reason that his jail term was not abated and if it was not so the government could have released him. However Majumdar's description makes it clear why Savarkar was not released. It is true that he had surrendered before the British might but nationalist revolutionaries in India and outside, oblivious of this fact, still held him as an icon of India's liberation. The situation demanded that Savarkar must be kept imprisoned in order to convince the revolutionaries about the futility of their cause. When the rulers needed Savarkar outside the jail to break Hindu-Muslim unity in early 1920s, they took no time in setting him free though he was awarded double jail term of fifty years.

Craddock's Notes on Savarkar's Mercy Petition

What transpired between Craddock and 'personal' mercy seekers in the Andamans Cellular Jail has been well preserved in a note Craddock wrote on November 23, 1913, on board the ship *Maharaja* which he took for his return journey to the mainland from Andaman's. This note was to be seen only by the then Governor General, and if he approved, by the other members of the Executive Council. According to R. C. Majumdar,

The whole document is of singular interest and great importance, in as much as it gives us an insight into the character, attitudes and general mentality, both of the political prisoners in the Andamans and of the authorities who controlled them, such as nothing else could do.¹⁵

The following note of Craddock contains both a general description of the Cellular Jail and details of the talks that he had with some of the prisoners individually including Savarkar.

The note presents a testimony of those who were ready to bend to the wishes of rulers and others like Pulin Behari who were determined to continue with their beliefs in spite of their plight. Craddock wrote:

Two days after my visit of inspection, I had up the five petitioners in the Jail office including: V.D. Savarkar, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Barindra Kumar Ghose, Nand Gopal and Sudhir Kumar Sarkar.

Savarkar's petition is one for mercy. He cannot be said to express any regret or repentance, but he affects to have changed his views, urging that the hopeless condition of Indians in 1906-1907 was his excuse for entering upon a conspiracy. Since that time, he said, the Government had shown itself much more conciliatory in the matter of councils, education and so forth, that the case for revolutionary action had disappeared. Mercy to him would, he said have a calming effect upon those who still conspire against British rule, and he was willing and anxious to send an open letter to the native press explaining his change of views. He admitted that he had no legal rights in the matter but pleaded for merciful consideration, and asked for a transfer to a jail in India or Burma where he would at least gain the moral right to be released after fourteen years. He pressed me hard to give him some promise, or to record something that would give him hope. True or false, that his case would be considered later on. I pointed out to him that a mere statement of change of views could not wipe out his record, and that apart from the purely political aspect of his case, he had been convicted of abetment of murder in the case of Mr. Jackson of Nasik. He had been instrumental in sending out 20 Browning pistols. He explained that the pistols were not intended for murder but in furtherance of a revolutionary movement. When I pointed out to him that revolutions could not be carried out by pistols, and that pistols could only be used for murder, he was unable to give any answer. I also pointed out to him that it was one of the disadvantages attendant on organizing or taking part in a conspiracy that so long as any conspiracy or tendency to conspire against Government continued, the release of a conspirator continued to be dangerous, and that in his case it is

more than ever dangerous, because he himself had been a leader. I further told him that I could neither give any promise nor hold out any hope of special considerations being shown to him because if I were to do so, no such promise could be in any way binding upon my successors.¹⁶

Craddock's conclusion was,

In the case of Savarkar, it is quite impossible to give him any liberty here, and I think he would escape from any Indian jail. So important a leader is he that the European section of the Indian anarchists would plot for his escape which would before long be organised. If he were allowed outside the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, his escape would be certain. His friends could easily charter a steamer to lie off one of the islands and a little money distributed locally would do the rest.¹⁷

Craddock's note and the British Government's resolve not to consider Savarkar's mercy petition in 1913, is presented as a proof of his patriotism by the Hindutva camp and followers of Savarkar. It is pathetic to draw parallels between Shivaji's heroic deeds against Mughal rulers of India and surrender of Savarkar before the British rulers. The Hindutva camp tries to brush aside the fact that this 'Veer patriot' Savarkar, though sentenced for 50 years (in 1910-1911), was in the Cellular Jail for less than 10 years and was finally released in 1924 from Yerwada Jail in Maharashtra. Thus he was able to secure remission of more than 35 years. There were hundreds of other revolutionaries who in the Cellular Jail and other jails remained incarcerated for full terms of their convictions. They are also keeping mum about thousands of martyrs like Bhagat Singh, Chandershekhar Azad, Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaquallah Khan, Sukhdev, Rajguru and Roshan Singh who neither begged for mercy nor were shown any leniency. There was also large number of Ghadar revolutionaries and Bengal 'terrorists' who refused 'to plead with the British authorities for mercy. Nor did they agree to give

up their struggle for India's liberty in exchange of their own personal liberty.¹⁸

It is true that the British refused to release Savarkar immediately after his most elaborate mercy petition in 1913, directly handed over to Craddock. It was due to many factors. Firstly, Savarkar remained a great icon of resistance to repressive colonial rule for the revolutionary individuals and organisations world over who dreamt of overthrowing the foreign rule in India. They were not aware of the fact that Savarkar had renounced the revolutionary path and was willing to be in the good books of the British. So, naturally, he remained a symbol of struggle for them. Secondly, Savarkar's surrender was too quick and sudden to be believed. The British rulers needed time to test his surrender vows and were not willing to accept merely his words. Craddock, as a representative of the most cunning imperial power at that time, did talk of the pragmatic approach to the question of Savarkar's release, in his note, when he said,

the degree to which he was dangerous or not, depended quite as much upon circumstances outside as upon his own conduct in prison, and that no one could say what those circumstances would be 10, 15 or 20 years hence. I could only therefore advise him to seek such alleviation as life in the jail could afford him by conforming to prison discipline and from the books to which he was allowed access.¹⁹

The British decided to wait and watch cautiously so far as the question of any kind of remission to Savarkar was concerned. The ball was in Savarkar's court and he needed to prove his words by his deeds.

Surely, Savarkar did not disappoint the rulers. He started keeping aloof from the fellow revolutionary prisoners, a fact corroborated by Trailokyanath Chakravarti in his memoirs. According to his account, on an average three prisoners in the

Cellular Jail committed suicide every month. This was simply because of the brutal treatment meted out to the prisoners. The prisoners decided to defy the repression through open defiance. However, Savarkar and few others refused to join the struggle. Non-participation by Savarkar and others in the ongoing struggle of fellow prisoners in the Cellular Jail helped the British rulers in overcoming the criticism that there was no rule of law there. According to R. C. Majumdar when the news of the death of prisoners and protest hunger strike in the Cellular Jail was

published in the *Bengalee* of Calcutta and its editor Surendra Nath Banerjee asked many questions in the Council about the state of affairs in that jail. It was stated on behalf of the Government that the trouble was solely the work of a few wicked prisoners; the leading prisoners had no sympathy and did not join with them. This was partly true. For, as stated above, Barin Ghose and Savarkar brothers did not join the strike. Chakravarti says in his memoir that the Savarkar brothers secretly encouraged us but when asked to join us they refused. This and similar remarks of Chakravarti mentioned above cast very uncharitable aspersions against notable revolutionary leaders like Savarkar and Barin Ghose.²⁰

Savarkar had his own explanation for keeping aloof from the struggle of political prisoners. According to his memoirs:

Some of the political prisoners were of opinion that the lead in the strike should be taken by the older members among us, that is by those who had spent more years in that prison. It was also for them to formulate demands on behalf of us all. But I explained to them how the purpose of the strike may be defeated by such steps and how our cause was likely to suffer by it. If I were openly to lead them, Mr. Barrie and the authorities over him would get the opportunity they needed to take off all the concessions which had come to me and old political prisoners according to jail rules,

and would put me back in solitary confinement. And the essential publicity of the strike by correspondence, personal messages and similar other methods will suffer, and the means of getting news from India through newspapers and other sources would come to an end... To risk one's life for such a petty object was to kill the national movement itself, and if I was to plunge in the strike I must not withdraw from it, whatever the cost be of such a strike. Hence it was for the young and the energetic among us to shoulder the burden, and these hundred and odd persons must by turns keep up the agitation and all the activities connected with it. The last and the most important reasons for my abstaining from it was that I would have forfeited thereby my right of sending a letter to India. It was a rule that a letter was allowed to be sent annually by one whose record during the year was clear of any punishment. If I were punished or went on strike, my right would go along with it, and to be deprived of my right was not only to harm the strike, but, more important than that, to lose the chance of working for the freedom of the political prisoners themselves.²¹

However, Majumdar did write,

How far the younger generation of the political prisoners was impressed by it, it is difficult to say, but the comments of Chakravarti indicate that at least one section was not quite satisfied. In any case, the younger groups stuck to their programme and continued the general strike.²²

It is admitted by Savarkar's biographer, Keer too, that "Savarkar was given the work of a clerk and afterwards was allowed to work as the foreman of the oil depot and department in the latter part of 1920."²³

It is to be noted that Savarkar's mercy petition presented to Craddock on November 14, 1913 personally at the cellular Jail was not the only one. He submitted in all five mercy petitions in 1911, 1913, 1914, 1918 and 1920. His mercy petition of 1920

was also a comprehensive one which offered total surrender. It is being produced here:

CELLULAR JAIL, PORT BLAIR,

The 30th March 1920.

To

The CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF ANDAMANS

In view of the recent statement of the Hon'ble Member for the Home Department to the Government of India, to the effect that "the Government was willing to consider the papers of any individual, and give them their best consideration if they were brought before them"; and that "as soon as it appeared to the Government that an individual could be released without danger to the State, the Government would extend the Royal clemency to that person," the undersigned most humbly begs that he should be given a last chance to submit his case, before it is too late. You, Sir, at any rate, would not grudge me this last favour of forwarding this petition to His Excellency the Viceroy of India, especially and if only to give me the satisfaction of being heard, whatever the Government decisions may be.

I. The Royal proclamation most magnanimously states that Royal clemency should be extended to all those who were found guilty of breaking the law "Through their eagerness for Political progress." The cases of me and my brother are pre-eminently of this type. Neither I nor any of my family members had anything to complain against the Government for any personal wrong due to us nor for any personal favour denied. I had a brilliant career open to me and nothing to gain and everything to lose individually by treading such dangerous paths. Suffice it to say, that no less a personage than one of the Hon'ble Members

for the Home Department had said, in 1913, to me personally, "... .. Such education so much reading... you could have held the highest posts under our Government." If in spite of this testimony any doubts as to my motive does lurk in any one, then to him I beg to point out, that there had been no prosecution against any member of my family till this year 1909; while almost all of my activity which constituted the basis for the case, have been in the years preceding that. The prosecution, the Judges and the Rowlatt Report have all admitted that since the year 1899 to the year 1909 had been written the life of Mazzini and other books, as well organised the various societies and even the parcel of arms had been sent before the arrest of any of my brothers or before I had any personal grievance to complain of (vide Rowlatt Report, pages 6 etc.). But does anyone else take the same view of our cases? Well, the monster petition that the Indian public had sent to His Majesty and that had been signed by no less than 5,000 signatures, had made a special mention of me in it. I had been denied a jury in the trial: now the jury of a whole nation has opined that only the eagerness for political progress had been the motive of all my actions and that led me to the regrettable breaking of the laws.

II. Nor can this second case of abetting murder throw me beyond the reach of the Royal clemency. For (a) the Proclamation does not make any distinction of the nature of the offence or of a section or of the Court of Justice, beyond the motive of the offence. It concerns entirely with the Motive and requires that it should be political and not personal.

(b) Secondly, the Government too has already interpreted it in the same spirit and has released Barin and Hesu and others. These men had confessed that one of the objects of their conspiracy was "the murders of prominent Government officials" and on their own confessions, had been guilty of

sending the boys to murder magistrates, etc. This magistrate had among others prosecuted Barin's brother Arabinda in the first "Bande Mataram" newspaper case. And yet Barin was not looked upon, and rightly so, as a nonpolitical murderer. In my respect the objection is immensely weaker. For it was justly admitted by the prosecution that I was in England, had no knowledge of the particular plot or idea of murdering Mr. Jackson and had sent the parcels of arms before the arrest of my brother and so could not have the slightest personal grudge against any particular individual officer. But Hem had actually prepared the very bomb that killed the Kennedys and with a full knowledge of its destination. (Rowlatt Report, page 33). Yet Hem had not been thrown out of the scope of the clemency on that ground. If Barin and others were not separately charged for specific abetting, it was only because they had already been sentenced to capital punishment in the Conspiracy case; and I was specifically charged because I was not, and again for the international facilities to have me extradited in case France got me back. Therefore I humbly submit that the Government be pleased to extend the clemency to me as they had done it to Barin and Hem whose complicity in abetting the murders of officers, etc., was confessed and much deeper. For surely a section does not matter more than the crime it contemplates. In the case of my brother this question does not arise as his case has nothing to do with any murders, etc.

III. Thus interpreting the proclamation as the Government had already done in the cases of Barin, Hem, etc. I and my brother are fully entitled to the Royal clemency "in the fullest measure." But is it compatible with public safety? I submit it is entirely so. For (a) I most emphatically declare that we are not amongst "the microlestes of anarchism" referred to by the Home Secretary. So far from believing in the militant school of the type that I do not contribute even to the peaceful and

philosophical anarchism of a Kropotkin or a Tolstoy. And as to my revolutionary tendencies in the past: - it is not only now for the object of sharing the clemency but years before this have I informed of and written to the Government in my petitions (1918, 1914) about my firm intention to abide by the constitution and stand by it as soon as a beginning was made to frame it by Mr. Montagu. Since that the Reforms and then the Proclamation have only confirmed me in my views and recently I have publicly avowed my faith in and readiness to stand by the side of orderly and constitutional development. The danger that is threatening our country from the north at the hands of the fanatic hordes of Asia who had been the curse of India in the past when they came as foes, and who are more likely to be so in the future now that they want to come as friends, makes me convinced that every intelligent lover of India would heartily and loyally co-operate with the British people in the interests of India herself.

That is why I offered myself as a volunteer in 1914 to Government when the war broke out and a German-Turko-Afghan invasion of India became imminent. Whether you believe it or not, I am sincere in expressing my earnest intention of treading the constitutional path and trying my humble best to render the hands of the British dominion a bond of love and respect and of mutual help. Such an Empire, as is foreshadowed in the Proclamation, wins my hearty adherence. For verily I hate no race or creed or people simply because they are not Indians!

(b) But if the Government wants a further security from me then I and my brother are perfectly willing to give a pledge of not participating in politics for a definite and reasonable period that the Government would indicate. For even without such a pledge my failing health and the sweet blessings of home that

have been denied to me by myself make me so desirous of leading a quiet and retired life for years to come that nothing would induce me to dabble in active politics now.

(c) This or any pledge, e.g., of remaining in a particular province or reporting our movements to the police for a definite period after our release - any such reasonable conditions meant genuinely to ensure the safety of the State would be gladly accepted by me and my brother. Ultimately, I submit, that the overwhelming majority of the very people who constitute the State which is to be kept safe from us have from Mr. Surendranath, the venerable and veteran moderate leader, to the man in the street, the press and the platform, the Hindus and the Muhammadans [*sic*]- from the Punjab to Madras - been clearly persistently asking for our immediate and complete release, declaring it was compatible with their safety. Nay more, declaring it was a factor in removing the very 'sense of bitterness' which the Proclamation aims to allay.

IV. Therefore the very object of the Proclamation would not be fulfilled and the sense of bitterness removed, I warn the public mind, until we two and those who yet remain have been made to share the magnanimous clemency.

V. Moreover, all the objects of a sentence have been satisfied in our case. For (a) we have put in 10 to 11 years in jail, while Mr. Sanyal, who too was a lifer, was released in 4 years and the riot case lifers within a year; (b) we have done hard work, mills, oil mills and everything else that was given to us in India and here; (c) our prison behaviour is in no way more objectionable than of those already released; they had, even in Port Blair, been suspected of a serious plot and locked up in jail again. We two, on the contrary, have to this day been under extra rigorous discipline and restraint and yet during the last six years or so there

is not a single case even on ordinary disciplinary grounds against us.

VI. In the end, I beg to express my gratefulness for the release of hundreds of political prisoners including those who have been released from the Andamans, and for thus partially granting my petitions of 1914 and 1918. It is not therefore too much to hope that His Excellency would release the remaining prisoners too, as they are placed on the same footing, including me and my brother. Especially so, as the political situation in Maharashtra has singularly been free from any outrageous disturbances for so many years in the past. Here, however, I beg to submit that our release should not be made conditional on the behaviour of those released or of anybody else; for it would be preposterous to deny us the clemency and punish us for the fault of someone else.

VII. On all these grounds, I believe that the Government, hearing my readiness to enter into any sensible pledge and the fact that the Reforms, present and promised, joined to common danger from the north of Turko-Afghan fanatics have made me a sincere advocate of loyal co-operation in the interests of both our nations, would release me and win my personal gratitude. The brilliant prospects of my early life all but too soon blighted, have constituted so painful a source of regret to me that a release would be a new birth and would touch my heart, sensitive and submissive, to kindness so deeply as to render me personally attached and politically useful in future. For often magnanimity wins even where might fails.

Hoping that the Chief Commissioner, remembering the personal regard I ever had shown to him throughout his term and how often I had to face keen disappointment throughout that time, will not grudge me this last favour of allowing this

most harmless vent to my despair and will be pleased to forward this petition - may I hope with his own recommendations? - to His Excellency the Viceroy of India.

I beg to remain,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

(Sd.) V.D. Savarkar, Convict no. 32778. ²⁴

Myth 3: References and Notes

- 1 Y. D. Phadke, 'A Complex Hero', *The Indian Express*, August 31, 2004, Delhi.
- 2 Tarun Vijay (editor of Hindi mouthpiece of the RSS *Panchajanya*) in 'Veer Patriot', *Outlook*, September 6, 2004, Delhi.
- 3 Ved Rahi cited in 'Savarkar's untold story', *Organizer*, September 26, 2004, Delhi.
- 4 Cited in R. C. Majumdar, *Penal Settlement in Andamans*, Department of Culture (Government of India), Delhi, 1975, pp. 211-213.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 208.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 206.
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- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 211.
- 9 Ra. Ravishanker, 'The real Savarkar' *Frontline*, August 2, 2002, p. 117.
- 10 Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, p. vii.
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- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 202.
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- 17 Ibid., p. 221.
- 18 Manini Chatterjee, 'The Kala Pani story' Indian Express, September 21, 2004, Delhi.
- 19 R. C. Majumdar, op.cit., p. 205.
- 20 Ibid., p. 241.
- 21 Ibid.
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MYTH 4

Savarkar Stood As a Bulwark Against Muslim League and Its Communal Politics

The supporters of Savarkar and Hindutva argue that Savarkar opposed Congress because he believed that led by Gandhi-Nehru, it was persistently capitulating to Muslim communalism, specially the Muslim League. Since there was no nationalist organization to check this mounting appeasement of Muslims, he had no choice but to aggressively organize Hindus.

FACTS

This claim of the Savarkarites is a sheer hoax because it was Savarkar who vehemently provided philosophical basis to the two-nation theory. Moreover, Hindu Mahasabha led by Savarkar entered into coalition governments with the Muslim League, as will be clear from the perusal of contemporary documents available in the Hindu Mahasabha archives itself. In fact, Savarkar and Hindu Mahasabha embarked on a path of Hindu Separatism that only provided legitimacy to Muslim Separatism.

Savarkar Openly Supported Two-nation Theory

For a complete appraisal of his role in advancing two-nation theory in pre-independence India, we must get acquainted with his words and deeds while he was a freeman, guiding the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1942. These are available under one caption, *Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, published by the Hindu Mahasabha, Maharashtra. According to this publication

Savarkar like Mohammed Ali Jinnah's Muslim League and other Muslim communalists believed in the two-nation theory. While delivering presidential address to 19th Hindu Mahasabha session at Ahmedabad in 1937, Savarkar unequivocally declared:

As it is, there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India, several infantile politicians commit the serious mistake in supposing that India is already welded into a harmonious nation, or that it could be welded thus for the mere wish to do so. These were well meaning but unthinking friends take their dreams for realities. That is why they are impatient of communal tangles and attribute them to communal organizations. But the solid fact is that the so-called communal questions are but a legacy handed down to us by centuries of cultural, religious and national antagonism between the Hindus and Moslems...Let us bravely face unpleasant facts as they are. India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogenous nation, but on the contrary there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Moslems, in India.¹

It is significant that when Muslim League passed its Pakistan resolution in Lahore (March 1940) Jinnah specifically referred to the above words of Savarkar thus drawing solace from the ideas of Savarkar in defence of its own brand of the two-nation theory. Savarkar was not to be left behind in this thanks giving exercise. While addressing a press conference in Nagpur on August 15, 1943, he went to the extent of saying, "I have no quarrel with Mr. Jinnah's two-nation theory. We, Hindus, are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two nations".² While defending the creation of an exclusive Hindu state he said "we Hindus must have a country of our own in the solar system and must continue to flourish there as Hindus—descendants of a mighty people".³ Savarkar while equating Hindu communalism with Indian nationalism declared: "In fact for a Hindu owning the Hindu Mahasabha ideology there can be no distinction whatsoever between his

Hindu interest and his National interest”.⁴

Savarkar’s belief in two-nation theory led him also to believe that Muslim League exclusively represented all Muslims and Hindu Mahasabha exclusively represented all Hindus. Savarkar in the course of his presidential address to the 22nd session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Madura thanked,

His Excellency the Viceroy for having deliberately and decisively recognized [*sic*] the position of the Hindu Mahasabha as... the most outstanding representative Hindu body and finally coming to the conclusion that the Moslim [*sic*] League represents the Moslem interests, the Hindu Mahasabha the Hindu interest...⁵

Savarkar as a leader of the Hindu Mahasabha always lauded the British policy in which “the League was rightly taken to express the Moslem opinion in general”.⁶ Simultaneously, he demanded the acceptance of Hindu Mahasabha as the sole representative of Hindus. This logic arose from his conviction that India remained a land of ‘two antagonistic nations’.

Savarkar carried his two-nation theory to the realm of languages too. Like the Muslim Leaguers, he believed and preached that Hindi was the language of Hindus and Urdu was for Muslims. In a statement issued on September 1, 1939, while outlining the ‘Policy of the Hindu Party’ he declared,

Hindi, pure and based on Sanskrit (*Sanskrit-nisht*) shall be the National [*sic*] language of the Hindus and Nagari the National Script [*sic*]. The Moslems will be allowed to have Urdu Schools of their own and adopt it as their communal tongue and Government will spend as grants and scholarship etc. a sum on Moslems schools etc. in proportion to their contribution in taxes and population at these localities.⁷

It is important to know that it was mandatory for every meeting and programme of the Hindu Mahasabha to end with

the slogan 'Hindu Dharma-ki-Jay, Hindu Mahasabha-ki-Jay, Hindusthan Hinduon ka (Long Live Hindu Religion, Long Live Hindu Mahasabha, India Belongs to Hindus)'.⁸

Hindu Mahasabha led by Savarkar ran Coalition Governments with Muslim League in 1942

It is not widely known that when Congress opposed any dealing with the Muslim League in 1942, Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League ran coalition governments in Sind and Bengal. Savarkar defended this nexus in his presidential speech to the 24th session of Hindu Mahasabha at Kanpur in 1942 in the following words:

In practical politics also the Mahasabha knows that we must advance through reasonable compromises. Witness the fact that only recently in Sind, the Sind-Hindu-Sabha on invitation had taken the responsibility of joining hands with the League itself in running coalition Government. The case of Bengal is well known. Wild Leaguers whom even the Congress with all its submissiveness could not placate grew quite reasonably compromising and socialable as soon as they came in contact with the HM and the Coalition Government, under the premiership of Mr. Fazlul Huq and the able lead of our esteemed Mahasabha leader Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerji, functioned successfully for a year or so to the benefit of both the communities.⁹

Hindu Mahasabha joined a coalition government with Muslim League in Sind and NWFP also.

Dhananjay Keer in his biography of Savarkar which is hailed as the most authentic one by the fans of Savarkar, admits that,

Savarkar had advised the Hindu leaders in the Muslim majority provinces to join ministries formed by the Muslim League without committing themselves to any scheme detrimental to the interests and to the integrity of Hindustan.¹⁰

In fact, Savarkar and B. S. Moonje, another prominent Hindu Mahasabha leader, made an offer to the Muslim League for coalition in Punjab too. Keer records that Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Muslim League boss in a speech at Sialkot (now in Pakistan) referred to this “statement of Savarkar and told the Muslims that Savarkar and Moonje had instructed the Punjab Hindus to join the Muslim League in forming coalitions ‘when it was inevitable to do so’”.¹¹

Savarkar Generally Aligned with Muslim League against Congress

While addressing the Madura Conference of the Hindu Mahasabha (22nd session) in 1940, Savarkar admitted that his party had been aligning with Muslim groups in different provinces in opposition to Congress. His following words only corroborate the fact that Hindu Muslim communalists had united against the Congress-

At several places they [the Hindu Mahasabhaite] succeeded in inflicting defeats on the Congress candidates and today representatives of the Hindu Sanghatanist party form so influential minority in the provincial legislatures and some of the local bodies as to be able very often to hold the balance so as to influence the formation of the Moslem Ministries themselves. In addition to that, there are two to three Hindu Ministers in the [Muslim] Ministry itself who are pledged to the Hindu ticket.¹²

Savarkar like Jinnah unambiguously said that he was not interested in a cosmopolitan all-inclusive free India -

The real meaning of swarajya then, is not merely the geographical independence of the bit of earth called India. To the Hindus independence of Hindusthan can only be worth having if that ensures their Hindutva—their religious, racial and cultural identity. We are not out to fight and die for a ‘swarajya’ which could only be had at the cost of our ‘swatva’ our Hindutva itself!¹³

Savarkar Demanded a Hindu Nation and Defended Shuddhi

Like Muslim communalists, Savarkar was bent upon destroying the unity of Indian masses. There was no vision to challenge the imperialist rulers. The rulers did not figure anywhere in their list of adversaries. The real enemies were Muslims, Christians and Congress leaders. This instance suited very well the rulers who were scared of the unity of Indian masses. When India needed to rise as one against the colonial rule Savarkar was busy in giving sectarian calls like the following one:

I exhort you all to assert yourselves as Hindus! Down with the apologetic attitude that makes some of us feel shy to proclaim themselves as Hindus, as if it was something unnational (sic), something like a disgrace to be born of the line of Shri Ram and Shri Krishna—Shivaji and Pratap and Govind Singh! We Hindus must have a country of our own in the Solar System and must continue to flourish there as Hindus—descendants of a mighty people. Then up with the Shuddhi which has not a religious meaning alone but a political side as well!¹⁴

Savarkar as a die-hard believer in the exclusivist theory of Hindu nationalism declared that “change of religion leads to change of nationalit”.¹⁵ Savarkar asked all the Hindu Sanghathanists,

to watch the activities of the Christian Missionaries for change of religion led always to change of nationality...So Savarkar appealed to the Hindu Mahasabha, Arya Samaj and Jana Sangh [forerunner of the Bhartiya Janata Party] to launch a frontal attack on the religious-cum-National [sic] aggression of the Christian Missionaries and save India from the menace of Christianstans [sic].¹⁶

When after Savarkar’s visit to Poona, few Hindu zealots forcibly evicted Christian missionaries from the city; he called it

a 'proper step' and demanded that "Hindus should boycott the Christian schools and hospitals, for they were being groomed as perspective converts".¹⁷

Savarkar believed that Hindus and Muslims constituted two nations and according to his theory of Hindutva, Sikhs were part of Hinduism as we will see later. However, led by his blind opposition to the Congress he was willing to let Sikhs organize as a separate community and nation. He went to the extent of allowing them to have their Sikhistan or separate Sikh homeland. According to Savarkar,

I want to emphasise the point that if but our Sikh brotherhood gets itself free entirely of the shackles of the Congressite mentality and especially of the Congress organization which now more than ever has strayed away into thoroughly anti-Hindu and anti-National channels with all its absolute Ahimsa vagaries and its covert acquiescence in the Pakistan demand itself, and if but the Sikh brotherhood pledges itself to safeguard and promote openly the interests of Hindudom as a whole and sends its representatives to the Legislatures etc., not on the Congress-ticket but on a purely Sikh-ticket and secures its due share in the fighting forces in the Land as before – then we may rest assured that when the Moslems awake from their day-dream of the Pakistan they shall see established a SIKHISTHAN [*sic*] instead in the Punjab.¹⁸

B. R. Ambedkar, a keen observer and critic of competitive Hindu-Muslim communal politics in pre-independence India, was candid in his belief that,

Strange as it may appear, Mr. Savarkar and Mr. Jinnah instead of being opposed to each other on the one nation versus two nations issue are in complete agreement about it. Both not only agree, but insist that there are two nations in India—one the Muslim nation and the other Hindu nation. They differ only as regards the terms and conditions on which the two nations must live.¹⁹

While describing Savarkar's designs about Indian Muslims as 'illogical', Ambedkar said:

Mr. Savarkar admits that the Muslims are a separate nation... He allows them to have a national flag. Yet he opposes the demand of the Muslim nation for a separate national home. If he claims a national home for the Hindu nation, how can he refuse the claim of the Muslim nation for a national home?²⁰

Ambedkar warned that Savarkar's Hindutva rhetoric that "Hindu nation will be enabled to occupy a predominant position that is due to it and the Muslim nation made to live in the position of subordinate co-operation with the Hindu nation",²¹ was indeed "creating a most dangerous situation for safety and security of India".²² Ambedkar wrote that danger of breaking-up of India was not far off as,

Mr. Savarkar will not allow the Muslim nation to be co-equal in authority with the Hindu nation. He wants the Hindu nation to be the dominant nation and the Muslim nation to be subservient one. Why Mr. Savarkar, after sowing the seed of enmity between Hindu nation and Muslim nation should want that they should live under one constitution and occupy one country, is difficult to explain.²³

Myth 4: References and Notes

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- 3 Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, p. 268.
- 4 Cited in A. S. Bhide (ed.), *Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's Whirlwind Propaganda: Extracts from the President's Diary of his Propagandist Tours Interviews from December 1937 to October 1941*, Na, Bombay, 1941, p. 386.
- 5 Savarkar, *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya: Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, vol. 6, Maharashtra Prantik Hindusabha, Poona, 1963, p. 407.
- 6 Ibid, p. 406.
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- 9 Savarkar cited in *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya*, vol. 6, op. cited, pp. 479-480.
- 10 Dhanajay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, op. cited, p. 348.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Savarkar, *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya*, vol. 6, op. cited, p. 399.
- 13 Ibid., p. 289.
- 14 Ibid., p. 297.
- 15 Savarkar's speech delivered at Poona on December 11, 1953, cited in Dhanajay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, op. cited, p. 457.
- 16 Dhanajay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, op. cited, p. 458.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 A. S. Bhide, op. cited, pp. 340-341.
- 19 B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India*, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1990 (reprint of 1946 edition), p. 142.
- 20 Ibid., p. 143.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., p. 144.
- 23 Ibid.

MYTH 5

Savarkar was a Rationalist, Stood for Scientific Temper and Fought Against Untouchability

Savarkar is glorified as a ‘rationalist Hindu’¹ and a leader who ‘ended the practice of Untouchability’.² It is also emphasized that he propagated ‘scientific temper’ and died as an atheist.³ The Savarkarites persist in saying that his “outlook was absolutely modern and scientific and secular”.⁴

FACTS

Savarkar wanted *Manusmriti* as constitution

How great a rationalist, crusader against Untouchability and practitioner of scientific temper Savarkar was, can be understood by knowing the fact that he was a firm believer in Manu’s Codes. He held *Manusmriti* as a sacred book for Hindus. As a philosopher and guide of Hindutva, and the RSS he, without mincing words said:

Manusmriti is that scripture which is most worship-able after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice. This book for centuries has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today the rules which are followed by crores of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on *Manusmriti*. Today *Manusmriti* is Hindu Law. That is fundamental.⁵

If this dream of Savarkar of enforcing the Laws of Manu is ever fulfilled, it is undoubtedly going to be the end of the

road for Dalits and women in India. To what miserable and dehumanized status their lives will be reduced to can be known by having a glance at the Codes of Manu about them. ⁶

Manu's Laws Concerning Sudras

For the sake of the prosperity of the worlds [the divine one] caused the Brahmana, the Kashtriya, the Vaisya and the Shudra to proceed from His mouth, His arm, His thighs and His feet. (I/31)

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudras, to serve meekly these [other] three castes. (I/91)

A Shudra, who insults a high caste man with gross invective, shall have his tongue cut out for he is of low origin. (VIII/270)

If he [Shudra] arrogantly teaches Brahmanas their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears. (VIII/272)

A low-caste man, who tries to place himself on the same seat with a man of high caste, shall be branded on his hips and be banished, or [the king] shall cause his buttocks to be gashed. (VIII/281)

Let [the first part of] a Brahmana's name [denote something] auspicious, a Kshatriya's be connected with power, and a Vaisya's with wealth, but a Shudra's [express something] contemptible. (II/31)

[The second part of] a Brahmana's [name] shall be [a word] implying happiness, of a Kshatriya's [a word] implying protection, of a Vaisya's [a term] expressive of thriving, and of a Shudra's [an expression] denoting service. (II/32)

The service of Brahmanas alone is declared [to be] an excellent occupation for a Shudra; for whatever else besides this he may perform will bear him no fruit. (X/123)

The remnants of their food must be given to him, as well as their old clothes, the refuse of their grain, and their old household furniture. (X/125)

No collection of wealth must be made by a Shudra, even though he be able [to do it]; for a Shudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brahmanas. (X/129)

The son of a Brahmana, a Kshatriya, and a Vaisya by a Shudra [wife] receives no share of the inheritance; whatever his father may give to him, that shall be his property. (IX/155)

Manu's Laws Concerning Women

By a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently, even in her own house. (V/147)

In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent. (V/148)

Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control. (IX/2)

Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (IX/3)

Women must particularly be guarded against evil inclinations, however trifling (they may appear); for, if they are not guarded, they will bring sorrow on two families. (IX/5)

Considering that the highest duty of all castes, even weak husbands (must) strive to guard their wives. (IX/6)

He who carefully guards his wife, preserves (the purity of) his offspring, virtuous conduct, his family, himself, and his (means of acquiring) merit. (IX/7)

As the male is to whom a wife cleaves, even so is the son whom she brings forth; let him therefore carefully guard his wife, in order to keep his offspring pure. (IX/9)

No man can completely guard women by force; but they can be guarded by the employment of the (following) expedients:

Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfillment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils. (IX/10, 11)

Women, confined in the house under trustworthy and obedient servants, are not (well) guarded; but those who of their own accord keep guard over themselves, are well guarded. (IX/12)

Women do not care for beauty, nor is their attention fixed on age; (thinking), '(It is enough that) he is a man,' they give themselves to the handsome and to the ugly. (IX/14)

Through their passion for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded in this (world). (IX/15)

Knowing their disposition, which the Lord of creatures laid in them at the creation, to be such, (every) man should most strenuously exert himself to guard them. (IX/16)

(When creating them) Manu allotted to women (a love of their) bed, (of their) seat and (of) ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice, and bad conduct. (IX/17)

For women no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts, thus the law is settled; women (who are) destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts, (are as impure as) falsehood (itself), that is a fixed rule. (IX/18)

Savarkar remained committed to Manu's diktats throughout his life. While delivering the presidential address to the 22nd session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Madura in 1940, Savarkar once again underlined the crucial fact of Manu being the law giver for Hindus and emphasized that once we 're-learn the manly lessons' which Manu taught 'Hindu nation shall prove again as unconquerable'. He firmly believed that once laws given by Manu were enforced 'our Hindu nation shall prove again as unconquerable and conquering a race as we proved once...'⁷

Savarkar's followers emphasise the fact that their mentor organized community lunches with Untouchables and went to visit their residential quarters. How serious he was even in these cosmetic reformatory actions can be known by the fact that he did it in his personal capacity '**without involving the Hindu Mahasabha organization into social and religious [sic] activities not guaranteed by its constitutional limits...**'⁸
[Bold as in the original text]

Savarkar assured *Sanatani* Hindus who were opposed to Untouchables' entry into Hindu temples in 1939 that Hindu Mahasabha,

will not introduce or support compulsory Legislature [sic] regarding Temple Entry by the untouchables etc. in old temples beyond the limit to which the non-Hindus are allowed by custom as in force today.⁹

On June 20, 1941 he once again pledged in the form of a personal assurance that he would not hurt the sentiments of *Sanatani* Hindus so far as the issue of entry of Untouchables in temples was concerned. This time he even promised not to touch anti-women and anti-Dalit personal laws,

I guarantee that the Hindu Maha Sabha [sic] shall never force any legislations regarding the entry of untouchables in the ancient temples or compel by law any sacred ancient and moral usage or

custom prevailing in those temples. In general the Mahasabha will not back up any Legislation to thrust the reforming views on our Sanatani brothers so far as personal law is concerned...¹⁰

Savarkar as Hindu Bigot

The reality of his scientific temper can also be judged by the language of the following telegram which he sent to the ruler of Kolhapur. While congratulating the ruler on the birth of a daughter he did not forget to wish him for a son too as if without a son the ruler was not well off. The telegram in original read as follows:

To, H. H. the Maharajha of Kolhapur. I Congratulate your Highness on the Birth of Princess Lilitadevi and Pray the State may be equally Blessed with Birth of a Prince. Savarkar, 18-10-40.¹¹

It was the 'rationalist' and 'secularist' Savarkar who initiated the sectarian practice of converting Muslims and Christians to the Hindu fold under the garb of *Shuddhi* (purification) movement in Maharashtra in a centralized manner and on a large scale. The official biography of Savarkar thus presents the graphic details of his *Shuddhi* activities in the following words:

The Ratnagiri Hindu Sabha reconverted from the middle of 1926 and onwards several persons to the Hindu fold with prescribed religious ceremonials. The Christian missionaries were enraged at this; so they warned a certain boy, who was reconverted to Hinduism, not to pass by the mission quarters lest other boys should catch the contagious idea that converts could again become Hindus... The Ratnagiri Hindu Sabha had vigorously supported the marriage of Tukojirao, Maharaja of Indore, with Miss Miller, an American woman, and even had expressed its readiness to arrange for a priest to perform the marriage ceremony. The Sabha in the beginning got two reconverted girls married to two Hindu gentlemen under the direction of Savarkar, who performed the marriage rites himself.¹²

The conversion programmes led by Savarkar were greatly publicized creating terrible bad blood amongst religious communities. How brazenly religious conversions were undertaken can be known by the following press note issued by the Hindu Mahasabha on July 1, 1941:

Mass conversion of Christians to Hinduism. An Important Shuddhi ceremony and Pan-Hindu Dinner at Bombay. Veer Savarkarji Presides. A very important Shuddhi ceremony took place at MAHIM, (BOMBAY) on the 29th June, 1941, under the President ship of Veer Savarkar.

In the days of the Portuguese inquisition hundreds of thousands of Hindu families were forcibly converted into Christianity almost at the point of the bayonet. After some four hundred years or so when the Hindusanghatan movement set in recently Shri Masurkar Maharaj of Satara succeeded in reconverting on a mass-scale ten thousand of these Christians back into the Hindu fold only a few years ago. This striking success of the Sanghatan movement naturally roused organised opposition on the part of the Missionaries in Portuguese India and Bombay. But after strenuous efforts of the Hindusanghatanists on all sides, a second campaign of mass reconversion into the Hindu fold is launched and promises to turn out as successful as the first. The Bombay Provincial Hindusabha reconverted this week the first batch of some fifty Christians whose ancestors were forced to be Christians and who had to continue there for the last three hundred years, Dr. Purandare who lead this movement along with Rao Bahadur Bole, Dr. Savarkar and many distinguished Hindusabhait 'Hom' was performed.¹³

The press note also went on to inform that the function of conversion of Christians to Hinduism concluded with 'the spirited and highly inspiring speech of Veer Savarkarji'. A. S. Bhide's book is full of conversion reports like the following one dated March 14, 1940. 'Shuddhi [*sic*] of 6 Bhilla Christians was performed in a public meeting attended by more than four thousand persons. Veer Savarkarji addressed it for an hour.¹⁴

Despite all the above facts and many more being available in the archives of the Hindu Mahasabha itself, Savarkar continues to be touted as a great rationalist, secularist and believer in social justice!

Myth 5: References and Notes

- 1 Y. D. Phadke, 'A complex hero', *The Indian Express*, August 31, 2004, Delhi.
- 2 Tarun Vijay, 'Veer patriot', *Outlook*, September 6, 2004, Delhi.
- 3 Kumar Ketkar, 'The unbearable potency of Savarkar', *The Indian Express*, August 27, 2004, Delhi.
- 4 Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, p. 203.
- 5 VD Savarkar, 'Women in Manusmriti' in *Savarkar Samagar* (collection of Savarkar's writings in Hindi), Prabhat, Delhi, Vol 4, p. 415.
- 6 All laws are the verbatim reproduction from the F. Max Muller (ed.), *The Laws of Manu*, (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 1996). This edition is the reproduction of the first edition published in 1886. The bracket after every code carries chapter number and code number respectively. For instance (I/31) means chapter I and code number 31 of *Manusmriti*.
- 7 V. D. Savarkar, *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya: Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, vol. 6, Maharashtra Prantik Hindusabha, Poona, 1963, p. 426.
- 8 A. S. Bhide, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's Whirlwind Propaganda: Extracts from the President's Diary of his Propagandist Tours Interviews from December 1937 to October 1941, na, Bombay, 1940, p. xi.
- 9 Ibid., p. 128.
- 10 Ibid., p.425
- 11 Ibid., p. 236.
- 12 Dhanajay Keer, op. cit., p. 179.
- 13 A. S. Bhide, op.cit., p. 427.
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MYTH 6

Charges Against Savarkar Were Never Proved in the Gandhi Murder Case

It is often argued by Savarkarites that

Savarkar differed with Gandhi like many others and became a suspect following his assassination. The court acquitted him but the denigration still continues.¹

The Hindutva camp continues complaining that ‘even after a clear cut verdict [of the court] there are people who rake it up.’²

FACTS

It is true that Savarkar could not be prosecuted for his role in Gandhi’s murder. But there are intriguing aspects of this case which are awaiting proper explanation even today. Anil Nauriya, a well-known lawyer and columnist, while dealing with the issue of Savarkar’s acquittal in the Gandhi Murder Case, says,

Those who try to exculpate V. D. Savarkar from involvement in Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination with reference to his acquittal in the murder trial fail to distinguish between legal and political responsibility. Also, even as regards legal responsibility...the evidence given by the approver, Digamber Badge which clearly implicated Savarkar...he was let off not because there was ‘no evidence’ but because the approver’s testimony required corroboration.³

There is a meaningful parallel between the acquittal of the pro-Muslim League accused in the Allah Bakhsh Murder Case in 1945⁴ and Savarkar’s acquittal in the Gandhi Murder Case

in 1949. These were Khan Bahadur Khuhro and his brother Mohammed Nawaz (both leaders of Muslim League) who were discharged of the accusation of conspiring to kill Allah Bakhsh. The judge, B. B. Paymaster, wrote in the acquittal order:

I agree with the assessors [Defence side] that no criminal offence has been proved against any of the accused, though I do not agree with them that the whole persecution is necessarily false and concocted. I have only held the charges to be not proven and have given the accused benefit of doubt...it is correct to say that in law the accused can be convicted upon the uncorroborated evidence of an approver, the long experience of the Courts and many decisions show that it is only prudent that the evidence of an accused of an approver should be corroborated by independent evidence...⁵

In the Allah Bakhsh Murder Case, despite the statements of two approvers (Daresh and Mohammed Khan) and in the Gandhi Murder Case despite Digambar Badge's testimony (that it was Savarkar who played the most important role in the conspiracy to kill Gandhi), the persons who were accused of conspiring were released because there was no 'independent evidence' to prove the conspiracy. The law demanded that when conspiracy was being hatched, and if it was to be proved in a court of law, there should be corroboration by some independent witness. Of course, it would be an impossible task to find an 'independent evidence' when conspiracies are hatched in the utmost secret surroundings. However, this was the law and persons accused of conspiring to kill Gandhi (Savarkar) and Allah Bakhsh (Khuhro Brothers) were all let off in two different cases.

Veer Sanghvi says that whatever may have been the technical reason for Savarkar's release,

Nobody seriously disputes that Nathuram Godse venerated Savarkar and was his follower. It is also accepted that Godse met

Savarkar in Bombay before each of his two journeys to Delhi to assassinate Gandhiji. The Commission probing Gandhiji's assassination, heard from K. M. Munshi (highly regarded in Sangh Parivar circles and usually quoted with respect these days) that while 'the Hindu Mahasabha as a whole has abstained from Savarkar's ideology and were not terrorists but the Savarkarite group did believe in political assassination'... when Godse and his fellow Savarkarites were tried for Gandhiji's murder, Savarkar was the only one to be let off because the judge did not find 'evidence without doubt'... But equally, we must accept that those who were convicted of the murder were Savarkarites and followers of his ideology.⁶

Even Justice G. D. Khosla who wrote the High Court (Simla) full Bench judgment in the Gandhi Murder Case, said:

Badge has given a very full and detailed account of the circumstances leading to occurrence and the occurrence itself... I am of the opinion that the story narrated by him is substantially correct.⁷

Later Justice Jivan Lal Kapoor who headed the commission of enquiry on Gandhi murder also arrived at the conclusion that all the facts 'taken together were destructive of any theory other than the conspiracy to murder by Savarkar and his group'.⁸

However, nobody knows why 'the prosecution had not appealed against the trial judge's acquittal of Savarkar and hence that chapter was not reopened in the High Court'.⁹

Sardar Patel held Savarkar Responsible for Gandhi's Murder

It may be relevant to know here what Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister of India and a favourite of Hindutva brigade said about Savarkar's role in the killing of Gandhi. Sardar in a letter to Nehru dated February 27, 1948, wrote,

It was a fanatical wing of the Hindu Mahasabha directly under Savarkar that hatched the conspiracy and saw it through. It also

appears that conspiracy was limited to some ten men... Of course; his [Gandhiji's] assassination was welcomed by those of the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha who were strongly opposed to his way of thinking and to his policy.¹⁰

Sardar Patel stressed the same fact in his letter to a prominent leader of Hindu Mahasabha, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee on July 18, 1948

As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the case relating to Gandhiji's murder is sub-judice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organizations, but our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible. There is no doubt in my mind that the extreme section of the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in the conspiracy. The activities of the RSS constituted a clear threat to the existence of Government and the State. Our reports show that those activities, despite the ban, have not died down. Indeed, as time has marched on, the RSS circles are becoming more defiant and are indulging in their subversive activities in an increasing measure.¹¹

How close Godse was to Savarkar can also be known by the fact that latter's biographer describes Godse as a lieutenant of Savarkar.¹² Moreover, there are now available Godse's letters to Savarkar which make it amply clear that former was under the spell of latter. These letters written between 1938 and 1946 "conclusively establish Savarkar's mentorship of Godse—and the latter's acknowledgement of Savarkar as his guru".¹³ These intimate letters are in direct contravention to Savarkar's statement in the court (November 20, 1948) in which while distancing himself from Godse he had said that his acquaintance with him was not an old one.

Savarkar As Mentor of RSS

Surprisingly the RSS which is in the forefront of idolizing

Savarkar today had denied any links with him and the Hindu Mahasabha in the aftermath of Gandhi's murder thus strengthening the belief that Savarkar was involved in Gandhi's murder. Even today it reacts angrily to any suggestion that it was too involved in Gandhi's murder. This is the specific reason for which the an ex-Indian Human Resource Minister, Arjun Singh was served with a legal notice by the RSS. These contradictory stands of the RSS present an interesting scenario. According to the RSS, Savarkar is the greatest nationalist, his philosophy of Hindutva is Indian nationalism and it is committed to make India of Savarkar's dreams. But it does not want to be seen as part of Savarkar's bandwagon when he is accused of Gandhi's murder. It is only recently that it has started denying any role of Savarkar in the murder. But it has created more problems for the RSS. It can reasonably be asked if Savarkar was not involved in Gandhi's murder why did they deny any links with Savarkar in late 1940s?

Whatever may have been the shifting stands of the RSS on Savarkar, the first Home Minister of India, Sardar Patel firmly believed that with Savarkar, the RSS too had a hand in Gandhi's assassination. In a letter addressed to Golwalkar, dated 11 September 1948, Sardar Patel stated:

Organizing the Hindus and helping them is one thing but going in for revenge for its sufferings on innocent and helpless men, women and children is quite another thing...Apart from this, their opposition to the Congress, that too of such virulence, disregarding all considerations of personality, decency or decorum, created a kind of unrest among the people. All their speeches were full of communal poison. It was not necessary to spread poison in order to enthuse the Hindus and organize for their protection. As a final result of the poison, the country had to suffer the sacrifice of the invaluable life of Gandhiji. Even an iota of the sympathy of the Government, or of the people, no more remained for the RSS. In fact opposition grew. Opposition turned

more severe, when the RSS men expressed joy and distributed sweets after Gandhiji's death. Under these conditions it became inevitable for the Government to take action against the RSS.¹⁴

Hindu Mahasabha and RSS have always been two sides of the same coin. Savarkar's biographer Dhananjay Keer admits that the RSS was,

regarded as a militant storm trooper offshoot of the Hindu Mahasabha. In his early youth Godse was a worker of the RSS and later he was a prominent member of the All India Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha.¹⁵

Keer in Savarkar's biography also refers to the crucial fact that,

Before starting the volunteer organization known as the RSS, Dr. Hedgewar had a long discussion with Savarkar over the faith, form and future of organization... After the collapse of Non-Cooperation Movement of Gandhi and the fiasco of the Khilafat Movement, the country lay prostrate, and chaos and confusion reigned in the student world. In the wake of this confusion and in consultation with Savarkar and others, Hedgewar decided to build up an organization to supply the Hindu society with powers and pillars.¹⁶

Hedgewar religiously maintained this linkage throughout his life. It remained a tradition for him to attend each and every session of Hindu Mahasabha till his death in 1940.¹⁷ The same momentum was maintained by M. S. Golwalkar who was nominated as heir-apparent by Hedgewar in his life-time and took over as the second *Sarsangbhalak* in June 1940. Both Savarkar and Golwalkar maintained close fraternal ties. It was clearly visible in the telegram which Savarkar wrote when ban against RSS (enforced in the aftermath of Gandhi murder) was lifted and Golwalkar released in the middle of July 1949. it read: 'Long live the Sangh, the valorous champion of Hindudom.'¹⁸

Savarkar had great affection for Golwalkar and while

facilitating him telegraphically on one of his birthdays said that 'Golwalkar was a pillar of the Hindu nation'.¹⁹ Golwalkar figured as a prominent speaker in many of the meetings Savarkar organized in the post-Gandhi murder phase. The RSS reciprocated with the same zeal. The RSS raised a memorial in the memory of its founder, K. B. Hedgewar and invited Savarkar to bless the occasion on April 5, 1962. According to Keer Golwalkar in a letter to Savarkar on March 16, 1962 wrote,

It was the desire of them all that Savarkar should attend the function and bless it as Savarkar had a high regard for Dr. Hedgewar who had his blessings also in his great work. Golwalkar added that he himself had the rare fortune of being worthy of his esteem. So he was pressing the invitation on him to undertake the journey and to attend the function.²⁰

Savarkar could not bless the memorial as serious illness had crippled him. He however, sent a message to Golwalkar calling upon the RSS to go ahead with the great work they were doing. Golwalkar on his part remained indebted throughout his life to the "principles of nationalism scientifically explained in Savarkar's great work *Hindutva*. To him it was a text book, a scientific book."²¹

How close Savarkar was to the RSS can be seen in the text of the telegram which Savarkar sent immediately after hearing the news of Hedgewar's death on June 22, 1940: 'Hindu Maha Sabha Mourns the Death of Doctor Hedgewar with Deepest Grief. Hedgewar is dead-long live Hedgewar: Hedgewar is dead-long live the Sangha !!!'²²

Savarkar directed all Hindu Mahasabha units to observe June 30, 1940 as Dr. Hedgewar -- Day. All Hindu Mahasabha offices were asked to,

have their Hindu flags blown half-mast and there should be a public meeting to pass Resolution of condolence on the death

of the great Hindu Sanghatanist. The Resolution should be forwarded to the president provincial Hindu Sabha Nagpur, Shrimant M. G. Chitanis, M. L. A., Chitnavis pura, Nagpur, C. P. 28-06-40.²³

Importantly, Savarkar referred to Hedgewar as a 'Hindu Sanghatanist' in his communication, a term which was specifically used to refer to a member of the Hindu Mahasabha.

A. S. Bhide's collection of Hindu Mahasabha documents recorded more than forty visits of Savarkar to the RSS programmes in different parts of the country between 1938-1941 only. In these programmes Savarkar spoke on themes like 'Military training', 'Appreciation of the work the Sangha is doing in creating solidarity amongst Hindus', 'Hope and faith he puts in the work of Sangha', 'On the great Missions the Sangh represents', 'Programme of the prospective Hindu Party', 'Future programme of Hindu Sanghatan movement', 'Advising the students to join Military forces [The British]'.²⁴ It is to be noted here that when Savarkar was calling upon the RSS cadets to join the British armed forces, Subhash Chandra Bose was organising a liberation army to free India from the clutches of the British rulers.

All these facts available in the Hindu Mahasabha archives go to prove two crucial realities. Firstly, Savarkarism provided philosophical as well as organizational foundations to the RSS. Secondly, the RSS followed into the footsteps of Savarkar so far as keeping aloof from the freedom struggle and helping the British rulers in overcoming Indian people's united challenge were concerned.

It is no secret that the RSS headquarters at Nagpur for a long time had a shrine in memory of Nathuram Godse. It carried a plaque which read that "one day when they [the RSS] would come to power a far more fitting memorial would be erected".²⁵

Myth: 6 References and Notes

- 1 Tarun Vijay, 'Veer patriot', *Outlook*, September 6, 2004.
- 2 Interview with Vishwas Savarkar (son of V. D. Savarkar)', *Organizer*, September 26, 2004.
- 3 Anil Nauriya, 'the age of generosity', *Janata*, May 11, 2003, p. 3. This article is a must read for all those who want to be familiar with the legal loopholes on the basis of which Savarkar could not be persecuted.
- 4 Allah Bakhsh organized Muslims of India at the grass root level for an effective and massive opposition to the nefarious designs of the Muslim League in pre-partition days was not an unknown person. He rose to be the Premier (those days chief minister was known by this designation) of Sind during the eventful days of 'Quit India' Movement of 1942 as head of 'Ittehad Party' (Unity Party), which did not allow Muslim League to have any foothold in the Muslim majority province of Sind. Allah Bakhsh and his Party were not part of Congress but when British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill made a derogatory reference to the Indian freedom struggle and 'Quit India' Movement in a speech in the British Parliament, Allah Bakhsh renounced in protest all titles conferred by the British Government. The British administration could not digest this dissent of Allah Bakhsh and the Governor Sir Hugh Dow removed him from office on October 10, 1942. This great sacrifice of a Muslim leader for the freedom of a united India remains unknown even today.

The great fighter for the independence of a united India and prolific opponent of the idea of Pakistan, Allah Bakhsh was murdered on May 14, 1943 in Sind by professional killers believed to be hired by the Muslim League. Allah Bakhsh needed to be liquidated because he was able to muster massive support of common Muslim masses throughout India against the idea of Pakistan. Moreover, Allah Bakhsh as a great secularist and person opposed to the formation of Pakistan with massive support in Sind could prove to be the greatest stumbling block in the physical formation of Pakistan as without Sind, the 'Islamic State' in the west of the country just could not have materialized. It is a well-known fact that dismissal of Allah Bakhsh Government in 1942 and his murder in 1943 paved the way for entry of the Muslim League in Sind. One could see the open ganging up of the British rulers and Muslim League in political and physical liquidation of Allah Bakhsh and his kind of anti-communal politics.

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- 8 Ibid.

- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Letter 68 cited in *Sardar Patel: Select Correspondence 19450-1950*, Volume 2, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, p. 283.
- 11 Letter 64 cited in *Sardar Patel*, op.cit., pp. 276-77.
- 12 Dhanajay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, p. 403.
- 13 Jyotirmaya Sharma, 'New light on Godse-Savarkar connection' and 'The Godse-Savarkar connection' *The Hindu*, September 20 and 21, 2004, respectively.
- 14 Cited in *Justice On Trial: Historic Documents of Guruji-Government Correspondence*, RSS, Bangalore, 1962, pp.26-8
- 15 Dhanajay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1988, p. 400.
- 16 Ibid., p. 171.
- 17 Ibid., p. 431.
- 18 Ibid., p. 421.
- 19 Ibid., p. 497.
- 20 Ibid., p. 523.
- 21 Ibid., p. 527.
- 22 A. S. Bhide, *Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's Whirlwind Propaganda: Extracts from the President's Diary of his Propagandist Tours Interviews from December 1937 to October 1941*, na, Bombay, 1940, pp. 218-219.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 219-220.
- 24 For more details see A. S. Bhide, op. cited.
- 25 Patrick Nair 'RSS' Godse's shrine', *Indian Currents*, September 19, 2004.

MYTH 7

Savarkar's Idea of Hindutva Provides Scientific Basis to the Indian Nation

Hindutva authored by Savarkar appeared in 1923. It was hailed as the most original and scholarly contribution to the Indian nationalism and Hindu ideology. A prominent supporter of the idea of establishing a theocratic Hindu state in India, glorified this book in the following words: "It must have been one of those Vedic dawns indeed which inspired our seers with new truths, that revealed to the author of *Hindutva* this 'Mantra', this definition of Hindutva!"¹

Savarkar's *Hindutva* was declared to be the Bible of Hindu *Sangathan* or organization. M. S. Golwalkar who headed the RSS after K. B. Hedgewar, too regarded Savarkar's *Hindutva* as a great scientific book which fulfilled the need of a text-book on Hindu nationalism.² According to a biography of Hedgewar published by the RSS, "Savarkar's inspiring and brilliant exposition of the concept of Hindutva marked by incontestable logic and clarity, struck the cord of Doctorji's [Hedgewar's] heart".³

G. M. Joshi, another well-known protagonist of Hindu state in India declared:

Savarkar's book is for all time. The principles inundated in this book will guide Hindus as well as non-Hindus of this country for centuries to come...The concept of Hindutva is Savarkar's own and corresponds exactly to the definition of a nation in modern political theory...Savarkar is perfectly logical in his arguments. He meets all objections dispassionately and logically. He is able

to convince his opponents because his own convictions are the result of deep study and clear thinking. But once a theory is proved beyond doubt his writing becomes emotional like that of a poet.⁴

FACTS

Despite these statements glorifying *Hindutva* as priceless contribution in defence of Hindu nationalism, the contents of the book did not attract many Hindu leaders and remained beyond the comprehension of common Hindus. In fact, even the title of the book seemed to have been an afterthought. A perusal of the original edition (1923) will show that the booklet was printed with the title *Hinduism* but subsequently a separate piece of paper on which *Hindutva* was printed was pasted on the title page of the book. Since the term remained beyond the comprehension of even the Savarkarites, by the 4th edition *Hindutva* as title was dropped and it was published under a new title *Who Is A Hindu?* In 1963 Maharashtra Provincial Hindusabha published it as part of Savarkar's collected works with the title *Essentials of Hindutva*.

The concept of Hindu Nation as elaborated in *Hindutva* remained a fringe thought despite the fact that Savarkar while presiding over the 19th session of Hindu Mahasabha at Ahmedabad in December 1937 declared it to be the goal of Hindu Mahasabha. There were not many takers for the book as is clear by a note of the publisher of the second edition, S. S. Savarkar, who happened to be a close relative of the author. The note says:

I received some letters and personal requests from scholars, and admirers of Veer Savarkar for copies of 'Hindutva'. I had to reply to them in the negative, as copies were not available. I used to feel sorry to say no! I had no capital to publish a new edition and the demand was not so much as to pay the expenses of printing!⁵

The dismal popularity of the book can also be gauged by the fact that after the publication of its first edition in 1923, the second edition could appear only in 1942. With the last edition appearing in 2003, only seven editions of the book came out in more than eight decades.

Savarkar wrote *Hindutva* in 1923 while imprisoned in Ratnagiri Jail and was able to smuggle it out, an act that would have been impossible without the complicity of the British administration. It was published under the pen name 'A Maratha' as the author Savarkar was in jail and was not legally permitted to produce such works. In fact, there was no need to use pseudonym as when one V. V. Kelkar, a Nagpur lawyer, brought about its first edition it was no secret that Savarkar authored it. Despite this fact known to everybody, the British rulers took no steps to ban it. Interestingly, though the author and contents of the book stressed only the Hindu identity of the country and its inhabitants, the pen name chosen signified a regional identity of the author and not the religious one.

The 1923 edition though appeared in English (128 demi-sized pages) but strangely had Sanskrit and Hindi text inserted into English sentences. It made strange reading. The original edition was divided into 8 chapters but in later editions this division was done away with and replaced by many more subtitles. Moreover, there were additions in the subsequent editions without any clarifications. Since none of the later edition was declared to be a revised edition, it is difficult to know whether Savarkar approved these changes.⁶

Savarkar's *Hindutva* was haphazard, confused, incoherent, monotonous, contradictory and repetitive in comparison to other works of Savarkar. In fact in *Hindutva*, propagated as the Bible of Hindu nationalism less than one quarter of the space was devoted to the theme. Major parts of the book contained

repetitive discussions over the origin of nomenclature like Hindu/Hindusthan, folk literature, evils in Buddhism, how Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists were Hindus and description of perpetually continuously raging conflicts between Vedic and non-Vedic sects in Hinduism.

The defensive manner in which Savarkar tried to trace the origin of the nomenclature 'Hindu' in *Hindutva* is a testimony to the fact that Savarkar, while propounding the theory of primordial character of Hindu religion and Hindu race, was conscious of the a-historicity of the term Hindu. In fact, he is seen indulging in 'construction' of history as G. P. Deshpande says that there is,

no word such as Hindu in Sanskrit, the language in which the texts of 'Hinduism' have been written. The *Vedas* or the *Upanishads* or even the *Bhagvad Gita* do not mention the Hindus. To the best of our knowledge, none of the *Smritis* or the *Puranas* talk of Hindu Dharma or the Hindus.⁷

This was the reason that Savarkar despite believing in the primordial nature of Hinduism had to admit that nomenclature Hindu originated with the Ionian Greeks, Persians and Arabs.

However, there is no denying the fact that *Hindutva* went a long way in building and propagating the myth of a Hindu Nation. In order to make it resonate and appeal emotionally rather than rationally, Savarkar chose to present epics like *Ramayana* as actual history to propagate his ideas of Hindu nation and nationalism. For instance, he wrote:

The day when the Horse of Victory returned to Ayodhya unchallenged and unchallengeable, the great white Umbrella of Sovereignty was unfurled over that, Imperial throne of Ramchandra the brave, Ramchandra the good, and a loving allegiance to him was sworn, not only by the Princes of the Aryan blood but Hanuman—Sugriva—Bibhishana from the south—

that day was the real birth-day of our Hindu people. It was truly our national day: for Aryans and Anaryans knitting themselves into a people were born as a nation.—It [sic] summed up and politically crowned the efforts of all the generations that preceded it and it handed down a new common mission, a common banner, a common cause which all the generations after it had consciously or unconsciously fought and died to defend.⁸

Confusion about Hinduism and Hindutva

Savarkar admitted at the outset that the 'term Hindutva defies all attempts at analysis'.⁹ However, he began by trying to make a clear-cut distinction between his theory of Hindutva and religion Hinduism. After reading the first few pages it seems that he intended to embark on a serious academic debate on the issue. According to him Hindutva should not be confused with the term Hinduism. He wrote:

Hindutva is not a word but history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term Hinduism, but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction a part of Hindutva. Unless it is made clear what is meant by the latter the first remains unintelligible and vague. Failure to distinguish between these two terms has given rise to much misunderstanding and mutual suspicion between some of those sister communities that have inherited this inestimable and common treasure of our Hindu civilization... Here it is enough to point out that Hindutva is not identical with what is vaguely indicated by the term Hinduism. By an 'ism' it is generally meant a theory or a code more or less based on spiritual or religious dogma or system. But when we attempt to investigate into the essential significance of Hindutva we do not primarily—and certainly not mainly—concern ourselves with any particular theocratic or religious dogma or creed. Had not linguistic usage stood in our way then 'Hinduness' would have certainly been a better word than Hinduism as a near parallel to Hindutva. Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole Being of our Hindu race... it is imperative to

point out that we are by no means attempting a definition or even a description of the more limited, less satisfactory and essentially sectarian term Hinduism.¹⁰

But by the time he completed his definition of Hindutva the difference between the two disappeared completely. Hindutva turned into nothing else but political Hinduism. Savarkar seemed to have forgotten the difference while concluding his thesis as we will see in the following:

A Hindu, therefore, to sum up the conclusions arrived at, is he who looks upon the land that extends from *Sindhu* to *Sindhu*, from the Indus to the Seas, as the land of his forefathers—his *pitribhu*, who inherits the blood of that race whose first discernible source could be traced to the Vedic *Saptasindhs* and which on its onward march, assimilating much that was incorporated and ennobling much that was assimilated, has come to be known as the Hindu people, who has inherited and claims as his own the culture of that race as expressed chiefly in their common classical language *Sanskrit* and represented by a common history, a common literature, art and architecture, law and jurisprudence, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, fairs and festivals; and who above all, addresses this land, this *Sindhusthan* as his *punyabhu*, as his Holyland—the land of his prophets and seers, of his godmen and gurus, the land of piety and pilgrimage. These are the essentials of *Hindutva*—a common *rashtra* [nation] a common *Jati* [race] and a common *Sanskriti* [culture, though in latter editions it is translated as civilization]. All these essentials could best be summed up by stating in brief that he is a *Hindu* to whom *Sindhusthan* is not only a *pitribhu* [land of his forefathers] but also a *punyabhu* [holyland]. For the first two essentials of *Hindutva*—*rashtra* and *jati*—are clearly denoted and connoted by the word *pitribhu*: while the third essential of *sanskriti* is pre-eminently implied by the word *punyabhu*: as it is precisely *sanskriti* including *sanskars* i.e., rites and rituals ceremonies and sacraments, that makes a land a Holyland.¹¹

So the essentials of Hindutva or being a Hindu were finally declared to be similar. Hindus belonged to a common nation because they hailed from the same Aryan race, belonged to a common civilization and adored 'Hindusthan' as their

Fatherland and Holyland. Muslims and Christians remained out of this nationhood because they did not assimilate into Hindu cultural heritage or adopt Hindu religion. According to Savarkar's argument,

Christians and Mohamedan [*sic*] communities, who were but very recently Hindus and in majority of cases had been at least in their first generation most willing denizens of their new fold, claim though they might a common fatherland, and an almost pure Hindu blood and parentage with us cannot be recognized as Hindus; as since their adoption of the new cult they had ceased to own Hindu *Sanskriti* [culture] as a whole. They belong, or feel that they belong, to a cultural unit altogether different from the Hindu one. Their heroes and their hero-worship their fairs and their festivals, their ideals and their outlook on-life, have now ceased to be common with ours.¹²

Savarkar knew that Muslims were not a monolithic whole and as a community lived with extreme diversities of culture, customs, beliefs and language. Moreover, they also had different perceptions of Islam as a religion. Moreover, he did admit that there were 'patriotic' Muslims like Bohra or Khoja in the country who loved India as their Fatherland and also possessed pure Hindu blood. Moreover, they had been reasonable and loved,

our history and our heroes, in fact the Bohras and the Khojas, as a community, worship as heroes or [*sic*, read it our] great ten Avatars only adding Mohamad [*sic*] as the eleventh. He is actually, along with his community subject to the Hindu law—the law of his forefathers. He is, so far as the three essentials of *rashtra*, *Jati* and *sanskriti* are concerned a Hindu.¹³

But could even these 'patriotic' Bohras or Khojas be regarded as Hindus, a prerequisite for being Indian? Savarkar's emphatic reply was simple 'no' as he said:

He [Bohra] would certainly have been recognized as such but for his attitude towards a single detail—which, though is covered by

the word *sanskriti* or culture, is yet too important to be lost in the multitude of other attributes, and therefore deserves a special treatment and analysis; which again brings us face to face with the question which, involving as it does the religious aspect of Hindutva, had often been avoided by us, not because we fight shy of it, but on account of our wish to fight it out all the more thoroughly and effectively.¹⁴

And Savarkar's 'thorough' and 'effective' study led to the judgment that the Bohras, along with other Muslims and Christians could not be considered as Hindus and subsequently part of Hindu Nation because their holy lands were in foreign lands. According to him Muslims and Christians who might have,

inherited, along with Hindus, a common Father-land and greater part of the wealth of common culture—language, law, customs, folklore and history—are not and cannot be recognized as Hindus. For though *Hindusthan* to them is *pitribhu* as to any other *Hindu* yet it is not to them a *punyabhu* too. Their Holyland [sic] is far off in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of a foreign origin. Their love is divided... We are not condemning nor are we lamenting. We are simply telling facts as they stand. We have tried to determine the essentials of *Hindutva* and in doing so we have discovered that the Bohras and such other Mohammedan or Christian communities possess all the essential qualifications of *Hindutva* but one and that is that they do not look upon India as their Holyland.¹⁵

Savarkar's Hindu exclusiveness and demagogy under the garb of Hindutva reached at its height when he evaluated and passed judgment over Sister Nivedita's claim of being part of 'Hindusthan' or the Indian nation. The fundamental issue was whether she was a Hindu as defined by Savarkar. Savarkar's judgment was,

Our patriotic and noble-minded sister had adopted our land... as her *pitribhu* [Fatherland]... So the first essential may, to some

extent, be said to hold good in her case. The second essential of common blood of Hindu parentage must, never-the-less and necessarily, be absent in such cases as these. The sacrament of marriage with a Hindu with really fuses and is universally admitted to do so, two beings into one may be said to remove this disqualification. But although this second essential failed, either way, to hold good in her case, the third important qualification of *Hindutva* did entitle her to be recognized as a Hindu. For she had adopted our culture and come to adore our land as her *punyabhū* [Holyland]. She felt, she was a Hindu and that is, apart from all technicalities, the real and the most important test.¹⁶

Savarkar had no hesitation in declaring that despite the fulfillment of all the above conditions (prescribed by himself) for claiming right to be Indian, Sister Nivedita could not claim to be a Hindu as she was not married to a Hindu. Interestingly, this was a new addition in the list of conditions which needed to be fulfilled for claiming the right of being a Hindu and Indian.

But we must not forget that we have to determine the essentials of *Hindutva* in the sense in which the word is actually used by an overwhelming majority of our people. And therefore we must say that any convert of non-Hindu parentage to Hindutva can be a Hindu, if bona fide, he or she adopts our land as his or her country and marries a Hindu, thus coming to love our land as a real *pitrībhū*; and adopts our culture and thus adores our land as the *Punyabhū*. The children of such a union as that would, other things being equal, be most emphatically Hindus. We are not authorized to go further.¹⁷

Interestingly, Sikhs were allowed the liberty or concession that was not allowed to Muslims and Christians. In the case of Sikhs loyalty to Hindutva was not to be determined,

by any theological tests...we must repeat it once more that the Sikhs are free to reject any or all things they dislike as superstitions in *Sanatandharma*, even the binding authority of the Vedas as a revelation. They thereby may cease to be *Sanatanis*, but cannot

cease to be Hindus. Sikhs are Hindus in the sense of our definition of *Hindutva* and not in any religious sense, whatever.¹⁸

Savarkar while showing great generosity to the Sikhs went to the extent of offering the concession that “let the Sikhs be classed as Sikhs religiously; but as Hindus racially and culturally.”¹⁹ However, Savarkar did not forget to emphasize repetitively in the book that Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists were part of Hindu Nation since they were racially, nationally and culturally called Hindus from times immemorial.

Only Hindus Constitute Indian Nationality

According to Savarkar’s *Hindutva*, these were only the Hindus who had the sole claim over India. Hindus were the only ones ‘whose past, present and future are most closely bound with the soil of Hindusthan as *pitribhu* as *punyabhu*, they constitute the foundation, the bedrock, the reserved forces of the Indian state.’²⁰

Savarkar’s logic leads to a situation where Hinduism, *Hindutva* and Indian nationality appear to be inseparable and work as natural corollary to each other. According to him,

The actual essentials of *Hindutva* are...also the ideal essentials of Nationality. If we would, we could build on this foundation of *Hindutva* a future greater than what any other people on earth can dream of:—greater even than our own Past [sic]. Provided we are able to utilize our opportunities!²¹

Savarkar made it profusely clear that *Hindutva* should not be confused with geographical terms like Indian or *Bhartiya* (meaning ‘Indian’) or ‘Hindi’ (term used by the Arabs and the Iranians for ‘Indian’). He insisted that though

the root-meaning of the word Hindu, like the sister epithet Hindi, may mean only an Indian, yet as it is we would be straining the usage of words too much—we fear, to the point of breaking—if

we call a Mohomedan [*sic*] a Hindu because of his being a resident of India.²²

According to Savarkar's Hindutva logic the term Hindu cannot be synonymous with *Bharatiya* or *Hindi* and should not be confused with the nomenclature Indian.²³ The Hindus were not merely the citizens of the Indian state but also shared the bonds of a common motherland, a common blood and religion. It is crucial to note here that Savarkar's Hindutva, by excluding Muslims and Christians from Indian nationhood, was admitting the fact that these religious communities constituted separate nations. This was exactly what he admitted in the course of his presidential address to 19th Hindu Mahasabha session at Ahmedabad in 1937 when he said "there are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India..."

Fundamentals of Hindutva: Racism, Casteism and World Domination

The Hindutva of Savarkar is often known for its anti-Muslim and Christian rhetoric but there are three other very significant components which need further elaboration as these greatly determined the evolution of Hindutva politics. These components also signify the direction which Hindus as a nation are expected to follow. Savarkar argued that the Hindu nation firstly, grew out of a superior Race. Secondly, it survived due to a system of four *Varnas*, and lastly, the Hindu Race was poised to rule over the world.

While emphasizing the Racial aspect of Hindutva Savarkar wrote:

The Hindus are not merely the citizens of the Indian state, because, they are united not only by the bonds of the love they bear to a common motherland but also by the bonds of common blood. They are not only a *rashtra* but also a *jati*. The word *jati*

derived from the root *ja* to produce, means a brotherhood, a race determined by a common origin—possessing a common blood. All Hindus claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers, the *Sindhus*.²⁴

Thus according to Savarkar's Racial theory of Hindutva,

A Hindu then is he who feels attachment to the land that extends from *Sindhu* to *Sindhu* as the land of his forefathers—as his Fatherland; who inherits the blood of the great race whose first and discernible source could be traced from the Himalayan altitudes of the Vedic *Saptasindhus* and which, assimilating all that was incorporated and ennobling all that was assimilated has grown into and come to be known as the Hindu people; and who, as a consequence of the foregoing attributes, has inherited and claims as his own the *Hindu sanskriti* [Hindu culture], the Hindu civilization, as represented in a common history, common heroes, a common literature, common art, a common law and a common jurisprudence, common fairs and festivals, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments.²⁵

Savarkar underlined the fact that Hindu Race and land of Hindus were superior to other people and countries of the world. '*Sindhusthan* was the *rashtramaaryasya chottamam* [Best nation of the Aryas] as distinguished from *Mlechasthan*, the land of the foreigners.'²⁶

Savarkar went on to emphasise that Hindus were the 'only people who succeeded in preserving their history—riding through earthquakes, bridging over deluges! It begins with their Vedas which were the first extant chapter of the story of our race.'²⁷ He was of the firm belief that the Hindus are not only a

rashtra [nation] but a *jati* [race], a born brotherhood. Nothing else counts, it is after all a question of heart. We feel that the same ancient blood that coursed through the veins of *Ram* and *Krishna*, *Buddha* and *Mahavir*, *Nanak* and *Chaitanya*, *Basava* and *Madhava*, of *Robidas* and *Tiruvelluvar* courses throughout Hindudom from

vein to vein, pulsates from heart to heart. We feel we are a *jati*—a race bound together by the dearest ties of blood—and therefore it must be so.²⁸

Savarkar's Hindutva Idolized Hitler and Mussolini

The belief in racial superiority led Savarkar to idolize Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Savarkar's Hindutva had great regard for Hitler and Mussolini. While delivering the Presidential address to the 22nd Session of the Hindu Mahasabha at Madura in 1940 he said:

There is no reason to suppose that Hitler must be a human monster because he passes off as a Nazi or Churchill is a demi-God because he calls himself a democrat. Nazism proved undeniably the saviour of Germany under the set of circumstances Germany was placed in...²⁹

Savarkar did not appreciate criticism of Fascism or Nazism from any quarter. When Jawaharlal Nehru came out with stringent criticism of these two totalitarian ideologies, Savarkar retorted:

Who are we to dictate to Germany, Japan or Russia or Italy to choose a particular form of policy of government simply because we woo it out of academical attraction? Surely Hitler knows better than Pandit Nehru does what suits Germany best. The very fact that Germany or Italy has so wonderfully recovered and grown so powerful as never before at the touch of Nazi or Fascist magical wand is enough to prove that those political 'isms' were the most congenial tonics their health demanded.³⁰

Savarkar went all out to support Hitler's anti-Jewish pogroms and on October 14, 1938 even hinted towards adopting the same solution to the problem of minorities like Muslim and Christians in India: "A Nation is formed by the majority living therein. What did the Jews do in Germany? They being in a minority were driven out from Germany".³¹

Savarkar as Great Defender of Casteism

Savarkar as a prophet of Hindutva defended Casteism in Hindu society and regarded it as a natural component essentially required for making a strong nation. He described Casteism as a 'peculiar mark of our nation'³² which Buddhists had tried to destroy in the ancient past of India thus jeopardizing the building of a Hindu nation. According to him the system of four varnas could not be wiped away even under the Buddhistic sway and later Hindu kings and emperors made it a sacred duty to re-establish the system of four varnas. 'Reaction in favour of this institution grew so strong that our nationality was almost getting identified with it.'³³ Savarkar while defending Casteism as an integral constituent of the Hindu Nation went on to declare that the land where the system of four Varnas did not exist should be known as the Mlechcha country.³⁴ On the contrary *Aryavarta* or land of the Aryas was essentially based on Casteism.³⁵

Savarkar's defence of Casteism is in fact a corollary of his racial approach to the understanding of Hindu Nation. While refuting the criticism that Casteism did check the free flow of blood in the Hindu society he presented an interesting logic by making these complimentary to each other. He argued that it was due to Casteism that purity of Hindu Race was maintained. He wrote:

For the very castes, which you owing to your colossal failure to understand and view them in the right perspective, assert to have barred the common flow of blood into our race, have done so more truly and more effectively as regards the foreign blood than our own... All that the caste system has done is to regulate its noble flood on lines believed—and on the whole rightly believed—by our saintly and patriotic law-givers and kings to contribute most to fertilize and enrich all that was barren and poor, without famishing and debasing all that was flourishing and nobly endowed.³⁶

Interestingly, Savarkar who stood steadfastly in defence of Casteism, also advocated the elevation of the status of the Untouchables in the Hindu society. He organized programmes against Untouchability, at times pleaded for their entry into Hindu temples and for letting them share water wells and ponds with others. This was not due to any egalitarian outlook or urge for providing equality to them but mainly due to the fact that he was alarmed at the numerical loss which the Hindu community had been experiencing due to the steady conversion of the Untouchables to Islam and Christianity which guaranteed them more social equality.³⁷

Moreover, as he himself admitted that due to treating them as outcastes, the then 7 crores strong, 'Hindu people-power' did not stand in 'Our' (High caste Hindus) favour. Savarkar knew that Hindutva would greatly need the services of these Untouchables, as foot soldiers of Hindutva against Muslims and Christians. So while warning Hindutva cadres that if the Untouchables did not remain in their fold, they were going to prove a factor which would bring far more terrible crisis for high caste Hindus, Savarkar warned,

they will not only cease to be beneficial for us but also become an easy means of dividing our house thus proving to be responsible for our boundless loss.³⁸

Indeed the same worry could be seen recurring in the thoughts of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee another contemporary of Savarkar and great luminary of the Hindutva cause. How urgently Hindus needed the support of physical power of the lower castes was clearly visible in the following speech of his:

Let it be remembered that persons belonging to the so-called lower castes are often the source of indomitable strength and courage among the Hindus. It is amongst them more than the others that Hinduism burns in an atmosphere of unselfish devotion and piety

and to allow them to be weakened either socially or economically is to strike at the very root of Hindu consolidation in India.³⁹

Importantly, Savarkar remained a great protagonist of Casteism and worshipper of *Manusmriti* or Codes of Manu throughout his life which were described by him as ‘the most worship-able after Vedas’.

Imperialistic Designs of Hindutva: Hindus to Rule Over the World

Savarkar’s Hindutva also had strong imperialistic ambition of ruling the world. His argument was that if small nations like Spain and Portugal could rule over parts of the world in history, why could not Hindus who were far superior, rule the world?⁴⁰ Savarkar concluded his treatise with the open declaration of the Hindu ambition to rule the world. He wrote:

Twenty-two crores of people [population of India at that time], with India for their basis of operation, for their Fatherland and for their Holyland with such a history behind them, bound together by ties of a common blood and common culture, can dictate their terms to the whole world, A day will come when mankind will have to face the force.⁴¹

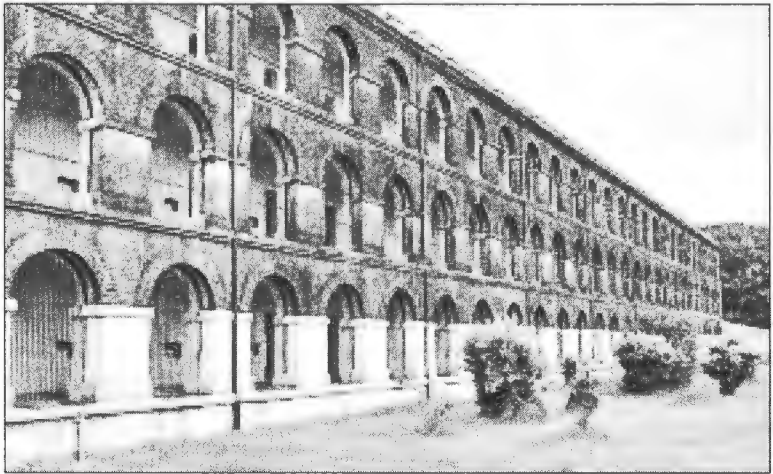
Hindutva of Savarkar was, in deed, and is, political Hinduism which aggressively preached for Hindu Separatism in order to maintain high-caste hegemony over the Indian society. It intends to extend this hegemony to the international arena also. Alarmed by these totalitarian ideas of Savarkar, touted as Hindutva, B. R. Ambedkar, a contemporary of Savarkar, could not avoid commenting:

If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country... [It] is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost.⁴²

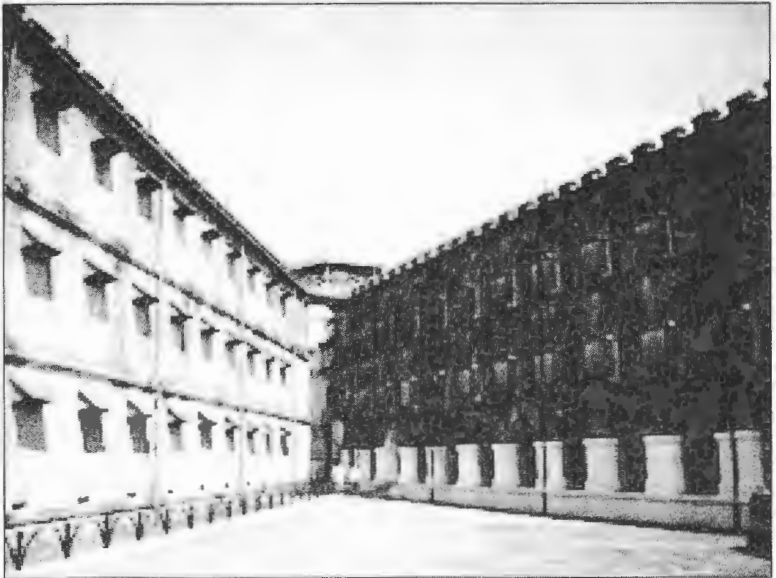
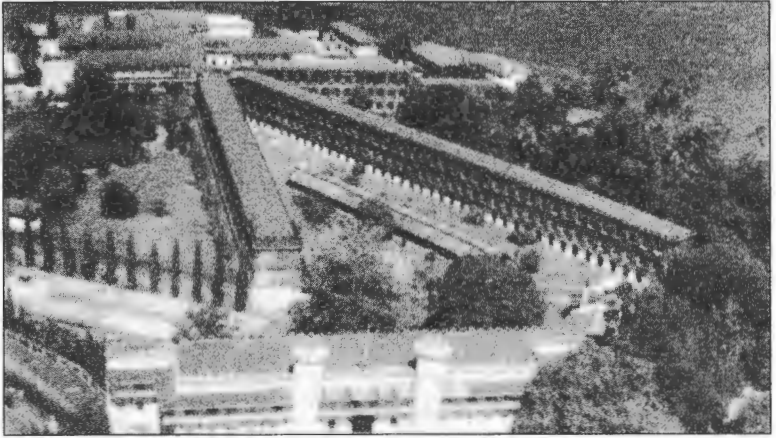
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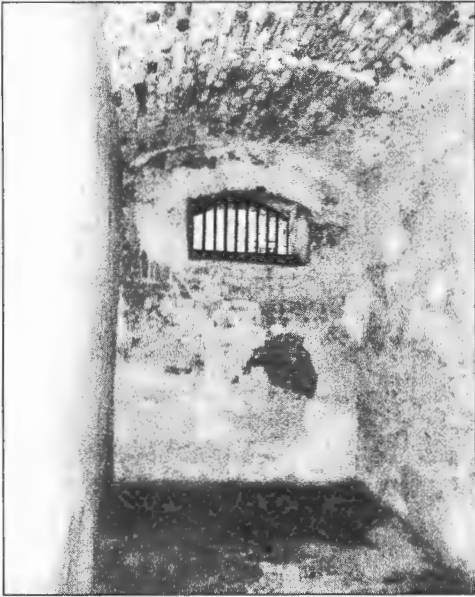
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- 31 Cited in Marzia Casolari, Ibid. Casolari has done pioneering work on the subject of linkages between Maharashtrian Hindu nationalist leaders and Italian Fascism. She notes that "the interest of the Indian Hindu nationalists in fascism and Mussolini must not be considered as dictated by an occasional curiosity, confined to a few individuals; rather it should be considered as the culminating result of the attention that Hindu nationalists, especially in Maharashtra, focused on Italian dictatorship and its leader. To them, fascism appeared to be an example of conservative revolution." Casolari goes on to point out that in the diaries of BS Moonje, available in the Nehru Memorial Museum library, New Delhi, Moonje described in detail a meeting that he had with Mussolini on March 19, 1931. Upon returning from this visit, Moonje remained in close contact with Savarkar and Hedgewar in order to chalk out plans for the militarization of Hindus.
- 32 *Hindutva*, 1923, p. 24
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Cellular Jail



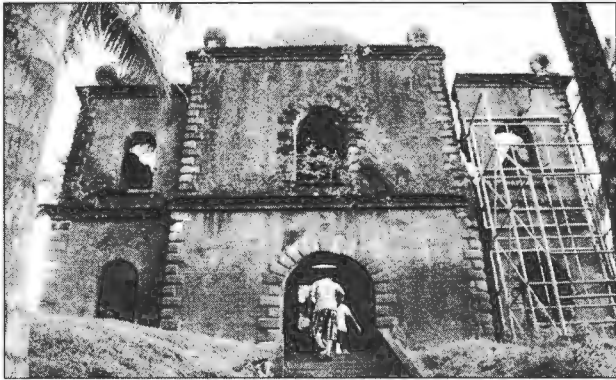
Cellular jail - Wings



Cellular Jail Cell



Cellular Jail- KOLHU - Oil Mill



Cellular Jail - Phansi Ghar



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