

Vir Savarkar : A Real Visionary and Father of Indian Nationalism

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Abstract

Vir Savarkar ranks high in the pantheon of heroic personalities of the Indian freedom struggle. His revolutionary ideas had the power to influence the thinking of people. He firmly believed that the British Government would never let India go out of its subjugation and no amount of peaceful tinkering, based on petitions and deputations that doves in the Indian National Congress had been trying for so many years, would make them change the colonial mindset. It was through forceful methods that freedom could be attained. In order to pursue his new vision to liberate the country he formed a society like Abhinav Bharat and dare to shake the roots of the British empire. He was convinced that freedom had never been attained without war. His revolutionary ideas inspired the Indian youth like Bhagat Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose and instilled their minds with undaunted courage to fight against the British Government. His seminal and motivational work 'First war of Indian Independence' confirms his stature as the father of Indian Nationalism. His revolutionary work while in Europe and his daredevilry are a part of the lore. After being captured by the British he was forced to spend long years of incarceration in the Cellular Jail of Port Blair. But he slugged it out manfully. This crucial and tough time influenced his thoughts and he decided to work in a different mode for social equality and unity of the country. He developed his own conceptions for the future of India which deeply influenced the Indian minds and being discussed even today. Unfortunately, this brave and multifaceted personality remained controversial and neglected in the Indian panorama. His vision for the social equality and unity of India is inspirational always. Based on primary and secondary sources, this paper attempts to highlight the incalculable contribution of Vir Savarkar India's march towards freedom.

Key words : Savarkar, visionary, freedom fighter, Port Blair, social reformer, British, Indian nationalism.

Introduction

Vir Savarkar ranks high in the pantheon of heroic personalities of the Indian freedom struggle. He was a pleasant and humorous man as well as a lecturer, conversationalist, and writer. His revolutionary ideas had power to influence the thinking of people. His personal charm impressed highly to VVS Aiyar and Lala Hardayal.¹

Being loyal to the British, the tongue-tied leaders made a negative impression in Europe and America that Indians were happy to be ruled over by the British.² Savarkar firmly believed that the British Government would never let India go out of its subjugation and no amount of peaceful tinkering, based on petitions and deputations that doves in the Indian National Congress had been trying for so many years, would make them change the colonial mindset. It was through forceful methods that freedom could be attained.

Savarkar's austerity was itself a disciple to others, which easy-going people hated and shunned. He studied all available documents at the India office library and found that the unearthed mystery about the Mutiny was – it was the regular war of princes and people to eject the British out of India. The use of greased cartridges was only the immediate cause of the explosion – the materials for the war had been accumulated since the battle of Plassey.³ It was the holy passion of love of country and religion that inspired the heroes of the war of 1857. It was really amazing and commendable how these heroes planned the organization with such secrecy under the nose of British officials. It is really difficult to find a parallel to the capacity for secret organization displayed by those men who successfully taught the necessity of mutual help and united actions to the Hindu and Muslim and infused the revolutionary spirit among all classes of people – sepoy, police, zamindar, civil officials, peasants, merchants, and bankers.⁴ His seminal and motivational work 'First war of Indian Independence' confirms his stature as the father of Indian Nationalism.

Savarkar was the brightest nationalist ever and convinced that freedom had never been attained

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without war. He always focused on the present therefore his revolutionary ideas influenced the youth especially. To pursue his new vision to liberate the country, he learned to make hand bombs and formed a society like Mitra Mela in 1905 and later Abhinav Bharat and dare to shake the roots of the British empire. In 1905-1906 his secret revolutionary society the Abhinav Bharat spread quickly in Maharashtra and had branches even in Bengal and Punjab.⁵ Mr Arvindo Ghosh and P. Mitra were its leaders. They ran paper like Yugantar. An organization like Anushilan Samiti had been active. He was the favourite student of Tilak in Furguson Collge, Pune.⁶ Savarkar was the first student who was rusticated from Government aided educational institutes in India for participating in Swadeshi movements.⁷ His revolutionary ideas inspired the Indian youth like Bhagat Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose and instilled their minds with undaunted courage to fight against the British Government.

While living in England the Indians behaved like British society but were called Blacks and natives . It was a pity they felt no shame and these words did not hurt their self-respect. They were highly influenced by western culture to the extent that they were ashamed of their own Indian culture, civilization, custom and traditions and considered them useless. This affinity towards English culture started spreading in different parts of India as well. Indians felt inferior themselves and tried to follow the European way of lifestyle. Savarkar asserted that the English were our rulers so we have to learn their habits in detail but we need not underestimate ourselves rather to make changes for our benefit. He rang a bell of India 's glory and inspired Indians to dream of flying Indian flags all over the world once again.⁸

His revolutionary work while in Europe and his daredevilry are a part of the lore. Around a century ago, Savarkar planned a new vision of free and united India and raised India's flag of freedom in England in 1906.⁹ Many youth were studying that time in England but because of their upbringing, they had developed a slavish mentality. No one had told them to fight for freedom. Savarkar described the mental attitude of the majority of students in London and propagated his views of India's freedom. "We lacked revolvers and bombs which could be purchased but how could we buy young men to do our work? It was necessary to persuade Indian youth to join our side".¹⁰ He formed Free India Society in London, Lala Hardayal Madan Lal Dhingra, and Virendra Chattopadhyay were also part of it. Follower of Herbert Spencer and Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Pt Shyam Kishan Varma had bought India House in London where Indian students used to live. Very soon this place became centre of India's freedom movement.¹¹ In London Savarkar came in contact with many active political workers like Dada Bhai Nauroji, Shyam Kishan Varma, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and such other figures who were from different states of India. Shyam Kishan Varma and Madam Cama supported and encouraged Savarkar in England for his mission to liberate India.¹²

Sir Curzon Wylie was murdered by a Punjabi student Madan Lal Dhingra on 1st July 1909. Curzon Wylie was in charge of Indian students in England on behalf of India office. Meanwhile, the revolutionary activities were going on in Bombay in which Savarkar was suspected therefore he was arrested in England by the Bombay police who was tracing him in Europe. When Savarkar was being deported India , he tried to escape from the ship at Marseilles. Though he could not be successful in his plan yet Savarkar's escape diverted world attention on India's problem.¹³

After being captured by the British he was forced to spend long years of incarceration in the Cellular Jail of Port Blair. But he slugged it out manfully. He had his company there with Putin Bihari Bose, the chief of Anushilan Samiti, Virendra Ghosh of Yugantar Samiti, Ashutosh Lahiri and Hem Chandra Das, and other Bengali revolutionary conspirators as a fellow convict. Nearly a hundred or more Sikh and non-Sikh revolutionaries of Gadar Party and other societies were sentenced to death but whose sentence to death was commuted to deportation had come to Andman and suffering the hardships of jail.¹⁴

Savarkar was very logical who knew that in jail confinement he was helpless and could do nothing. So he wrote several mercy petitions to the British Government and ultimately was released on the promise of leaving politics and being loyal to the British by the order of the Interim Ministry of which Mr. Jamnadas Mehta was the member. He had gone at the age of 26; he became a free man once more at the age of 54. He had paid for his love of liberty by himself being in confinement during the best years of his life.¹⁵

This crucial and tough time influenced his thoughts and he decided to work in a different mode for social equality and unity of the country. He denounced the birth-based Chaturvarna system of Hindu society "Just as I felt I should rebel against the foreign rule over Hindustan, I also felt I should rebel against the caste

system and untouchability in Hindustan”.¹⁶ When Savarkar was in Ratnagiri his movements and participation in active politics were restricted but he presided over the Mahar Conference held in Ratnagiri as well as wrote on the social issues.¹⁷ In 1937 he joined Hindu Mahasabha and worked for the unprivileged class. He advocated the scientific approach to social issues and emphasized the cultural unity of India. His revolutionary political activities were criticized yet proved inspirational for all freedom lovers in India. The success of Azad Hind Fauj and the reactions of Indian soldiers forced the British to leave India. He developed his conceptions for the future of India which deeply influenced the Indian minds and being discussed even today. Savarkar always had a vision of a strong India and today we are having the world's largest army. Former Indira Gandhi recognized and hailed the legacy of Veer Savarkar and said “Savarkar's daring defiance of the British Government has its importance in the annals of our freedom movements.” Unfortunately, this brave and multifaceted personality remained controversial and neglected always in the history textbooks. His vision for the social equality and unity of India is inspirational always.

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