

Veer Savarkar- the thought

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ABSTRACT

Veer Savarkar's personality is an integral mixture of three very different traits - revolutionary, poet and intellectual reformer. It is generally held that Savarkar's life was a tragedy because he was too far ahead of his time. But during the last two- three decades condition in the country is changing rapidly. The paper discusses these three traits of veer Savarkar and shows how this dynamic person is not just an individual but a thought that can change and guide our society.

Key words: Veer Savarkar, revolutionary, poet, writer, reformer.

Mr. Barack Hussein Obama the first African-American President of USA in his presidential address (2009) says -

'We are in the midst of a season of trails....Yet the story of America is one of adversity, reconciliation in the face of discord, and we know that there is purpose for everything under heaven.this legacy is not simply a birth right, it is a glorious burden!'

A nation that has been in existence for just two centuries considers its history as a glorious burden! And we, who are the inheritors of a timeless civilization, feel history to be a burden. Friends, I strongly feel that it is time to redefine and rewrite history. In redefining and rewriting history from Indian Perspective, we need to look at Savarkar's concept of history and his writing of history, which includes facets of human life-material, moral and spiritual and not just dates. Veer Savarkar's personality is an integral mixture of three very different traits- revolutionary, poet and intellectual reformer. It is generally held that Savarkar's life was a tragedy because he was too far ahead of his time. But during the last two- three decades condition in the country is changing rapidly. Thoughts of Savarkar, which were yesterday rejected because they were thought to be too radical, are today finding growing acceptance. Savarkar's prophetic words, *I shall prove a Prophet*, are proving true. The time has come for Savarkar *The Thought*. It is a gentle breeze today but it will be a tornado tomorrow. The paper focuses on Savarkar as a writer and the thoughts and philosophy that originate from his various writings.

Swatantrya-Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born in 1883, that is 134 years ago. Today he is remembered as one of the foremost revolutionaries of Indian struggle of independence. He had a multifaceted personality. He was not only a fearless revolutionary but also a great orator and a writer with unparalleled literary gift for prose and poetry. From his school days Savarkar was a voracious reader. He had a sharp penetrating intellect and an excellent memory. His literary contribution includes newsletters, articles translation works, historical and biographical novels and poems. He went to Pune in 1902 and was a student of Fergusson College. At this junction of his life he was greatly influenced by Tilak and Mr.S.M.Paranjape. In 1906 he was awarded a scholarship and left for London. From London he started sending newsletters to Marathi papers at home. A published collection of these newsletters runs into 122 printed pages. He also wrote articles in *Gaelic America* published by Irish patriots in New York. These articles were translated in Germany, French, Portuguese, Chinese and Russian.

Savarkar was a revolutionary, an outstanding orator and an enthused historian. Well, it would be right to say that, he was a maker of history as well as a writer of it, who used history as a means of national awakening. G. S. Sardesai, the famous historian of Baroda, once said to Savarkar himself, *'We are after all just narrators of history, but you are a real maker of history'*. He was a historiographer who could use history for guiding the nation. His writing of history is not just a collection of facts and dates, not an intellectual dissection or distortion of the past events, but his approach to history is positive and creative and Indian. The Indian educator, Madura, says-

'We have had the Muslim view; the European view; the Missionary view and yet no Hindu view. Mr. Savarkar's dramatic presentation serves as a healthy antidote.'

Savarkar wrote books like *Joseph Mazini* (Biography of an Italian revolutionary), *1857 Che Swantantra Samar* (The first Independence struggle of India of 1857), *Shikhanchaltihis* (History of the Sikhs), *Mazijanmathep* (A narration of his jail term in the Andamans), *SanyastKhadga* (a play), *KaalaPani* (BlackWater), *Mala Kay Tyache* (What is it to me), *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* and *Gomantak*. Savarkar's three plays include *Usshaap*, *Sanyastakhadga* and *Uttarkriya*. They are notable for their dialogues and dramatic content. Savarkar also wrote three books on history. They are *The Indian War of Independence 1857*, *Hindupadpaadshaahi* and *Six Glorious Epochs*. These books disclose his deep learning and insight into history, desire for detail and inspirational but well-researched content.

No doubt his first important book was *1854: The First Indian War of Independence*. This book proved to be a work that inspired the whole nation. His pen was like a sword. He penned his 1857, sitting right in the lion's den i.e. in London. This book was a *history bomb* which aimed to blast the enemy. In this book for the first time we see an Indian approach to history. The events of 1857, which were called *Mutiny* by the English historians were given the name of freedom struggle by Savarkar. His '1857', literary became a gospel of revolution. Finding it impossible to get the original Marathi text printed anywhere in India or out side, because of the ban by the British Government it was translated into English and was smuggled out. Thanks to Savarkar the sense of *Mutiny* was itself changed. The change of value is the first thing that comes to mind when we think about Savarkar approach to history. However, it is our tragedy that it took us 50 years, to change the word *Mutiny* in our history text-books. For the same reason he wrote *The History of the Sikhs*. He wanted to make the Sikh soldiers in the British Indian Army conscious of their duty towards their motherland. His objective in writing history was to inspire his people.

In Andaman jail he used to keep notes by scratching with a nail on the walls of his cell. All this soul – enthralling poems runs into some 13,500 lines. In one of his poems *Saagarahe* writes –

I miss the love of the mango tree, the flowers in my garden back home the blossoming creepers and the blooming rose... I feel desolate...

Oh Ocean, I am pining for her... Take me back to my motherland

Oh Ocean, I am pining for her...'

In *Jayostute* (Victory to you!) he writes -

'Death for your, oh motherland, is life and life without you is death'

At this time this is a literary truth. Savarkar lived the poem. No doubt his legacy in form of some of his poems will always motivate generations to come. After his release from prison Savarkar wrote about his experience in jail in the book titled *MyTransportation for life*, the book no doubt is a classic deserving an honoured place in world literature.

While he was serving his term of imprisonment in the Ratnagiri Jail, he wrote *Hindutwaa* book born out of his deep meditation and thinking of many long years of observing the society. Here in this book he has traced the glorious history of the term *Hindu* right from Vedic times. He convincingly and with solid proof, shows how the term *Hindu* was used both by the ancient Hindus and contemporary foreigners to mean the Hindu *Rashtra* and not a Hindu community as it is mistakenly or maliciously used today.

After his conditional release from prison at Shirpur - Ratnagiri, he wrote his famous book *Hindu Pad-Padashshi*. This book stands apart. Savarkar himself in the forwarding to this book says that, the Maratha movement transcends the limits of provinciality and that it deserves Pan-Hindu importance and treatment. Later on, after Independence he wrote his famous *Bharateeya Jtihasted Saha Soneri Pane* in Marathi. The book has been translated into Hindi (LokhittParashanUttar Pradesh), English (*Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*) and other languages. This book was written with the purpose of infusing pride in the Hindu psyche and to disperse the defeatist psychology drilled into our mind by the foreign historians.

In the first four chapters of *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, Savarkar explores the myth that Alexander was the world conqueror as he could not even cross the western border of India. While in the fifth Glorious Epochs the diabolic nature of the two-pronged religious-political aggression of the Muslims is explained at great length along with its ultimate downfall and the persistence of the Hindu warriors and the Hindu society in spite of the atrocities of the Muslim rulers. While in the Sixth Glorious Epoch Christian

domination under the British leadership is shown to have met its end. Savarkar never spares them. He blames them for their acts and for not understanding the events happening around them in their proper perspective. He knew that the foreign Historians were misguiding the nation and the politicians were also doing the same.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar in his *History and Culture of the Indian People* in his preface to the VI- volume *The Delhi Sultanate*(1960) says –

'The real and the effective means of solving a problem, is to know and understand the facts that give rise to it, and not to ignore them by hiding the head, ostrich-like into the sands of fiction.'

This insight Savarkar had. He could not close his eyes to the way Hindu interests were sacrificed by our national leaders for appeasing the minorities. Dr. Majumdar further says-

'A fear of wounding the susceptibilities of the sister community and historians, and not only prevents them from speaking out the truth, but also bring down their wrath upon those who have the courage to do so'.

From the age of eighteen to eighty Savarkar had been writing on history. But he was neither a mere compiler of historical accounts for the students nor was he interested in fixing dates and places and such other details, as the research scholars in history generally are. He was essentially a commentator of history, throwing new light or adding new insight to a particular happenings and characters of history. But yet he never perverted nor did he tamper with the historical facts. He accepted the proven historical facts as they were. He studied them carefully, understood their antecedents and values and developed a deep insight to it. He looked upon history as a trust worthy friend and guide for future course of action.

Savarkar's views on *How to read and write history- particularly by an Hindu Sanghatanistare* in Marathi. Here he advices the reader to take a broad sweep of historical account right from the earliest times to the present day, to understand carefully how the Aryans spread over the whole of India, assimilating different cultures into a single all India Hindu culture. In his opinion, the writing or reading of history should not become dry, unresponsive, valueless and emotionless. History he feels should be looked upon as a great panorama of life, which should thrill us, chill us as the occasion demands. The ultimate aim of a historian, he believes is to give value-based historical perspectives to an historical event, a perspective that is befitting the majority and its sentiments and culture.

Consequently, in a nut-shell we can conclude that Savarkar believed in value-based Historical approach. Arun Shourie in his *Eminent Historian* (1998) tells the same. We should not allow any more mischief with our history. The great philosopher Arnold Toynbeesays –

'Today we are living in the transitional chapter of the world's history, but it is already becoming clear that a Western beginning will have an Indian ending, if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race'

I would like to conclude with Savarkar's lines –

'Those historians who deny this basic fact of history are fooling themselves and are also fooling others. They have yet to learn the real history.'

112(1967, Organizer).

Accordingly, history written by political motive should be rewritten, redefined and rediscovered with a spiritual reality and splendid ideas which coalesce into a common identity. Savarkar was a warrior, a reformer, a philosopher and a writer, a multi-faced person. This multidimensional person is not an individual, but a thought, that will guide the Hindu society for years to come.

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