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Social Reformer Savarkar

Swatantryaveer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (28 May 1883 to 26 Feb 1966) was a fearless freedom fighter, social reformer, writer, dramatist, historian, political leader, and philosopher. As much of his literature is in Marathi, his thoughts and achievements in several spheres are mainly unknown outside Maharashtra. Savarkar is primarily known as a revolutionary freedom fighter and exponent of Hindutva. It is not widely known that he was also an outstanding social reformer. His contribution to the field of social reform is relevant even today.



Savarkar carried out a vigorous campaign for social reform through his thoughts, words, and actions. Savarkar wanted to start a temple that would be freely open to the Hindus of all castes. On Magh vadya 14 (Mahashivaratri) day, i.e., 10 March 1929, Shankaracharya Dr. Kurtakoti laid the foundation stone of this temple. The Patitpavan Mandir symbolizes Savarkar's lifelong commitment to social reform. Savarkar was strictly against the idea of untouchability and caste discrimination. His thoughts were, "Building separate and exclusive new temples for untouchables is not the right way of eradicating untouchability, what to speak of temples, having different schools for untouchables is also, in a sense, harmful. The liberation of untouchables is not theirs alone; it is the liberation of those touchable whose hands and minds had been soiled by this injustice. He believed there was a need to build pan-Hindu temples that were freely open to all Hindus irrespective of their caste rather than creating separate and exclusive temples for untouchables. While it is essential to build new pan -Hindu temples, it is equally important to throw open old temples to all Hindus. (1929, *Samagra Savarkar vangmaya*, Vol.3, p.491-493)

Savarkar worked hard to eradicate untouchability; he believed that “No one should ever think that a certain Hindu caste is high or that another is low. He says the notion of high and low will be determined by over merit; every Hindu child has but one caste at birth-Hindu. Other than that, consider no other sub-caste. ‘Janmanaa Jaayate Hinduhu’ (‘everyone is a Hindu by birth’)! In truth, every man has but one caste at birth-human.(1930, Jatyuchchedak nibandha or essays on abolition of caste, Samagra Savarkar vangmaya, Vol. 3, p. 479)

Savarkar explains the meaning of Sanatan Dharma, "When we append the term 'Sanatana' to 'Dharma,' we apply it to the principles and philosophies that expound the nature and the mutual relation between God, individual and creation (Ishwar, Jeev, and Jagat). For the nature of the First principle (aadishakti), the First Cause of creation, and the First Laws are truly Sanatana, eternal, and have stood the test of time. In 1923, Veer Savarkar wrote his seminal book 'Essentials of Hindutva' in Ratnagiri Jail, where he was kept for nearly two years after being brought to the Indian mainland from the Andamans.

Veer Savarkar inspired an armed struggle through this inspirational and interesting work, “1857 – The first war of Indian Independence”, in Marathi and English. A leading revolutionary himself was attracted and inspired by the burning zeal, heroism, bravery, suffering, and tragic fate of the leaders of 1857. He decided to re-interpret the story and relate it thoroughly with the help of all the material available at the time.

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References :

- 1) www.savarkar.org
- 2) Vol. 1: The Indian War of Independence 1857