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## Veer Savarkar: A Brave Reformist

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the legendary leader of India's independence movement whose unyielding dedication to the cause of freedom etched a permanent mark on Indian history. With his unshakeable resolve to liberate his motherland, Savarkar's life was a testament to the unrelenting pursuit of a dream that defied the constraints of time and space.



Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born on May 28, 1883, in the village of Bhagur near Nashik in Maharashtra, India. He was the third of four kids who were raised in a Hindu Brahmin household. His father, Damodar Savarkar, was a teacher, while his mother, Radhabai, was a religious personality. His parents fostered in him a strong sense of national identity and an interest in reform in society. Tragedy occurred shortly into his life as he lost both his parents at a young age. His elder

brother, Ganesh, subsequently referred to as Babarao, was instrumental in molding Savarkar's character and perspective.

Savarkar completed his further studies at Fergusson College in Pune, from where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree. Here, he created the student society "Mitra Mela," which ultimately transformed into the revolutionary organization "Abhinav Bharat Society." The society's objective was to create pride and solidarity among Indians while also preparing them for an armed struggle against British rule.

Savarkar accepted a scholarship to study law in London in 1906. However, his major attention remained on the Indian independence cause. He joined the India House, a hostel for Indian students that also served as a hub for revolutionary activities. During this period, he wrote "The First War of Indian Independence" a key work that reframed the 1857 revolt as a nationalist struggle rather than a mutiny.

He continued his radical actions, eventually getting detained in 1909 over allegedly plotting to murder British officer A.M.T. Jackson. Savarkar received a sentence of life in jail and was sent to Kala Pani in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where he served a decade under brutal conditions.

Savarkar's worldview was founded on the notion of Hindutva, which he defined in his 1923 pamphlet, "Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?" He envisioned India as a Hindu Rashtra (country), emphasizing the Hindus' cultural unity. His opinions on Hindutva have been both powerful and divisive, impacting the debate over Indian nationalism and identity.

Savarkar's support for complete independence (Purna Swaraj) and his demand for military resistance set him apart from other contemporary politicians who preferred milder measures. He was also an advocate for social reform, calling for the removal of untouchability and caste prejudice.

Savarkar was a renowned reformist who worked tirelessly to eliminate untouchability within Hindu society. In 1931, he made a remarkable move by building the Patit Pavan Mandir in Ratnagiri, a temple that welcomed Hindus

regardless of caste, notably untouchables. This was a daring move at a period when untouchability was strongly ingrained in Indian culture.

Savarkar believed that social unity was necessary for national unity. He relentlessly battled for equal rights for untouchables and tried to uplift them, emphasizing the value of education and inclusion in mainstream culture. His initiatives were part of a larger push to modernize the Hindu community and end prejudice based on caste.

Savarkar's commitment to social reform was evident in his tireless efforts to break the "seven shackles" that had weakened Hindu society: sparshabandi (untouchability), shuddhibandi (prohibition of reconversion), betibandi (prohibition of inter-caste marriages), rotibandi (prohibition of inter-caste dining), sindhubandi (prohibition of seafaring), vyavasayabandi (prohibition of following the profession of other castes), and vedoktabandi (prohibition of performing Vedic rituals).

To guarantee that untouchability was eradicated from households, Savarkar visited numerous homes during Hindu festivals like Dussehra and Makar Sankranti, accompanied by people from other castes, and distributed customary sweets. He organized large haldi-kumkum meetings of Hindu women, in which ladies from the untouchable castes administered kumkum to women from 'upper' castes.

Savarkar organized a bonfire of the untouchability statue on February 22, 1933. He supported Dr. Ambedkar's Mahad and Nashik efforts against untouchability. Even after being released from Ratnagiri, Savarkar continued to struggle for social reform, frequently visiting untouchables' houses as Hindu Mahasabha president.

Savarkar's unwavering commitment to social reform is best summed up in his own words: "As far as I am concerned, so that I am not torn about the choice between popularity and the public good, I have this stamped on my mind: Varamjanahitamdhyeyamkevalam na janastuti (It is better to think only of the welfare of people, not receive adulations from them)".

Veer Savarkar was a complicated and powerful character in Indian history, known for both substantial contributions to the liberation struggle and controversial actions and views. His life and legacy are still being contested, with both fans and adversaries giving their opinions. While his early years were spent dedicated to the

freedom struggle, his later years saw a shift towards Hindutva. Finally, Savarkar's legacy serves as a reminder of India's historical complexity and difficulties, which continue to impact its politics today.

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