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Contribution of Freedom Fighters in Freedom of India : Vinayak Damodar Savarkar

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Introduction

India's journey towards freedom was tough. But, the freedom fighters of the country never lost their hope. The people who selflessly sacrificed their blood and even their lives are known as freedom fighters. Fortunately, a fair share of freedom fighters is present in every country. India is a country blessed with a large number of freedom fighters. These Indian freedom fighters made sacrifices that cannot even be imagined. Their sacrifices and strive for freedom cannot even be put into words. Their sacrifice of blood and soul has left the generations after them in their debt. From starting several revolutionary freedom movements to opting for the path of non-violence to attain their country's freedom, the freedom fighters took several different paths and finally won India's freedom from the British on 15th August 1947.

Early life

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born on 28 May 1883 in the Marathi Chitpavan Brahmin Hindu family of Damodar and Radhabai Savarkar in the village of Bhagur, near the city of Nashik, Maharashtra. He had three other siblings namely Ganesh, Narayan, and a sister named Maina. Savarkar began his activism as a high school student. When he was 12, he led fellow students in an attack on his village mosque following Hindu-Muslim riots, stating: "We vandalized the mosque to our heart's content." In 1903, in Nashik, Savarkar and his older brother Ganesh Savarkar founded the Mitra Mela, an underground revolutionary organization, which became Abhinav Bharat Society in 1906. Abhinav Bharat's main objectives were to overthrow British rule and reviving Hindu pride.

Student activist

Savarkar continued his political activism as a student at Fergusson College in Pune. Savarkar was greatly influenced by the radical Nationalist leader, Lokmanya Tilak. Tilak was in turn impressed with the young student and helped him obtain the Shivaji Scholarship in 1906 for his law studies in London.

While a student of law in London (1906–10), Savarkar helped to instruct a group of Indian revolutionaries in methods of sabotage and assassination that associates of his had apparently learned from expatriate Russian revolutionaries in Paris. During this period, he wrote *The Indian War of Independence, 1857* (1909), in which he took the view that the Indian Mutiny of 1857 was the first expression of Indian mass rebellion against British colonial rule.

In March 1910 Savarkar was arrested on various charges relating to subversion and incitement to war and was sent to India for trial and convicted. In a second trial he was convicted of his alleged complicity in the assassination of a British district magistrate in India, and, after sentencing, he was transported to the Andaman Islands for detention "for life." He was brought back to India in 1921 and released from detention in 1924.

While imprisoned he wrote *Hinditva: Who Is a Hindu?* (1923), coining the term Hindutva ("Hinduness"), which sought to define Indian culture as a manifestation of Hindu values; this concept grew to become a major tenet of Hindu nationalist ideology.

Savarkar resided in Ratnagiri until 1937, when he joined the Hindu Mahasabha, which militantly defended the Hindus' claims of religious and cultural supremacy over Indian Muslims. He served as president of the Mahasabha for seven years. In 1943 he retired to Bombay. When Mohandas K. Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a former member of the Mahasabha, Savarkar was implicated, but he was acquitted in his subsequent trial because of insufficient evidence.

Savarkar's contributions as a social reformer

Savarkar built Patit Pavan Mandir in the Ratnagiri district to allow entry to all Hindus, including Dalits.

According to Savarkar, the rigid caste system "deserves to be thrown into the dustbins of history".

Savarkar wanted to break away from caste-based vocational rigidity and encourage persons to pursue any vocation of their choice based on aptitude and ability. In the absence of motivation of competition, or lack of aptitude, Savarkar believed, "merely following what one's father did, will make one both complacent and unproductive."

Savarkar wanted to break away from the taboo on inter-caste dining. He had said, "Religion is in the heart, the soul, the spirit; not the stomach!" He also promoted inter-caste marriage.

Veer Savarkar wanted to popularize Vedic literature to everyone, not only to a particular caste. He called Vedic literature civilizational knowledge for the entire human race and India's unique gift to mankind.

Savarkar believed in global mobility and the need for Indians to venture out into foreign lands so as to "bring back the best of the world and carry the fragrance of India and her culture to every corner of the globe."

Veer Savarkar underscored was the need to develop a scientific temper. "We are 200 years behind Europe", he had remarked adding, "It is through science, modern thoughts and industrialization that we can ensure that every man woman in India will have a job to do, food to eat, clothes to wear and a happy life to lead."

Opposing stand during the Quit India Movement

Under Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha openly opposed the call for the Quit India Movement and boycotted it officially. He asked all the Hindu sabha members in the government to support the British government instead.

Hindu Mahasabha also opposed Gandhi's initiative to hold talks with Jinnah in 1944. Savarkar strongly attacked the British and Congress for making concessions for the Muslim separatists.

After the resignation of the Congress ministries in protest of Linlithgow's decision to drag India into WWII without their consultation, the Hindu Mahasabha, under Savarkar's presidency, joined hands with the Muslim League and other parties to form governments, in certain provinces like Sindh, NWFP, and Bengal.

The 'two nations in one country' theory

When he gave 'the two nations in one country' theory, he propounded that the Hindus and Muslims, though different can bury their differences and unite for India.

That's the reason he had opposed INC's acceptance of the partition of India.

Note: The two nations theory adopted by Jinnah was given by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi: The charge and acquittal

In 1948, he was charged as the co-conspirator for the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Nathuram Godse was a member of Hindu Mahasabha and a prolific follower of Savarkar's ideas. Savarkar was however later acquitted from the charge due to lack of evidence.

Post-Independence India and Savarkar

He was under the constant scrutiny of the public after Gandhiji's assassination. Later, he was also arrested by the government for making "Hindu nationalist speeches" but was released after agreeing to give up political activities. He continued addressing the social and cultural elements of Hindutva.

After the death of his wife in 1963, from February 1966, Savarkar gave up consuming food, water, and medicines. According to him, giving up life when one was no longer useful to society was better than waiting for death.

He died on **February 26, 1966**, due to ill health.

Legacy of Veer Savarkar:

Savarkar was the first political leader to set independence as India's goal in the 1900s. Almost immediately after joining college, he had started organizing and spreading his anti-British and revolutionary ideas through his efficient oratory and writing skills.

He was also known as **Swatantryaveer** or **Veer Savarkar** which was earned due to his courageous behaviour. He was a proponent of a **united India**, which was inclusive and diverse — an India that was an organic result of all its diverse cultures. He believed in the idea of inclusivity for mobilizing the Indian masses.

Savarkar also openly embraced the "**Era of Machines**" and warned the Indian leaders to learn from Europe's mistakes.

His futuristic approach to Indian cinema, too, was commendable. He believed in the innovative spirit of the human mind.

Even though his ideology on Hindu Rashtra and Hindutva is controversial, Savarkar's ideas of modernity, social and religious reforms, cultivation of scientific temper, and embracing technological tools continue to be relevant for building a new India.

Some of his other literary works include:

- Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History
- My Transportation for Life
- Kale Pani
- 1857 che Svatantrya Samar
- Maazi Janmathep
- Moplyanche Banda (about Moplah rebellion of 1921)
- Hindu Rashtra Darshan

Conclusion

No matter how high one speaks about the role and contribution of freedom fighters in India's freedom struggle, it will never be enough. They were the ones who took every possible and even the impossible way to get freedom for their country. The contribution of the freedom fighters can never be expressed in any set of words.

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