

### CHAPTER III : V. D. SAVARKAR AND HIS CONCEPT OF HINDU RASHTRAVAD

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, born at Bhagur in Maharashtra on May 28, 1883, was the second of the three sons of a Maharashtrian, Damodarpant by name, and was hardly known for his brilliance as a school student. However, he is said to have a phenomenal memory enriched with knowledge available to a voracious reader.

After his initial schooling at Bhagur, Savarkar was sent to Nasik for English education. Savarkar passed his matriculation examination in December, 1901 and left Nasik for Poona in January, 1902. Savarkar joined the Fergusson College, Poona, in January, 1902. There he was attracted by the revolutionary ideologies.

Savarkar made his presence felt in the college by his youthful enthusiasm and his scholarly attitude. He became an instant leader. He started working with secret revolutionary organizations in Poona. "While at college he had convened in

1904 a meeting of some two hundred selected members of the *Mitra Mela*<sup>1</sup> - a revolutionary party. The name of his party was later changed to *Abhinava Bharat*. Keeping the leadership of *Abhinava Bharat* under the supervision of his comrades, namely, Bapat, Hemchandra Das and Mirza Abbas, Savarkar left for London on June 9, 1906 for higher studies.

In England, Savarkar continued his revolutionary activities and set up a front organization named 'Free India Society'. However, Savarkar's stay in England came to an end when he was arrested on 13 March, 1910 in connection with a conspiracy in India and sent to Bombay. After a long trial he was sentenced to fifty years' imprisonment and sent to Andamans. Savarkar was later transferred to Ratnagiri jail and was finally released on 6 January, 1924 after completing fourteen years in jail in sub-human conditions with a shattered health. The release was conditional and Savarkar was ordered not to leave Ratnagiri. His internment came to an end on 10 May, 1937. It was in the Ratnagiri jail that Savarkar's most important work *Hindutva* was written and sent out secretly and was published under the pen name *Mahratta*.

After his release from the Ratnagiri jail, Savarkar joined the Hindu Mahasabha. He became the president of the party. In the words of Dhananjay Keer :

“It was in the fitness of things that such an inspired personality was elected unanimously to the presidentship of the Hindu Mahasabha, .... for its nineteenth Annual Session which was held at Ahmedabad on 30th of December, 1937. This was the highest honour that the Hindus could confer upon him. Savarkar made the greatest sacrifice of his life in joining the Hindu Mahasabha and staked his name and his all for the cause of the Hindus.”<sup>2</sup>

From 1937 to 1947 Savarkar had strained every nerve to keep India united. His efforts failed. As a result he suffered from a lot of frustration, pain and anger. This had also adversely affected his health. Though he gave what he considered very valuable advice and timely warning to the the new rulers at New Delhi, there were no listeners among them.

Savarkar breathed his last on 26 February, 1966, leaving behind him a treasure of theorizations on *Hindutva*, Indian nationalism and such other themes that are so relevant even today to men and women fighting for a strong, united India. His theoretical writings are considered by many to have Hindu revivalist overtones, whereas many others dispute such an evaluation.

### **Savarkar on *Hindutva***

Savarkar in his important work Hindutva : Who is a Hindu? developed the core of his philosophy on the concept of *Hindutva*. According to Savarkar *Hindutva* was not a word but a history. It was not only a history of the spiritual or religious life of the Indian people but a history of the entire civilization. *Hinduism* is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of *Hindutva*.<sup>3</sup>

In order to make *Hindutva* a grand concept Savarkar held that by an 'ism' it was generally meant a theory or a code more or less based on spiritual or religious dogma or system. In order to investigate into the essential significance of

*Hindutva*, Savarkar did not primarily concern himself with any particular theocratic or religious dogma or creed. He held that had not linguistic usage stood in the way then 'Hinduness' would have certainly been a better word than 'Hinduism' as a near parallel to *Hindutva*.<sup>4</sup>

Savarkar was of the opinion that *Hindutva* embraced all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of the Hindu race. He held that to understand the significance of this term *Hindutva*, one should understand first the essential meaning of the word 'Hindu' itself and 'realize how it came to exercise such imperial sway over the hearts of millions of mankind and won a loving allegiance from the bravest and best of them.'<sup>5</sup> However, Savarkar felt it imperative to point out that he was by no means attempting a definition or even a description of the more limited, less satisfactory and essentially sectarian term 'Hinduism'.<sup>6</sup>

Savarkar admitted that the concern of the theoreticians had been more with what would have been or what should be. Savarkar was not opposed to this kind of inquiry which in his opinion was "necessary and at times

more stimulating".<sup>7</sup> However, he was more emphatic on the point that one should first get a firm hold of what actually was. In his own words :

“We must try, therefore, to be on our guard so that in our attempt to determine the essentials of *Hindutva* we be guided entirely by the actual contents of the word as it stands at present. So although the root meaning of the word Hindu like the sister epithet Hindi may mean only an Indian, yet as it is we would be straining the usage of words too much - we fear, to the point of breaking - if we call a Mohammedan a Hindu because of his being a resident of India.”<sup>8</sup>

However, Savarkar did not rule it out as an impossibility. On the contrary, he held that at some future time the word Hindu might come to indicate a citizen of India<sup>9</sup> and nothing else. He was of the opinion that such a historical situation would only arise when ‘all cultural and religious bigotry had disbanded its forces pledged to aggressive egoism’<sup>10</sup>

and religions ceased to be 'isms' and became 'merely the common fund of eternal principles'<sup>11</sup> that would create a common platform on which the state could rest majestically and firmly. However, Savarkar opined that such a noble possibility was extremely remote at that time. So it was prudent to meet the reality.

Savarkar held that in reality cultural or national unity could not afford to loosen the bonds, especially those of a common name and a common banner, that were the mighty sources of organic cohesion and strength. There was no sign of other 'ism's disowning their special dogmas which landed them into 'dangerous war cries'.<sup>12</sup>

Savarkar opined that an American might become a citizen of India : "He would certainly be entitled, if 'bonafide', to be treated as our *Bharatiya* or Hindi, a countryman and a fellow citizen of ours".<sup>13</sup> Savarkar was of the opinion that he should adopt Indian culture and history, inherit Indian blood and should come to look upon the land not only as the land of his love but even of his worship. Otherwise, he could not get himself incorporated into the Hindu fold. In Savarkar's own words :

“For although the first requisite of *Hindutva* is that he be a citizen of Hindusthan either by himself or through his forefathers, yet it is not the only requisite qualification of it, as the term Hindu has come to mean much more than its geographical significance.”<sup>14</sup>

According to Savarkar every person was a Hindu who regarded this land as his ‘Fatherland’ as well as his ‘Holyland’, i.e. the land of the origin of his religion.<sup>15</sup> Savarkar held that the followers of ‘*Vaidicism, Sanatanism, Jainism, Buddhism, Lingaitism, Sikhism, the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Dev Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj* and such other religions of *Hindusthani* origin’, were Hindus and constituted ‘Hindudom’.<sup>16</sup>

Savarkar opined that the Indian Muslims, Christians, Jews, Parsees were excluded from the right to claim themselves as Hindus, in spite of India being their ‘Fatherland’. Similarly, though the Japanese, the Chinese and other nationals considered India as their ‘Holyland’, yet they were not considered as Hindu people because this land was not their ‘Fatherland’, i.e., the land of their forefathers.<sup>17</sup> So, according



to Savarkar, a person would be considered Hindu, i.e., a normal citizen of *Hindusthan*, if he or she fulfilled two criteria of *Hindutva*.

Savarkar defined *Hindutva* as not only the spiritual or religious history of the Hindus, but the history in full pervasion. Hinduism was only a derivative, a fraction, a part of *Hindutva*. He observed that *Hindutva* was not particularly theocratic, a religious dogma or a creed. It embraced all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of the Hindu race. Savarkar stated that :

“Forty centuries, if not more, had been at work to mould it as it is. Prophets and poets, lawyers and lawgivers, heroes and historians, have thought, lived, fought and died just to have it spelled thus.”<sup>18</sup>

Savarkar's main argument in his book *Hindutva* was that the Aryans who settled in India at the dawn of history already formed a nation later embodied in the Hindus. Their *Hindutva*, according to him, rested on three pillars : geographical unity, racial features and a common culture.

Savarkar minimized the importance of religious criterion in the definition of a Hindu by claiming that Hinduism was only one of the attributes of 'Hinduness'.

The notion of territory was at the heart of Savarkar's ideological construct but not in the same way as in the universalist conceptions of nationalism; for Savarkar, the territory of India could not be dissociated from Hindu culture and the Hindu people. In his eyes, Hindus were preeminently the descendants of the 'intrepid Aryans (who) made it (the subcontinent) their home and lighted the first sacrificial fire on the bank of the Indus',<sup>19</sup> a river which he considered to be the western border of the Hindu nation. Savarkar's view that the Indus was the frontier of the Hindu nation was part of a broader reinterpretation of the word 'Hindu' or 'Sindhu', the letters 'h' and 's' being interchangeable in Sanskrit :

"Sindhu in Sanskrit does not only mean the Indus but also the sea – which girdles the southern peninsula – so that this one word Sindhu points out almost all frontiers of the land at a single stroke and so the epithet Sindhusthan calls up the image of our whole

Motherland : the land that is between  
Sindhu and Sindhu – from the Indus to the  
sea.”<sup>20</sup>

For Savarkar a Hindu was, therefore, an inhabitant of the zone between the rivers, the seas and the Himalayas ‘so strongly entrenched that no other country in the world is so perfectly designed by the fingers of nature as a geographical unit.’<sup>21</sup> This was why, in the Vedic era, the first Aryans developed there ‘the sense of unity of a people’ and even a ‘sense of nationality’.<sup>22</sup> Here we perceive an ethnic logic, i.e., the enclosed character of Hindusthan was described as the factor that determined the social unity of a population marked by intermarriage.

Savarkar emphasized that his was not a territorial conception of nationalism as the stress on geographical unity might have suggested. Savarkar held that the Hindus were not merely the citizens of the Indian state because they were united not merely by the bonds of love they bore to a common motherland but also by the bonds of a common blood. They were not only a nation but a race – *jati*. According to Savarkar, a race or *jati* was determined by a common origin, possessing

a common blood. He held that all Hindus claimed to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers'.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, Savarkar rejected any form of nation – state based on an abstract social contract and thereby comprising individualized citizens dwelling within the country's administrative frontiers. In contrast with the universalist and territorial pattern of nationalism he emphasized the ethnic and racial substance of the Hindu nation. Savarkar's racial argument reflects the influence of the European writers from whom he derived his intellectual nourishment. He was well acquainted with the works of Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Ernest Haeckel and Thomas H. Huxley whose writings had helped to foster the idea of ethnicity in the scientific and political fields.<sup>24</sup>

The emphasis placed on the racial criterion minimized the importance of internal divisions in Hindu society by assuming the existence of an invisible but potent binding factor, that of blood. However, the notion of racial purity was absent from Savarkar's ideology. His historical account of

the formation of the 'Hindu people' rested on the assumption that Aryans and indigenous populations intermingled when the former entered India and he called upon on foreigners who aspired to become Hindus to marry Hindus and to have Hindu children. In his words :

".... Any convert of non-Hindu parentage to *Hindutva* can be a Hindu, if bonafide, he or she adopts our land as his or her country and marries a Hindu, thus coming to love our country as a real Fatherland, and adopts our cultue and thus adores our land as the *Punyabhū* (sacred land). The children of such a union as that would, other things being equal, be most emphatically Hindus."<sup>25</sup>

G. Pandey suggests in his study of *Hindutva* that for Savarkar, as well as for other Hindu nationalists of the 1920s and 1930s, the Muslims and Christians who lived in India, and had lived in most cases as long as the Hindus, had a place in the country, albeit probably a subordinate one, as 'citizens'.<sup>26</sup>

Savarkar even contested the idea of racial plurality.

He stated that :

“After all there is throughout this world, so far as man is concerned but a single race, the human race kept alive by one common blood, the human blood”.<sup>27</sup>

However, Savarkar’s writings suggest that his racism was not really of a biological kind but was one of domination. Savarkar did not put a great stress on racial purity for his racism of domination was deeply influenced by the rationale of the caste system. It is very difficult to conceive of a Hindu race – in biological terms – as opposed to other races. Here human species are integrated in a hierarchical social order known as the caste system. There can only be one Hindu culture defining rituals and social rules implemented by a certain human community in which different castes coexist in a hierarchical relationship. A biological ideology of race is, therefore, difficult to construct in the Hindu context, but a racism of domination by the upper castes appears natural.

The third criterion of Hindutva – a ‘common culture’ as defined by Savarkar – stemmed directly from the crucial importance of rituals, social rules and language in Hinduism. Savarkar held that the Hindus were bound together not only by the tie of the love they bore to a common ‘Fatherland’, but also by the tie of the common homage they paid to their great civilization – the Hindu culture. Savarkar opined that the Sanskrit language was the common language of the Hindu race. He held that Sanskrit had been the chosen means of expression and preservation of Hindu culture.<sup>28</sup>

It is noteworthy that Savarkar wrongly cited Sanskrit as the common reference point for all Indian languages. The languages of South India had different origin. Actually Savarkar wanted that every political programme of Hindu nationalist ideology should call for recognition of Sanskrit or Hindi, the vernacular language closest to it, as the national language.

Besides language, ‘common laws and rites’, such as religious festivals, were cited as criteria of *Hindutva* by Savarkar. According to him, Christians and Muslims of India

were not part of the nation because of their differences from the Hindus in cultural terms. Savarkar stated that :

“Their holyland is far off in Arabia and Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of foreign origin. Their love is divided”.<sup>29</sup>

This characterization of Christianity and Islam led Savarkar to write that, when the Muslims forced their entry into India, ‘the conflict of life and death began’.<sup>30</sup> However, this conflict had a positive effect since ‘nothing makes conscious of itself so much as a conflict with non-self’.<sup>31</sup>

In sum, Savarkar’s notion of *Hindutva* rested on cultural criteria rather than on a racial theory and was accordingly in tune with the traditional Brahminical world view; but at the same time it represented an ethnic nationalism which borrowed much from western political theory. In the book he wrote during his period of detention in the Andamans between 1911 and 1921, he referred to Bluntschli’s The Theory



of the State which he had not only read but also used when teaching his fellow prisoners.<sup>32</sup>

Bluntschli was an exponent of German ethnic nationalism, and his writings influenced many Hindu nationalists. Savarkar's attachment to this kind of nationalism may induce one to think that he was a zealot. Ashis Nandy defines a zealot as :

“One who has internalized the ‘defeat’ of his religion or culture in the hands of the modern world and who believes that defeat can be avenged only when the peripheral faiths or ethnicities have internalized the technology of victory of the western man and decided to fight under the flag of their own faiths”.<sup>33</sup>

This definition of a zealot may fit in well in the characterization of Savarkar as an exponent of *Hindutva*.

### **Savarkar on Indian nationhood**

According to Savarkar Hindus in India were a nation and other people were communities and numerically, therefore, minorities. Savarkar observed that the ancient and modern history of the Hindus were common. They had friends and enemies in common. They had faced common dangers and won victories in common. He held that one in national despair and one in national hope, the Hindus by an admirable process through assimilation, elimination and consolidation were 'welded together during the aeons of a common life and common habitat'.<sup>34</sup>

Savarkar maintained that above all the Hindus were bound together by the dearest ties, most sacred and most enduring bonds of a common 'Fatherland' and common *Holyland*. Savarkar stated that the Hindus as a people differed more markedly from any other people in the world than they differed among themselves. In his opinion the Hindus were entitled to form a nation by all tests of common country, race, religion and language.<sup>35</sup>

Savarkar declared that the festivals and cultural forms of the Hindus were common. The Vedic *rishis* (monks) were their common pride, their grammarians Panini and Patanjali, their poets Bhavabhuti and Kalidas, their heroes Shri Ram and Shri Krishna, Shivaji and Pratap, Guru Govind and Banda were a source of common inspiration. Savarkar held that like their ancient and sacred language, the Sanskrit, their scripts also were fashioned on the same basis and the Nagari script had been the common vehicle of the sacred writings since centuries in the past.<sup>36</sup>

Savarkar further observed that India was dear to the Hindus for it had been the home of the Hindu race. The land had been the cradle of Hindu prophets and heroes and Gods and Godmen. Savarkar held that :

“River for river the Missicipi(Sic) is nearly as good as the Ganges and its waters are not altogether bitter. The stones and trees and greens in Hindusthan are just as good or bad stones and trees and greens of the respective species elsewhere”.<sup>37</sup>

Savarkar held that Hindusthan was a 'Fatherland' and a 'Holyland' to the Hindus not because it was a land entirely unlike any other land in the world but because it was associated with their history and had been the home of their forefathers wherein 'their mothers gave them the first suckle at their breasts and their fathers cradled them on their knees from generation to generation'.<sup>38</sup>

To Savarkar the Hindu nation was an organic growth and no paper makeshift. It was neither a mushroom growth nor a treaty nation. "It was not cut to order. It is not an outlandish makeshift".<sup>39</sup>

Savarkar held that the Hindu nation had grown out of the Indian soil and had its roots struck deep and wide in it. Savarkar was of the opinion that the idea of Hindu nation was not a fiction invented to antagonize the Muslims. "It is a fact", declared Savarkar, "as stupendous and solid as the Himalayas that border North".<sup>40</sup>

The Indian National Congress believed and upheld the territorial nationalism. To them a nation meant people

living on a common land. Whoever came to India – the Arabs, the Jews the Portuguese, the Greeks – formed a nation together with the Hindus, because these new comers also lived in India. Savarkar observed that the Congress committed the serious mistake of overlooking the fundamental, social and political principle that in the formation of nations, religious, racial, cultural and historical affinities counted immensely more than their territorial unity.<sup>41</sup> What they called the Indian nation Savarkar called the Indian state, because he believed that the Hindus could form a state with other minorities.

Savarkar found nothing objectionable in the ideal of Indian nationalism which was in his opinion a noble one suited to the Hindu mentality with its synthetic trend, always prone to philosophy with a universal urge. However, Savarkar opined that not territorial unity, but the religious, racial and cultural unity counted more in the formation of a national unit. According to Savarkar, the idea of territorial nationality alone was envisaged by the Congressmen, who in general preferred to be totally ignorant of Muslim history, theology and political trend of mind.<sup>42</sup>

Savarkar held that the theological politics of the Muslims in general and the Indian Muslims in particular divided the human world into two groups only – the Muslim land and the enemy land. Savarkar opined that to any other land no faithful Muslim was allowed to bear any loyalty. He condemned the Congressmen by saying that :

“The territorial patriots wanted the Hindus to cease to be Hindus at least as a national and political unit. Some of them actually gloried in disowning themselves as Hindus at all. But the Moslems are Moslems first and Moslems last and Indians never”.<sup>43</sup>

Savarkar observed that so far as the Hindus were concerned, there could be neither distinction nor conflict in the least between their communal and national duties, as the best interests of Hindudom were simply identified with the best interests of India as a whole. He held that the truer a Hindu was to himself as a Hindu the surer it was for him to grow into a truer national. In his opinion the Hindus were the bedrock on which the Indian independent state could be built.<sup>44</sup>

Savarkar asserted that a Hindu patriot worth the name could not but be an Indian patriot as well. To the Hindus India being the 'Fatherland' and 'Holyland' the love they bore to this country was boundless. Savarkar held that this was the reason why they predominated in the national struggle. Savarkar, further declared :

“Even the buried bones in the Andamans would assert this fact .... We Hindus must have a country of our own in the solar system and must continue to flourish there as Hindu descendants of a mighty people.”<sup>45</sup>

Savarkar believed in the resurrection of the Hindus who had stood by the graves of empires and civilizations that prospered in other parts of the world. He observed that amidst the terrible struggle for existence, which was incessantly going on in the creation, survival of the fittest was the rule. “The Hindus survived the national cataclysms because they were found fittest to survive”.<sup>46</sup>

**Savarkar on national language and script**

On the question of national language Savarkar held that Sanskrit should be considered as the sacred language and Hindi, which was derived from Sanskrit and drew its nourishment from the latter, should be the national language. Savarkar opined that Sanskrit was the richest and the most cultured of the ancient languages of the world. To the Hindus Sanskrit was the 'holiest tongue of tongues'.<sup>47</sup>

According to Savarkar, Hindu scriptures, history, philosophy and culture had their roots so deeply embodied in the Sanskrit literature that it formed the brain of the Hindu race. He was of the opinion that the Sanskrit language should be 'an indispensable constituent of the classical course for Hindu youths'.<sup>48</sup>

Savarkar held that in adopting the Hindi as the national language no distinction was implied as regards other provincial languages. Savarkar opined that Hindi could serve the purpose of a national pan-Hindu language best. He held that long before either English or even Muslims stepped in



India the Hindi in its general form had already come to occupy the position of a national language. Savarkar emphasized that the Hindu pilgrim, the tradesman, tourist, the soldier, the pandit travelled up and down from Bengal to Sindh and Kashmir to Rameshwar by making himself understood from locality to locality through Hindi. Savarkar argued that :

“.... just as the Sanskrit was the national language of the Hindu intellectual world even so Hindi has been for at least a thousand years in the past the national Indian tongue of the Hindu community”.<sup>49</sup>

So Savarkar's prescription was that every Hindu student should learn Hindi compulsorily along with his provincial mother tongue.<sup>50</sup>

Regarding the national script Savarkar favoured the *Nagri* Script. According to him, like the Hindi language the *Nagri* script too had been present all over India amongst the Hindu literary circles for some two thousand years. He held that with a little touch here and there it could be reformed so as to render it as suitable to modern mechanical printing as the Roman script.<sup>51</sup>

**Savarkar on the name *Hindusthan***

Savarkar was of the opinion that the name of the country should be *Hindusthan*. He observed that such other names as India, Hind etc. being derived from the same original word 'Sindhu', might be used but only to signify the same sense, i.e., the land of the Hindus, a country which was the abode of the 'Hindu Nation'.<sup>52</sup>

However, Savarkar held that in this insistence on the name *Hindusthan* no encroachment or humiliation was implied in connection with any of the non-Hindu countrymen. He believed that the Parsees and Christians were too akin to the Hindus culturally and were patriotic citizens. So objections to the name *Hindusthan* should not come from them.<sup>53</sup>

Savarkar did not conceal his suspicion of the Muslims. He wanted the Muslims to remember that they did not dwell as minority only in India. China, Greece, Hungary and Poland had crores of Muslims among their nationals. Savarkar held that being there a minority, the existence of Muslims in these countries had never been advanced as a ground to change the

ancient names of these countries. The country of the Poles continued to be Poland and of the Grecians as Greece. The Muslims did not distort them but were quite content to distinguish themselves as Polish-Muslims or Grecian Muslims. Savarkar wanted that Indian Muslims should distinguish themselves nationally or territorially as '*Hindusthani* Muslims' without compromising in the least their separateness as a religious or cultural entity.<sup>54</sup> However, Savarkar regretted that a large section of the Muslim community objected to this name of the country.

Savarkar found no reason why the Hindus would break up the continuity of the nation from the 'Sindhus in Rig Vedic days to the Hindus'<sup>55</sup> of the present generation which was implied in *Hindusthan*. Savarkar held that just as the land of the Germans is Germany, of the English England, of the Afghans Afghanistan – so the Hindus should have it indelibly impressed on the map of the earth for all times to come as *Hindusthan* – the land of Hindus.

*Hindusthan* to Savarkar did not only mean the so-called British India, it comprised even those parts which were

under the French and Portuguese possession. He stated that :

“From the Indus to the Himalayas, from the Himalayas to Tibet, from Tibet to Burma and from Burma to the Southern and Western Seas run the lines of the boundaries of our land. The whole territory including Kashmir and Nepal, Gomantak, Pondechery and other French possessions constitutes our national and territorial unit. And this whole constitutes our country – *Hindusthan* and must remain one, indivisible and integral.”<sup>56</sup>

Thus, Savarkar subscribed to a conceptual framework that related *Hindutva* to Indian nationhood and upheld the slogan of *Hindi-Hindu Hindusthan*. This Pan-Hindu conceptualization of Indian nationhood of Savarkar made a sharp distinction between the Muslims of India and other minorities.

### **Savarkar on minorities other than Muslims**

Savarkar was of the opinion that in India the Hindus

alone constituted a nation. Minorities were merely citizens of the country who were supposed to look upon the country as a land of the Hindus. However, Savarkar did not view all the minorities in similar light.

So far as the Parsees were concerned, Savarkar held that they were by race, religion, language and culture most akin to the Hindus. They had gratefully been loyal to India. Savarkar opined that the Parsees were not fanatics and always displayed good intentions towards the Hindu nation which to them had proved 'a veritable saviour of their race.'<sup>57</sup> So Savarkar opined that the attitude of the Hindus towards the Parsees should be one of 'trust, friendship and of equal rights.'<sup>58</sup>

Regarding the Christian minorities Savarkar opined that they were civilized people and had no extra – territorial political designs against India. He held that the Christians were not linguistically and culturally averse to the Hindus and, therefore, could be politically assimilated.<sup>59</sup>

However, Savarkar was opposed to the Christian

proselytizing church. He held that in that matter alone the Hindus should be on their guard and should not give the missionaries any 'blind latitude to carry on their activities beyond voluntary and legitimate conversion.'<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, Savarkar reminded the Hindus to continue reconversion of the Christians.

So far as the Jews were concerned, Savarkar held that they were too few and had given the Hindus 'no political or cultural troubles.'<sup>61</sup> He held that they were in the main not a proselytizing people and so would be friendly towards the Hindu nation. Savarkar believed that the Jews could easily be assimilated in a common Indian state.

### **Savarkar on the Muslims**

Savarkar was totally hostile to the Muslims. He opined that the attitude of the Hindus towards the Muslims should be 'one of distrust and watchfulness' in view of their 'anti-Hindu', anti - Indian and extra-territorial designs.<sup>62</sup> He held that the Hindus should sternly refuse them any preferential

treatment in any sphere of life, religious, cultural or political.

Savarkar held that the Indian Muslims wanted 'the unalloyed Urdu to be raised to the position of the national tongue of the Indian state.'<sup>63</sup> Savarkar pointed out that the Muslims insisted on adopting the Urdu script as the national script and rejected the *Nagri*.<sup>64</sup>

Savarkar criticized the Muslim intolerance to the *Vande Mataram* song.<sup>65</sup> He pointed out that the very words *Vande Mataram* (Hail the motherland) were considered by the Muslims as insulting. Savarkar warned the Hindus that the Muslims wanted *Hindusthan* to be cut into two pieces – *Hindusthan* and Pakistan in order to destroy the integrity of the country.<sup>66</sup>

Savarkar was of the opinion that the Hindu-Muslim conflict was neither a simple thing nor the creation of a third party, but a strife of different cultures and races. He reminded the Hindus that :

“It is no wonder that when an overwhelming majority in a country goes on its knees before an antagonistic minority such as the Muslims imploring it to lend its helping hand and assuring it that otherwise the majority community is doomed to death then the minor community does not sell its assistance at the highest bid possible and thus hasten the doom of the major community and aims to establish its own political sovereignty in the land.”<sup>67</sup>

Savarkar held that the Hindus did not want any special privilege and they were even willing to guarantee special protection for the language, culture and religion of the Muslims as a minority. In return he demanded that the Muslims should promise that they would never try to dominate and humiliate the Hindus.

However, Savarkar also did not conceal his suspicion of the anti-Indian design of the Pan-Islamic movement, that thrived on links of Muslim nations from ‘Arabia to Afghanistan’.<sup>68</sup> Savarkar made it clear that the Hindus were



not out to fight with England only to find a change of masters, but the sole objective of the Hindus was to be masters in their own house.<sup>69</sup>

Savarkar was of the opinion that in order to achieve their goal the Hindus should form a strong political organization. A party representing Hindu nation was Savarkar's dream. In this regard he upheld the Hindu Mahasabha – the first political party of the Hindu nationalists in the twentieth century India of which Savarkar was an active leader and chief theoretician.

### **Savarkar on the nature of the Hindu Mahasabha**

According to Savarkar the Hindu – Mahasabha was the national representative body of the 'Hindudom'. The sole objective of the party was the all-round regeneration of the Hindu people. Savarkar opined that the Mahasabha was concerned with the common objective of regarding India as the 'Holyland'.<sup>70</sup>

According to Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha was only

indirectly concerned with Hinduism which, in his opinion, was only one of the many aspects of *Hindutva*. He held that the party was mainly concerned with 'other aspects of *Hindutva* resulting from the second constituent of possessing a common fatherland.'<sup>71</sup> Therefore, in Savarkar's opinion, the Hindu Mahasabha was a pan-Hindu organization shaping the destinies of the Hindu nation in all its social, political and cultural aspects.

Savarkar opined that the Hindu Mahasabha was not a communal body. He held that the party should not be condemned as sectional for it tried to defend the just and fundamental rights of the Hindu nation against the unjust and overbearing aggression of other human aggregates and did not infringe on equal and just rights and liberties of others. He declared that the consolidation and the independence of the Hindu nation were but another name for the independence of the Indian nation as a whole.<sup>72</sup>

Savarkar held that the Hindu Mahasabha had not come into being as a reaction to the Muslim League. He held that the Hindu nation developed a new organ to battle in the

struggle for existence under the changed conditions of the modern age. The Hindu Mahasabha 'grew up of a fundamental necessity of national life and not of any ephemeral incident.'<sup>73</sup> Savarkar opined that it was clear from the aims and objectives of the Hindu Mahasabha that its mission was as abiding as the life of the nation itself.

It is doubtless that Savarkar was held in high esteem by his Hindu nationalist admirers both for his writings and public activities. The Hindu Mahasabha with him at the helm was able to create a name for itself in the social and political domain of Indian life, but one can hardly avoid the conclusion that neither the Mahasabha as a political organization nor its personnel as individuals succeed in building up a political party worth the name that the Indian situation then demanded.

The Mahasabha remained essentially a pressure group within the Congress, busy in recruiting its supporters mostly from the conservative princes and other notables. The Indian National Congress also could not part with the company of such people. A sort of alliance existed between the politically conscious Congress intelligentsia and the members of the

erstwhile royal houses. This alliance turned out to be a mutually rewarding experience. As an example one may cite the case of Dr. Moonje, a Brahmin by birth and a noted ophthalmologist by profession, who benefitted from the assistance and financial support of the heirs to the old Kingdom of Nagpur, the Bhonsle Maharajas, whose royal house was dis-established in 1818, and of an important Nagpur landowner, M. G. Chitnavis.<sup>74</sup>

This is just one example which can easily be multiplied. The princes and other notables had their own special reasons to forge friendly relations with the politically conscious intelligentsia. Such relationships between the intelligentsia and their patrons had been identified by Christopher Bayly as one of the means by which the Congress developed upto the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>75</sup>

However, the Congress intelligentsia was later freed from the control of the notables, in part, because of the constitutional reforms of 1909 and 1919, which made it incumbent on it to appeal to a wider audience. The Hindu Mahasabha, being unable to follow this path, remained highly

dependent on the influence of notables whose conservatism and factionalism hampered the development of the organization.

Excluded from the Congress in 1937 on account of its alleged communal views, it failed to be truly represented in the elective institutions till independence. This divorce between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress was not, however, complete in so far as the pillars of the former preferred to remain in the latter. A prominent example of this duality was Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of the Benaras Hindu University (BHU), whose faction, firmly implanted in the United Provinces, represented the durability of a Hindu traditionalist current within the Congress.

While the Hindu Mahasabha experienced an early decline the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (R.S.S.) developed steadily and was to become the principal standard bearer of the Hindu nationalist ideology. In fact, this organization, which was formed by Dr. K. B. Hedgewar after he had read *Hindutva* and had been further stimulated by a visit to Savarkar, was deeply influenced by the latter's view of the nation.

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