



'The first serious biography of Savarkar in English, this book allows us to understand a man whose ideas have come to define contemporary India'

FAISAL DEVJI, Professor of Indian History,  
University of Oxford

'A gripping narrative . . . We get a rich portrait of Savarkar as a poet and writer as well as a political activist and theorist'

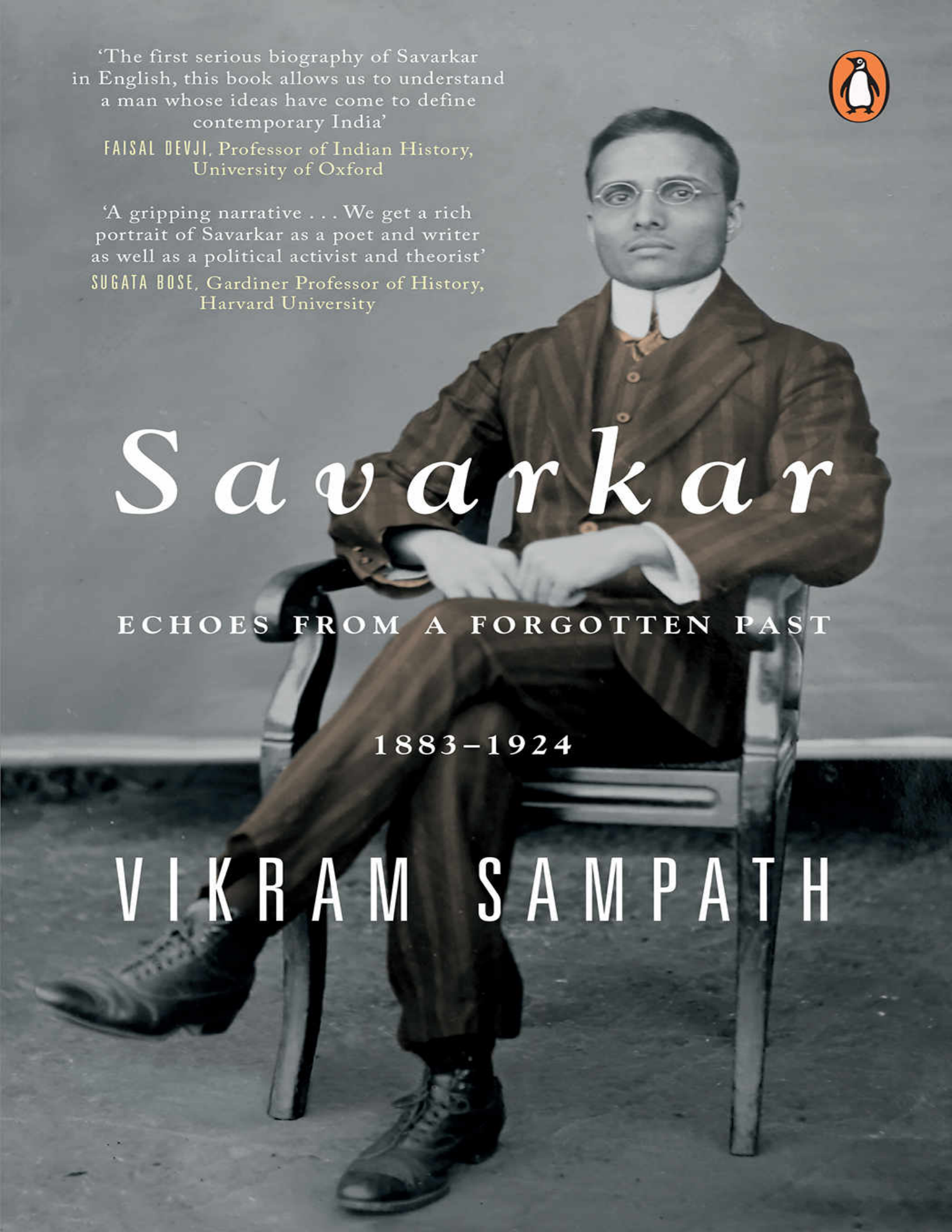
SUGATA BOSE, Gardiner Professor of History,  
Harvard University

# Savarkar

ECHOES FROM A FORGOTTEN PAST

1883-1924

VIKRAM SAMPATH





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## Savarkar

*Echoes from a forgotten past*

*1883-1924*



PENGUIN BOOKS

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## Advance Praise for the Book

‘Generally, there is consensus in a country about its great men and women, allowing some people to make a few critical comments on him or her. It is rather an exception that opinion in a country gets to be so divided so as to cause a complete polarization, with some at one pole admiring a person as a messiah, a trailblazer; and others, on the other, denouncing him as an ogre, an embodiment of evil. And which pole dominates depends on the supervening sociopolitical and cultural atmosphere of the country. When neither pole dominates, it takes a lot of courage on the part of an author to buck the trend and seek the truth.

‘Vinayak Damodar “Veer” Savarkar (1883–1966) was such an exceptional person. And Vikram Sampath has proved to be such a courageous author. In fact, when I undertook to write a biography of Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerji, incidentally a close associate of Savarkar, I came across similar feelings; I went ahead notwithstanding, claiming no credit for any courage, certainly not of the kind that Vikram has shown.

‘For Savarkar was a much more maligned person than Dr Mookerji. While the onslaught on the latter was more by way of omission than commission, Savarkar had been directly and personally accused of complicity in Gandhiji’s assassination; he had also been falsely accused of begging for mercy to be released from the hellhole otherwise known as the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, of whipping up hatred against Muslims and Christians, and so forth . . . Therefore, writing a biography of Savarkar would take more courage and the most painstaking research possible to rubbish the accusations thrown at him. This Vikram has been able to do admirably, plumbing the depths of material on him not only in English but also in Savarkar’s native Marathi.

‘Vikram’s command of the English language, his writing skills and his penchant for description, especially of the inhuman torture that the prisoners had to undergo at the hands of the unspeakable Scottish jailor Barrie make the text both heart-wrenching as also very readable. The book covers his life up to about 1924 and leaves the reader waiting impatiently for the remaining part of his life—possibly the most productive phase—when he crystallized his concept of Hindutva, put it into practice and got Dr Mookerji to second for him at a time when his health had begun to fail. Although the two parted company later, it was Savarkar’s philosophy that got his second to take it onwards and found a new party, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which later metamorphosed into the Bharatiya Janata Party, which has just come to power at India’s centre with a decisive majority’

—**Tathagata Roy** , governor, Meghalaya, Raj Bhavan, Shillong

‘Because of his opposition to the Congress and the belief that he was complicit in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, historians of independent India have tended to ignore the life of V.D. Savarkar. This is the first of a two-volume biography based on formidable research in hitherto unconsulted documents in Marathi and in archives across the world. It explores, as never before, the formation of the young revolutionary who was to create the doctrine of Hindutva. This is a key work for understanding the development of ideas dominant in Indian politics today’

—**Prof. Francis Robinson** , Royal Holloway, University of London

‘The first serious biography of Savarkar in English, this book allows us to understand a man whose ideas have come to define contemporary India. A long overdue study, and one full of new material, it heralds a welcome departure in the scholarship on Indian political thought’

—**Prof. Faisal Devji** , professor of Indian history, University of Oxford



‘Based on extensive research, Vikram Sampath provides a gripping narrative of the first half of the life of an anti-colonial revolutionary turned ideologue of Hindutva. Sampath’s biography delves into Savarkar’s formative influences in Maharashtra, his camaraderie with radicals in England and France, and his suffering as a prisoner in Andaman. We get a rich portrait of Savarkar as a poet and writer as well as political activist and theorist’

—**Prof. Sugata Bose** , Gardiner professor of history, Harvard University

‘Vikram Sampath’s book is not limited to providing mere biographical details of the life of Savarkar, but offers historical context through detailed descriptions of historical events of that era. Thus, it makes a dual contribution to Indian history. The author staggers Savarkar’s biography with details of the sinister British rule in India, which gave rise to powerful nationalist leaders of multiple stripes during the early phase of the Indian independence movement.

‘The book fulfils a long overdue prerequisite for an authentic historical biography of a brave son of India. It examines the life of Savarkar closely, while also providing lesser-known details, which help dispel the many mythical accounts of Savarkar’s life. As a corollary, this book also supplements our existing patchwork of knowledge on the history of Indian independence.

‘Sampath’s is both a biographical work as well as a historical book on one of the most misunderstood nationalists of India. This book brings forward, for the first time, an authoritative examination of material (letters, speeches, official communication, newspaper reports) and numerous never-before-studied documents.

‘The book begins with the birth of Savarkar, narrating events of his childhood and young adult life in the first few chapters interspersed with thought-provoking details of the political circumstances of India. Through the depiction of successive struggles of young Savarkar in plague-affected western India between 1899 and 1900, the author demonstrates the

struggles of average Indians under British rule. With Savarkar's move to Nashik from 1900 onwards, his nationalist activities gained momentum as he founded Mitra Mela (also its affiliate Rashtrabhakta Samuha). Savarkar's activities and entanglements with the national movement here pitted him against British authorities, and at times brought him in opposition to established national leaders including Tilak. Crucial is Savarkar's decision to champion the celebration of Shivaji Utsav during this early phase. Savarkar's brilliant speeches inspired numerous young nationalist leaders, while the British government used these speeches to prosecute him on charges of sedition many years later. Of utmost interest are the chapters discussing the life of Savarkar in London (including his short stint in Paris) followed by his imprisonment in the Andamans and later in India. Sampath's rich prose brings history to life with amazing clarity.

'The book makes a most valuable and original contribution to historical scholarship on the Indian independence movement. It also makes important "modifications" to the hitherto established views on the independence movement, giving a new and critical analysis of the events. His study infuses India's independence movement with the necessary complexity, which has remained too simplistic for far too long due to missing information. Sampath offers a consciously alternative narrative of India's independence that is representative of her numerous trials and tribulations.

'The book captures the formative period of India's independence movement, which was the true crucible of India. Emerging under alien rule, India endured the most arduous journey, which was only partially recollected in the simplistic narrative preserved in India's history books. Sampath successfully addresses this lacuna by bringing forward the dimensions that have missed a critical evaluation. He offers an alternative narrative to the prevailing colonial and Western recollections of the independence movement, thus providing a new and original lens to examine Indian history.

‘*Savarkar* is necessary reading for every student of Indian history. I also strongly suggest that everyone interested in learning about India reads this’

—**Lavanya Vemsani** , professor, Shawnee State University; president, Ohio Academy of History; editor-in-chief, *American Journal of Indic Studies*

‘Veer Savarkar remains one of the most intriguing figures in contemporary Indian history. He invites Manichean sentiments from his supporters and his detractors. Vikram Sampath’s brilliant biography demystifies the man, the thinker and the leader. Far from being a hagiography, the book is essential reading for all those interested in contemporary India and the rise of Hindutva’

—**Prof. Amitabh Mattoo** , professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; honorary professor of international relations, University of Melbourne; chair, governing body, Miranda House College, University of Delhi; governing board, Australia India Institute, Delhi

‘Veer Savarkar comes to life for the English-speaking reader in Vikram Sampath’s extraordinarily well-researched and immensely readable new biography. A must-read for anyone who wishes to understand one of the most important, least studied and much maligned leaders of India’s struggle for freedom against British colonialism. In Sampath’s engaging and sympathetic account, Savarkar emerges as a complex, gifted and enigmatic visionary, the determined opponent of Empire who was also an ideologue and inspiration of Hindu political and cultural nationalism’

—**Prof. Makarand Paranjpe** , director, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla

‘This is the most significant work on Savarkar since Dhananjay Keer’s biography seven decades ago. Vikram Sampath has earlier won acclaim for his history of Mysore’s Wodeyar dynasty. His biographies of Gauhar Jaan, India’s first classical musician to record on the gramophone, and late S. Balachander, the veena maestro, have established him as the country’s foremost biographer.

‘Sampath now interrogates one of modern India’s most controversial political figures. Drawing on an impressive array of archival material in India and the United Kingdom, as well as a vast corpus of writings in the regional languages, he exhibits a mastery over his subject that will be difficult to surpass.

‘Sampath’s canvas is vast. From the cultural resurgence in early twentieth-century Maharashtra, to the liberal petitioners and extreme nationalists, the emerging trend of violent armed struggle, Sampath presents a panoramic view of a tumultuous period of Indian history. Amidst this he situates Savarkar, his childhood, personal tragedies, his London visit, the powerful articulation of swaraj and swadharma, and the landmark work, *The War of Independence of 1857*.

‘Thereafter, events followed in quick succession: the Nasik Trial, arrest in London, dramatic escape and capture at Marseilles, deportation to India, award of two life transportations to the Andamans, the horrific jail conditions and the distressed response. It’s a gripping tale, skilfully told. In Vikram Sampath, Savarkar has at last found his Boswell. Readers will eagerly await the second volume’

—**Prof. Meenakshi Jain**, senior fellow, Indian Council of Social Science  
Research

‘A rare biography that offers details of a fascinating saga, the life story of one of the most charismatic characters in modern history, which captures the overall ambience of the tumultuous times, when our society was fighting centuries of cultural–religious–political humiliation and marginalization. Vikram Sampath fills up admirably many critical gaps in

our flawed historiography, particularly the revolutionary strand, systematically smothered in sarkari narrative, seeking to set the record straight. No easy task!

‘Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was no ordinary human being—an original thinker, a rationalist; demolishing with aplomb the received wisdom on the issues he had to deal with. Every calumny hurled against Savarkar is explained in painstaking details with hitherto unknown evidence, deployed with finesse and sound logic. Who would know about such nuggets of history—the commitment to India’s freedom—of Dadabhai Naoroji’s granddaughter, Perin, belonging to a genuine minority community, never demanding exclusive privileges; and of Niranjan, the son of Bipin Chandra Pal. Vikram brings out the surprising fact as to how Madan Lal Dhingra was seen sympathetically by some senior British politicians as against the hostility of some Indian leaders! Every revolutionary missing from our history books—Shyamji Krishna Verma, Virendranath Chattopadhyay and many such real heroes—come alive in this exhaustive study.

‘Beginning with the genealogical tree of Chitpawan Bramhans, the revolutionary fervour in the Bombay Presidency, the centrality of Poona, the role of the Mitra Melas, Abhinav Bharat, revolutionary secret societies in Nashik with their road-map delineated in detail, in the backdrop of the larger all-India picture, his marriage as a school student, his interest in world history, the stint at Fergusson College, details of family life are all there. From India House, London, to the Cellular Jail, and the subsequent story are analysed in great detail.

‘Those who have maligned Savarkar systematically without any credible evidence stand exposed by the weight and logic of Sampath’s work and come out as men of wavering principles, if not hypocrites, consistent in their policy of compromise with both Muslim separatism and British hegemony. Vikram takes us through the suppressed pages in our history.

‘The British may or may not regret the mass murder of Indians at Jallianwala Bagh, but looking at Savarkar’s experience of the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, about which he himself wrote, and which has been

denied the importance it deserves, we have one more item on our national agenda to ask the British to apologize for—their barbaric treatment of freedom fighters.

‘Fidelity to facts and reliance on primary source materials, most of it archival, held in UK and India, make this a very credible and inspirational story. An academically sound historical narrative needs to be even-handed in its treatment of the subject matter and Vikram fulfils this criterion’

—**Prof. Saradindu Mukherji** , historian and member, Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR)

‘This book is a true gift. The pages are imbued with valuable information, wisdom and thought born of deep research and great reflections. If you want to live an important angle of Indian history, please begin here’

—**Imam Mohamad Tawhidi** , bestselling author, scholar and Islamic reformer

‘Vikram’s book fills a big gap in our understanding of one of the most influential thinkers of early twentieth-century India, Veer Savarkar, who is much debated but is also often misrepresented by followers and detractors alike. In this superb volume on the “revolutionary phase” of Savarkar’s life, Vikram has not merely recreated the man but also his times. Read it, not just to understand Savarkar, but also to understand the emergence of modern India’

—**Sanjeev Sanyal** , bestselling author and principal economic advisor, Ministry of Finance, Government of India

‘Veer Savarkar is undoubtedly one of India’s most influential freedom fighters. He stands apart by the personal example he set as a patriot, intellectual, writer and scholar par excellence.

‘Savarkar was prominent in hoisting the flag of defiance on British soil against Britain’s oppressive colonial rule in India. He was angry with the

glorification of the mass murder of Indians in the 1857 war in the British media. While studying in London, Savarkar headed a band of Indian students to organize and protest Britain's colonization. He infused the passion for fighting for freedom in an entire generation of young Indians, both in Britain and India.

‘Savarkar’s life was truly extraordinary. He was classified as a serious threat to the British Empire and had to escape from Britain in a manner that defies imagination. While being transported to India, he was caught while trying to escape, leading to a famous international case. After returning to India, Savarkar continued to work zealously for India’s freedom.

‘Savarkar was incarcerated at the Cellular Jail for over eleven years. I hardly knew about Savarkar till I visited Port Blair and the Cellular Jail a few years ago. I was shocked at the bleak environment and tools of torture Britain employed to break its inmates. The prisoners were yoked to oil mills to grind seeds into oil, tortured and continuously beaten, deprived of adequate food and medical care, human beings made to work like animals under the violent whip of the British master.

‘At Kalapani, Savarkar was confined to solitary imprisonment to shatter his will and set an example to the rest of the inmates. He suffered bodily and mentally. He was often denied rights that were due to political prisoners like him. None of the other freedom fighters of India widely recognized today—Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Azad, Jinnah—were imprisoned and tortured to this extent. From his solitary cell window, Savarkar would see Indian revolutionaries hanged by the British, never sure when he would be put to death. Despite the extensive torture and degrading health, his spirit endured.

‘Savarkar was released from prison when the Government of India Act was being drafted. He gave an undertaking that he would not participate in political activities and settled down in Ratnagiri to write a definitive thesis on the Indian nation and enthruse people to carry on the fight for freedom. Through his popular thesis on Hindutva, Savarkar was the foremost proponent of the Hindu social reform movement.

‘The tragedy of Savarkar is that after his death in 1966, the leftist account of our history and freedom movement superseded the factual narrative. Despite Indira Gandhi’s reverence for Savarkar’s efforts, saying, “Savarkar’s defiance of the British government has its own place in the freedom struggle,” he was posthumously abused, denigrated and defiled. His views were relegated for ideological reasons. Any mention of his ideas was automatically labelled as communal and unacceptable. Even in recent times, as is evident in Mani Shankar Aiyar’s displacement of a memorial plaque in Savarkar’s name, efforts to cast him as anti-Indian continue. It is only after I visited the Cellular Jail that I started reading about Savarkar. Only after personal examination can the offensive nature of the ideological manipulation of his legacy be fully understood.

‘Vikram Sampath has done extraordinary research into Savarkar’s life and history. This book covers Savarkar’s life from his childhood until his release from jail, and formulation of the Hindutva thesis. Here, Vikram has placed in front of the Indian audience a neutral and objective picture of who he was, what his writings were, and what he did for India’s freedom. We wait in anticipation for the sequel, which will provide us with more details of his life after release from prison and events thereafter.

‘With this effort, Vikram has set an example of how New India’s scholars and historians can crack through the many manipulations and falsehoods behind the politically convenient “accepted construct” of India’s recent history and unearth the inspiring stories of our freedom movement’s many heroes who are deliberately ignored and oft-maligned. The true facts and deeds of patriots and freedom fighters like Savarkar must be made available to all Indians so that we can evaluate and decide for ourselves their impact on our shared history.

‘Vikram has done well to independently research, publish hitherto unpublished material and explain Savarkar’s life. It is up to the reader to make an objective assessment of Savarkar’s impact on India and our freedom. History is only as useful as what we can make of it. I hope this book contributes to the formation of your understanding of India’s unsung heroes’



—**T.V. Mohandas Pai** , chairman, Manipal Global Education

‘Missing from the monochromatic rendition of the freedom struggle in school history textbooks for long, Savarkar remained “a pleasant addiction” in the author’s curious mind. The British called him “a dangerous, seditious force” but the Nehruvian-era historiography labelled him a cowardly traitor. The author found in the much-maligned historian’s enigma “a poet’s heart and a revolutionary’s brain” and a bundle of delightful contradictions. Savarkar even left a message for his future biographers, urging them to write without “inhibitions and fears”. Vikram Sampath’s is neither an apology for Savarkar, nor an effort to correct historical wrongs. It is a laborious, painstaking and substantive research from archival documents in India and the United Kingdom’

—**Shekhar Gupta** , editor-in-chief, *The Print*

‘Vinayak Damodar Savarkar has finally got a twenty-first-century biography he deserves. It is probably the first of several, for the man—revolutionary, activist, reformer, intellectual—is vastly influential and relevant to any study of contemporary Indian society. The “intellectual fountainhead” of political Hinduism, Savarkar’s slim tract *Hindutva* (1923) anticipated many of the ambitions, anxieties and urges of today’s India. It has also given its author a salience that was ironically denied to him in his lifetime. Savarkar himself would have smiled wryly at this. He once remarked, as Vikram Sampath quotes him, “time would be the best arbiter of a man’s destiny”. Time and history have generously vindicated Savarkar.

‘Savarkar lived a rich life—a radical, “veer” freedom fighter; the subject of an international human rights and wrongful detention court battle in which his legal case was argued by, among others, a grandson of Karl Marx; author of a riveting biography of the uprising of 1857; a writer and poet of rare sensitivity in his native Marathi; a prime product of the firm and compelling intellectual and cultural narratives of Poona and

especially of its Brahmin community, among modern India's early educated elites. Unfortunately, his final years and succeeding decades after his death in 1966 saw him being examined substantially through the prism of immediate party politics and ideological prejudices—rather than as a legatee of the Maratha renaissance, a product of his age, and an autonomous and independent political thinker, with a gift for trenchant interventions.

‘In the India of 2019, there is more acceptance of Savarkar’s ideas. Sometimes this is without explicit recognition that the ideas that have been so embraced are actually ideas he advocated, often alone and isolated, close to a century ago. Consequently, there is a greater interest in Savarkar, and in what he represented and why he did so. Vikram Sampath’s book seeks to fill many of those gaps. It is a welcome addition to our public discourse’

—**Ashok Malik** , former press secretary to the President of India, political analyst and commentator

‘Savarkar has long been a subject of abuse and adulation, both based on an incomplete understanding of his life and ideas. Vikram Sampath has written the finest biography. He has researched his subject in incredible depth and breadth, tracked down documents and memories long forgotten. This will restore the right balance to the story of one of the revolutionaries of modern India’

—**Meghnad Desai** , eminent author and columnist, professor emeritus, London School of Economics

*Dedicated to the everlasting memory of my beloved Amma,  
my best friend, guide, philosopher, confidante and mother, all rolled into  
one;  
for whom I did/do everything that I did/do*

## Prologue

The year was 2004. Newspapers and television channels in India were agog with a controversy that had erupted in distant Port Blair. The previous Government of India headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee had decided to honour the memory of a freedom fighter, who had been incarcerated at the infamous Cellular Jail in Port Blair, with a plaque carrying his name and quotation. The Indian Oil Foundation had set up this memorial. It was a well-known secret among government and media circles that the assiduous efforts of Ram Naik, the then petroleum minister in the Vajpayee cabinet, were behind the much-belated recognition to the departed soul. With the general elections of 2004, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by the Indian National Congress (INC) ousted Vajpayee's government. In a swift move, within just a few months of coming to power, the new government and its petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar got the plaque removed. Aiyar also went on to make several disparaging comments about the freedom fighter, justifying the move to displace the memorial. Both Houses of Indian Parliament were rocked by the controversy, with the erstwhile ruling party and now the principal Opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and its Maharashtra ally Shiv Sena demanding a restoration of the plaque and an apology from the minister. This did not come and the Opposition was told in no uncertain terms that the UPA government had no intention of revoking this decision.

This was perhaps the first time that my interest in the freedom fighter who was at the centre of this unseemly controversy, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, was stoked. I had of course heard his name in passing, though it was conspicuously absent from all our history textbooks at school. Having

studied in schools following the CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) syllabus, it certainly seemed to me that successive Central governments in India did not wish young people of the country to know anything about this man.

Since a forbidden fruit has always been an attractive proposition from the time of Adam and Eve, over the next couple of years, Savarkar remained a pleasant addiction to my curious mind. At the same time I was getting more conscious of the manner in which his name gets entangled in every current political dogfight in India's polarized polity. How did a man who died way back in 1966 manage to evoke such strong passions in the current generation? I wondered. And thus began my personal journey of discovering the life of the much-maligned Savarkar.

As the intellectual fountainhead of the ideology of Hindutva, Savarkar is undoubtedly one of the most contentious political thinkers and leaders of the twentieth century. Accounts of his long and stormy life have oscillated from glorifying hagiographies to reproachful demonization. The truth, as always, lies somewhere in between and has unfortunately never been told to the people of this country.

I was to slowly discover that Savarkar was a bundle of contradictions and a historian's enigma. He simultaneously means many things to many people. An alleged atheist and a staunch rationalist who strongly opposed orthodox Hindu beliefs and the caste system and dismissed cow worship as mere superstition, Savarkar was also the most vocal political voice for the Hindu community through the entire course of the Indian freedom struggle. He and his ideology stood as one of the strongest and most virulent opponents of the Indian National Congress in general and of Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of pacifism and non-violence in particular. A feted revolutionary who created an intellectual corpus of literature that inspired the revolutionary movement in India for decades, Savarkar was also a passionate and sensitive poet, a prolific writer and playwright, and a fiery orator. It is rare to find a combination of a poet's heart and a revolutionary's brain in a single man. The social reformer in

him strove to dismantle the scourges of untouchability and caste hierarchies, and advocated a unification of Hindu society.

Savarkar and his views could not have been more relevant to Indian politics and society than now, in 2019, with the Indian 'right' being in political ascendancy. With electoral politics and valuable judicial time being consumed by meaningless rhetoric around Savarkar and subsequent defamation cases that follow, it almost becomes a historian's burden and duty to lay the facts bare for every discerning reader to judge where the truth lies. This biography attempts to do precisely that over two volumes.

In 2014, India voted resoundingly for a stable government with a majority in the Lower House and which was free from all influence of the once powerful Indian National Congress. With this reversal of political fortunes, there has been a renewed interest in revisiting the lives of several national leaders who had hitherto not received their due in the course of the monochromatic narrative of the freedom struggle that has been popularized by the regimes post-Independence. Today, scholars are unearthing new information about leaders such as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Deendayal Upadhyaya and Shyama Prasad Mookerji, thereby looking at the multiple historiographical prisms through which one can view modern Indian historical discourse.

But Savarkar has somehow been left out of this reassessment. While his ardent followers and biographers have extolled his greatness, his critics have slammed him as a cowardly traitor, murderer and a communal bigot. Savarkar, his contributions, his political philosophy and his legacy need to be re-examined and reassessed both by the yardstick of historical facts and documents that stare us in the face, and also through his own copious writings, which sadly have not reached mainstream scholarship as they have been largely in Marathi. This biographical series does just that.

The ubiquitous word in contemporary Indian discourse is 'Hindutva'. Commentators and politicians use the term in a broad sweep, seldom caring for the subtle historical nuances that underlie it. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Savarkar had differences of opinions on

matters of Hindutva. Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse in his confessional statement that was banned for decades mentions his disillusionment with what he describes as Savarkar's 'pacifist' version of Hindutva. These facts demonstrate that there have been many versions of this term during its long and chequered history, since the time Savarkar pioneered its popularization in 1923.

An assessment of the political philosophy of Savarkar and his Hindutva is essential to understand the situation that India finds itself in, in 2019, grappling with quite the same issues and contentions that he had been writing or warning about. At the same time, his flaws and follies need to be assessed in conjunction with his vision and philosophy, since he was undoubtedly one of the most critically influential political thinkers of his time. After all, as American historian John Noble Wilford states: 'All works of history are interim reports. What people did in the past is not preserved in amber . . . immutable through the ages. Each generation looks back and drawing from its own experience, presumes to find patterns that illuminate both past and present.'

Being a prolific writer, Savarkar wrote extensively about his own life. While information of his early life, replete with rich details, is extant in his memoirs, he has chosen to black out several time spans in his long, tempestuous life. It has thus been an incomplete autobiography. It trails away, even as he got caught in the whirlwind of political campaign in the run-up to freedom and later the trials related to Gandhi's assassination where he was presented as a co-accused. Towards the end of his life, he had willed his secretary Balarao Savarkar to make use of the corpus of available documents about his own life, newspapers, diary notes and articles to chronicle milestones of his life. Balarao compiled these in volumes in Marathi titled *Ratnagiri Parv*, *Hindu Mahasabha Parv* and *Akhanda Hindustan Ladha Parv*. They cover the period from 1924 till his death in 1966 in extensive detail.

Towards the end of 1926, the first English biography of Savarkar titled *The Life of Barrister Savarkar* was published in Madras under a curious pen name 'Chitragupta'. In Hindu mythology, Chitragupta is the

accountant of Yama, the God of Death, who keeps a meticulous debit and credit account of every soul's sins and virtues. There have been various allusions about who the author is—from Congress leader C.

Rajagopalachari, the revolutionary V.V.S. Aiyar to Savarkar himself writing under a pseudonym. The identity of the author continues to remain a mystery. The book chronicles the stormy years that he spent in London till he was arrested and sent back to India.

Thereafter, Sadashiv Rajaram Ranade penned a brief biography in Marathi that was sold out within a fortnight of its release. In 1943, when Savarkar turned sixty, Shivaramant Karandikar wrote an elaborate biography that ran into nearly 600 pages. He referenced numerous newspaper articles, personal correspondences, memoirs, diaries and accounts of people close to Savarkar. Given its explosive content, the British government promptly ordered its ban. The proscription stayed on till 1947. But even after Independence, given the widespread negative perception that was spread about Savarkar in the aftermath of Gandhi's murder, people preferred to stay away from him or with anything associated with him due to fear of reprisal from the government of independent India.

Legends abound about how several eminent people lost their jobs, livelihood and reputation for demonstrating the least of associations with him. It is said that Karandikar was so frustrated that he wanted to burn all remaining copies of the book. It was left to eminent Marathi writer and historian Balwant Moreshwar Purandhare (popularly known as Babasaheb Purandhare) to convince Karandikar against this. Purandhare even volunteered to assist in selling the copies canvassing from door to door. <sup>1</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, the Government of Bombay released some secret papers from its archives related to the revolutionary body that Savarkar had founded, Abhinav Bharat. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, other aspects of the revolutionary period of Savarkar's life and stormy contemporary events began falling in place. Accounts by R.K. Patwardhan (*Nashikache Dashakatil Shatkrutya*) and Mukund Sonpatki (*Daryapar*) were published. D.N. Gokhale's chronicle of Savarkar's elder brother,



Ganesh Damodar or Babarao, brought to light further details of the trials and tribulations faced by the brothers. Memoirs of former comrades of Savarkar in Abhinav Bharat such as Sridhar Raghunath Vartak, Damodar Mahadeo Chandratre and Krishnaji Mahabal added new shades to the emerging picture of this man's life. A compilation of all this emergent information along with extensive personal interviews with Savarkar himself was accomplished by his confidant Dhananjay Keer. Keer's biography in English is among the first complete accounts of Savarkar from his birth in Bhagur in 1883 till the time of his death in 1966. It has been hailed by fans and criticized by opponents for being highly eulogistic.

Within this rubric of several biographies, this book posits itself as one that presents to its readers an objective assessment of Savarkar and his contemporaries based on extensive archival research of original documents from across the world and hitherto unused Marathi documents.

Savarkar was himself quite philosophical in his approach about why his story needed to be told. In his memoirs that are now compiled in a ten-volume collection, *Savarkar Samagra Vangmaya*, he begins by thanking the amazing ability that human beings have to forget. But for this, we would have miserable experiences and painful memories of this and past lives haunting us all the time! Past wounds can impair present and future paradigms and relationships, he opines. In this fine balance between remembering and letting go, he conjectures that memoirs and autobiographies need to pass a litmus test to ascertain whether they need to be written at all in the first place. Beyond one's personal self and family, if someone's story brings to light a conglomeration of several other noteworthy individuals who have shaped the country and her fate, such a story deserves to be recorded. He then asserts that his story is so inextricably linked with that of the nation, its destiny and a narrative of two or three of its generations that he would not wish for them to be burnt away on his pyre. It is with this intent that he sets off to compile his memoirs.

With so little known about the armed struggle for freedom, given the oppressive alien regime and an uncooperative sovereign rule thereafter, he believes that a narration of his life that brings to light these obscure facts and heroes becomes a national duty. Being the eternal rationalist, Savarkar however cautions, not only himself, but also every future biographer of his. While the temptation to exaggerate and pay encomiums to oneself would be intense in order to win wide public acclaim, he calls for restraint and a conscious detachment with the writing. In his own words:

While it is nice to describe a beautiful rose in full bloom, it would be incomplete without a description of everything—right from its roots, the stem, the manure and nutrients that have sustained it, the fresh and dried leaves as also the thorns, in order to conceptualize the beauty of that rose in all its dimensions. Likewise, for a human being's biography, he needs to be presented 'as is' and not 'as should be'—from head to toe, nothing more, nothing less, as transparent and true to reality as one can be. Everything that can be said or unsaid, that is embarrassing or praiseworthy has to be documented without inhibitions and fears. Of course given the social and political situation that I am writing these in, despite my will, some of the details are being suppressed a little. Also, it would be a breach of trust to reveal confidential details of renowned people whom I have had the good fortune of meeting and interacting with closely in my life. Still, I hold a promise that I have revealed all that needs to be revealed, with the least of colours and bias from my side. <sup>2</sup>

The iconoclast that he was, Savarkar also asserts that after a couple of generations if the people of India found his memoirs to be useless and of little significance, they were free to throw these away in the bins of history. Time would be the best arbiter of a man's significance, he adds. After all, the universe is intelligent enough to remove vestiges that serve no purpose, in order to create space for the new.

With this guidance coming straight from the mouth of the protagonist, all that I needed to do was to follow his advice carefully—try to present the picture 'as is' and not 'as should be', with the documents available at my command. This book is not an apology for him, nor does it take on itself the lofty goal of correcting historical wrongs done to a national figure. If these do happen, they would be purely coincidental and not intended to be so. Stripping off any personal biases, the records must be

allowed to speak for themselves. It is after all this painful process of cutting all emotional cords with the subject that has been the object of your obsession for years that determines whether the narrative that follows thereafter is an objective biography or a eulogizing hagiography. I wish to believe that I have tread the path of the former and the rest is for the readers of these volumes to decide.

Meanwhile, with the coming back to power of the Bharatiya Janata Party helmed by Narendra Modi in 2014, the displaced plaque at the Cellular Jail was reinstalled in July 2015, exactly eleven years after it had been removed. The same Ram Naik did the honours of laying the new foundation stone. History seemed to have come full circle. In the ever-changing electoral fortunes of the world's largest democracy, it is a historian's hope that the legacy of Savarkar, and of men like him, do not become political footballs in the ugly arena of toxic public life.

Dr Vikram Sampath  
Bengaluru, March 2019



# 1

## The Early Years

9 July 1879, Poona

Sir Richard Temple had a fairly long innings as a civil servant in British India. Few contemporaries could boast of the kind of knowledge he possessed about the country and its public opinion, especially about the British Empire. During his Indian term from 1847 to 1880, Sir Temple had held several important positions in Punjab, Central Provinces, Bengal, and the crowning glory of this stellar career was his appointment as the governor of Bombay from 1877 to 1880. With this vast experience behind him, a troubled Sir Temple wrote two confidential letters to the viceroy, Lord Lytton.<sup>1</sup> Given the many spelling and grammatical errors in these letters, it is obvious that Sir Temple had penned them in considerable haste. He had reason to worry, since there was serious trouble on hand. As recently as 1875, there had been several agrarian riots in the districts of Ahmednagar, Poona, Satara and Solapur in the Bombay Presidency. In 1876–77, the Deccan had suffered an acutely miserable famine and epidemics of cholera, plague and smallpox. These had led to a commission of inquiry and eventually to the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act of 1879. The Act sought to protect farmers against arrest for their inability to repay their debts. But it was too little, too late. The discontent had already

gained ground across the Deccan. Wasudev Balwant Phadke, whom Sir Temple had dismissed as a petty Brahmin ‘brigand leader’,<sup>2</sup> had led a bloody uprising against the British. It was obvious that there were rumblings in paradise and that public disaffection was simmering against alien rule.

But it was not these recent incidents alone that Sir Temple narrated at length to Lytton. Instead, he presented a historical sweep of the region and its people since that eventful year of 1818 when the British had managed to snuff out the mighty Maratha Empire under the Peshwas. ‘It is commonly said,’ wrote Temple, ‘that it was the Mahomedans whom the British displaced as rulers in India. This is true only in a restricted sense. It would be nearer the truth to say that it was the Mahrattas in the main, whom we displaced.’<sup>3</sup> Given the expanse and influence of Maratha rule across India by 1818, the observation was accurate. Unlike the Sikhs whose fighting spirit was vanquished and who somehow forgot the ignominy of defeat following the Second Anglo-Sikh War of 1848–49, the thorn of the 1818 debacle stuck in the flesh of self-respecting Marathas. And more so, as Sir Temple elucidated, in the community of the Chitpawan Brahmins of the region. But who were these Chitpawans who sent such shivers down the spine of the mighty British Empire?

Mythical accounts of the origins of the Chitpawan Brahmins can be traced back to Parashuram, a saint considered an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Their fair complexion, light eyes, and their large settlements along the western coast of India, particularly Ratnagiri, suggest that they may have come from Iran to Maharashtra by sea.<sup>4</sup> Organized into fourteen patrilineal groups, or gotras, they had no formal caste leadership or guidelines for conducting their social lives, but instead owed a loose allegiance to their religious pontiff, the Shankaracharya of Sankeshwar. From the hilly and economically depressed Konkan strip along the western coast where they initially settled, earning them the title of ‘Konkanastha’ Brahmins, the Chitpawans, who accounted for nearly 20 per cent of the Maharashtrian Brahmin population as per the 1901 census, migrated eastwards towards the ‘desh’ or mainland. Here they were up against their

fellow caste-mates, the Deshastha Brahmins, who outnumbered them and composed the traditional elite of the region. From being cultivators, priests and petty traders in their home strip of the Konkan, the newly arrived Chitpawans soon became administrators, diplomats and even martial soldiers. They quickly appropriated all the skills needed to rise up the political and economic ladder, and left the Deshasthas to occupy lower positions in administration or continue as priests.

This pre-eminence of the Chitpawan Brahmins in administration was firmly rooted following Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's death in 1680 and the establishment of the Peshwa rule by the early eighteenth century. The Peshwas, prime ministers of Shivaji Maharaj's descendants, were Chitpawan Brahmins themselves. They became the de facto political authority after Shivaji, while his descendant and grandson, Shahu Maharaj, occupied the ancestral throne at Satara. From the appointment of Balaji Vishwanath Bhat as the Peshwa in 1713, the Chitpawans found their way into all the departments of government. They followed the Maratha princes everywhere from Baroda, Indore and Sangli, to Miraj and Jamkhandi. The Peshwa generously rewarded eminent Chitpawans with large grants of land. From princes or sardars, administrators, statesmen, diplomats to being landholders, bankers, merchants and commanders of the mighty Peshwa army, it was a golden era in Chitpawan history.

However, all this changed dramatically and abruptly after 1818. The British conquest destroyed the patronage of the old ruling classes and stripped the Chitpawans of their hereditary advantages. The new systems of administrative service that the British introduced necessitated new skills. Yet, it was the ever-adaptive Chitpawan Brahmin who reinvented himself even under this biggest challenge to his monopoly by becoming the first of the community to benefit in large numbers from colonial English education, thus taking up civil service positions. The key post in the Bombay services was that of the mamlatdar (district revenue collector), and Brahmins, mostly Chitpawans, occupied nearly three-fourths of the positions in this grade. The Public Service Commission found that in the Bombay Presidency, 41.25 per cent of the deputy

collectors were Brahmins. By 1886, thirty three of the 104 subordinate judges in the Presidency were Chitpawans.<sup>5</sup> The reason the Chitpawans benefitted so extensively under British rule was explained by Sir Temple in his letter to Lytton, stating that the pre-eminent ‘position is won not by favour but by force of merit’.<sup>6</sup> What then, one wonders, embittered a community that depended so much upon government service for its livelihood?

Sir Temple summed this succinctly in his letter to Lytton where he spoke of the Maharashtrian Brahmins’ nostalgia for their former military and political glory over vast parts of the country. The subsequent fall from grace stirred a potent sentiment of resentment against the British since the 1820s itself. ‘The Chitpawun tribe,’ explained Temple, ‘are inspired with national sentiment and with an ambition bounded only with the bounds of India itself . . . the true Chitpawun . . . unites the hardihood and energy of a martial Commander with all the address and skill of a diplomat . . . nothing that we do now, by way of education, emolument or advancement in the public service, at all satisfies the Chitpawuns . . . Education does indeed in some respects draw them towards us—they reflect on many large matters solely through our language; they learn to use our modes of thought and to dis-use their own. On the other hand, education is certainly making their minds restless . . . They will never be satisfied till they regain their ascendancy in the country, as they had it during the last century . . . never have I known in India, a national and political ambition, so continuous, so enduring, so far reaching, so utterly impossible for us to satisfy, as that of the Brahmins of Western India, especially the dominant section of the “Concan-ust” Brahmins above described.’<sup>7</sup>

That many of Maharashtra’s prominent writers, educationists, social reformers, historians, civil servants, lawyers and journalists—from Mahadev Govind Ranade, Bal Gangadhar Tilak to Vishnushastri Krishnashastri Chiplunkar, Ganesh Agarkar and Gopalkrishna Gokhale—were Chitpawan Brahmins fiercely opposed to British rule reinforced Sir Temple’s analysis. It was in such a family of nationalistic Chitpawan Brahmins that Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born in 1883.

## Bhagur, 1883

The little town of Bhagur is about 22 kilometres from Nashik. Given its hospitable climate and good water supply, the British established their cantonment at Deolali, about 4 kilometres away from Bhagur. The Nashik region was part of the Maratha Confederacy till 1818; it was later divided between the Khandesh and Ahmednagar districts of the Bombay Presidency. The Nashik district was created in 1869 and, as per the 1901 census, had a population of 816,504—witnessing a 3 per cent decrease in the decade 1891–1901. One of peninsular India's largest rivers, the Godavari, originates in Nashik in the Tryambakeshwar mountain range and continues its journey eastwards in the district. Near the banks of the Godavari is one of Hinduism's most sacred pilgrim spots—the ancient Tryambakeshwar Shiva temple, which is among the twelve traditional *dyotirlinga*s or mystical Shiva temples.

About seven or eight generations before Vinayak Damodar, the Savarkars had migrated to Bhagur after the Peshwa granted it as a generous jagir to the family. Their place of origin was Palshet in the Guhagar taluk of Ratnagiri district in the coastal Konkan region. Palshet had an abundance of trees named sawri. Their original surnames were Oak and Bapat, but since they hailed from the land of sawri trees, they came to be known as 'Savarwadikar', which, in due course, got shortened to 'Savarkar'.<sup>8</sup> One of Vinayak's ancestors was supposed to be a famed Sanskrit pundit. The Peshwa was so pleased with his scholarship that he gifted him a golden palanquin. The remnants of the palanquin that rested in the local Khandoba temple became part of their family lore. Given their eminence, after the migration of the Savarkars and their caste kin, the Dhopavkars, to Bhagur as its landlords, the fortune of the little town also shone like that of the palanquin-riding ancestor. The Savarkars, specifically an ancestor named Mahadev Dixit Savarkar, were also granted the adjoining village of Rahuri as a jagir for the aforementioned's heroism. During the 1818 war, their ancestor, Parshurampant Savarkar, also served as an able diplomat negotiating between the Peshwas and the British.



Stories of the lavish Savarkar household, with fourteen courtyards, were passed on from generation to generation. So much so that much later, young Vinayak would eagerly count these fourteen courtyards each time an excavation in the house threw up a buried structure of the past; but he would always be disappointed that the number never squared. Rumours about the family well leading to hidden underground treasures that were guarded by a giant serpent were also part of this family's romance with its glorious and hoary past.

Vinayak's paternal grandfather had two sons and a daughter. His father, Damodarant, or Annarao, was the younger of the two brothers, with a gap of about fifteen years separating the siblings. The elder uncle, who was called Bapu Kaka, was of athletic build and keenly interested in physical fitness and exercising. The legal profession deeply attracted him and he had several lawyer friends. He owned mangroves and farms but yearned for domestic bliss as his wife had died early without any offspring. Bapu Kaka never remarried and though his relationship with his younger brother remained strained, he treated his nephews and nieces as his own children, showering them with all his affection. The only sister of the two Savarkar brothers was married into the Kanetkar family of neighbouring Kothur. Her husband and Bapu Kaka were business partners.

Damodarant lived in a world of his own. He was a friendly and mild-mannered man whose humility painfully extended to making him cringe with embarrassment each time honorifics were showered on him as the young jagirdar (landlord). He had completed his matriculation from Nashik High School and his teachers remembered him as an intelligent, though naughty child. He was even infamous for having thrown a ball at the school principal once. Besides being deeply religious, Damodarant was a poet of sorts who had memorized and recited verses of great bards of Marathi and Sanskrit. He was married to Radhabai, daughter of Manohar Dixit, who belonged to the Dixit family of Brahmin scholars of Kothur. Like Damodar, Radhabai's brother was equally interested in poetry and it was this interest in literature from both sides that rubbed off on the next generation of Savarkars. After losing two children, the couple was

blessed with a son on 13 June 1879. This child too was sickly at birth and fragile health dogged him all his life. He was named Ganesh and he was lovingly called 'Babarao'.

Four years later, on 28 May 1883, Damodar and Radha had their second son who was born in the family house at Bhagur. He was named Vinayak, but everyone affectionately called him 'Tatya' at home. The weak and petite Radhabai had suffered great labour pain and it was believed that she would most probably lose the baby. In 1886, Radhabai gave birth to a girl, Maina, who was called 'Mai'. Two years later, on 25 May 1888, the youngest of the siblings, Narayan, was born. He was called 'Bal' at home and was the cynosure of their eyes.

Damodar's family was picture-perfect. The young couple took strolls by the Daarna river each evening, and spent many a happy afternoon eating fresh, ripe mangoes with their children in their farms. The local Khandoba and Ganapati temples; a tree from which his father fell unconscious while attempting to pluck fruits; a dilapidated mutt; and the babul trees on the banks of the Daarna whose flowers were imagined as relatives waiting for him with open arms—were all enduring memories for the young and sensitive Vinayak. Many years later, he paid tribute to these lasting memories of his village and its picturesque and iconic spots in his Marathi poem 'Gomantak'. He was forever lost in thought and fanciful imagination and would pen down most of it.

Vinayak was always the leader of the pack, the domineering child who loved public attention and adulation. He was fond of being pampered and 'honoured' as the 'little *jagirdar* of Bhagur'<sup>9</sup> and even as a child, he would sit amid his 'subjects'<sup>10</sup> and enact mock courts with them. Farmers from the countryside who came home with bullock carts laden with fresh mangoes and other produce to their landlords never failed to pay their obeisance to the young boy. On his part, Vinayak would be deeply moved by their hard work, imploring them to sit in the shade, rest a bit while he served them refreshments. The petrified farmers would shriek in horror at the suggestion because entering their jagirdar's house and sitting there would earn them the ire of the senior Savarkar brothers. To this, Vinayak

would triumphantly tell them that if anyone caught them for their supposed indiscretion, they could confidently take his name and be let off. On a few occasions when Bapu Kaka walked past these squatting peasants, they would stand up in fright and seek his pardon, informing him that it was Tatyia who had forced them to sit there and rest. With a broad smile on his face, Bapu Kaka would say, ‘Well, if the *chota jagirdar* has seated you here as his valued guests, how can I muster the courage to dislodge you? Sit, sit, enjoy yourselves!’<sup>11</sup> and hurry away. This would boost the boy’s ego further.

Damodar’s maternal grandfather was known to be a brave warrior who had once commanded a battalion of horses. On one occasion, they had raided a group of dacoits and defeated them, taking away with them a beautiful idol of an eight-handed goddess—Ashtabhuja Bhawani.<sup>12</sup> Damodar’s mother had brought this idol to the household she had married into and it was installed at the family altar. The local priest had advised the family that being an extremely potent deity, it needed a daily animal sacrifice to propitiate it. The Savarkars being Brahmins and strict vegetarians had to hence shift the deity to the local temple where all the diurnal rituals could go on unabated. Every year, there was a grand procession of the goddess. Several years later, when Damodar built a new house, he decided to defy the priests and get the idol installed at home as the family deity.<sup>13</sup> The Bhawani idol attracted young Vinayak, who spent hours sitting in front of her, talking and chanting hymns. During the Navaratri festival, Damodarpant devoutly kept fasts, decorated her and made offerings of food, lamps, flowers and incense, even as Vinayak religiously sat beside him. Every time during the recitation of the Durga Saptashati when Damodar chanted ‘*Namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namah*’ (Repeated Salutations to you O! Mother!) in his high-pitched voice in chaste Sanskrit, Vinayak always got goose pimples.

Vinayak began his education at the local government school when he was six. A keen interest in reading everything from newspapers to books caught up fast with the precocious child. Soon, he taught himself English till the level of a grade three student in order to access the several books

that he found at home. His natural genius was further honed and nurtured by his father, also a voracious reader. There is a lasting memory that Vinayak cherished of his childhood when he was seven or eight years old. Damodar pant would summon his entire family around him after dinner. What followed was an intense reading of the scriptures, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and Marathi and Sanskrit works such as *Rama Vijay*, *Hari Vijay*, *Pandav Pratap*, *Shiva Leelamrit*, *Jaimini Ashwamedh*, *Bharat Katha Sangrah*, along with *bakhar*s (chronicles) and *powada*s (ballads) of the heroic exploits of Shivaji, Rana Pratap and the Peshwas. These readings instilled a deep understanding of religiosity and historical consciousness in the impressionable minds of the children. This would be followed by a long and intense discussion in which Radhabai and her four children were encouraged to participate and share their views.

But Damodar pant was also a strict disciplinarian when it came to his children. He would teach Babarao English, something that the latter would seldom understand. This would anger Damodar pant so much that he would run behind him in the courtyard, holding his ears and making him repeat each word and its spelling till he got it right. Tatyaa would come to his elder brother's rescue each time he faced their father's ire and help him hide behind the altar of the family tulsi plant. Once something that Tatyaa did angered Damodar pant so much that he locked his son in a cupboard. Radhabai was distraught searching for her son all over the house before finding him unconscious in the cupboard. She then gave her husband an earful about how he should not be so harsh with the kids.

The image of this happy family was suddenly shattered in 1892. It seemed like just another day when the family was observing the shradh ceremonies of an ancestor. Radhabai, who was in her early thirties at the time, had suddenly taken ill with a high fever. Despite this, she completed all the chores in the kitchen, but fell unconscious immediately afterwards. In no time her pulse rate declined rapidly. She was diagnosed with cholera. Even as Damodar pant sat by her bedside with tears in his eyes, she summoned all her children, embraced them and gesticulated to their father to take care of them, and soon afterwards, passed away.<sup>14</sup> Vinayak was

nine years old and later recalls in his memoirs that even the faintest memory of her face had faded away and that if she appeared in front of him in flesh and blood he would scarcely be able to recognize her at all. He was too young to even register the intensity of the tragedy that destiny had played on him and his siblings. After cremating her and returning home, Vinayak remembers that a potato curry had been prepared by a relative, and that he ate it with much relish, its taste remaining with him all his life. Evidently, the loss of a mother and the immense vacuum that it creates in an individual's life had simply not sunk in for any of the children.

Damodar pant, who was constructing a big three-storey house for his family, quickly got it completed and moved there to escape the memories that haunted him in the old house. Bapu Kaka stayed back. Given that Damodar pant was a young man, barely in his thirties and with four children to look after, every well-wisher advised him to remarry. But he was vehemently against the idea and instead decided to play the dual role of a mother and a father to the little ones, trying his best to ensure that they did not miss her presence too much. From handling the family business to the kitchen, to putting them all to bed, it was a quick transition that Damodar pant was forced to make. As the eldest sibling, Babarao also had little option but to forget childhood and step up to being a responsible adult in the face of this crisis. He assiduously stood by his father and assisted him in all the chores including cooking.

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Right from his childhood, Vinayak found the caste system that plagued Hindu society reprehensible. In his own little way he broke these barriers. Despite being an upper-caste Brahmin, and a landlord at that, all his childhood friends were from poor backgrounds and belonged to the supposed lower castes. Parashuram Darji and Rajaram Darji, who belonged to the tailor community, were among his best friends. Their father owned a village theatre company where he donned female roles and

sang melodious songs known as *lavani* s. The boys ate together and the Darjis' mother treated Vinayak as her own son, showering him with all her love. Gopalrao Anandrao Desai, the son of the local land record officer, Vamanrao Dhopavkar, Babu Kulkarni, Tryambak Darji, Balu Kulkarni, Bhiku Banjari, Sawalaram Sonar, Bapu and Nathu were the other close childhood friends and associates of Vinayak. The favourite pastime of these boys was to jointly build a mock temple, install a deity in it, and participate equally in its worship and even take out a grand procession on a toy palanquin. These boys were all witness to the rising political awareness and the seeds of revolution germinating in their talented friend Vinayak. He was also an extremely voracious reader, much beyond his age. Vinayak insisted on reading aloud the books and newspapers he loved along with his friends and discussing them in depth, so that they enriched their knowledge together. The feeling of community living and progressing in harmony rather than in competition was thus a part of Vinayak's character from a very tender age.

The streak of rationality and questioning tradition too came early to him. Once a multicoloured book on the shelf at home caught his attention and he decided to read it, despite it being in Sanskrit, of which he understood very little. When Damodarant discovered that his young son was reading the *Aranyaka* s he was enraged. There was a superstition that reading the *Aranyaka* s at home forebodes evil for the reader's worldly life and they needed to be read in seclusion in the woods. This left a lasting question in Vinayak's mind. How could someone as intelligent as his father believe in such superstitions?, he wondered. Mocking the belief, he continued reading the book without anyone's knowledge and proved to himself that this was just a fanciful and concocted tale.

History fascinated Vinayak from his childhood. *A Short History of the World* peered at him from the top of the bookshelf and he immediately lapped it up. Sadly for him, the first half of the book was torn and it began from Arab history. This instilled the eternal dilemma that every true and objective historian faces. Even if one were to reconstruct these destroyed pages, his young mind wondered, could one ever get to the story's

‘beginning’? What about those stories that preceded the ones in print, those that never got written? Have we, in that case, as a civilization, lost them forever? This philosophy of his towards historiography finds a reference in his poem ‘Saptarshi’ in which he emphatically states that if we want to understand world history, we would at best get only a fraction of it, as the ‘beginning’ remains elusive forever. At an age when most of his contemporaries shuddered at the very thought of reading school textbooks, such were the profound thoughts that were finding root in Vinayak’s fertile, young mind.

The same bookshelf held forth several other treasures for him. Among the writings that caught his fancy was the monthly *Nibandhamala* written by Vishnushastri Krishnashastri Chiplunkar starting 1874. This was one of his favourites. Chiplunkar was a vocal spokesperson for assertive nationalism in Maharashtra. In this seminal work, he reminds the people of Poona of their glorious past and questions British rule. From translations of the Mahabharata, editions of the *Kesari* newspaper, a monthly journal titled *Saddharmadeep* and Homer’s Iliad to the Marathi poetry of several stalwart poets such as Moropant and Vaman, Vinayak ravenously devoured all the books. And, all of this even before he was eleven. He emulated Chiplunkar’s style in his own essays on several contemporary issues.

Poetry germinated in Vinayak when he was only eight years old. While he employed all the poetic metres in Marathi of Ovi, Phatka and Arya styles, it was Moropant’s Arya metre that attracted him the most. Unfortunately, his teachers and the school headmaster were far from appreciative of, or understood, his poetic genius and dismissed it as a gimmick. An earlier headmaster had been sympathetic to Vinayak’s poetic talents. While he made the young lad run errands for him, he also trusted him immensely. Vinayak was given the most trustworthy task of handling the school seal and also the slightly meagre job of keeping a watch in school while the teacher took a lazy siesta. In return, Vinayak got a patient hearing to all his compositions in Arya. But the man who succeeded this headmaster, a poet himself, had a peculiar aversion to Vinayak. When the

boy took his poems to him, the headmaster threw them back after a glance, snapping that merely stringing words together did not make one a poet. Savarkar rues in his memoirs that all his life he singularly missed that loving mentor who could hold his hand and show him the path. But not the one to be disheartened, he kept at it and even sent his poems to several newspapers of the time. It was a proud moment for him and the entire family when his first poem ‘Swadeshi ki Phatkaar’ appeared in the newspaper *Jagat Hitecchu*. It seemed like sweet revenge to everyone who mocked him and his efforts. Little did the editor of the newspaper know that the poet he had published was just twelve years old!

Due to his interest in reading the scriptures, history, poetry and epics, Vinayak would sometimes fall back on his homework. But he devised an ingenuous way of circumventing this problem. He would come late to class on the day he had not finished his homework and sit at the very last bench. By the time his turn came, he would have finished the work, while others were submitting their answers, thereby also managing to emerge first in class, winning the accolades of teachers.

His penchant for reading newspapers gave Vinayak a window to the happenings in contemporary Maharashtra and the country. It was a turbulent period that witnessed numerous events, all of which caught his attention.

## Socio-political situation in Maharashtra

A significant demographic change that occurred in Maharashtra after 1818 was the rapid decline of Poona, the erstwhile capital of Peshwa glory, in every walk of public life. Several rich *sawkar* (banker) families who had also accumulated significant wealth suddenly lost their eminence.

Disbanded members of the Peshwa army loitered jobless. Replacing Poona in its eminence, the city of Bombay began to emerge as a modern metropolis of cosmopolitanism and economic growth. With the opening of British trade with China in the 1830s, Bombay was the veritable bridge in the commercial lifeline of the East India Company stretching from



Liverpool to Canton. Textile industries began to be set up here. The first cotton mill was started in 1851 by Kawasji Dawar; by 1880 the number of mills rose to forty-three, and to seventy-three by 1885.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the movers and shakers of this new economic resurgence were largely non-Maharashtrians. The British, Parsis, Bhatias and Khojas dominated the Bombay textile industry, while the Marathi speakers were relegated to the status of workers in the mills, whose plight was beyond miserable. In education too, Bombay stole a march with the then governor, Mounstuart Elphinston, establishing a network of educational institutions. It was only from the 1870s that Poona began to stage a comeback in the socio-political narrative and presented a contrast to Bombay on almost every issue. While Bombay presented a progressive, liberal and moderate viewpoint on several issues, Poona became the mouthpiece of conservative and, sometimes, extremist trends.

One of the pioneers who shifted the axis of importance to the Maharashtrian cultural capital of Poona was Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842–1901) after his transfer to the city in 1871. A liberal thinker and judge in the Bombay High Court, he was active in campaigns to promote women's education and to end the taboo surrounding widow remarriage. Through several social, political and cultural institutions and his own oeuvre of prolific writings, he advocated social reforms, criticized the British economic policies, and insisted on industrialization and capital investment through swadeshi or home-grown initiatives. Around the same time, the Sarvajanik Sabha established in Poona in 1870 under the leadership of Ganesh Vasudev Joshi (popularly known as Sarvajanik Kaka) began to play an important role as the mouthpiece of Poona's intellectuals, and through them, the Marathi-speaking citizens of the Presidency. From petitioning governments to intervening in matters related to Indian representation in governance to famine relief and social reforms, the Sabha, with which Ranade too got deeply involved, tried to build a new Poona narrative in Maharashtrian politics.

In 1880, a group of young graduates who were inspired by Vishnushastri Krishnashastri Chiplunkar opened the New English School at Poona. The

principal objective was to make English education accessible and affordable to a large cross section. They found a unique way to overcome the problem of lack of funds. The teachers serving in the school agreed to work gratis. M.B. Namjoshi, who ran the *Deccan Star* newspaper, offered his services by merging it with the school. A vernacular newspaper was also in the works. The profits from the press were meant to subsidize the activities of the school. By early 1881, under Chiplunkar's leadership, Bal Gangadhar Tilak headed the activities of the school.<sup>16</sup> A spirited young man, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, joined them soon. They started the publication of two newspapers—the *Mahratta* and the *Kesari*. In no time, the school became a success and financially viable. This inspired the founders to establish the Deccan Education Society in 1884 and by the end of the same year, Fergusson College.

Even though the gentlemen had come together with the larger objective of spreading education, ideological differences—particularly between Tilak and Agarkar—soon began to surface. While the *Kesari* carried articles advocating social reform and government legislation to regulate Hindu society, the *Mahratta* of the same week under Tilak's pen would passionately urge the contrary.<sup>17</sup> Their squabbles on every issue of social and political importance were public. Finally, by 1888, a frustrated Agarkar decided to start his own English-Marathi newspaper, *Sudharak*, assisted by his young accomplice, Gopalkrishna Gokhale, who had joined the Society in 1886. Agarkar wrote bitter letters, some possibly in the heat of the moment, complaining of Tilak's attitude and what he termed as 'self-glorification at the cost of honesty, unity, friendship, public duty, and several other social virtues'.<sup>18</sup> The ill will among hitherto comrades eventually blew up in the face of the Society after Agarkar's alleged misuse of funds given by the Holkar Maharaja of Indore to the Society.<sup>19</sup> This ended with Tilak's resignation after a hotly contested board meeting. He quit the Society frustrated and deeply disappointed at his own failure to stamp his influence, ideas and leadership on his associates. But Tilak took away with him the two newspapers—*Kesari* and *Mahratta*. These newspapers were to prove invaluable assets for him in both launching a

vindictive tirade against his betrayers, and also enhancing his own political mastery and influence in the politics of the Deccan. The battle lines between the competing ideological positions of the moderate, liberal, self-flagellating reformist and the extremist, fiercely nationalist and Hindu-conscious were firmly drawn.

Through his newspapers and his political activities, Tilak adopted a unique strategy to make Hinduism, as well as Maharashtra's historical icons, relevant to contemporary times. Positing himself as a sentinel of nationalistic values, his newspapers combined praise of Hindu society and the glories of its hallowed past with criticisms of the degraded present, along with a beacon of hope for a better future. His popularity rose due to his championing the protests against the controversial Scoble Bill of 1891, also known as The Age of Consent Act, that forbade consummation of marriage with a Hindu girl under the age of twelve, making it a punishable offence. The Bill was part of the reforms agenda of Ranade, Gokhale, Agarkar and others. But given its sensitivity and the impact it would have on traditional Maharashtrian households, Tilak's fierce opposition to the fact that the British were interfering in the social and religious lives of Hindus won him a lot of popularity.

Tilak also threw his weight behind the celebration of the Ganapati festivals in Maharashtra. After the fall of the Peshwas in 1818, public festivities had petered out, but continued to be celebrated quietly in domestic and temple contexts. It was not until the 1890s that the festival was revitalized for large-scale public involvement, lasting over ten long days. Bhausahab Lakshman Javale, a renowned Ayurvedic doctor of Poona, along with some of his friends—Dagdusheth Halvai, Nanasaheb Khasgivale, Maharishi Annasaheb Patwardhan, Balasaheb Natu, Ganapatrao Ghoravadekar and Lakhusheth Dantale—started a small-scale community celebration of the Ganapati festival by erecting a makeshift pandal in Poona in 1892. This came to be called the Bhau Rangari Ganapati Mandal. Tilak approved of this revitalization to unify the Hindu community. He enhanced the scale of the festival and widely publicized it

through his newspapers. He thereafter became the much-recognized icon of the Ganapati festivities.

In 1894, Tilak began his own massive Ganapati celebrations, installing a pandal in the courtyard of the *Kesari* newspaper press in Vinchurk Wada. This also enabled Tilak to circumvent British colonial laws against political gatherings and disseminate his views within the rubric of a religious festival. Many of these Ganapati idols were depicted in a heroic fashion slaying a demon. These hidden transcripts made effective use of religious icons to convey veiled political messages, where the demon being slayed was a personification of the British, and Ganapati, the remover of obstacles that came in the path of freedom.

But beyond the patient petitions and representations of the liberal reformers and the grandiose and extremist nationalists, a quiet third category of political thought also grew. This latter group was aligned to the concept of violent armed rebellion to overthrow British power. They had their roots in the suppressed armed struggle of 1857 and strongly believed that an uprising in the British Indian Army was the only way to liberate the country. One of the fathers of Indian armed revolution who exploded on the political scene in Maharashtra during this time was Wasudev Balwant Phadke (1845–83). A Chitpawan Brahmin like Ranade, Gokhale and Tilak, W.B. Phadke had secured enough English education to get himself a government job. Starting off as a clerk in the audit office at the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, he was soon promoted to the military finance office under the controller of military accounts and served there for over fifteen years. Being in Poona, he was initially an ardent follower of Ranade and an activist of the Sarvajanic Sabha, propagating swadeshi. From starting the first non-governmental school in Poona in 1874 to organizing youth camps for unity and undertaking relief measures in far-flung famine-struck areas, the spirit of nationalism burnt strongly in Phadke. A masterful orator, his fiery speeches inspired people in Poona to come out in large numbers to listen to his views.

But the devastating famine of 1876–77, the subsequent inaction of the British dispensation to address this calamity and a pusillanimous response

from the Indian nationalists in pushing the government enough on the issue, disillusioned him from the political activities that he had hitherto participated in enthusiastically. The turning point, however, came in the form of a personal trigger with his officer denying him permission to visit his village, Shirton, when news of his dying mother reached him. Defying the lack of permission, he left for his hometown. But by the time he got there, his mother had sadly passed away. Of what use was his loyalty, service and conscientiousness when he could not meet the person he loved the most during her dying moments?, he wondered. With no effective redressal of his grouse and his immense guilt of letting his mother down, Phadke decided to break ranks and form a secret revolutionary group. A junior member of this secret group, Gangadhar Vishnu Joshi, described the modus operandi of the organization:

The organization consisted of four groups. The first organized meetings of schoolboys without the knowledge of inquisitive teachers at secret places outside the school. The message of independence was conveyed by the spokesman of the organization at these meetings. The second group took out processions, which went about singing patriotic songs that chiefly included the prayers of saints such as Ramadas and Tukaram. During the later part of the day, the preachers belonging to the third group sang satirical songs describing the pathetic plight of India under alien rule. People often invited these singers to their houses for singing the songs. The fourth group consisted of active members engaged in revolutionary activities. The members of this secret organization had to take an oath of secrecy and to say that 'I shall respond to the call of my nation, sacrificing everything of mine at the altar of my motherland'. In the desolate thicket beyond the temple of Narsimha in Pune city sixty to seventy youth daily gathered for training in sword exercise given by Wasudev. They included students, teachers, government servants and public workers. Wasudev's second wife Bai Saheb Phadke was also a member of this group and even Bal Gangadhar Tilak, then in his teens, is reported to have frequented this secret group. <sup>20</sup>

The members collected arms and ammunitions and to test their capabilities, organized mock battles on the hill near Fergusson College in Poona. Shivaji Maharaj was their eternal inspiration, both in his vision of a free nation and the guerrilla tactics of attacking the enemy. Phadke soon organized several backward communities—the Ramoshees, Kolis, and Dhangars—in Maharashtra, committing several political robberies to

collect money for his mission. The targets were always the rich merchants or banias, although women would be spared. In May 1879, Phadke undertook the Konkan expedition, looting Nere, Chikhli and Palaspe, and the booty was more than Rs 150,000. But while returning from Konkan, Major Daniel caught the revolutionaries in the Tulshi Valley of the Mawal province and confiscated the loot after a tough fight. Daulatrao Naik, the leader of the troop, had to sacrifice his life. Notices of bounty were put up for Phadke by the British government in various places.

In retaliation, Phadke audaciously announced a double bounty on anyone who brought the heads of Bombay governor Sir Richard Temple, Poona's collector and the session judge. He signed this declaration in his own name with the self-styled honorific: 'The new *Pradhan* of the Peshwa'. He also declared that this act of his would lead to a rebellion across India and a massive repeat of the 1857 uprising. This declaration was stuck on all the major walls and buildings in Poona. At the same time, on the night of 13 May 1879, his revolutionary associates set fire to two big European bungalows—the Vishrambagh Wada and Budhwar Wada—in Poona, burning government documents.<sup>21</sup> These incidents found its echoes in London as it was quoted in the British Parliament. Going into a tizzy, the press there reacted in horror, even calling for the imposition of martial law in Poona. The *Daily Telegraph*, *Morning Post*, *The Times*, *Bombay Gazette* and several newspapers castigated the government for living in a world of make-believe while discontent simmered underneath. The *Bombay Gazette* noted with deep concern:

The rumours that have been flying about Western India for the past few months have now received ample confirmation. The rumours ascribe to certain members an ambition on their part to renew in Western India those tactics by which Shivaji in days gone by succeeded eventually in sapping the power of the then mighty Mughal Empire. A little martial law would do Poona a great deal of good. The Mutiny attained its dangerous proportion mainly because we ignored it at the beginning. There should be no mistake of that sort in Poona now.<sup>22</sup>

Sir Richard Temple also outlined in detail these activities of Phadke in his letter dated 3 July 1879 to Viceroy Lord Lytton. That someone from their own governmental ranks could be so embittered to organize an armed rebellion against them rattled the British government in India. It also blew in the face of British claims back in London that things were fine in India after the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 and the subsequent 'reforms' in governance that they claimed to have brought about. Phadke was a living embodiment of their failures and he had to be curbed at any cost.

However, the Ramoshees decided to part ways with Phadke soon after. In the few pages of his extant diary, Phadke writes about them in utter frustration:

Seeing what had occurred in the last ten days, I began to consider what all this would end in, and how I could accomplish anything with such people (Ramoshees) who on committing a dacoity first of all rob and make away with the booty and then bully for their share of the division, after which they are anxious to return to their homes at once. Under such circumstances how can two hundred men be collected? . . . If I had two hundred men I would have looted the Khed treasury and got much money as at this time the revenue was being collected and had I got more money I could have got the assistance of 500 horses. Through poverty no one possesses horses. If I had got horsemen they would have been good men, not deceitful like Ramoshees . . . they (Ramoshees) fear to go before guns and have great avarice of money. <sup>23</sup>

But not one to give up easily, Phadke sent his emissaries to the Lingayat adventurers, the Rampa rebels in the Godavari district, and to all the native states in the south. He sent his trusted accomplice, Bhaskar Jyotishi, to Benares on a secret mission and sought reinforcements from Maulvi Muhammad Saheb of Hyderabad who was the leader of the Arabs, Rohillas and Sikhs in the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad. He summoned his colleagues in different parts of India to rally around his banner, envisioning a simultaneous rising all over India. His vision was to stop mails, cut off railway and telegraph lines, break open jails and get the convicts on to the revolutionary side. In his own words:

Having obtained Rs 5000/- from a Savkar, I proposed to send to all sides three or four men a month in advance, so that small gangs might be raised by them and from which great fear would come to the English. The mails would be stopped and the railways and telegraph interrupted, so that no information could go from one place to another. Then the jails would be opened and all the long sentenced prisoners would join me because if the English government remained they would not get off. If I obtained 200 men, even should I not be able to loot the treasury, I should carry out my intention of releasing criminals. How many and where the military were would not be known and thus thousands of ignorant people would collect. This would be good and my intentions would be carried out . . . When a child is born it is as a drop of water, when he grows up he can carry out his desires, but only in one year or five can he do it? So also with a 'BAND'! Even though it may be small, if the foundation is good it shall grow big and conquer this oppressive government. There is much ill feeling among the people (against the British) and if a few make a commencement those who are hungry will join. Many men are inclined to begin and the result would eventually be good. <sup>24</sup>

Contemporary newspapers like the *Deccan Star* and *Bodh Sudhakar* were tempted to compare the activities of Wasudev Balwant Phadke with the events of the American War of Independence. The *Bodh Sudhakar* of 13 December 1879 rues:

We are certain that those who esteem and applaud Washington will do the same in the case of Wasudev Balwant, but the natives of India have lost all ideas of patriotism and hence there is no one among them to appreciate him. Washington pursued a policy which was perfectly understood by all his countrymen but the plans of Wasudev Balwant were utterly unintelligible to his followers . . . Wasudev Balwant wished to establish a republican government but the accomplishment of this object was no easy matter unless all the people were of the same mind with him. <sup>25</sup>

Things now took an unfortunate turn for Phadke. The British were on the run to capture this nuisance of a 'brigand'. He was encircled from all sides in Gangapur, near the Sholapur–Karnatak border, and eventually captured, tried and sentenced for life to the fort of Aden. He unsuccessfully tried to escape and finally fasted to death on 17 February 1883.

Paying rich tributes to him, the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote:



Vasudeo Balwant Phadake possesses many of the traits of those high souled men who are now and then sent in this world for the accomplishment of great purposes . . . The noble feelings of a Washington, a Tale (of Switzerland) and a Garibaldi animated his breast . . . his heart overflowed with love for India. Whatever he had he was willing to offer for his country, even his life. The very idea of establishing a Republic shows the unselfish nature of his mind. He had no intention to establish a Raj of his own . . . forget for a moment that Phadake led bands of dacoits and sought the subversion of British Government and then he stands before you as being as superior to the common herd of humanity as the Himalayas to the Satpura range. <sup>26</sup>

One does not know the exact contours of the ‘republic’ that Phadke wished to establish. But from contemporary reports in newspapers it can be inferred that he was deeply influenced by the concept of the American Republic and wanted to model the new, free India on similar lines. Thus, it was not mere anarchy and dacoity that revolutionaries such as Phadke indulged in. They also had a broad vision of the alternative that they wished to establish after overthrowing British rule by force.

While Phadke’s rebellion might have been crushed, the spirit of armed rebellion was still alive. It undoubtedly was left leaderless and scattered for a while, but the embers were not extinguished. The belief that arming India and Indians was the only way to snatch freedom from the British began to gain ground. The mobilization and support that Tilak offered this sentiment further aided the belief. By 1894, many secret groups roamed Maharashtra with a renewed hope.

The other outcome of these explosive events was a growing realization in the minds of the British, albeit in a minority, of the need to engage with Indians and win them over to avoid a repetition of 1857. Allan Octavian Hume (1829–1912) was one such British administrator and policy influencer. As the collector of Etawah, he had seen the horrors of 1857 first-hand. The nightmare of having to paint his skin black and wear a sari and burqa to escape the bloodthirsty revolutionaries looking for British officers in 1857 had a lasting impression on him. He was a critic of Lord Lytton, by the end of whose listless career devastating famines, frontier wars and administrative vagaries produced a potpourri of disenchantment with British rule. After his retirement, around the same time, Hume

wanted to do something to ensure that ‘sudden violent outbreak of sporadic crime, murders of obnoxious persons, robbery of bankers and looting of bazaars’<sup>27</sup> did not coalesce to ‘develop into a National Revolt’<sup>28</sup> that it had a potential to. He rued that the British government had a ‘studied and invariable disregard, if not actually contempt for the opinions and feelings of our subjects’.<sup>29</sup> He believed in the need for an institutionalized channel of communication between the rulers and the ruled. It was envisaged that several existing civil society organizations across India, such as Ranade’s Sarvajanik Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association with members like Pheroza Shah Mehta, Nana Shunker Sheth, Justice Telang and Badruddin Tyabji, and Surendranath Banerjea’s Indian National Association (INA) in Bengal would merge to create this pan-Indian platform.

Accordingly, the Indian National Congress took shape and its first session was held in Bombay on 28 December 1885 with seventy-two delegates in attendance. Hume assumed the charge as general secretary and Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee of Calcutta was elected president. The Congress had no intentions of seeking independence from British rule and instead pledged unswerving loyalty to the Crown. It had modest demands—recruitment of Indians in high offices, reduction of taxes, appointment of a few Indians on government advisory bodies and creating a partial entry for Indians into the legal system. The acceptance, even in part, of even some of these ‘demands’ could then be showcased by the British as living up to the aspirations of the Indian people, who on their part would be expected to be ever grateful to this benevolent, participatory regime. As Hume’s biographer Sir William Wedderburn noted:

There was no cause for fearing political danger from the Congress . . . it is the British Government which has let loose forces which unless wisely guided and controlled must sooner or later involve consequences which are too dangerous to contemplate. And it is to limit and control them and direct them when there is yet time to do so . . . that this Congress movement was designed.<sup>30</sup>

One gets a glimpse of the nature of demands and motivations of the Congress and its early leaders in the words of Dadabhai Naoroji, who elucidated in his presidential address at the Ninth Annual Session of the INC at Lahore on 27 December 1893:

Our faith in the instinctive love of justice and fair play of the people of the United Kingdom is not misplaced . . . I for one have not the shadow of doubt in dealing with such justice loving and fair minded people as the British. We may rest fully assured that we shall not work in vain. It is this conviction, which has supported me against all difficulties. I have never faltered in my faith in the British character and have always believed that the time will come when the sentiments of the British Nation and our Gracious Sovereign proclaimed to us in our Great Charter of the Proclamation of 1858 will be realized. <sup>31</sup>

In these early days of the nationalist struggle for freedom, these pioneering leaders, while not wanting at all either in patriotism or intent, had almost an innocent belief in the fairness and intent of British rule, which was deemed as divinely ordained for the betterment of India. They hoped and believed that such conciliatory tones, reverential petitions and requests would help them achieve a greater participation for Indians in the process of governance.

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Back in faraway Bhagur, the sheer expanse and the drama surrounding these tumultuous developments across Maharashtra and India captivated young Vinayak who keenly followed all that was happening.



2

## Painful Transitions

After the tragedy of Radhabai's demise, the year 1896 finally brought cheer to the Savarkar family. Babarao turned seventeen and was married to Yashoda, the niece of Nanarao Phadke of Tryambakeshwar. She was two years younger than Vinayak and thus began a lifelong friendship between the two. In her memoirs, she narrates the incident of her first meeting with her favourite brother-in-law, Vinayak.<sup>1</sup>

A day before the wedding, unable to contain his curiosity about his future sister-in-law, Vinayak, along with his younger brother Bal, turned up at the residence of Yashoda's uncle, advocate Nanarao Phadke. Yashoda was busy with the pre-marriage rituals. Besides, she was suffering from a bout of conjunctivitis. The smart thirteen-year-old Vinayak arrived at their doorstep and with an air of confidence inquired: 'Is this the Phadke residence? Where is our sister-in-law?' A bemused group of women asked him who he was and which sister-in-law he was looking for. Vinayak's gift of the gab and smart replies won their hearts. Yashoda's mother, Mathura Tai, reminisced that she could not tire seeing Vinayak's adorable, handsome and delicate frame.

After the wedding that was held at Tryambakeshwar, when the time came for the Yashoda's departure, she started crying at the prospect of

leaving her maternal home. Her mother tried in vain to console her. Seeing her sob uncontrollably, Vinayak stepped forward and assured her mother that he would take care of nursing her conjunctivitis and give her the proper medication. His innocence about the reason for her tears made everyone, including Yashoda, burst out laughing. On the return journey at night from Tryambakeshwar to Nashik in a bullock cart, Vinayak kept describing the natural beauty of the region to Yashoda who could barely keep her eyes open.

True to his word, on their return, he took care of her conjunctivitis, and she was soon cured. The Savarkar household, bereft of a woman for long, got in Yashoda a loving girl, who stepped up to be a mother to her two younger brothers-in-law. As per Hindu tradition, her maiden name too was changed after marriage to Saraswati, but the name Yesu *Vahini* (sister-in-law), as Vinayak and Bal called her, stuck with her for the rest of her life. She was the affectionate confidante that Vinayak had always craved. He taught her to read and write and shared his writings and poems with her. In return, Yesu taught him melodious Marathi songs from her vast repertoire, particularly the Marathi *Gajagauri* songs dedicated to the Mother Goddess.

Shortly after the wedding, Babarao completed his Marathi education in Bhagur, and Damodarant decided to send him to Nashik to pursue higher education in English. Babarao was always a spiritually inclined young man. In Nashik, he came under the influence of a mendicant, Balabua, from whom he learnt several techniques of yoga and meditation. He began following austerities like surviving on merely ghee and water for an entire month and remaining awake for long hours in the night. It is said that he spent almost fourteen to fifteen hours daily on his yogic and spiritual pursuits. Unlike his younger brother Vinayak, the political upheavals in the country hardly mattered to Babarao and they even failed to impact his mind. For someone so aloof from political matters, it was quite a transition when he jumped into the revolutionary fray many years later, after being inspired by Vinayak.

Around this time, communal riots rocked different parts of the Bombay Presidency. The Ganapati festivals and the subsequent processions often invited Muslim ire and led to conflicts. The Muslims quoted their theological texts that prescribed offering their prayers in silence—something that the processional music of the Hindus allegedly disturbed. Trying to deduce which community began a riot was a classic chicken-and-egg problem. On 6 February 1894, in Yeola, a small weaving centre in the Nashik district, a conflict erupted over a report that a pig's head had been thrown into a local mosque. On receiving the news, the mamlatdar went to the mosque and found 'two portions of a dead pig, cut in half, lying in the mosque and its enclosure'.<sup>2</sup> He urged the crowd that had gathered 'not to attempt any reprisals'.<sup>3</sup> But soon after, news arrived that 'the Musalmans had retaliated by slaughtering a cow in the Hindu temple'.<sup>4</sup> This led to further rioting and military assistance was sent for. Later in the day, the mamlatdar heard that 'the Hindus were making arrangements to burn the Juma mosque'.<sup>5</sup> Even as police protection could be arranged, news came in that Muslims 'had set fire to the Muralidhar temple'.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, other mosques and temples were damaged or destroyed. Four people were killed.<sup>7</sup>

Government officials attributed this spurt in violence to the cow protection movement that had gained ground. It was one of the central tenets of the Arya Samaj founded by Hindu reformer Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Cow protection societies existed in Punjab since 1882. In Bombay, it was around 1887 that the Society for the Preservation of Horned Cattle was formed with modest goals such as construction of *gau shala*s or cow refuge homes. However, by the 1890s, cow protection societies had spread across a number of Deccan towns including Ahmednagar, Belgaum, Dharwar, Poona, Satara, Nashik and Yeola.

The other reason for the outbreak of clashes between the two communities was the vexed one of Hindu processional music being played in front of mosques. With music being considered taboo in Islam, the Muslim clerics detested the processions that played loud music passing by their places of worship, while the Hindus contested it saying they were

using a public space where no one could dictate their actions. As early as 1859, a Bombay Sadr Faujdari Adalat (court) had ruled that music in temples that formed part of religious worship must be respected. However, processional street music, which was not necessarily part of core Hindu religious ritual, should be conceded only when it did not interfere with the liberty of others. Thus:

The right of praying in their mosque must be secured to the Muhammadans so long as their prayers are not a nuisance to others, and the Hindus may be allowed to accompany their processions with music so long as their music is not a nuisance to others; but whenever it becomes a nuisance, it ought, the Judges think, to be prohibited. <sup>8</sup>

In the *Kesari*, Tilak denounced the government for what he alleged as appeasement of the Muslim sentiments when it came to cow slaughter and which had led to these riots all over the Presidency. <sup>9</sup> The processional music issue too bothered him and he decided to retaliate by making the Ganapati festivals grander and more ostentatious than before. The processions were marked by loud shouts of call to arms for the Hindus and to rebel as Shivaji did to overthrow alien power. The festival was organized as a mela movement. A mela consisted of a group of young men or students, dressed in special costumes, armed with sticks, who practised singing, dancing, drilling and fencing. Each mela was attached to a particular Ganapati celebration and would go around the town and the countryside before and during the ten days of the festival. They performed popular verses and songs in which references to current political events were inserted. It is these songs that Muslims objected to and that led to a communally precarious situation.

Vinayak and his friends were absorbing from the *Kesari*, *Pune Vaibhav* and other newspapers the stories of these bloody riots and the polarized tinderbox that Maharashtra had become. Each time they heard of the attack on Hindus, they would be enraged and wondered why Hindus could not organize themselves and retaliate instead of suffering repression. To avenge the riots, Vinayak and his friends planned a secret attack on a

mosque in Bhagur that had been left unused for decades. By dusk, the team of boys armed with their little weapons attacked the mosque, broke down parts of it and made a quick escape. When the news reached their Muslim classmates, they were incensed and there was a showdown at school. The ‘Hindu side’ led by Vinayak and armed with their ‘weapons’ managed to trounce the opponents. A truce was thereafter called for, as per which both sides agreed not to bring this to the notice of any teacher. However, a few Muslim boys were seething with rage and sought revenge by vowing to put meat into the Brahmin boy’s mouth. <sup>10</sup>

While these incidents could be dismissed as childish squabbles, Vinayak acknowledges in his memoirs that these experiences taught him how poorly organized and disunited the Hindu community was and how easy it was to subjugate them. <sup>11</sup> The Hindus were perpetually divided among themselves along several fault lines, especially caste, and this made them doubly vulnerable to attacks. They were full of self-doubt and suspicion about the other, and seldom committed to the ‘cause’. Vinayak decided to establish a ‘military training school’ of sorts to instil a sense of discipline, rigour and commitment among his group.

The boys divided themselves into groups—some of them played the role of Hindus, while others were either Muslims or the British. Neem seeds were used as mock bullets. Those who were unafraid of the attack of the neem seeds and managed to grab the saffron Hindu flag or *bhagwa* from the middle of the field while also stealing the opponent’s arms was declared the winner. Almost always it was Vinayak who headed the Hindu side and steered them to victory. If ever the Muslim or British side seemed to win, he would diplomatically urge them (after all they were only play-acting) to accept defeat for the larger ‘national interest’. After all, in their skit, the Hindus could never lose. The boys would sing victory songs and parade all through Bhagur after these games. Babarao was good at archery and Vinayak began to learn this art from him. Damodarant had a sword and a gun at home that Vinayak would keep looking at with awe, touching and feeling these, and trying to learn to use these as well.



A historically conscious Vinayak was thrilled to read about a new initiative that his hero, Tilak, had started in 1896. On 15 April 1896, on the same lines as the Ganapati festival, Tilak inaugurated the Shivaji festival at Raigarh in Poona. The objective was to raise funds to maintain Shivaji's tomb in Raigarh and to instil a sense of nationalism drawn from their past in Maharashtrians. The festival was held annually on the anniversary of Shivaji's coronation—a momentous occasion that had led to the foundation of the glorious Maratha Empire. Ballads, or powadas, were composed in praise of Shivaji and his inspirational guru, Ramdas; athletic competitions were held; kirtans and plays performed, and lectures given on Maratha history. Tilak's detailed programme published in the *Kesari* of 3 March 1896 for a 'proper celebration' at the festival at Raigarh on 15 April that year was certainly an attempt to regulate spontaneous celebrations and harness them for the nationalist cause:

The images of Shivaji and Ramdas will figure most prominently in the celebration . . . during the three days that it will last, lectures, sermons, dramatic representation (not of the sensual or obscene type), singing of historical ballads . . . will form the chief items on the programme . . . Things produced or manufactured in foreign countries, such as petroleum, candles, glassware . . . will be strictly eschewed at the celebration and only home-made articles will be brought . . . even at the possible sacrifice of some aesthetic attraction. Readings of the *Dasbodh* and *Shivavijaya* will be given during the three days . . . A specially composed ode in honour of Shivaji will be sung on the last day with Shivaji's standard floating overhead. The *mankaris*, staff and volunteers will remain standing while the ode is being sung and will greet its close with shouts of Har Har Mahadev! The singing of the ode will be the most important function in the whole celebration. <sup>12</sup>

The Marathi paper *Sudharak*—edited by Tilak's ideological opponent and long-time rival, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, till his death in 1895, and thereafter by Sitarampant Deodhar—was foremost in opposing this use of Shivaji as a symbol for nationalist purposes. It insisted that his appeal was extremely localized to Maharashtra and that the symbol of a monarch who could not unite the country against foreign rule was inappropriate, especially at a time when national unity was crucial. On 29 May 1899, the

*Sudharak* asked: ‘Under what obligations are the Muhammadans or the Bengalees or the Rajputs to remember Shivaji? It is . . . clear that the festival has in it nothing that can make it national even among the Hindus.’<sup>13</sup> Moderate newspapers that cautiously supported Tilak’s programme also commented on its special regional appeal. For example, on 25 April 1898, the *Indu Prakash* opined:

Wherever there is Hinduism, Shivaji’s name will be revered and we should not wonder if we hear of Shivaji’s birthday celebrations in Madras next year. He is essentially a national hero for all Hindus, and the Marathas may well rejoice that he was born among them. It is but natural that among the Marathas more than ordinary enthusiasm should be evoked by these celebrations . . .<sup>14</sup>

Tilak himself was aware of stretching this too much. In the *Kesari* of 9 April 1901, he painstakingly argued:

It does not matter if in different parts of India such celebrations are held in honour of different national heroes. Although the main object is to unite the whole of India as one nation, it cannot be denied that the whole Indian nation is made up of different smaller nations and that the solidarity of different parts taken by themselves is indispensable for, and by no means inconsistent with the general unity of the nation.  
<sup>15</sup>

Building on the success of both these festivals, in the same year, Tilak managed to gain control over the Sarvajanik Sabha and outsmart his long-time rivals Ranade and Gokhale, who resigned in disgust and wrote disparagingly about Tilak and his actions. But Tilak’s success was short-lived. The excessive involvement of the Sarvajanik Sabha under Tilak during the famine that gripped the Deccan in 1897 and their incitement to farmers to not pay taxes angered the government. They derecognized the Sabha as a body that had any claim to address the government on matters related to public policy. Tilak’s influence got neutralized even before it could create much impact.

Deeply inspired by Tilak, Vinayak and his friends too organized the first Shivaji Jayanti festival in Bhagur at the house of Marwari Seth

Balmukund Maniram. Vinayak's brilliant keynote speech left everyone, including Damodarant, spellbound.

After Vinayak completed his primary school, Damodarant insisted that he join Babarao in Nashik to pursue his education at the prestigious Shivaji School. Accordingly, the thirteen-year-old Vinayak left his hometown for the first time in pursuit of education and excellence. The two brothers stayed in a modest accommodation near the Kanadya Maruti Temple in Nashik. They cooked their own food as eating out meant losing one's caste for a chaste Brahmin. But Vinayak firmly refuted such beliefs and gorged on the delicious jalebis at the Gangaram Hotel in the city.

Every fortnight, Damodarant would come to Nashik to visit his sons. Being very attached to his father, Vinayak would eagerly wait for his arrival and become sad on the day he was scheduled to depart. His homesickness was further accentuated by the kind of classmates he had. Hardly anyone shared the kind of zeal for academics, current affairs or politics, squandering their time in mindless pursuits.

It is worth mentioning that Vinayak was the favourite student of all his teachers at school. Given his exceptional intelligence, sense of discipline and his poetry and writing skills, he emerged as the apple of their eyes. In fact, one of his teachers inspired Vinayak to send his article to the *Nashik Vaibhav* newspaper. After much scepticism, he wrote a piece on Hindu culture and its glory. The editor of the newspaper was surprised at the content, style and flow of the article and found it hard to believe that the author was a schoolboy. The essay was published in two parts and was widely appreciated all over Nashik.

The *Lok Seva* was another important newspaper in Nashik. Its editor and owner was the renowned theatre artist Anant Waman Barve. The newspaper was a veritable mouthpiece for Tilak's work and carried several patriotic essays and articles about Tilak's Ganapati and Shivaji festivals. Barve used to sing melodious patriotic songs in programmes and festivals that were regularly organized on the banks of the Godavari in Nashik. While most of his schoolmates would be gallivanting aimlessly by the riverbanks, Vinayak was an uninvited but regular attendee of all these

events and nationalistic gatherings by the Godavari. Here, he heard some stirring speeches and melodious songs and constantly internalized all that he was hearing. His teachers introduced Vinayak to Barve as a poet and writer and this enabled easier access to future events. Barve also implored Vinayak to participate in the annual debate competition in Nashik. Although he was well past the application deadline, on Barve's insistence Vinayak was given admission to the contest, which was merely three days thence. The topic was the same for all students and Vinayak was the last speaker as he had enrolled so late. Since most of what had to be said would have already been conveyed by earlier speakers, by the time the last speaker came to the podium audiences would normally get bored and leave. But Vinayak's speech captivated them from the very beginning and they stayed rooted. The judges were quick in making their decision and Vinayak was unanimously declared the winner. The judges were however sceptical about the originality of Vinayak's speech as they found it difficult to believe that a fourteen-year-old boy could write or conceive of subjects and topics in this mature manner. It was left to Barve and Vinayak's teachers to adjudicate that the young lad was indeed a fine writer and a thinker. This was Vinayak's first attempt at public speaking and he had effortlessly won his maiden attempt. People of Nashik began to talk about this talented young man with fiery oratorical skills.

Encouraged by this success, Vinayak began reading several Marathi books on public speaking to hone his innate skills. The various elements of constructing an argument, consolidating and concluding them, voice modulation, body language, intonation, command over language and such aspects of public speaking fascinated Vinayak. He worked hard on these skills to later become a master orator, someone who could mesmerize large crowds.

During these formative years, all the reading and reflecting made Vinayak question several beliefs and rituals that were blindly followed at that time. In fact, he had frequent arguments with Babarao on such matters. It was from this fire of doubt and agnosticism that his interest in philosophy and religion sprang. He began making critical evaluations of

the scriptures and the Vedanta and engaged in debates and discussions with those stuck in rituals of religion, superstitions and a strong belief in either theism or atheism. Babarao's spiritual quests took him to all kinds of god-men and saints, many of whom were quacks and would end up exploiting his naivety. Once in Nashik, Babarao took Vinayak to a sadhu staying in Panchavati's Rama Dharamshala. He was told that the sadhu was a reincarnation of Saint Ramdas who had guided Shivaji in his conquest against the Mughals; that he had a vision of Vinayak's future and was keen on meeting him. When Vinayak saw the sadhu, he told him that the only earnest desire in his life was to overthrow the British Empire through armed rebellion. The sadhu admonished him and asked him to abandon these silly and demoniac goals and become his disciple instead and serve him with devotion so that he could have a vision of God. Nothing happens without God's will, and the British Empire too was God's wish for India and Indians, and it is only when the Almighty desires that India might dream of liberation, he contended.

The illogical argument enraged Vinayak and he entered into a long altercation with the sadhu. How can a kingdom of thieves and dacoits be God's wish?, he argued. And if it truly is, how does envisioning an overthrow of such a despotic regime make one demoniac? Isn't the mobilization and the germination of the very thought of ending the rule also God's handiwork? Finally, Babarao had to intervene and drag his irate brother home. Thus, right from his youth, rationality and logical arguments marked every aspect of Vinayak's personality. He questioned even men of religion and beliefs that were considered sacrosanct.

Meanwhile, in 1896–97 the most fatal pandemic of plague struck India and particularly Maharashtra. The British authorities had no real idea of the causes or cure of the disease. Beneath the outwardly appearance of confidence was a great sense of alarm. Special Plague Officer Walter Charles Rand and Surgeon Captain W.W. Beveridge were dispatched to Poona in February 1897 as part of a Special Plague Committee (SPC) to contain the disease by any means. The governor of Bombay, Lord Sandhurst, through his private secretary, J.J. Heaton, insisted that in Poona

‘the plan of using soldiers by themselves must definitely be abandoned. No search party should be without a respectable native . . . The most careful, thorough and earnest attempt must be made to work with and not against the people . . . In the existing Municipal institutions and ward committees you have some kind of organization.’<sup>16</sup>

Despite these cautionary words from the governor, the British in general and Walter Rand, in particular, were keen to eradicate the plague quickly as it adversely affected their commercial interests. European countries were refusing to purchase goods from Indian territories as they feared that the epidemic might spread. The Government of India passed the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, that empowered authorities to take drastic steps to contain the plague. Ironically, by 12 March 1897, instead of doctors and nurses, 893 officers and men—both British and native—were placed on plague duty. It was incumbent on the principal occupant of every house to report any case of outbreak of plague or deaths caused by it in their family to the committee. In their zeal, Rand and his men ruthlessly searched every house to find plague victims, showing little respect even for places of worship, ill-treating old men and molesting women. Victims of plague were forced to vacate their houses overnight and leave the town to live in isolation camps. Their possessions were destroyed or burnt. At a time when the patients needed treatment, rest and recuperation, they were hounded out of their homes and all their properties and possessions destroyed to quarantine the town. Funerals were declared unlawful until the deaths were registered. This constant harassment by the soldiers caused a deep sense of hatred and resentment. Tilak thundered in the *Kesari* about the inhuman conduct of Rand’s men and criticized the methods adopted by the Plague Committee. ‘The Government should not have entrusted the execution of this order to a suspicious, sullen and tyrannical officer like Rand,’ noted Tilak.<sup>17</sup>

And then one day, on the evening of 22 June 1897, Poona shook to its very foundations. Walter Rand and his lieutenant, Charles Ayerst, were shot at. Rand lingered on for a few days before succumbing to his injuries; Ayerst died immediately. The assassins, it later emerged, were two

brothers, Damodar Hari Chapekar and Balakrishna Hari Chapekar. It seemed like their actions were a protest and revenge against the repressive plague control measures that Rand had implemented. Who were the Chapekars who had in effect reignited the spark of revolution that had dimmed after Wasudev Balwant Phadke's death?

The three Chapekar brothers—Damodar, Balakrishna and Vasudev—were driven by a revolutionary zeal of religion-based nationalism. Around 1885, their father, Hari Bhau, who was a *kirtankar* (professional singer of devotional songs) migrated to Poona from their native place Chinchwad. His young sons barely received any formal education. They were known to mock those who took English education and did not even spare Ranade or Tilak. In his autobiography, Damodar Chapekar writes: 'My father had taught me the First English book at home. I studied the Second Book for four months in the New English School, but having in the meantime imbibed a dislike for the English language and left off studying it.' <sup>18</sup>

The young Chapekars were a witness to the upsurge of nationalistic feelings brought about by Tilak's Ganapati and Shivaji festivals. They were volunteers at the festivals and actively participated in the melas, performing acrobatics and cultural programmes. But soon they were disillusioned even with these festivals and their grandiose arrangements. The 'great deal of talk' in these festivals 'exasperated' them. <sup>19</sup> They believed that the ostentatiousness involved would not have been something that even Shivaji, had he been alive, would have approved. The real tribute to Shivaji was not in talking about him or celebrating him in grandeur, but in picking up arms and fighting for the nation as their hero did. They dismissed the constitutional methods of the Congress, which they dismissed as a sham and a mere 'talkative body' and were not inspired even by the mass politics of extremist nationalists like Tilak. <sup>20</sup>

Damodar, whose views had inspired his two younger brothers, strongly believed that it was English education that had led to the moral degradation of Indians and diverted them away from their cultural moorings to the path of vice. The British Empire to him was not just

political subjugation but also included social, religious and cultural. Damodar notes:

So strange is the influence of the study of English that if one simply intends to learn that language or if a child learns by heart only the first two or three letters of its alphabets, he begins at once to look upon his elders as fools and despises his good and ancient religion. If the mere odour of English education has this effect, where is the wonder if any righteous person who fully tastes it should turn an Englishman from top to toe and an earnest votary of the bottle? <sup>21</sup>

. . . When the English assumed the administration of India they thought it necessary to extinguish the spirit of the Hindus by making them addicted to the vice of education. <sup>22</sup>

As devout Hindus, they found the British interference in their religious customs and practices reprehensible. The Scoble Bill was one such example of British interference. The general pro-Muslim policies of the British, including supporting Muslim claims when it came to matters of playing processional music outside mosques, angered the Chapekars. Incidentally, in 1894, Walter Rand had ruthlessly punished some respectable Hindus in Wai for playing musical instruments before a masjid, thus breaking government rules. <sup>23</sup>

After failing to get enlisted in the army despite several attempts, possibly because of the British policy of excluding Chitpawans from government services and the army, Damodar Chapekar notes:

A system of administration so cruel as that of the English cannot, even if search be made, be found, in any region of this globe. Far better were the tyrannical Yavana kings who with sword in hands actually cut the throats of men as if there were so many goats. But the English are perfidious and I positively declare that no other people can be found on this earth who are as villainous as they and who like them ruin others by a show of kindness . . . Hitherto there have been many cruel Yavana kings in India but they made no rules from excluding Hindus from particular appointments or for limiting the number of those open to them. <sup>24</sup>

Damodar Chapekar created a group of more than a hundred young boys dedicated to the cause of armed revolution. This 'Chapekar Club' was also



known as ‘Rashtra Hitecchu Mandali’ or society for promoting national interests. One of the tasks was to collect arms, which was difficult to procure in British territory and had to be purchased from the adjacent domain of the Nizam of Hyderabad. But they always suffered from a paucity of funds.<sup>25</sup> Elaborating on the activities of this Club, Damodar writes:

We used to teach the following exercises: wrestling, *danpatta*, *kathi*, lance exercises, high and long jumps and boxing. 4 to 6 in the evening was the appointed time . . . we also collected historical works containing accounts of warriors and established a library at the place . . . In the evening one of us two brothers used to give historical readings. Selecting some episode in ancient history, we used to deliberate upon it in a way suited to impress upon the minds of the boys a sense of self-respect and love for one’s own religion . . . Whenever in the course of our readings we came across descriptions of battles containing such terms and expressions as *Morchebandi*, *Khandak*, *Ganimikava* and *Chapa*, as well as names of arms we explained them with sufficient clarity to make them understand.<sup>26</sup>

The group decided to smear tar and disfigure the Queen Victoria statue in Bombay. After the act, Damodar, writing under the pseudonym ‘Dandapani’ (literally meaning ‘The one with a staff in hand’) to *Suryoday*, a local newspaper from Thane, notified the editor about his association with the group and made its aims and objectives explicitly clear.

We have formed an association called Dandapani. Our fixed determination is to die and kill others for the sake of our religion. It’s first achievement was the blackening of the face of the statue of the Queen of England who made a distinction between Natives and Europeans . . . This Dandapani Association will not be overawed by any one. Anyone who encourages immorality, whether the Queen or someone superior to her is the enemy of this association.<sup>27</sup>

But the ultimate path that the Chapekars chose was that of political assassination. They were inspired by tales of the Mahabharata and the Gita that spoke of how killing for *swadharma*, or one’s faith, and vanquishing evil by the forces of virtue were not immoral. On 22 June 1897, the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria was being celebrated in Poona.

Damodar and Balakrishna, each armed with a pistol, selected a spot near Ganeshkhind Road and waited for their victims in pitch darkness. Even as the official carriage was returning from Government House after the celebrations, the brothers exchanged their code words: ‘*Gondya aala re aala*’ (Our target has come). Balakrishna leapt at the carriage and shot its occupant point-blank. He then realized that it was not Rand but his military escort, Ayerst, whom he had shot. The road was too dark for the coachman of the carriage that was following behind to notice what had happened in front. Balakrishna quickly signalled Damodar, who took his position and jumped into Rand’s carriage that followed and shot him in his head from the back. Rand was rushed to Sassoon Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries on 3 July 1897. The brothers slipped away in the darkness after accomplishing their task.

The British government was rudely awakened by these killings and announced a bounty of Rs 20,000 for information about the assassins. The Chapekars’ ex-associates, the Dravid brothers, turned informants of the government and passed on the details of the plot to the British. Based on this, the Chapekars were arrested and charged under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). In his confession recorded on 8 October 1897 before Chief Presidency Magistrate W.R. Hamilton, Damodar elaborated on the motivations behind the attack:

I went to Poona . . . the operations for the suppression of the plague were commenced . . . In search of houses a great *zulum* (atrocities) was practised by the soldiers. (They) entered the temples and brought out women from their houses, broke idols and burnt *Pothis* (holy books), we determined to revenge these actions but it was of no use to kill common people, it was necessary to kill the chief man. Therefore we determined to kill Mr Rand who was the chief. <sup>28</sup>

Balakrishna managed to escape, but once again with the information passed on by the Dravid brothers, the government managed to intercept him. To avenge the treachery of the Dravids, the youngest brother, Vasudev, along with Mahadev Vinayak Ranade and Khando Vishnu Sathe

murdered them near their house in Sadashiv Peth on 8 February 1899. All of them were however rounded up by the police.

On 18 April 1898, Damodar Hari was hanged. The following year, Vasudev, Balakrishna and Ranade were also executed on 8 May, 10 May and 12 May respectively.

The assassination and the subsequent execution of the Chapekars caused a sensation all over Bombay Presidency. The stories of their chivalry, the trial details and the manner in which they embraced the gallows with verses from the Gita on their lips moved Vinayak immensely. He was incensed when several newspapers chided the Chapekars for being misguided and rash young men. While their actions lacked strategy and careful planning, to abuse martyrs who had laid down their lives for the country was something that Vinayak simply could not accept. He lost sleep for several nights after this. In a moment of intense emotion, he rushed to the idol of the Ashtabhuj Bhawani in his home town in Bhagur and poured his heart out to her. He made a fervent vow in front of his family goddess that he was committing himself and his life to free the motherland through armed struggle. He declared in her presence: '*Shatrus maarta maarta mare to jhunjen!*' (I will wage war against the enemy and slay them till my last breath). Little did he know that the innocent vow taken by a teenager was to have so many repercussions on so many people—from bloodshed, attacks, executions and incarcerations. But the seed of revolutionary thought was firmly sown that night in presence of the goddess and there was no looking back thereafter.

Vinayak even wrote a prayer in the *Durga Dasa Vijay* that he was composing in honour of the goddess, where he beseeched her to grant him the strength to follow up on this resolve. His associates burned copies of this work a few years later when the police raided their house suspecting conspiracy, lest it land up in the wrong hands. Vinayak also wrote a play on the Chapekars, titled *Veershriyukta*, to spread the spirit of revolution in Bhagur, and a local theatre group of Ranoo Darji was willing to stage it too but backed out in the last minute fearing consequences. Vinayak's poem 'Chapekarancha Phatka' was a rage till even the 1910s and inspired

youngsters across Maharashtra. Each time he sang or recited the poem, Vinayak would tremble with emotion and his voice would choke with both anger and sorrow.

Damodarpant was deeply worried by this revolutionary turn in his son's nature. Although it was he who had instilled patriotism and a love for Tilak and his works in Vinayak from a young age, and was proud of his metamorphosis, seeing his son become so emotionally attached to the idea at such a young age, his constant talk of murdering the British, his many sleepless nights, restless behaviour, and pensive mood worried him. One night, Damodarpant came to Vinayak's room and saw him breaking down while writing a poem. He picked up the paper and saw that his son was writing about the Chapekars. He complimented the poetry but then with great affection held his face with both his hands and told him: 'Tatya, you are the only hope for our family, the centre of our household and the source of support for me. Don't put your life at risk. You have no idea what the dreadful consequences are of the path that you are trying to tread. Continue your poetry; study well, become a famous man and then do whatever you wish.'<sup>29</sup> Vinayak remained silent but told himself that nothing and nobody could now change his resolve.

The general tendency in Poona and the rest of Bombay Presidency was to assert that these revolutionary deeds were the work of isolated cranks. Even the *Kesari* did not support the Chapekars, and Tilak called the assassination a 'shocking tragedy at Poona which we all deplore', although he blamed the colonial high-handedness in dealing with the plague that led to 'feelings of dissatisfaction'.<sup>30</sup> This was wordplay. Tilak did not go all out to criticize them but made a fleeting and cursory condemnation of the violence. It was public knowledge that he tacitly supported the Chapekars.

But it was the *Kal*, a newspaper edited by the indefatigable Shivram Mahadev Paranjpe (1864–1929), that published an editorial which appeared to argue that the Chapekars had acted according to what they believed to be the law of God—a law higher than that of man.<sup>31</sup> Paranjpe was an old associate of Tilak. Following his brave editorials, Paranjpe was

severely ostracized and was in fact barred by Dadabhai Naoroji from attending any Congress sessions, lest the organization got tainted.

The fiery articles of the *Kal* that shone with revolutionary zeal had a great impact on Vinayak and he became a diehard admirer of Paranjpe and the newspaper. In his own words:

Wherever I went, I would insist on reading the *Kal* and also used to read it out to other people . . . because there was no other journal that would (openly) justify the armed revolution . . . (and) if it (the *Kal*) had not directly shaped my opinion, it certainly influenced my knowledge, understanding, linguistic style and enthusiasm . . . If at all I am to revere someone as the Guru of my revolutionary inspiration, it is certainly the *Kal*. <sup>32</sup>

An unexpected fallout of the Chapekar incident was the arrest of Tilak on charges of sedition under Section 124A. It produced as evidence a speech he had made in 1897 at the Shivaji festival and which had been reported in the *Kesari* a few days before the assassinations. The Bombay government claimed that an unsigned report on the Shivaji festival at which Tilak and others spoke, and a poem written under a pseudonym, which was far from unique in subject, opinion or rhetorical strategies were an incitement to ‘disaffection of the Government’. <sup>33</sup>

The poem ‘Shivaji’s Utterances’ (and signed ‘mark of the Bhawani Sword’) appeared in the editorial columns of the *Kesari*. In it, the eponymous figure laments the plight of India in a language that traffics in opacity. Its opening lines read: ‘By annihilating the wicked I lightened the great weight on the globe. I delivered the country by establishing *Swarajya* and by saving religion. I betook myself to shake off the great exhaustion which had come upon me. I was asleep, why then, did you my darlings awaken me?’

According to the unsigned report of the Shivaji festival held from 12 to 14 June 1897, Professor Jinsinwale, one of the prominent attendees, said in his lecture: ‘If no one blames Napoleon for committing two thousand murders in Europe, if Caesar is considered merciful though he needlessly committed slaughters in Gaul . . . many a time, why should so virulent an

attack be made on Shri Shivaji Maharaja for killing one or two persons? The people who took part in the French Revolution denied that they committed murders, and maintained they were removing thorns from their path, why should not the same principle be made applicable to Maharashtra?’<sup>34</sup>

Histories of extraordinary violence were invoked in the article to draw attention to the double standards by which Indian political violence is deemed savagery, while the same in other parts of the world is feted as chivalry. Tilak reportedly said:

Let us even assume that Shivaji first planned and then executed the murder of Afzulkhan. Was this act of the Maharaja good or bad? This question, which has to be considered should not be viewed from the standpoint of even the Penal Code or even the *Smritis* of Manu or *Yagnavalkya* or even the principles of morality laid down in the western and eastern ethical systems. The laws, which bind society, are for common men like yourselves and myself. No one seeks to trace the genealogy of a Rishi nor to fasten guilt upon a king. Great men are above the common principles of morality. These principles fell in their scope to reach the pedestal of great men. Did Shivaji commit a sin in killing Afzulkhan or now [sic]? The answer to this question can be found in the Mahabharata itself. Shrimat Krishna’s advice [teaching] in the Geeta is to kill even our teachers [and] our kinsmen. No blame attaches [to any person] if [he] is doing deeds without being actuated by a desire to reap the fruit [of his deeds]. Shri Shivaji Maharaja did nothing with a view to fill the small void of his own stomach [i.e., from interested motives]. With benevolent intentions he murdered Afzulkhan for the good of others . . . do not circumscribe your vision like a frog in a well; get out of the Penal Code, enter into the extremely high atmosphere of the Shrimat Bhagavad Geeta and then consider the actions of great men.<sup>35</sup>

Cutting across ideological barriers, several national leaders such as Seth Dwarkadas, Y.V. Nene, Surendranath Banerjea and Dadabhai Naoroji rallied around Tilak. As Surendranath Banerjea wrote: ‘For Mr Tilak my heart is full of sympathy, my feelings go forth to him in his prison-house. A nation is in tears.’<sup>36</sup> Tilak was provided financial assistance by the Bengali nationalists who even established a Tilak Defence Fund. They even got the famous Calcutta barrister, L.P.E. Pugh, to defend Tilak in court and paid his fees of Rs 10,000.<sup>37</sup> The trial took place over six days in Bombay (8 to 14 September 1897). However, it took the jury only forty

minutes to arrive at a verdict of guilty, by a vote of six to three—six Europeans and three Indians. Tilak was sentenced to eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment but he was released a few months before the end of his sentence.

After his conviction, there was an outpouring of support for Tilak all over the country. The front page of the moderate newspaper, *Bengalee*, of 25 September 1897 sported a black border (as did *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Indian Mirror* in Calcutta) as a mark of protest and stated:

This number of the *Bengalee* appears with a black border out of respect and sympathy for Mr Tilak. We believe him to be innocent of the charge laid to his door. No native of India, certainly, no one possessed of intelligence and capacity of Mr Tilak (and even his enemies must admit that he is a man of exceptional ability), can be otherwise than loyal to the British Government. <sup>38</sup>

The equally moderate *The Hindu* in Madras of 15 September 1897, lamented:

The conviction of Mr Tilak has cast a gloom over the whole country. The news has been received everywhere with intense grief and with a sense of humiliation. It is not that law and justice have been vindicated, but that the policy of reaction which for some time the enemies of the Indian people have been urging, has triumphed. <sup>39</sup>

Allahabad's *Advocate*, another moderate newspaper, noted:

The sensation created by Mr Tilak's conviction throughout the length and breadth of India is natural . . . The State trial has made his name a household word, and we think we are not exaggerating to say that every Indian who reads newspapers, or keeps himself in any way in touch with public opinion feels strongly for him on his misfortune, while there are thousands, nay, lakhs of men, who consider him a martyr to his country. <sup>40</sup>

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While the spirit of revolution and political activism had fully possessed Vinayak, Babarao was largely untouched by it. He managed to pass fifth

grade in English, but slowly his interest in studies waned. He carried on till the seventh grade driven by sheer fear of his father. Babarao was strangely attracted to two totally contradictory sets of people—on the one hand, god-men with long, matted hair and ash-smearred faces, and on the other, theatre artists with painted faces. Late-night discussions about drama, songs and dance, along with tea and snacks were his favourite pastimes. And during the day, he roamed around in the company of sadhus, trying to understand tantra. Around 1898–99, there was news about Swami Vivekananda teaching the tenets of Raja Yoga to anyone who stayed with him at his Mayawati Ashram.<sup>41</sup> Babarao, who had already begun showing signs of renunciation from family life, wanted to run away and take spiritual initiation under him. The Savarkars would have lost Babarao to both family and revolution had it not been for the scourge of plague that hit Maharashtra yet again—this time, closer home.

In 1899, when Nashik was hit by the plague, Damodarpant forced Babarao and Vinayak to discontinue school for a while and return to Bhagur. When the epidemic spread to Tryambakeshwar where Vinayak's sister, Maina, and brother-in-law, Bhaskar Rao Kale, lived, Damodarpant advised them to shift to Bhagur as well. But as luck would have it, by the time everyone got to Bhagur, the plague had spread to Bhagur too. Given the repressive plague measures of the government, people concealed information about any plague victim in their houses. The death of rats would be passed off as a casual attack by a neighbourhood cat. The Savarkar household too kept shut about the death of rats in their courtyard and secretly disposed them. The plague soon hit the neighbourhood where the Savarkars lived. Vinayak sat by the window all night, frightfully listening to the cries of pain of several afflicted neighbours. He wanted to make a will that in case he were to die due to the plague, all his works, *Durga Dasa Vijay*, *Sarvasaar Sangrah* and other poems, should be posthumously published.

Spurred by a sense of duty and compassion, Damodarpant involved himself wholly in the relief operations, despite being warned against it. One evening, after returning from his visits to the houses of friends who



were hit by plague, Damodarant seemed very distraught. Without speaking a word, he retired upstairs to the upper floor of the house. Bal, who usually slept with his father, was strictly told not to come near him. Instead, he summoned Vinayak to him and with tears in his eyes said that his joints were hurting badly and it seemed to him that he might have contracted plague too. Vinayak recounts in his memoirs that right from childhood it was his nature that each time he was faced by a crisis, he would become cold and stone hearted, and turn action-oriented sans any emotions; he would look for ways to solve the problem on hand. He quickly brought medicines for his father and the family decided to keep the whole matter a secret, lest the police get to know and evict them. Bal was asked to play sentinel by the door and not let anyone inside.

Once, when Vinayak saw Bal strolling away from his designated spot at the door, he yelled at him in anger. The little boy came to his elder brother with tears in his eyes, telling him that his thighs too ached badly. He had contracted plague as well. An aghast Vinayak asked his sister-in-law, Yesu Vahini, to tend to Bal, while he would care for Damodarant. Vinayak and Yesu eagerly waited for Babarao to return from Tryambakeshwar where he had gone to fetch Maina and her husband. Damodar's condition rapidly worsened. The plague caused intense thirst, but they were not to give him water, even as he cried loudly for it, turning uncontrollably violent a few times. Babarao returned the next morning and seeing the condition at home, advised Maina and her husband to move elsewhere. That very night, on 5 September 1899, Damodarant became violent and was locked up on the upper floor of the house. When they opened the door in the morning, they discovered that their beloved father had passed away. At the tender age of sixteen, Vinayak was orphaned.

The family could not even grieve his death because Bal's condition was still precarious. With Damodarant's death, there was no way they could continue living in the house as the government would evict them to the segregation camps. With the help of a family friend, they got a little hut built for themselves on the outskirts of the city. Meanwhile, they had to spend a few nights at the Mahadev and Ganesh temples in town. Their

paternal uncle, Bapu Kaka, came to his unfortunate nephews who had lost both their parents at such a young age. The ordeal was so physically and emotionally exhausting that Vinayak recollects in his memoirs that they felt they would collapse from sheer fatigue any moment. Unfortunately for them, in just a few days, Bapu Kaka also contracted plague.

The crisis that the Savarkar family faced was unprecedented. The place that they took shelter at was notorious for dacoits who they feared might loot them, knowing they were the erstwhile jagirdars. The desolate location had a cremation ground nearby; wails of people, the smell of burning corpses and the cries of owls and wolves made it an eerie experience. Vinayak recounts how a street dog came and kept them company all night during those frightful days and if any stranger came near the family, he would bark and scare them away.

The news of the crisis that befell the Savarkar family reached Nashik. One of Damodarant's friends, Ramabhau Datar, whom the former had helped when his father was afflicted by plague, brought all of them to Nashik. It was a Herculean task given the strict government vigil on people moving across towns. He kept the Savarkars at his house despite strong protests from the entire locality to not let them in because it was a communicable disease. Unfortunately, after reaching Nashik and within ten days of his younger brother's demise, Bapu Kaka also passed away. The tragedy kept compounding with each passing day.

Bal was still suffering from the disease and was admitted to the plague hospital. Babarao refused to leave his side and tended to him at the hospital all day. There was a European nurse in the hospital who was extremely harsh in her treatment of patients and many felt that suffering the disease was much better than tolerating her rudeness and unskilled handling. When she tried the same with Bal, Babarao picked a quarrel with her, reported her to the senior doctor and also had the nurse fired. Thereafter, till the replacement filled in the nurse's shoes, without caring for his own health, Babarao volunteered to nurse the patients himself. He was not allowed to come back home from the hospital or interact with others outside the hospital. It was only Vinayak and Yesu Vahini who

stayed back at the outhouse of the Datars, worried every minute about what might be happening at the hospital. Vinayak would take food for his brothers each day and wait outside. He was not allowed to meet or interact with Babarao because of the fear of contracting the disease. His biggest nightmare of Babarao also falling victim came true one morning. Vinayak was crestfallen.

However, Babarao and Bal were cured, and by then, the plague too subsided in Nashik. The two returned home and in a few months recuperated completely. The family decided to settle down in Nashik itself.

That dreadful night, when the Savarkars ran in mortal fear, along with little Bal who was suffering from high fever, Vinayak bid a permanent farewell to Bhagur, the land of his parents and ancestors. A new life awaited him in Nashik.



3

## The Birth of a Revolutionary

Nashik, 1899

The town of Nashik is deeply rooted in legends and boasts a hoary past that dates back to the times of the Ramayana. Back then it was known as Panchavat, the land of five banyan trees. Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are supposed to have stayed here during their exile. This was also the place where Lakshmana cut off the nose of the demon princess, Surpanakha, and hence the place draws its name from *nasika*, the Sanskrit word for nose. Many people think that since the town is surrounded by nine mountain peaks (or *shikhar*s in Marathi), it was known as *Nava-Shikha*, that later became Nashik.<sup>1</sup> The Sita Gufa or Cave of Sita, where she prayed, and from where she was abducted by Ravana; the Ram Kund where Lord Rama supposedly took his daily bath, where mortal remains and bones are believed to dissolve magically as did King Dasharatha's; and a host of other temples reverberate with this same faith. Once every twelve years, the Maha Kumbh at Nashik brings people from across India and outside to take a holy dip in the waters of the Godavari River. The town has also been part of several important ruling dynasties. Peshwa Baji Rao II wanted to make it his capital and also got a palace called the 'Peshwa Wada' (later known as Sarkar Wada) constructed there towards the end of the

eighteenth century. Ironically, the British used the same building to conduct trials of revolutionaries of the freedom movement.

When the Savarkars moved to Nashik permanently in 1899, it was among the more backward towns of Maharashtra. Narrow lanes, irksome priests who harassed pilgrims, and dusty roads were all that it had. Being the district headquarters, it however offered better opportunities for English education, and it was mainly because of this that Damodar pant had insisted that both Babarao and Vinayak go to Nashik for their higher studies.

During the end of their earlier stay in Nashik, before Damodar pant's demise, the Savarkar brothers had moved to the narrow, congested lanes of Tilbhandeshwar that also housed an eponymous temple of Lord Shiva. They had rented a single room on the top floor of the Vartak household. By then, Vartak had passed away. But his wife, a daughter and three sons—Nana, Trimbak and Shridhar—considered the Savarkars as their own family members. In 1899, on relocating to Nashik permanently, the family decided to stay in the same Tilbhandeshwar area where Ramabhau Datar's house was also located. Ramabhau's brother, Vaman, who later became a renowned doctor 'Vaidya Bhushan' Vaman Shastri Datar, was roughly the same age as Vinayak and hence the two became good friends. The Savarkars and Datars lived as one family, shared kitchens and pooled their incomes. There were many others in this new world who became Vinayak's close associates and played an important role in his political activities.

When Babarao and Bal were admitted in the city's plague hospital, the former met Trimbak Rao Mhaskar, an officer at the hospital. Even though Mhaskar, who was in his thirties then, was stricken by extreme poverty, he was compassionate and helpful to anyone who was in distress. Being educated, he managed to strike a chord with Babarao, the only literate and well-read patient in the hospital. Being a staunch patriot, Mhaskar organized small public gatherings and festivals in Nashik without garnering too much publicity from them. Eminent leaders of Nashik such as Bapurao Ketkar, Dajirao Ketkar, Loksevakar Barve, Raibahadur Vaidya,

Kavi Parakh and others knew Mhaskar well and thought highly of his organizational skills.

Mhaskar's friend, Raoji Krishna Paage, a government employee, was however a study in contrast. While Mhaskar was shy, an introvert, Paage was an attention-seeking, outspoken and witty man. Like Mhaskar, he too organized small public agitations all the time. They were however united in their goal of achieving freedom for India through armed revolution but had no clarity of thought or vision on how to get there. Being staunch Tilak supporters, they assumed that public mobilization through festivals and mass activism was the only way to national liberation. They had formed a students organization called Vidyarthi Sangha. Like a loving elder sibling, Mhaskar advised Vinayak on the need to be vigilant and careful, and not venture completely into the idea of a total armed revolution. Vinayak expressed his deepest thoughts and ideas to Mhaskar and Paage and revealed his desire to start an underground student society. He told them that merely organizing festivals of Ganesh and Shivaji would hardly achieve anything tangible; that one needed to strike at the very root of the poisonous tree, and that was possible only through total armed revolution. But the Chapekar incident and its fallout instilled in them fear of the consequences and they remained sceptic for a while.

Near the Datar and Vartak households lived a priest, Dhondobhat Vishwamitra. A fair, stocky and ebullient man, who relished paan, tobacco, tea, lemon soda and playing cards after his temple duties, Vishwamitra was the life of the locality. His Maratha maid's son, Aabaa Darekar, was crippled after a prolonged fever at the age of eight. But he was a jolly fellow who composed bawdy songs (lavanis) and wrote a play, even as his mother struggled at housework to eke out a living. Aabaa, however, earned substantial money by selling kites, paper handicrafts, coloured paper caps and pet animals. He was the unofficial leader of the boisterous locality boys and even Ramabhau, Vaman, Trimbak and others were under his spell. It was amazing that despite being illiterate, he wielded such influence on educated, upper-caste, English-speaking boys.

Initially, Aabaa and his cronies did not like Vinayak too much and derided him as a bookworm and a nerd. Some in Aabaa's group were envious of Vinayak's poetry skills and carried tales to Aabaa about him, as he too was an amateur poet of sorts. However, Vinayak's intelligence and wordplay had piqued Aabaa's interest, and he wanted to know the secret behind his writing and oratorical skills. Vinayak's 'Sinhagadacha Powada' or the 'Ballad of Sinhagad' <sup>2</sup> of 1670 attracted Aabaa's attention. Finally, breaking the ice, he visited Vinayak to ask him for help with his writing; something that Vinayak immediately agreed to. Soon Aabaa's group began respecting Vinayak. The lessons in grammar, poetry and history by Vinayak kindled Aabaa's latent genius and he was deeply influenced by the spirit of freedom. Soon, he became one of Maharashtra's famous patriots and freedom-poets, writing under the pen-name 'Govind'. His most famous poem is entitled 'Ranaaveen Swatantrya kona milaale' (Who has ever won freedom without a bloody war?).

It was in these very narrow lanes of Tilbhandeshwar that the first modern, organized secret society of young revolutionaries in India took shape. Under sixteen-year-old Vinayak's stewardship, and Mhaskar and Paage as members, the Rashtrabhakta Samuha, or The Society of Patriots, was formed towards the end of November 1899. The three young men took an oath to liberate India through armed struggle and sacrifice their lives for the cause too, if needed. Many of the ideas about the methods and organization of the secret society were borrowed from Thomas Frost's work *Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776–1876*. Frost had surveyed several such societies and mentioned that a 'secret society may be distinguished from other combinations [by] the adoption of an oath of secrecy and fidelity, an initiatory ceremony, and the use of symbols, passwords, grips, etc.' <sup>3</sup>

The trio decided to invite S.M. Paranjpe of *Kal*, whose writings and newspaper had inspired them, to be their adviser. Reaching out to a national hero like Tilak was considered unfeasible at this early stage and they decided to approach Tilak once they had some work to showcase. Spurred by his vow to the goddess after the execution of the Chapekars,

Vinayak was comfortable with the idea of going it alone as well. Mhaskar provided the much-needed perspective, as he feared that Vinayak might do something stupid in his youthful exuberance. The trio decided to keep this society strictly secret and not even tell Babarao about it. The idea was to mobilize the youth and select a few of them for armed revolution after adequate training. Paage was already working closely with the youth and the newly founded Samuha needed to intensify that outreach. The trio used the cryptic acronym 'Ram Hari' for the society. Thus, someone mentioning 'Today Ram Hari would be meeting' would mean the members of the Samuha were scheduling a secret meet.

Vinayak suggested that they needed a dual organization—a front-end entity that organized 'peaceful' activities like festivals and melas, which could have a wider societal outreach and become the hunting ground for talented youth with a nationalistic drive and organizational skills. Those chosen in this manner would then be a part of the core, secret armed revolution group. So on 1 January 1900, the trio started the 'Mitra Mela', or Group of Friends, as a front-end organization of the Rashtrabhakta Samuha. Slowly, people like Babarao, the Datar brothers, Varthak brothers, Aabaa Darekar and others joined the Mitra Mela. It met every week on Saturdays and Sundays; one speaker would be selected and detailed discussions followed every lecture. Initially, the topics were general, but Vinayak slowly began talking about politics, current affairs and the revolutionary zeal. His fiery speeches at the Mela meetings would stress on the need for an armed struggle. He opined that there was no point merely cutting leaves of a poisonous tree; one had to strike at the root to dismantle it. For such a task, one needed an axe and the person wielding it would have to risk his life.

The Congress, Vinayak said, kept harping on about cutting leaves and pouring milk (prayers and petitions) to the poisonous tree. According to him, following the path of the Congress and Gokhale—of peaceful petitions and prayers—might get a few Indians jobs and fanciful titles, but not total independence for the nation. Even Tilak's initiatives and civil disobedience, Vinayak postulated, would get Indians a few rights, but not



the ultimate goal of complete liberation. However, given the immense nationalism and work that patriots like Gokhale and Tilak had put in, Vinayak warned his team not to belittle their contribution, but to effectively fuse their ideologies and build on them. While one needed to be grateful to them for kindling the spark of freedom in the hearts of Indians, there was a need to go beyond, even if it took another hundred years to achieve that eventual goal, he exhorted. Even if the topics of discussions in the Mitra Mela meetings related to language, literature, economy, history, fitness, cow protection, or Vedanta, Vinayak would always steer them to the main theme of political freedom and armed revolution.

The initial meetings were held at Paage or Mhaskar's house. Soon, they decided to have a permanent venue and the single room at Aabaa Darekar's house was chosen, given its location atop Vishwamitra's house. From the narrow lanes of Tilbhandeshwar, even finding this little room tucked away on the first floor, accessible only through a stair of creaky wooden steps, was difficult and this made it a perfect secret spot. The members decorated the place. The main portrait in the room was a painting of Shivaji Maharaj by the royal painter Ravi Varma. Pictures of the heroes of the 1857 uprising—Nana Saheb, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Tatyasaheb Tope—and later revolutionaries like Wasudev Balwant Phadke, the Chapekar brothers and Mahadev Vinayak Ranade adorned the walls: a lineage of the armed revolutionaries of the country, of which the Mitra Mela members were the rightful inheritors. Mhaskar suggested toning down the revolutionary spirit in the room by putting up a portrait of the British emperor and empress too so that if the police ever raided the place no suspicions would be raised. But Vinayak strongly vetoed the suggestion, saying that arrest would be a better option than defiling the walls by hanging the portraits of despotic rulers. Hence a compromise was reached, and paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses were hung to camouflage the revolutionary spirit a bit.

Even though the little room was so closeted from the main road and voices would not carry, some members would loiter in the streets outside

to check if they were being heard or spied upon. If ever the voices from the room were loud enough to be heard on the street outside, they would send a coded message inside to swiftly switch to safer topics. Talks on non-political issues were written down as well and these were archived, so that in the possibility of a raid it could be shown as a harmless, apolitical forum of young, intelligent men.

The objectives of the Mitra Mela were kept vague: ‘Striving for all-round development of our country.’ New members were selected by a majority of older ones after they were satisfied about the suitability of those willing to join. The Mela documented the list of enrolled members, taking care to keep the title blank so that the police did not get a whiff of what was under way. Slowly, when the government started getting suspicious of their activities, the Mela stopped writing or documenting anything, including the income-expense statements that used to be normally read out.

The Shivaji festival used to be an insipid affair in Nashik, but with the Mitra Mela and its mobilized youth, the utsav, or festival of 1900, was a grand one. During this occasion, Vinayak delivered a stirring speech:

Till now we Maharashtrians kept saying that Shivaji *Utsav* is only a historical commemoration and it has no political colour. But the festival that we have organized here in Nashik is both historical and political. Only those people, who have the capability to struggle for the freedom of their country just like Shivaji Maharaj, have the real right to organize and celebrate a festival commemorating his memory. Our main objective must therefore be to strive towards breaking the shackles of colonial rule. If our only aims are finding solace in foreign rule, earning fat salaries, be peaceful negotiators with the government on inconsequential issues such as lowering taxes, diluting some laws here and there, and secure ourselves enough to eat, lead comfortable lives, earn pensions and privileges—then this *Utsav* is not for you or for Shivaji, but that of the last Peshwa Baji Rao who capitulated to British might! Here we are invoking the god of revolution, Shivaji Maharaj, so that he may inspire and instil that energy in all of us. Depending on circumstances our means might change, but the end is non-negotiable and that end is total and complete freedom for our motherland.

The speech became the talk of town and Mitra Mela suddenly created quite an impression on the people of Nashik. The Ganapati festival soon followed and the Mitra Mela members got an idol of Lord Ganesha installed. Vinayak's talks drew huge audiences. Aabaa Darekar wrote stirring lyrics, set them to tune and sang them. During the festival, the streets of Nashik reverberated with the chants of '*Swatantrya Lakshmi ki Jay*', or 'Victory to the Goddess of Freedom'—a slogan coined by Vinayak.

The Mitra Mela members had to select subjects of their choice, research them, read books on the topic, write essays and then lecture and debate on them in the weekly meetings. However, many rarely took this seriously and only came for bigger events, utsavs, processions or if a visiting celebrity's lecture was organized. Vinayak insisted that people take part in these meetings and lectures to understand the history and context of the freedom struggle and revolution by becoming aware of what was happening inside and outside the country. These topics could not be discussed openly at educational institutions or public spaces and hence the Mitra Mela meeting was the best forum to equip oneself with knowledge and past experiences before planning anything big. Revolution was not a mindless activity; it had to be backed by strategy and knowledge. Vinayak resolved to hold these meetings weekly irrespective of the attendance. Many, including Babarao, who was initially not at all interested in politics or revolution and just came for his younger brother's sake, slowly started becoming more regular.

However, all these activities did not hamper Vinayak's studies. Towards the end of 1899, he got into high school in grade five and in a couple of months got promoted to grade six by doing well in the examinations. R.B. Joshi, the principal of Nashik High School, was an eminent scholar. He was a close associate of Gopalkrishna Gokhale. He, and all the other school teachers, knew about Vinayak's multifarious extracurricular activities and praised him as the most talented boy in school who fared well despite these distractions.

Since most members of the Mitra Mela were young, Vinayak did not want their studies to suffer due to their involvement in the activities. He, along with a few others, would undertake teaching pro bono for those members who were weak in any subject and ensure they all passed examinations. Most of Vinayak's day was spent reading newspapers, gathering knowledge on current political issues in India and outside and reading books outside the school curriculum. But even as the half-yearly or annual exams beckoned, for a month or two he would shut himself in a room and make a thorough and meticulous study of the subject. He passed his examinations with flying colours, much to the surprise of his teachers who had predicted failure because of his irregularity at school. Babarao would celebrate his younger brother's success by distributing sweets in the neighbourhood and patting Vinayak's back with love and pride—something that Vinayak recounts as the best reward he could ever aspire for.

After Damodarant's death, the young and inexperienced Babarao was taken for a ride by many people who usurped much of their family property and farms. There were debts to be cleared and Babarao wanted to take up a government job. To get a job, he needed to produce two security bonds of Rs 500 each. This was hard to get for a long time, but eventually he succeeded and got a job as a cashier in the famine relief department. He faced several hardships and insults but ensured that none of these troubles ever reached his younger brothers, confiding only in his wife Yesu. They would run out of provisions at home, and Babarao and Yesu would many a time starve themselves in order to feed Vinayak and Bal. At work, he soon found out that his department was steeped in corruption. Refusing to be a part of such misdeeds, he raised his voice. Consequently, he was dismissed from the job, even as the threat of mounting debts loomed large. This was when Yesu sold all her jewellery, except her traditional nose ring that her mother had gifted her during her wedding, to clear their debts. But when Babarao needed to pay the fees for Vinayak's education, he hesitatingly asked her to part with this last ornament. Without a murmur, she handed it over to him as it was for the cause of her favourite brother-in-law's

education. No wonder Vinayak was deeply attached to his sister-in-law. In a poem written to her in 1909, he states:

*Mateche Smaran hou na dile, Shrimati Vahine Vatsale!  
Tu Dhairyaaachi asasi moorti! Maazhe Vahini, Maazhe Sphurti!*

O! Loving sister-in-law, you never made me feel the absence of my mother  
A symbol of bravery and sacrifice, you are my perennial inspiration!

Yesu even lost a child because she neither took care of herself nor did she get adequate nourishment. The only beacon of hope for Babarao and Yesu was Vinayak and his bright future.

Babarao was not at all worldly-wise and everyone who owed the family money managed to easily con him. He once went to Bhagur to collect money from people to whom Damodarant had lent money. One Karanjkar made up a story about a huge secret treasure buried by the riverbank and that he would have this excavated after performing a few rituals and donate the entire treasure to the Savarkars. He requested Babarao to give him a few hundred rupees to perform this ritual and the latter readily agreed and secured this money after much effort. They were to meet at the riverbank by night to dig out the treasure, but expectedly the con man never turned up. Babarao waited all night with great expectation, and even later was unwilling to acknowledge that the fellow was a rogue. He believed in the innate goodness of all human beings, but more often than not he was usually cheated because of his naivety.

Vinayak felt miserable about Babarao's piteous condition and worried constantly about his elder brother having to finance his education. He wanted to quit studies and start working so that he could shoulder his brother's burden. Once Vinayak ran a high fever and in a half-delirious state expressed his concerns about his education. This moved Babarao and he hugged his brother tight and assured him that he simply need not worry as long as he was alive. Vinayak decided to write to *Kal*'s editor, S.M. Paranjpe, to get him any job that might be available at the newspaper desk.

Mhaskar who knew Paranjpe decided to carry this letter to him, along with an introduction to Vinayak.<sup>5</sup> Without letting Babarao know, Vinayak even appeared for the public service exam that helped young men secure petty jobs of bookkeeping, accounting, etc., in district offices at a monthly pay of about Rs 15 to 20. He passed the examination as well, but Babarao was adamant that Vinayak should not discontinue his studies and that he was willing to put up with every hardship to ensure that his younger brothers were well educated.

In 1900–01 plague hit Nashik yet again. Babarao and Ramabhau Datar were at the forefront of providing relief to people. They literally carried corpses on their backs, taking them to the funeral grounds, as no one else was willing to perform this task. But when the epidemic lasted for more than two months, Vinayak's maternal uncle, Bhikaji Sakharam Maohar, forced them to leave Nashik and come to their house in Kothur. Babarao stayed back to help the victims, but the rest of the family moved to a farmhouse owned by Jagirdar Annarao Barve on the outskirts of Kothur. While in Kothur, Vinayak delivered several stirring speeches, inspired people and soon a Kothur branch of Mitra Mela was established. Annarao's son, Vaman Rao Barve, and his cousin, Balwant Rao, became its members. Soon, a Bhagur branch too came up, administering to its members the same oath of striving for freedom without caring for one's life.

By the time the plague subsided and Vinayak returned to Nashik, Queen Victoria had died (22 January 1901), and this opened the floodgate of sycophantic Indians expressing their servile gratitude and condolences. Lengthy adulatory columns and obituaries were written in newspapers about how India had been orphaned by the death of her loving mother, the empress. Paeans were sung to the new emperor, Edward. This was nothing new. Such was the sycophancy towards the Empire among several Indians that when Lord Ripon had taken charge as viceroy in 1880, he was heartily welcomed by all and his carriage was reverentially pulled by the scholarly pandits of Kashi.<sup>6</sup> Paage and Mhaskar felt that it might be prudent to call for a prayer meeting in the deceased queen's memory and declare loyalty

to the new monarch, only to escape British suspicion. Although the Mitra Mela was just a year and a half old, the calls to freedom, the festivals and the rhetoric of its members, especially Vinayak, had caught British attention. While Vinayak understood his comrades' motivation, he felt it was unnecessary as there was no reason for them to prove their character as being non-seditious just yet. He argued forcefully against the queen, whom he accused of being complicit in the massacre of Indians in 1857. His vehemence finally led to the cancellation of the proposed prayer meet.

When festivals in honour of Emperor Edward on his coronation were organized, the Mitra Mela and its volunteers secretly put up posters all over Nashik castigating the festivals and its organizers with provocative statements like 'Why would you honour someone who had made your mother a slave?' They would tear up the festoons and flags at pandals where such festivals were organized. When the head of one such festival committee declared King Edward as his father, the Mitra Mela posters mocked him, asking what the emperor meant to his mother. They were pasted by Vinayak and Babarao's brother-in-law, Anna Phadke.

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In 1901, Vinayak completed grade six and got into high school. His passion for reading only increased with each passing year. He was now acquainting himself with the international histories of various kingdoms of the past and also biographies of revolutionaries from America and Europe. Whatever he read, he would make a quick synopsis of the content so that they were easier to revisit for future essays or talks. This in itself had taken the shape of a huge volume and he had titled it *Sarvasaar Sangrah* —the summary of everything—which had the distilled knowledge of different books. Sadly, this book too did not survive the future police raids. Even for the Mitra Mela talks, Vinayak prepared a summary sheet to serve as a ready reckoner. He spoke eloquently on diverse topics such as the dynasties of ancient Iran, the Moors of Spain, the Dutch Revolt in the Netherlands, and the lives of Italian

revolutionaries Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi to an audience who had barely even heard of anything from outside Maharashtra. In his diary, he made a systematic list of all the books read in a year, pen pictures of people he met, and childhood memories and experiences. These diaries too were unfortunately destroyed during the time of the revolution and raids.

Vinayak had accomplished the feat of reading all the Marathi books at the Nashik Library, including those that were not easily comprehensible and hence necessitated a second read. His young mind struggled to gather the complete purport of Herbert Spencer's *Liberal Utilitarianism*. Many years later in England, when he asked people who had read Spencer in English, he realized to his amazement that the Marathi translations of Spencer's works that he had read in Nashik had given him more knowledge than those who read the originals. Vinayak's fertile mind also correlated these philosophies of Western writers with Indian writings. He firmly believed that Lord Krishna was the first proponent of this utilitarian theory as expounded in his words in the Gita or the Bhagavata. Vinayak had made a list of nearly twenty to thirty books that all members of the Mitra Mela had to read so that they were intellectually aware about world history, heroes such as Napoleon, Mazzini, Vivekananda and others, and events related to revolutions across the world. In addition, they also had to read the *Kal*, which had two sections 'Tarun Italy' and 'Kheti-Kisaani' related to revolutions in Europe and how international secret societies operated. Thus, he not only expanded his own knowledge and understanding but also his comrades' in the Mitra Mela.

Alongside intellectual enrichment, exercise and physical fitness were a compulsory part of the regimen for Mitra Mela members. They had to ready themselves for struggles that involved languishing in jails, hunger, lashings and back-breaking hard work in captivity. Everyone learnt and practised swimming, running, staying hungry for a long time, trekking mountains and forests, among others. Vinayak had a frail and petite body since childhood and he had shaved his head like all Brahmin boys to maintain a pigtail. However, from the age of twelve to thirteen, physical



fitness became his enduring interest—he regularly did yoga, surya namaskar, used dumbbells for his workout and managed several push-ups a day. He also learnt the martial arts of mallakhamb (traditional Indian pole gymnastics) and kushti (wrestling).

The Mitra Mela suffered a jolt in 1901 with the sudden and untimely death of Mhaskar due to plague. Even in his last days, he would enact fights and scenes of liberating the country. After his death, Paage too slowly began to distance himself from the organization and Vinayak was the only one left. Separate branches for children and teenagers were formed with Vinayak's younger brother Bal and others leading it.

Vinayak found new companions in the Mitra Mela. Vishnu Mahadev Bhat, or 'Bhau' as he was called, was the maternal cousin of the Savarkars and almost the same age as Vinayak. He became one of Vinayak's closest associates. He had lost his father in childhood and his mother had brought him up against all odds. With his sharp intellect, powerful oratorical skills and wide knowledge he greatly enriched the Mitra Mela activities. Sakharam Dadaji Gore was another companion in the Mela. An extremely jovial, extroverted and sociable young man, Gore had the unique distinction of failing the matriculation examinations for a record number of times. Being older in age than most classmates due to this, he always threw his weight around. Even the teachers were sometimes wary of his arrogant behaviour. A perennial last-bencher and class howler, he occupied the last seat in class with great pride as if it were his well-earned jagir. The squint in one of his eyes added to the overall comicality his appearance exuded. He regularly accompanied his brother to Tilbhandeshwar to spend time playing cards with Aabaa Darekar and that is when he met Vinayak. He would initially attend the weekly meetings and in his characteristic non-serious and jovial way, spoil the sombre mood and serenity of the meetings with his antics. But slowly he came to realize the seriousness of the cause and became so involved that he did not think twice about martyring his own life for the country's freedom.

Other new members who joined the Mitra Mela after Mhaskar and Paage were the Khade brothers, Sarode, Shankar Gir Gosavi, Dhanappa

Chiw Dewala, Devsinh Pardesi, Khushal Singh, Ganapati Magar, Mayadev, Ghanshyam Chiplunkar and others. All of them were devoted to Vinayak, whom they considered their guru and mentor. On his part, Vinayak would counsel them on every issue and motivate them about the cause, prescribe readings, and supervise their fitness regimen.

The orthodox Brahmins of Nashik despised the Mitra Mela, as its members ranged from every strata of society—Brahmin, bania, farmer, Maratha, barber, shudra, kayastha and so on, and they worked and dined together. This was completely taboo and an anathema in a deeply caste-ridden Maharashtrian society of the times.

The same year, in 1901, Vinayak was to face his matriculation examinations and like always, had reserved the last three months for intense study. But a new development was waiting for him. His maternal uncle came visiting and informed them that he had fixed Vinayak's marriage. This led to a great deal of inner turmoil for Vinayak on whether marriage would impede his revolutionary path and also ruin an innocent girl's life were he to be arrested or hanged. At the same time, his worries on account of his brother still financing his education would not abate.

In fact, this was a subject of many discussions among the young men of Mitra Mela—should those adopting the revolutionary path get married? Vinayak would forcefully argue that a brave patriot who had no qualms about laying down his own life for his country needs to have progeny as brave as him. It was natural to have self-doubts about whether distractions imposed by marriage and children would swerve one from the path of national service. But if a revolutionary was mentally strong enough to sacrifice his parents, family and his own life, why should wife and children stand in the way? Instead, he could mould his wife and children towards the path and make them strong enough to accept any eventuality. If a revolutionary died early, was it not society's responsibility, for whose sake he had sacrificed his life, to take care of his wife and children? If she was a young lady and wished to remarry, why should she not be allowed to do so? Such were Vinayak's arguments on this topic with his comrades. He also espoused similar thoughts in his poem 'Kamala'.

The girl's father, Ramachandra Trimbak Chiplunkar (popularly known as Bhaurao Chiplunkar), was born in 1863, and was known to Vinayak's maternal side in Kothur for a long time. Two generations of his family had served in the Jawhar principality near Thane and served the current prince as his dewan (prime minister). Their forefathers had served as killedars, or commanders of the fort, of Harihargarh near Tryambakeshwar. After the fall of the Peshwas in 1818, they sought shelter in several small principalities. Bhaurao's grandfather, Bapuji Govind Chiplunkar, and father, Trimbak Bapuji Chiplunkar, served the Jawhar state. Trimbak Bapuji played an important role during the transition of power to Patang Shah, one of the rajas of the state.<sup>7</sup> The state tacitly supported several revolutionaries and also assisted an unsuccessful attempt to set up an arms and pistol manufacturing factory in Nepal in 1907 at Tilak's instance.<sup>8</sup>

Bhaurao was tall, well built, good-looking and aristocratic. He rode horses, hunted, and was adept at shooting, wrestling and gymnastics. His house was always crowded with people who came seeking his help on a host of issues. Soldiers and horsemen stood in attendance at his doors. When Bhaurao heard about Vinayak's predicament regarding his education, he volunteered to take complete charge of financially supporting his college studies. This was quite reassuring to Vinayak and also to Babarao who was struggling to make ends meet. His father-in-law's continued assistance for his studies was something that Vinayak was deeply grateful to him for:

If there be any man or any family next to dear Baba [Ganesh Savarkar] to whom I owe all that is best in me owing to whose noble patronage and winning solicitude I had unusual chances and facilities of assimilating the noblest things of this world and even of doing something for our common Motherland, then that man and that family is theirs [Chiplunkars].<sup>9</sup>

Following this assurance from Bhaurao Chiplunkar, Vinayak married Yamuna, the eldest daughter of Bhaurao, in 1901, in the Hindu month of Magha (January–February). Born on 4 December 1888, Yamuna was only thirteen at the time.

Shortly after the wedding, Vinayak hurriedly studied for his examinations and left for Bombay to appear for the final matriculation examinations. It was his first visit to the city, and he stayed at a friend Balu Barve's house in Angrewadi. With just a month to go for the matric examinations, he put everything, including Mitra Mela, aside and concentrated on his studies.

By the time Vinayak returned to Nashik, the plague hit yet again, and the family moved temporarily to Kothur. The repeated outbreaks of plague were symptomatic of a complete lack of a public health mechanism and demonstrated the callousness of the British government. International efforts to impose quarantine to prevent the spread of epidemics such as cholera and plague were not the government's priority at all. The government followed a reactionary strategy rather than a precautionary one.

In the serene surroundings of his maternal house in Kothur, Vinayak composed a beautiful poem 'Godavakili', in praise of the Godavari. Many theatre actors reached out to him there and requested him to write songs, which he did. 'Sharaabi' and 'Do patniyon ka pati' and other songs were composed during this time. He also wrote an essay for an essay competition organized by the Marathi journal *Karamnook* that was run by eminent novelist Hari Narayan Apte. It was titled 'Who is the greatest Peshwa?' Vinayak wrote a fantastic piece on Peshwa Madhav Rao I, which won him the first prize as well. This essay was, in fact, prescribed in the 1940s by the Bombay University for the matriculation syllabus. Vinayak's presence in Kothur gave a fillip to the nascent Mitra Mela's activities there.

The examination results were soon out and much to the delight of the Savarkar family and the Mitra Mela comrades, Vinayak had passed with flying colours. It was an important statement for Vinayak too, answering sceptics who feared that involvement in revolutionary activities impeded academics. His success was quoted as a shining example that belied any such apprehensions. With Bhaurao Chiplunkar's financial support, young Vinayak was all set to pursue higher education. By then, he had emerged as

a powerful orator, a master debater, a prolific writer and poet and a leader of a revolutionary secret society that was spreading its wings, slowly yet steadily, in several towns and villages of the Nashik district.

Poona, January 1902

On 24 January 1902, Vinayak enrolled at the prestigious Fergusson College in Poona for a major in the arts. By the turn of the century, Poona had become an epicentre of Indian politics. Justice Ranade had passed away in 1901. Even though Ranade was critical of revolutionaries and their methods, Vinayak composed a moving eulogy titled ‘Maajhi namra takrar’ (My humble complaint) to the departed soul:

*Aho bahut maatala yama swatantra ka jahala?  
Varishtha adhikari kakuli na yavari raahila?  
Adhi nipajati kiti jatati deshakari ase,  
Tashaata sama konihi vibuddha madhavaacha ase.  
Mhanuni radato prabhu nabahu nyayamurti stava.  
Swadesha hita sadhaka janana hey aso sarvada.* <sup>10</sup>

(Oh God! There are so few people with an innate virtue of striving hard for the nation.  
Justice Ranade was one among such priceless gems.  
Why have you snatched him away from us, dear Lord?  
That is why I am complaining, nay crying before you—  
do not take away such invaluable people like Ranade from our midst!)

But Tilak’s release from prison after the Chapekar incident imbued fresh enthusiasm among the nationalists, galvanizing the freedom movement. Vinayak had reached Poona at the most propitious time. In Poona, among the first things he did was to call on his hero and role model S.M. Paranjpe, editor of *Kal*. His son, Shrikrishna, was almost the same age as Vinayak and the two struck an early friendship. He also paid his respects in person to Tilak, whose life and writings had inspired him since his childhood days in Bhagur. Despite being ideologically opposed to the moderate views of Gopalkrishna Gokhale, Vinayak is said to have called on the statesman several times while he was in Poona. <sup>11</sup>

Soon, Vinayak's magnetic personality, deep knowledge and fiery oratorical skills attracted a large group of students around him who formed the 'Savarkar Group'. In 1902, the Fergusson College branch of the Mitra Mela was started with Shrikrishna Paranjpe, H.B. Bhide, Kaka Kalelkar, Dattopant Tarkhadkar, Tilak's son Vishwanath Tilak, Antrolkar, Moholkar, Risbud, Ranade of Sholapur, Joglekar of Junner, Athani, Oak, Godbole, Daji Ganesh Apte and Thatte among the earliest members. From the narrow lanes of Tilbhandeshwar, the Mitra Mela had, in a very short time, become a more widespread organization. These members met on the hillock adjacent to Chatusringi in Poona or on a hill behind Fergusson College. Some of the day-scholar members of the Mitra Mela started branches in their localities in the city.

At the Deccan College, students of junior BA class were given an option of simultaneous study of LLB (Bachelor of Law) degree. After completing his first year, in 1903, Vinayak began attending these lectures in the evenings. Soon a Mitra Mela branch sprang up even in Deccan College with Babasaheb Khaparde,<sup>12</sup> Randive, Pande, Gurunath Bevoor, Devbhankar and Pandurang Mahadev Bapat (famous later as 'Senapati' Bapat) joining this branch.

Different student clubs of Fergusson College brought out their own magazines and weeklies, and the club that Vinayak belonged to had a handwritten one called *Aryan Weekly*. Vinayak contributed articles on a wide range of topics from history, politics and nationalism to literature and science to this weekly. Many of these articles found their way into the local Poona newspapers. In an article titled 'Saptapadi', he traced the seven stages of evolution of a subjugated nation till it finally found liberation. He also composed a lot of poetry while in college. His poems were published in the newspaper *Bhaala*, run by the Bhopatkar brothers.

There was a photograph of Shivaji that hung in the dining hall of the college and every Friday, a poem in praise of the ruler (composed by Vinayak in February 1902) was sung there. This was the first ever arati song composed by anyone eulogizing the great ruler. The song began with this stanza:

*Aryancha deshavara mlenchancha ghaala,  
Aala aala Savadha ho Shiva Bhupala;  
Sadgadita Bhoomata de tuja haatela  
Karunaarava bheduni tava hrudaya na ka gela.  
Jaideva jaideva Jai Jai shivaraya!  
Ya Ya Ananya Sharana Aarya Taaraya.* <sup>13</sup>

(Oh Shivaji! This land of the Aryans  
has been repeatedly attacked by the *Mlechchhas* (non-Indians).  
Please wake up!  
This land is calling for your help.  
Are you unable to hear that pleading tone of this motherland?  
Is it not piercing your heart?)

His philosophical poem, ‘Vishwaath aajavari shashwata kaay jhaali?’  
(What is permanent in the universe) was published in *Kal* in 1902. Its first  
stanza is as follows:

*Haa unnati avanati cha samudra jaato.  
Bhaswan ravi hi udayaasta akhanda gheto;  
Utkarsha aani apakarsha samana kele vishwaath  
Aajavari shashwata kaay jhaali?* <sup>14</sup>

(Just as high and low tides are cyclical for the seas;  
the rising and setting is a diurnal process for the sun;  
and just as progress or regress are two sides of the coin of life;  
what exactly is permanent in this universe?)

Sir Balchandra Bhatavadekar, an eminent citizen of Bombay, had  
announced a poetry contest on behalf of the Winter Lecture Series run by  
Bombay’s Hindu Union Club. It carried a cash prize of Rs 20 for the best  
entry. Vinayak’s heart-wrenching poem on the plight of Hindu widows,  
titled ‘Vidhawanchi Duhkhe’, which dealt with cruel customs and outdated  
traditions, was adjudged one of the best entries as it was tied with another  
budding poet Shripad Narayan Mujumdar’s poem. Along with being a  
young revolutionary, Vinayak clearly showed signs of a social reformer  
who had no trouble challenging orthodoxy and established social evils.

The poem was published later in the magazine *Vividha Gyana Vistaar* in 1904. <sup>15</sup> Its opening stanza is as follows:

*Dete ka koni o! Abalecha yaa madeeya hakela?  
Bola ho! Bola ho! Dheeracha ek shabda tari bola  
Satheecha jarathaanno vidhuranno nava vadhu khushaala vara  
Lagnacha ashta dishi vidhawa pari anya na varo naura  
Haa nyaya kona? Kaa ho vidhawa vidhuraata bheda haa asala?  
Kaslya apradhacha vidhawanna krura danda haa basala?*

(Is there anybody responding to this pitiable appeal of helpless widows?  
Please answer! Have enough courage to answer my question!  
Old, tottering widowers aged sixty and above can easily have a young bride  
But so many young widows are unable to find a bridegroom  
Is this justice? Why this difference between widows and widowers?  
For what crime are women punished this way?)

In 1903, his poem ‘Hymn to Liberty’ created quite a patriotic stir among the masses, and even after Independence, it would be broadcasted on All India Radio (AIR). It is still popular across India as the iconic song ‘Jayostute’. It has been immortalized in the voice of the nightingale of Indian music, Lata Mangeshkar, set to tune by her brother, Hridaynath Mangeshkar.

*Jayostute! Jayostute! Shri Mahan Mangale Shivaaspade Shubhade  
Swatantrate Bhagavati! Twaamaham Yashoyutaam Vande!  
Rashtraache Chaitanya Murt tu, neeti sampadaachi  
Swatantrate Bhagavati! Srimati! Rajni tu tyaanchi.  
Paravashatechya nabhaat tuchee, aakaashi hosi  
Swatantrate Bhagavati! Chandni Cham Cham lakh lakh si!  
Vande Twaamaham Yashoyutaam Vande! (1)*

*Gaalavarachya kusumi kinva kusmaancha gaali  
Swatantrate Bhagavati! Tooch ji vilasat se lali  
Tu Suryache tej, udadhiche gambhiryahi tuchi  
Swatantrate Bhagavati! Anyatha grahana nashta techi  
Vande Twaamaham Yashoyutaam Vande! (2)*

*Moksha Mukti hi tujheecha rupe, tulaacha vedanti*



*Swatantrate Bhagavati! Yoginija Parabrahma vadati  
Je Je Uttam Udaatta Unnata Mahanmadhura te te  
Swatantrate Bhagavati! Sarva tava sahachaari hote  
Vande Twaamaham Yashoyutaam Vande! (3)*

*Hey Adhama rakta ranjite, sujana pujite!  
Sriswatantrate Sri Swatantrate Sri Swatantrate!  
Tuja saathi maraNa te janana, tujha veeNa janana te marana  
Tuja Sakala charachara sharana, charachara sharana, sriswatantrate! (4) <sup>16</sup>*

(Victory to you, Oh! Ever Auspicious, munificent and holy Mother!  
Oh! Glorious Goddess of Freedom! I seek your blessings for success.  
You are the embodiment of our national spirit, morality and accomplishments  
You are the Queen of Righteousness, Oh! Goddess of Freedom!  
In these dark skies of enslavement, you are the bright beacon and star of hope.

The flowery cheeks of people and the fields of blossoms,  
You are that blush of confidence, Oh! Goddess of Freedom!  
You are the radiance of the Sun, the solemnity of the oceans!  
Oh! Goddess of Freedom! But for you, the sun of freedom is eclipsed.

Oh! Goddess of Freedom! You are the face of eternal happiness and liberation,  
This is why sages hail you as the supreme consciousness, in our scriptures.  
Oh! Goddess of Freedom! All that is ideal and lofty, magnificent and sweet!  
Is associated only with you.

Stained with the blood of the evildoers whom you destroy, nurturing the righteous!  
Life is to die for you! Death is to live without you!  
The entire creation surrenders unto you, Oh! Goddess of Freedom!)

Vinayak also dabbled in the Marathi literary genre of powadas, or ballads, and composed two significant ones on Maratha heroes Tanaji and Baji Prabhu. Vinayak begins the ballad on Tanaji with the words of Jijabai, the heroic mother of Shivaji Maharaj thus:

*Gulamagirichi bedi paaee tasheecha dharta na?  
Gulamagiricha narakaamajhi tasecha pichata na?  
Swaatantryacha sukha ni maaji janma swatantraanche  
Gulamagiricha ukeeradyavari gulama nipajaaya che*

(The fetters of slavery that you exhibit on your legs;  
You seem to have fallen in love with this wretched state of hell?  
No doubt, you neither feel bad nor shameful about this state of yours.  
But remember, if you are free, your future generations will lead a life of self-respect;  
But if you embrace your slavery thus, your successors would wallow similarly!)

In the powada on Bajji Prabhu. each stanza ends with the refrain

*Chala ghaalu swatantryasangari ripuvara ti ghaala*  
*Avachita gaathuni, thakavuni, bhulavuni kasaahi khechava* <sup>17</sup>

(In this freedom struggle let us all get together and attack our enemies.  
Strike catching him unawares, strike by stealth, or by mesmerizing him  
Do whatever you please, but attack for sure!)

Bal, along with two bright boys, Dattu and Shridhar (who later became well known as Prof Dattopant Ketkar and Advocate Shridharpant Vartak), performed these powadas to much public acclaim in Nashik. S.M. Paranjpe invited Bal, Vartak and Ganapat Ramachandra Magar to Poona to perform during the Shivaji festival on 17 June 1905. <sup>18</sup> Tilak, who witnessed the performance, praised it, ranked it the best and honoured them with a gold medal. Tilak even invited them to perform at the Shivaji festival at Raigarh Fort. These ballads were later printed by Babarao under the *Laghu Abhinav Bharat Mala* publication series in May 1906. The British government proscribed these ballads, but by then they had attained the popularity of folk songs all over Maharashtra.

Not much of the prose that Vinayak wrote during this period is available. On the occasion of the centenary of the erstwhile Maratha Empire's influential statesman and minister, Nana Phadnavis, he wrote a thought-provoking article called 'Why should the celebration of historical characters be held?' It concludes with his forceful assertion:

To pay our national gratitude that we owe to those heroic souls, these festivals should be celebrated as a mark of reverence and remembrance of the immense good that those benevolent men have done to this world. Such celebrations have the sanction of ancient traditions as well. They are the veritable clouds that shower the nectar of

instruction. They are the monuments of virtues to emulate. They are the catalysts of positive human thought and action. They are the preceptors who impart direction to the youth on the righteous path. They are the living history of the deeds of noble heroes . . . Especially, we Hindus, should take to these celebrations in order to emerge from the present degraded state that we find ourselves in, largely due to want of self-respect and dutifulness. For this is the only easy and sure path to our nation's liberation and her prosperity. <sup>19</sup>

Vinayak had made an in-depth study of all the dramas of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti, the legendary playwrights of Sanskrit literature. In an essay, he brilliantly contrasted their styles. The English poets Scott, Shakespeare and Milton influenced him the most. Milton's *Paradise Lost* was among his favourite works and he had even learnt many of its cantos by heart. His extensive reading found its reflection in his insightful writings. His essay 'Ramayana and Iliad' that compares the two great epics was a masterpiece that won him much acclaim even from his professors. Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer's political philosophy made a lasting impact on him. Vinayak was particularly impressed by the utilitarian philosophy of Bentham and Mill. He writes: 'In college days I read Bentham and Mill and . . . based my moral thinking on the lines of utilitarian principles as explained by them . . . Not only that, I would teach this utilitarian philosophy even in our revolutionary organizations.' <sup>20</sup> While he wrote plays later in his life, as a student of Fergusson College, he even acted in two of them—a minor role in the play titled *Tratika* in 1902 and the role of Iago in *Zunzarrao*, the Marathi version of *Othello*, in 1904.

In the Mitra Mela meetings at Poona, Vinayak gave scholarly lectures on world history, and the lives of great revolutionaries of Italy, Netherlands and America. The intent was to provide his young colleagues an insight into the tortuous life of struggles that a revolutionary had to brace himself for. At Fergusson College, he once delivered a powerful lecture on the history of Italy. This session was presided over by one of Maharashtra's most eminent historians and scholars 'Itihasacharya' <sup>21</sup> Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade who was deeply impressed by the young

man's knowledge, research and oratorical skills. He cautioned him from linking the subject of the history of Italy and its revolutionaries to Indian politics or delivering such speeches that could be easily construed as seditious.

In 1903, at the opening of a new session in college, when young Vinayak was called upon to address the students, the hall echoed with the thunderous applause of his colleagues and admirers. On this occasion, he gave a stirring speech on India's glorious past and bemoaned the loss of freedom. The entire hall was overcome with emotions, and a harried Professor C.G. Bhanu, who was presiding over the meeting, hastily rose and told the audience: 'Young men! You need not take Savarkar seriously. He is a Devil!' <sup>22</sup> Such was the sway that the knowledge and oratorical skills of young Savarkar had on his comrades. Always dressed in his trademark black cap, short collared coat and distinguished by his prominent cheekbones and jawline, broad forehead and piercing eyes, Vinayak's magnetic personality was difficult to ignore for even those who did not like him.

With Vinayak moving to Poona, the onus of the Mitra Mela in Nashik fell on Babarao—a man who till a few years ago had wanted to renounce worldly pleasures and become a disciple of Vivekananda. After a lot of inner turmoil, he decided to throw his weight behind his younger brother's mission. Commenting on his change of heart from spiritual pursuits to revolutionary work, Babarao stated:

My only purpose is and has always been to achieve the eternal or Brahman. Now I realize that my countrymen are nothing but a form of the Brahman only. The way to achieving Brahman is not necessarily through asceticism in the Himalayan peaks alone, but from serving my countrymen and freeing them from British yoke. <sup>23</sup>

As the Mela's secretary, he took the lead in organizing lectures of several leaders such as Tilak, S.M. Paranjpe, Aurobindo from Bengal, Syed Haidar Raza, advocate Babarao Deshpande of Nagar, Shankar Balkrishna Deo of Dhule, Kashinath Waman Lele from Wai and others. These were held in

the Vijayanand and Brahmanand theatres. Being particular about punctuality, Babarao would insist that the lectures begin on time and hence people thronged the theatres nearly half an hour before they commenced. The lectures were preceded by patriotic songs and on special occasions such as Dussehra or Shivaji Jayanti, processions of decorated palanquins with loud exultations to the leaders went all over Nashik.

In 1903, young Narayanrao organized an allied association called the Mitra Samaj in which nearly 200 schoolchildren of his age (all in their early teens) enrolled themselves. Prominent members included S.R. Vartak, K.B. Mahabal, K.P. Bhagwat, Ketkar brothers, V.N. Barve, Sitarampant Shauche, Vishwanathrao Patwardhan, Gochide, Dandekar, Vaishampayan and K.G. Karve. They practised physical activities such as push-ups, gymnastics, swimming, marathons, etc. Their favourite pastime was enacting a play titled *Ramadasi Hadasam* where they went to one of the dilapidated forts around Nashik, imagined the saffron flag, or bhagwa, flying atop it, and rehearsed various war techniques to protect this flag of their nation and faith. On several occasions, they would leave for these unknown forts and difficult terrains within the jungles with limited resources of food and clothing, stay there for a couple of days in order to acclimatize and adjust themselves to literally 'living on the edge'.

The children also published handwritten journals propagating freedom and advocating the revolutionary cause. Bal, like his brother Vinayak, wrote articles and also delivered speeches on the economic condition of India, famines, effects of disarmament on Indians, and the dissolution of the princely states. These evoked great interest among the students, who listened with rapt attention to these animated lectures. The members accosted British officers and shouted slogans of '*Swatantrya Lakshmi ki Jai*' demanding absolute and complete freedom to India—when such an idea was unknown in most parts of the country. The police got wind of these activities and routinely kept track of all that was going on in the schools.

Not to be left behind, the women of Nashik too organized themselves under the Atmanishtha Yuvati Sangha around 1905. Yesu Vahini was the

association's main organizer. Nearly fifty to sixty women enrolled despite the obvious revolutionary agenda associated with it. Prominent members included Janakibai Gore, Laxmi Bai Bhatt, Godumai Khare, Laxmi Bai Datar, Janakibai Datar, Parvati Bai Gadgil, Uma Bai Gadgil, Laxmi Bai Rahalkar and Yamuna Bai Savarkar, among others. Tilak's daughter, Parvati Bai Ketkar, was a prominent member and on one occasion her mother, Satyabhama Bai Tilak, presided over the meeting.<sup>24</sup> The group gathered every Friday and collectively read newspapers, specifically articles related to political and social issues. This was followed by elaborate discussions, and possible solutions deliberated upon. They also arranged lectures among themselves on several topics of national interest. They eschewed the sacred offerings or prasad served in temples as it contained foreign-manufactured sugar. In their gatherings, they sang patriotic songs and taught these to the young children of the family. Festivals such as Shivaji Jayanti, Rani Lakshmi Bai Jayanti, Dussehra and so on were celebrated collectively.

With the wide network of the Mitra Mela branches all over Maharashtra, Vinayak decided to convene a gathering of all its members. In 1903, the first such meeting was held at advocate Randive's house in Dhule over a period of two days. Nearly seventy members from various parts of Maharashtra—Nashik, Poona, Kothur, Bhagur, Trimbak and Berar—attended this meeting. It was a stocktaking exercise for the organization to evaluate its work and make future plans.

The following year, in 1904, about 200 members of the Mitra Mela gathered in Nashik for the second convention that was held at V.M. Bhat's house, Bhagwat Wada. Vinayak spoke about Mazzini and Young Italy to this vast gathering of bright, spirited revolutionaries who were all stirred up with nationalistic fervour. It was in this meeting that Vinayak proposed a new name for the Mitra Mela, Abhinav Bharat (New India), one that terrorized British authorities not only in India, but abroad as well. In front of a picture of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj touching his sword, the oath that was administered to the members went something like this:

*Vande Mataram* (Salutations to the Mother!)

In the name of God,

In the name of Bharat Mata,

In the name of all the martyrs that have shed their blood for Bharat Mata,  
By the love innate in all men and women, that I bear to the land of my birth,  
Wherein lie the sacred ashes of my forefathers, and which is the cradle of my  
children.

By the tears of the countless mothers for their children whom the foreigner has  
enslaved, imprisoned, tortured and killed,

I . . .

Convinced that without Absolute Political Independence or *Swarajya* my country can  
never rise to the exalted position among the nations of the earth which is Her due,  
And convinced also that that *Swarajya* can never be attained except by the waging of  
a bloody and relentless war against the Foreigner, solemnly and sincerely swear that I  
shall from this moment do everything in my power to fight for Independence and  
place the Lotus Crown of *Swaraj* on the head of my Mother;

And with this object, I join the Abhinav Bharat, the Revolutionary Society of all  
Hindustan, and swear that I shall ever be true and faithful to this, my solemn Oath,  
and that I shall obey the orders of this organization (body);

If I betray the whole or any part of this solemn Oath, or if I betray this organization  
(body) or any other working with a similar object, May I be doomed to the fate of a  
perjurer! <sup>25</sup>

Thereafter, annual sessions became a regular feature. In 1905, Abhinav Bharat's meeting was held at Kothur and the following year in Sion. In 1906, Babasaheb Khare and V.M. Bhat decided to go to Calcutta for the annual Congress session presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji. On the sidelines, they intended to create alliances with like-minded secret societies of young revolutionaries there, such as Anushilan Samiti, Swadhin Bharat and others. They decided that the need of the hour was simultaneous armed rebellions all over India.

The following year, in 1907, Babarao and nearly a hundred members of the Abhinav Bharat attended the Surat Congress session. Babarao found an enthusiastic young man, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, who had also come to attend it. He administered the oath of the Abhinav Bharat to Pillai and asked him to go back to Madras and enlist more members. Pillai later became an important revolutionary figure in Madras and engineered

uprisings in Tirunelveli and Tuticorin.<sup>26</sup> At Surat, a secret meeting of revolutionaries was arranged where Babarao and his associates met the Bengali revolutionaries Aurobindo Ghose, his brother Barindra, and Congress leader Surendranath Banerjea.<sup>27</sup> Thereafter, the members of Abhinav Bharat were in regular touch with the revolutionaries from Bengal. Regular meetings of such secret societies across India began to be held. Thus, contrary to popular narratives of dispersed activities of firebrand radicals devoid of any plan or strategy indulging in mere mindless violence and political assassinations, the emergent revolutionary movement was a planned, coordinated and a strategic one.

In the past too attempts had been made to coordinate the activities of various secret societies that had sprung up in different parts of India, particularly Maharashtra and Bengal. In 1904, a staunch associate of Tilak, Damu Kaka Bhide, had called a meeting of Abhinav Bharat members and secret societies from Nagpur and Poona. Wamanrao Joshi, Shamarao Deshpande, Durani and Palekar, and Vinayak, V.M. Bhat and Vishnu Sitaram Randive from the Abhinav Bharat were present for this secret meeting. However, it ended inconclusively due to Vinayak's uncompromising stance of seeking total and absolute freedom and nothing short of it.<sup>28</sup>

Wherever a member of the organization went, he would start a branch of Abhinav Bharat. In the Nashik district itself, by the end of 1906, branches were opened at Trimbak, Bhagur, Ozar, Kothur, Niphad, Igatpuri, Dhodap, Vani and other places.<sup>29</sup> Soon branches mushroomed at Junnar, Bombay, Pen, Satara, Nagpur, Nagar, Sholapur, Dhule, Kolhapur, Baroda, Indore, Gwalior, Aurangabad, Hyderabad and other places. Marathe, Bapat, Kolhatkar, Jog and Gokhale belonged to the Pen branch; Tonpe,<sup>30</sup> Barve, Trimbakseth Gujarati, Shivram Seth Sonal and Anant Kanhere belonged to the Yeola branch; the Hyderabad unit was headed by Vinayak Govind Tikhe;<sup>31</sup> the Bombay branch included V.M. Bhat, Balasaheb Kher who later became the chief minister of Bombay under the Government of India Act of 1935, Dr Gune, Vhandawarkar, Murdeshwar, Dr Sonapar, solicitor Thatte, engineer Ghate, Chiplunkar and others. Dr Parulkar, Wagh, Dr



Athalye and others formed part of the Vasai unit, while nearly forty to fifty members made up the Gwalior branch.

The Baroda unit included barrister Deshpande, Kelkar, Sardar Mujumdar and Rajaratna Manikrao as its members. Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, popularly known as Acharya Kripalani, who later became the president of the INC during the transfer of power in 1947, also came under the spell of Abhinav Bharat when he was a student of the Deccan College in Poona. Other prominent members included Kundanmal Firodia from Ahmednagar who later became the speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and Shripad Damodar Satavalekar, who wrote several books on Indian philosophy.

Each branch worked as autonomous units and was linked through their heads. They thus formed a vast network or federation of secret societies united by a common fire and passion. The structure was similar to the secret societies that operated successfully in Ireland and Russia. Vinayak's thorough study of world history and politics had given him an insight into these societies and hence he decided to structure the Abhinav Bharat on similar lines. All the members were not known to each other. As Bhat recounts, this helped in saving 'a number of institutions, thousands of members and cache of arms'.<sup>32</sup> Vinayak's writings and speeches of the time reveal his strategy and philosophy of revolution:

The Abhinav Bharat calls for total and complete freedom, to attain which armed revolution is an inevitable means. But was our goddess of freedom a blood-thirsty and anarchist deity? No, not at all. The excess of hyper nationalism is as dangerous as the complete lack of it. We need to deliberate on the binaries of Violence versus non-violence; truth versus falsehood, nationalism and humanity in our weekly meetings. Our testing stone needs to be Utilitarianism—the maximum good to the maximum people. But truth is relative and how do we then define what is good and what is bad? Well the obvious acts such as a thief going scot-free and a saint being executed is clearly untruth, disqualification and *adharma*. And whenever the cruel exploiting force gags the voice of truth in this manner, then the forces of justice must unite to decimate them and to do that secretive and strategic coming together becomes our *dharmic* responsibility. After all, Lord Krishna also grew up in stealth in Nanda's house before killing Kamsa. If he had gone strictly with the 'truth' he would have been killed by Kamsa's demons. Similarly, Shivaji stealthily escaped from Aurangzeb's capture. Secrecy per se is neither good nor bad but what its utility is for,

gives it a positive or negative character. Similar is the case with national struggle. For the restoration of legitimate rights through which the maximum good is possible to the maximum number of people, the struggle through violence is also a virtuous act, while supporting an exploitative force that captures another's land, property and rights and destroys another's house is demoniac and needs to be destroyed ruthlessly. The nation must always be for the good of its people.<sup>33</sup>

In a rare approach of postulating a broad humanitarian acceptance, Vinayak always emphasized that he or his associates must not hate the British; that they should be considered enemies only till the time they illegitimately captured and subjugated Indians. But once India was liberated from these shackles, there should be no trouble embracing them as friends and fellow humans. So much so that if tomorrow another country captured England in a similar illegal and exploitative way, Indians must be the first to support England's right to struggle and free itself. Vinayak proclaimed in both Mitra Mela and Abhinav Bharat that their true caste and religion is humanity and humanity alone. 'Our concept of freedom,' wrote Vinayak, 'was expansive and all-embracing—the actual nation is this earth and the true king, the God Almighty. But in today's India all kinds of civil liberties and personal freedoms are held captive. Even for spiritual freedom, political freedom to practice your path is necessary.'<sup>34</sup> He found no incongruity between spiritual struggle for salvation and a political struggle for freedom. The latter, he believed, was a stepping stone towards the former and should not be considered a sin. The main aim of Abhinav Bharat was an overarching and all-inclusive vision of integrating the material and spiritual responsibilities of both the nation and the individual to attain a state of complete freedom—an almost utopian freedom in all its dimensions. This was not limited to just materialistic welfare, but intellectual, moral and spiritual progress too, along with political independence. The vision of freedom was one of divinity, of a divine goddess. No wonder then that they started and ended every meeting and their letters to one another with '*Swatantrya Lakshmi ki Jai*' (Victory to the Goddess of Freedom).

Cautioning his young comrades against joining the organization with romantic ideals of revolution, he urged them to be prepared for the thorny path ahead:

Easy patriotism seems like the order of the day and has also led several people to important positions, but for us the steps of patriotism lead straight to the noose. If all these courteous petitions to the government seeking concessions could lead to freedom, we would be the happiest. But since that is an impossibility, that is why we are going on this path. The path of petitions and requests are important and at best, they were preliminary measures. But the ultimate means was only armed struggle. However, this path will be bloody and that is something I keep emphasizing to my associates by narrating the tales of similar political revolutions in Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, etc. It will not just be imprisonment like Tilak suffered. But you will be beaten black and blue, eyes gouged out, kept hungry for days and weeks, your parents, wife and kids will be brought before you and insulted in front of your eyes. While you might be strong enough to suffer physical and mental tortures on yourself but to see your innocent family suffer in front of you will require strength of another kind. Every trick will be employed by the oppressor to break your will, your soul, your heart and your resolve. Do you have it in you to suffer like the Hindus did in the past or the Protestants? Do you have it in you to burn in the pyre like Sati and yet remain alive and be a warrior of *dharma* for your country? If yes, only then this path is open for you. <sup>35</sup>

The clarity of thought, purpose and vision of a man in his twenties is striking when one reads Vinayak's prose and lectures of this time.

Meanwhile, the Nashik branch of Abhinav Bharat invited Tilak to its meeting on 25 and 26 August 1906. There was great enthusiasm that a national leader of his stature was sharing the dais with them and guiding their activities. On this occasion, Aabaa Darekar (also known by then as the poet Govind) welcomed the eminent guest with a poetic address titled 'Lokamanyanchi Bhupali'. Hari Anant Thatte, the head of the Nashik unit, gave an elaborate account of the secret society and its collection of arms. The same evening, a secret meeting of the core members of the Abhinav Bharat with Tilak was conducted by Babarao. Despite a thorough scrutiny of all the attending invitees, there was a mole among the attendees, Narendra Singh Pardeshi, who had pretended to be a dedicated member but was a spy serving the police. Babarao addressed the gathering and voiced

his opinion that India would never achieve absolute independence by merely petitioning for it. The revolutionary movement, he opined, needed to adopt the Russian way of revolution to achieve this objective. Tilak gave the young men a patient hearing and then shared the following words of advice:

There is nothing wrong in the basic approach of Abhinav Bharat. But before decisive means for gaining independence are available to us, any hasty steps driven by mere emotions will defeat our purpose wholly. Nothing will be gained by ordinary means. We have gone through this process in our times. My experience tells me to advise you to be a little more patient and at the same time alert, till you are fully prepared. Once all the preparations are complete, then I will become your leader. <sup>36</sup>

It was a timely advice from an elderly statesman who had seen a lot of the revolutionary movement, its spirit, as well as its failures, and hence wanted it to succeed this time.

S.M. Paranjpe was invited for the Ganapati festival of 1905 by the Nashik branch. Over two days, he delivered six scholarly lectures and was felicitated by Vinayak. By then, news about the insidious plan of the British to partition Bengal had begun to trickle in. Vinayak proceeded to Kothur and then Poona where he condemned this move and forcefully advocated a bonfire of foreign goods as a mark of protest.

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The years between 1905 and 1910 are considered an important watershed period in the evolution of anti-colonial political activity in the midst of seemingly contradictory application of colonial power—reforms and repression. The period saw tectonic shifts in the political scene in India. The move by the British government, particularly Viceroy Lord Curzon, to partition Bengal on communal lines, beginning with the release of the plan draft in 1903, under the pretext of it being too unwieldy and large to administer, proved to be one of the last nails in the coffin of internal schisms of the Indian National Congress.

From the late 1890s onward, the INC had been comatose. While resigning from the post of joint secretary in 1900, Dinshaw Wacha bitterly complained to Dadabhai Naoroji: ‘Your big leaders nowadays don’t care to attend the Congress, so we have a minor crew—most of whom try to boss themselves without judgement and wisdom.’<sup>37</sup> Curzon too saw the Congress as a failing organization that was ‘tottering to its fall’.<sup>38</sup> But the Bombay leaders, especially Gokhale, tried to infuse some enthusiasm in the rank and file and undertook whirlwind tours of Bengal, Madras, the Central Provinces and Berar.<sup>39</sup> The prospect of an imminent change in government in Britain and the Liberal Party coming to power gave them a sense of hope to bargain better. The Government of India however tried to create a wedge among the leaders of the presidencies of Bombay and Madras vis-à-vis those of Bengal through preferential treatment and official interference in every matter of governance in Bengal.

The final blow came in the form of Curzon’s Partition of Bengal plan that was implemented on 16 October 1905. The Muslim-dominated areas of East Bengal were carved out craftily to also undermine the influence of dominant castes of the Hindu minority, such as the Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayasthas, who played important roles in the Congress movement. This led to massive outrage across Bengal. The leadership of the Congress was placed in a confusing dilemma. On the one hand, they were negotiating reforms with the government and Gokhale himself was readying to visit London to present the case before the British public. On the other, their own colleagues were advocating massive boycotts and violent protests to condemn the partition plan. Young and new leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose, who had hitherto little or no influence in the politics of Bengal, were seizing the opportunity and becoming the mouthpiece of the agitation, sidelining old-time Congress veterans such as Surendranath Banerjea and Bhupendra Nath Bose.

Several Congress leaders in Bengal scrambled for clarity on the organization’s stand on the issue and even wrote to Gokhale that the ‘Congress should express its opinion in unmistakable terms as to whether or not boycott is a legitimate means of constitutional agitation and as such

deserving of sympathy'.<sup>40</sup> The situation in Punjab too was not too comfortable for the Congress as provincial reforms suggested by the likes of Gokhale meant a larger share to the Muslim and Sikh representatives, with marginalization of the Hindus. Lala Lajpat Rai and other leaders there advocated a more strident approach than the one being adopted by the Bombay clique. 'What Bengal has done,' wrote Lajpat Rai, 'should be done by every province in ventilating its grievances.'<sup>41</sup> Despite regional differences of approach and localized problems, there was a slow emergence of a national pan-Indian political identity that made common cause with grievances in any part of the country and also drew from global experiences and ideas.

In all this, Tilak offered himself as a brilliant alternative who spoke out unabashedly for the interests of all these threatened factions, even as he consolidated his traditional base in Maharashtra. Aided by the support of young revolutionaries and secret societies like Vinayak and his Abhinav Bharat, the former having already opened channels of communication with similar societies across India, galvanizing a pan-India support was easier. The evolution from fledgling mass mobilizations to widespread revolutionary activities in different parts of India, and later abroad, was another feature of this period. In heralding this important phase of revolutionary activism in India and abroad, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's role is seldom discussed and scantily researched.

Also, around the same time, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05 and the defeat of a European force by an Asian country had a psychological impact on Indians. The director of criminal intelligence of India had cautioned: 'It [the Japanese victory] not only thrilled the entire oriental world with new hope . . . but it inspired India to the realization that it would be only a matter of time when her people would also be able to hold their own as free people in their own country.'<sup>42</sup>

Vinayak who had kept a close watch on the happenings across India and also within the Congress decided that this would be the opportune moment to strengthen the hands of Tilak. Vinayak gave rousing speeches calling for action. In a meeting on 1 October 1905 held at the auditorium of the

Sarvajanik Sabha in Poona, Vinayak floated the idea of creating a mass bonfire of foreign clothes. N.C. Kelkar and S.M. Paranjpe were present at this meeting. N.C. Kelkar, who was chairing the session, suggested to Vinayak that instead of setting clothes on fire, it might be more prudent to collect them all and distribute it to the poor and needy. Vinayak gently retorted that what they were setting fire to were not merely clothes, but the very roots of British imperialism and the sparks of the bonfire would be the first stepping stones towards freedom. ‘It is not the *videshi* [foreign] cloth that we burn,’ said Vinayak, ‘but the *videshi* itself—the treacherous attachment to foreigners and consequent betrayal of our Nation that we mean to burn here.’<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly, there was intense rivalry between Kelkar, then editor of *Kesari*, and Paranjpe of *Kal*. The *Kesari* of the following day promptly reported that clothes would be collected and distributed to the poor. Vinayak was disappointed that misleading information would completely beat the spirit of the idea. He visited different printing presses of the city, but they were all closed as it was a Sunday. He then rushed to Paranjpe’s house. The Manohar Press of the *Kal* was located within his house. The two men sat and personally prepared the typescript for the following day’s edition enumerating the real purpose of collecting clothes.<sup>44</sup>

On Tilak’s return to Poona from Bombay, Vinayak met him and suggested that a massive bonfire of foreign-made goods and clothes be lit in Poona. Tilak appreciated the suggestion but asked him to ensure that there needed to be at least a cartload of foreign clothes in the bonfire in order to make a shattering impact. Vinayak immediately mobilized the entire Abhinav Bharat cadre to collect foreign clothes in large numbers. The Bhopatkar brothers who ran the Maharashtra Vidyalaya supported him with student volunteers.

Inspired by Vinayak’s speeches, many groups in Poona came forward to express their solidarity. On 2 October 1905, the Brahmin priests of Poona arranged a meeting at the Omkareshwar temple, supporting the concept of swadeshi and boycotting foreign goods. On 6 October, the women of Poona held a meeting in the Mahadev temple of Sardar Natu and decided

to boycott foreign-made bangles, kerosene, glassware and other domestic items.

By that year's Dussehra festival, enough clothes had been gathered and they were taken in cartloads during the procession, which started at Maharashtra Vidyalaya near Panjarapol.<sup>45</sup> Paranjpe and Bhaskar Bhopatkar were a part of the procession and Tilak joined them midway near Chitrashala in Poona. The procession ended near Fergusson College. Tilak, Paranjpe, Vinayak and several others made speeches. Vinayak, V.M. Bhat, Hari Anant Thatte, Shankar B. Moghe, Haribhau Risbud, the famous poet V.G. Maydeo<sup>46</sup> and others were also present.<sup>47</sup> One of the students present at the occasion was Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, who later became famous for his involvement in the Ghadr movement. It was almost 9 p.m. when the meeting ended, with a massive bonfire of the clothes at Lakdi Pul. When people implored Paranjpe to speak, he merely picked up an unburned coat from the bonfire, pretended to check its empty pockets and threw it back into the fire. This action indicated that the British were pickpockets who were looting this country and the bonfire was an attempt to destroy their influence.

On Tilak's advice, Vinayak and his associates kept a watch on the bonfire till all the clothes were burnt. Meanwhile, Babarao organized similar bonfires at Nashik on the same day. The Nashik Race Course grounds reverberated with slogans of '*Goranna hya deshaatoon hakalle jayeel*' (The British should be expelled from India immediately).<sup>48</sup> Thus, an issue related to distant Bengal suddenly unified nationalists across India and strengthened the hands of 'extremist' elements within the Congress. All this, while the moderates were still hopeful of securing a reversal of the partition through their prayers, petitions and peaceful negotiations. Reporting the bonfire, the *Bombay Samachar* of 10 October 1905 stated:

Mr Savarkar, a student of Fergusson College who took a prominent part in the movement and was the mover of the proposal brought forward at a previous meeting in Poona for banning foreign goods called upon the audience to cast away all foreign



articles in their possession. This appeal was quickly responded and caps, hats and umbrellas, etc., began to pour in from all sides from the audience. <sup>49</sup>

The anti-British upsurge in the wake of the Partition of Bengal provided an impetus, even if temporarily, to swadeshi and a boycott of British goods. There was even talk of a passive resistance. Tilak presented as an alternative to the moderates' version of constitutional reforms and legislative participation:

This is boycott and this is what we mean when we say boycott is a political weapon. We shall not give them assistance to collect revenue and keep peace. We shall not assist them in fighting beyond the frontiers or outside India with Indian blood and money. We shall not assist them in carrying on the administration and justice. We shall have our own courts, and when the time comes we shall not pay taxes. Can you do that by your united efforts? If you can, you are free from tomorrow. <sup>50</sup>

Tilak's *Kesari* and *Mahratta* were exulting in the victory that the extremist camp managed during this occasion. They also highlighted the growing estrangement between Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta within the moderate faction as the latter felt increasingly marginalized. It was in such a politically turbulent situation that the Congress session was held in 1905 in Benares with Gokhale as the president. In a masterful balancing act, he denounced the Partition of Bengal as 'a cruel wrong inflicted on our Bengali brethren, a complete illustration of the worst features of bureaucratic rule in India, its utter contempt for public opinion, its arrogant pretensions to superior wisdom, its reckless disregard of the most cherished feelings of the people and its cool preference of Service interests to those of the governed'. In none of this was the government or Curzon criticized and it was made to appear like a mere oversight of a bureaucratic decision. Much to the surprise of the extremist faction, Gokhale also commended the boycott movement, saying: 'On an extreme occasion, of course a boycotting demonstration is perfectly legitimate, but that occasion must be one to drive all the classes, as in Bengal, to act with one impulse, and make all leaders sink their differences . . .' Almost

immediately, he added a note of caution to save his stand: ‘It is well to remember that the term boycott, owing to its origin, has got unsavoury associations and it conveys to the mind before everything else, a vindictive desire to injure another. Such a desire on our part as a normal feature of our relations with England, is of course out of the question.’<sup>51</sup> He had cleverly posited himself and his ideology as the mainstream of the Congress, and those like the Lal-Bal-Pal trio (as Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal were called), the outliers or the extremists. The divorce between the two factions was almost nearly complete.

Even as the Congress’s internal squabbles intensified, Vinayak paid a price for leading the movement of organizing the bonfire of foreign clothes. The principal of Fergusson College, Sir Raghunath Purushottam Paranjpe, was an anglophile, and also the first Indian to achieve the coveted title of senior wrangler at the University of Cambridge. He was aghast that a student of his college had been found participating in such a movement. Vinayak was fined Rs 10 and expelled from the college residence. This earned Vinayak not only the distinct honour of being the first Indian leader to have organized a mass bonfire of foreign goods, but also the first student to be rusticated from a government-aided institution for political purposes. With no place to stay, Vinayak went to his friend, Ganpatrao Joglekar, who also offered to pay the fine. But the students had already collected vast amounts of money for the fine. Vinayak paid the fine from his own pocket and donated the rest for the nationalist cause. In a further vindictive act, Fergusson College rusticated Joglekar as well for supporting Vinayak. He then took shelter at his friend Haribhau Risbud’s house.

The actions of Fergusson College led to outrage from all quarters and support poured in for Vinayak from everywhere. Tilak wrote angry editorials stating, ‘These are not our gurus’, and attacked Sir Raghunath Paranjpe and the Fergusson College management. Under S.M. Paranjpe’s chairmanship, a meeting was held at Sarvajanic Sabha. Several eminent Poona citizens such as Bhalakar Bhopatkar, Harendranath Mitra and

Ghamendabuva spoke out in support of Vinayak, and congratulated the students for collecting the money to pay his fine. In a stinging editorial in *Kal*, S.M. Paranjpe decried it as a national shame that one Indian citizen was being fined by another for the former's love for his country. He rued that it was all the more abhorrent that such a thing was happening in the educational field. Terming it as shameful disease that was spreading to all sections of society, Paranjpe termed this ploy of pitting Indians against fellow Indians as an indication of the great success, shrewdness and power of the British.<sup>52</sup>

Nearly thirty-eight years later, presiding over the diamond jubilee celebrations of his student, Professor Wrangler Paranjpe continued to hold a bit of his grouse against him: 'In his younger days as I know him, Savarkar was marked by a keen intellect, fervid eloquence, great fluency in writing and a magnetic personality. I remember his patriotism was intense, but as natural to young men it was based entirely on strong emotions, not much regulated by cold reason.'<sup>53</sup>

Amid these tumultuous times, the BA examinations were fast approaching. As was his nature, Vinayak closeted himself for a couple of months and dedicated his time to intense studies. The results were declared on 21 December 1905 and once again he emerged successful. A wave of happiness spread among his supporters, as well as his family back home in Nashik. A year earlier, he had already passed the first LLB examination as well. As 1906 dawned, Vinayak shifted to Bombay for his final law degree examination. Bhat too followed him there and enrolled at Wilson College. The two stayed together at Sukha Niwas Lodge off Girgaum Train Terminus.

As expected, even in Bombay, Vinayak was relentless in his work related to Abhinav Bharat. One of the members, Bhaskar Vishnu Phadke, was a publisher and had begun a new Marathi weekly, *Vihari*, along with Ramachandra Narayan Mandalik and Balakrishna Narayan Phatak. Vinayak made regular, firebrand contributions to *Vihari* that acted as a veritable mouthpiece of Abhinav Bharat. Vinayak acted as the de facto co-editor of the weekly. Its circulation increased by leaps and bounds, quite

like the *Yugantar* in Bengal that was started in March 1906. New members were initiated in Bombay and the oath administered to them. Regular meetings were organized either at Sukha Niwas Lodge or in Shastri Hall or in the Chikhalawadi tenements.

Intensive propaganda soon began to win members from some of the city's most prestigious and elite institutions of higher education such as the Elphinstone College, Wilson College, Victoria Technical Institute, Gujjar's Laboratory, Art School, Law School, and other medical colleges. Vinayak believed that inducting members from the government services would help them keep a close watch on the internal activities of the government. With this in mind, they slowly began infiltrating the railways, post and telegraph departments, customs, the Bombay High Court, the secretariat, the weather bureau and so on. Abhinav Bharat had truly metamorphosed into a powerful force to reckon with. Bhat pithily quotes Vinayak's observations on the strategy of the organization :

If our plan to rise in arms simultaneously all over India had not miscarried, we would have heralded the coming of that revolution by throwing bombs and by murdering British officers all at one time. We had collected enough arms to make life difficult for the British Government, especially the officials. The bomb factory at Vasai was a secret school where trustworthy revolutionaries were taught the art of bomb making.

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Unlike the revolutionaries of the past such as Wasudev Balwant Phadke or the Chapekar brothers, who were not wanting either in patriotism or courage but lacked in calculated strategy, Vinayak's Abhinav Bharat was far from a bunch of misguided youth hurling bombs and assassinating random officers. It had a clear road map of how to instigate that ultimate pan-India revolution, taking inspiration from the seeds of 1857, and extinguish the Empire in its massive blaze. In Vinayak's own words:

The strategies that Mazzini employed in Italy, or the revolutionaries did in Ireland or Russia and our own revolutionaries of 1857 can be re-employed in India again with a high probability of success. Infiltrating the army and police, creating a vast network of a secret armed force, establishing contacts with revolutionaries from Russia, Italy,

Ireland and other countries, striking attacks on the main protagonists of British administration, having stocks of arms in the provinces and border areas for quick deployment in case of need, low intensity revolts all the time to keep the administration busy and diverted before a big blow can be dealt with, and most importantly, the will to die and inspire others to do as well—these are what would be needed to craft a successful revolution in India. In the end if Britain gets embroiled in some international war back home, its strength would be further diminished and striking at that time would undoubtedly result in their overthrow. I never believed that just killing some random British officers here and there would make them scared and run away. We also know all the 30 crore Indians would not join us. But even if 2 lakh brave people come and join the movement, it would suffice. Those who called revolution as childish and mindless, and relied only on servile applications must realize that their means are flawed and that can never help us achieve the goal. At this stage of our existence in Abhinav Bharat, it is presumptuous and hilarious to assume we could shake the mighty British Empire. We are just a matchstick, but please know that if we light it, we can burn down the whole edifice of the palace. History is replete with several such matchsticks that have burnt down entire nations and empires. Our essential fodder is the disaffection towards the empire in the minds of 30 crore Indians and this was enough for the canon to explode. The first two years of our existence is for understanding, theorizing and strategizing this plan and for moulding and strengthening the minds, setting a road map and clear direction to our acts and not perpetrate random violent acts. We also need to take in the best ideas and practices of both the so-called Moderates and Nationalist Extremists as they were all patriotic people too, with good intent for the country and its freedom. <sup>55</sup>

While in Bombay, Vinayak was invited by students in Poona to meet a man named Agamya Guru who was known to make passionate speeches and who also made students collect funds to liberate the country. <sup>56</sup> Curious to know more, Vinayak interviewed him on 23 February 1906. Quite early in the conversation, Vinayak realized that the man was a quack as he kept talking about his mystical powers and the support of the Almighty in the efforts to free India. <sup>57</sup> Cutting him short, Vinayak asked him to clarify his political viewpoints. The baffled guru told him that he would first need some financial assistance from Vinayak and only thereafter would he reveal his political strategies. The interview was terminated in twenty-five minutes flat. Vinayak advised the students to ignore such imposters. His assessment proved right, because two years later, in 1908, the guru was found guilty of outraging the modesty of an English girl in London and was released after four months of imprisonment in a British jail. <sup>58</sup>

What makes this insignificant event interesting is that it found its way into a confidential document called ‘The Sedition Committee Report’ of 1918. The Committee was presided by Justice Rowlatt, and it had the inputs of eminent judges, officials and intelligence agents. Vinayak Savarkar and his activities in Poona are elaborately covered here, indicating that by then he had come under the radar of the intelligence department of the British government. But how horribly wrong this Committee got its facts is indicated in the following extract from the report:

Before leaving India Vinayak Savarkar had been drawn into a movement initiated early in 1905 by a person styling himself Mahatma Sri Agamya Guru Paramhansa, who toured in India delivering lectures and speaking fearlessly against Government, telling his audiences not to fear Government. As part of the movement, a number of students early in 1906 started in Poona a society, which elected Vinayak Savarkar as their leader and invited him to Poona to meet the Mahatma. Savarkar attended a meeting on the 23rd February and suggested that a committee of nine should be appointed to carry out the objects of the movement. A committee was accordingly elected, of which most of the members had at one time or other belonged to the Fergusson College in Poona, where Vinayak had been educated. The Mahatma at this meeting advised the raising of funds by a contribution of one anna from every person for the purposes of the society and said he would advise how it should be utilised when a sufficient amount had been collected. <sup>59</sup>

Vinayak was conscious of detectives following him around. On 23 February 1906, when he was making a powerful speech in Poona’s Joshi Hall about the need to emulate the advice of Shivaji Maharaj’s guru, Saint Ramdas, he noticed suspicious-looking people in the audience. He was advising his audience to fill their hearts with the thought of freedom from foreigners but stopped short of saying the words lest the snoopers record his words. He said:

Detectives are here. I am glad that they have come here to hear and help us in the work we are doing. We have, so to say, indirectly the sympathy of these people and brought even the police to our side. Bear in mind the commands of Ramdas and follow them in the work you undertake. We have lost everything. We have no more

faith in our own religion. Try to re-establish that in India. Shed no tears for what is lost. Shed drops of blood to regain what is lost. <sup>60</sup>

A secret file relating to the Savarkar brothers was opened in 1906 and the file was numbered 60 in 1908. <sup>61</sup> Alexander Montgomerie, ICS, who was then the first class magistrate of Nashik, had written a note in another confidential report that ‘Savarkar had already grown into an accomplished orator of an enviable rank’. <sup>62</sup> Interestingly, Montgomerie filed a secret report of this meeting at Joshi Hall where Vinayak spoke, the same evening as it was delivered:

His delivery is fast, he is extremely bold, is very impressive in style and at times when encouraged by cheers of his audience forgets that detectives are around him . . . in my humble opinion he has been ruining his own life for he is yet but a raw boy not fitted to preach opinions which he scarcely understands and in addition has been sporting (sic) the lives of youngsters by putting in very nasty ideas in their tender brains . . . this evening he convened a meeting of students of which he was the President . . . he addressed his audience like a general before leading his men to a desperate onset. He spoke for nearly 35 minutes . . . it would appear that a branch of the Indo-European movement will shortly be established in Poona. <sup>63</sup>

On his return to Bombay, Vinayak came across an announcement in the *Indian Sociologist* newsletter, edited by Pandit Shyamji Krishna Varma of England. A few scholarships had been announced by Shyamji for talented and nationalistic young Indians to study abroad.

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Shyamji was born to poor parents, Krushnadas Bhanushali and Gomatibai, at Mandavi in Kutch on 4 October 1857. His father was settled in Bombay but was struggling to make ends meet. Since Shyamji had shown early signs of intelligence, his mother took him to Bhuj for education at the English school there. But after her early demise, his father brought him back to Bombay. As destiny would have it, Shyamji soon lost his father when he was barely ten. With the help of his relatives, he pursued his

education at Wilson High School and later Elphinstone High School, graduating with flying colours. Alongside, he also learnt Sanskrit at the Sanskrit Pathashala run by Vishvanatha Shastri. Around 1874, he met the spiritual leader and social reformer, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, in Bombay, who founded the Arya Samaj in 1875 to fight several social evils that had crept into Hindu society and to rekindle the ancient Vedic faith. Shyamji was among the first to be formally initiated into the Arya Samaj and worked for it rigorously. On a whirlwind propaganda tour to different parts of India, he delivered stellar lectures in chaste Sanskrit on the need for social reforms and a fresh interpretation of Hindu scriptures.

In 1875, Shyamji was married to Bhanumati, the daughter of Sheth Chhabildas Lallubhai, a wealthy Bombay industrialist.

Shyamji's erudition in Sanskrit caught the attention of Professor Monier Williams, a well-known Sanskrit scholar and then Boden professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford. He was so deeply impressed that he decided to take Shyamji along as his assistant at Oxford. Several eminent people such as Krishna Shastri Chiplunkar and Justice Ranade gave reference letters as testimonials of his brilliance to Professor Williams. Accordingly, Shyamji left for Oxford in 1879 and achieved great academic success over the next four years. Sir Richard Temple, the governor of Bombay, recommended his case to the Maharaja of Kutch for a scholarship that he eventually got. His lectures on Sanskrit and the Vedas earned him a membership at the prestigious Royal Asiatic Society in 1881. He was also sent by Marquis of Harlington, then Secretary of State for India, to represent the country at the fifth Oriental Congress in Berlin. Two years later, Shyamji was once again sent to London as India's representative to the Oriental Congress by the Earl of Kimberley, then Secretary of State for India. With such erudition and contacts, by the time he completed his BA he became a member of the Empire Club that had as its members governors, Governor-Generals, and commanders-in-chief.

After becoming a barrister in 1885, Shyamji returned to India and over the next twelve years, held plum positions as dewan of states such as Ratlam, Udaipur and Junagarh. He also practised law in Ajmer for about



three years. Around this time, he came in contact with Tilak and was deeply inspired by the latter's nationalistic spirit. But being disillusioned and shattered with his stint at Junagarh, facing court intrigues and a bad conduct certificate slapped on him, he decided to resign and leave India for good with his wife in 1897. Given his sudden unpopularity in the British administration, Shyamji decided to maintain a low profile in England for about seven to eight years. He invested in stocks and shares and made a considerable fortune to live independently.

After the Partition of Bengal and its aftermath, Shyamji was convinced that he needed to play a more active role in the political movement back home. He was convinced of the imperative necessity to inculcate new doctrines of rationalism and freedom in the minds of Indians. To this end, he evolved a scheme of founding Indian lectureships for propagating the ideas of his icon, Herbert Spencer, in India. On Spencer's death in 1903, he announced a personal grant of £1000 for establishing the Spencer lectureship at Oxford, to help arrange lectures by eminent scholars of philosophy for Indian students. Keenly observing revolutionary movements in his neighbourhood in Europe, Shyamji decided to begin publishing an English monthly called the *Indian Sociologist* as 'An organ of Freedom and of Political, Social and Religious Reform' on 1 January 1905. He also established contacts with *Gaelic American*, a prominent Irish-Catholic newspaper owned and published by John Davoy of the Irish Republican Party from New York.<sup>64</sup> Shyamji, however, repudiated violence and took a more conciliatory and non-combative approach towards the British public, writing articles and letters to British newspapers appealing on the basis of cold logic and justice.<sup>65</sup> In his maiden editorial in the *Indian Sociologist*, Shyamji set out his guiding principles and also his disdain for the moderate faction of the Congress:

Resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative. Non-resistance hurts both altruism and egoism . . . the political relations between England and India urgently require a genuine Indian interpreter in the United Kingdom to show on behalf of India how Indians really fare and feel under British rule. No systematic attempt has, so far as our knowledge goes, ever been made in the country by Indians

themselves to enlighten the British public with regard to the grievances, demands and aspirations of the people of India. It will be our duty and privilege to plead the cause of India and its unrepresented millions before the Bar of Public Opinion in Great Britain and Ireland. <sup>66</sup>

A.M. Shah describes the *Indian Sociologist* as only ‘mild in its criticism of British rule’ and points to Shyamji’s statement that ‘India and England should sever their connection peaceably and part as friends’. <sup>67</sup> It circulated widely in Great Britain, India, and even the United States of America, even after the British tried to prohibit its import from 1907 onward.

Soon after the publication of the second issue of the *Indian Sociologist*, Shyamji decided to back it up with an organization of and for Indians in London. Although inspired by the Irish revolutionary movement, his ‘Indian Home Rule Society’ adopted a fairly conciliatory stance. On 18 February 1905, about twenty Indians met at his house at Highgate <sup>68</sup> in London to inaugurate the society. Its principal objectives were securing Home Rule in India, carrying out propaganda in the United Kingdom by all practical means towards that end and to spread among the people of India knowledge of the advantages of freedom and national unity. Other than Shyamji, the members of this society included C. Muthu, J.M. Parikh, Dr D.E. Pereira, Parameshwar Lal, Dr U.K. Dutt, Sardarsingh Rana, Manchershah Barjorji Godrej and Abdullah Al-Mamun Suhrawardy.

There were associations like the London Indian Society and the East India Association that had Indians and former British governors, commissioners, members of parliament and prominent politicians. These were started by Dadabhai Naoroji but they had not achieved much traction. Shyamji was no votary of armed rebellion but instead advocated passive resistance and boycott, just like Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. However, the moderates and extremists did not use the word ‘Home Rule’ as propounded by Shyamji as it conjured bad memories of the Irish Home Rule Movement for the British. Bipin Chandra’s ‘autonomy’ proposal or Dadabhai’s ‘self-government’ was similar to Shyamji’s Home Rule—

internal freedom to rule within the British Empire, just like Canada and Australia. But using the dreaded word was anathema.

In May 1905, Shyamji made a new announcement:

It is proposed to open a house or hostel in London to be called 'India House' during (the) early part of July next for the accommodation of the gentlemen holding the Indian Travelling Fellowships, and of other Indians who may be deemed eligible to reside there . . . a freehold estate has been purchased at Highgate (London), a part of Hornsey which according to official statistics is the healthiest suburb of London and which has the lowest death rate in the United Kingdom. The property is situated close to trams, within easy reach of three railways stations, and also within a few minutes' walk of Waterloo Park, Highgate woods and Queens [sic] woods.

The House . . . has at present accommodation for about twenty-five young men. Arrangements will ultimately be made to build and so take in fifty students. The Lecture Hall, Library and Reading Room are all on the same floor, thus presenting every facility for study and intercommunication. To provide recreation there is ample space for tennis courts, gymnasium etc.

The management of the establishment will be in the hands of Indians only . . . no alcoholic drinks will be allowed on the premises. Indian gentlemen holding Travelling Fellowships will be charged 16/- per week for board and residence, while others will be received on such terms and condition as may be specifically arranged . . . this is the first attempt ever made in this country for securing an attractive residential meeting place for students from all parts of India.

India House was inaugurated on 1 July 1905. Several eminent people, including Mr Henry Mayers Hyndman, the leader of the Social Democratic Party of England, Mr Sweeny of the Positivist Society, Mr Swelch, editor of *Justice Paper*, Indian leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Lala Lajpat Rai, Madame Bhikaji Rustom Cama and others, were present. The tone of Henry Mayers Hyndman's speech flummoxed many present on the occasion:

Loyalty to Great Britain means treachery to India. I have met many Indians and the loyalty to British rule, which the majority has professed, has been disgusting. Either they were insincere or ignorant . . . Indians have until now hugged their chains. From England itself there is nothing to be hoped. It is the immoderate men, the determined men, the fanatical men who will work out the salvation of India . . . this India House is a great step in that direction of Indian growth and Indian emancipation. <sup>69</sup>

In the years to come, India House at Highgate was to become the hotbed of many young Indian revolutionaries, including Vinayak.

It was in the December edition of the *Indian Sociologist* that Vinayak had seen the notice regarding the scholarships. These were additional fellowships sponsored by Shyamji's comrade, Sardarsinhji Ravaji Rana (popularly known as S.R. Rana) of Kathiawar. Rana was in London for his barrister studies, from where he migrated to Paris where he started a business dealing with diamonds and precious stones. He was one of the founding members and the vice-president of the Indian Home Rule Society of Shyamji and had formed a Paris Indian Society in 1905, along with another revolutionary luminary, Madame Bhikaji Rustom Cama. Three fellowships of Rs 2000 each were offered in the name of Indian heroes—Maharana Rana Pratap of Mewar, Shivaji Maharaj and Mughal Emperor Akbar. Since he was educated at London by the help of fellow Indians, Rana told Shyamji that: 'it is my bounden duty to help in turn at least two or three of my compatriots to visit self-governing countries and to appreciate the blessings of political freedom'.<sup>70</sup>

The young students receiving these scholarships had to pledge that they would not join the British government service, either in Britain or in India. Interestingly though, the scholarships had to be repaid at a rate of 4 per cent interest per annum within ten years of signing the agreement. In addition, a life insurance policy (of a minimum of Rs 5000) had to be purchased by the candidate prior to departing India. The premium was to be paid by the candidate and he had 'to deliver punctually the premium receipts to the undersigned or his assigns, as a security for the money advanced, to the candidate'.<sup>71</sup>

While Vinayak toyed with the idea of applying for the scholarship, he realized that the amount would not be sufficient to live in England. His father-in-law however assured him that any deficit in this regard would be borne by him. With this assurance, he sent in his application to Shyamji. In his letter, he writes:

Independence and liberty I look upon as the very pulse and breath of a nation. From my boyhood, dear Sir, up to this moment of my youth, the loss of independence of my country and the possibility of regaining sit forms [sic] the only theme of which I have dreamt at night and on which I mused by day. <sup>72</sup>

Shyamji had received nearly 153 applications, but it was Vinayak's application, buttressed by recommendation letters from both Tilak and S.M. Paranjpe, that caught his attention. Tilak wrote to Shyamji:

When there is such a rush like that, it is no use recommending any one particularly to your notice. But still, I may state, among the applicants, there is one Mr Savarkar from Bombay, who graduated last year and whom I know to be a spirited young man, very enthusiastic in the Swadeshi cause, so much so that he had to incur the displeasure of the Fergusson College authorities. He has no mind to take up Government service at any time and his moral character is very good. <sup>73</sup>

In his recommendation letter to Shyamji, dated 8 March 1906, S.M. Paranjpe wrote:

I have not as yet had the good fortune of being personally acquainted with you. But I hope you perhaps remember me as one of the members of the most honourable Home Rule Society that you started for the elevation of our mother country in the scale of nations. But I ardently wish that I should be on terms of intimacy with you and therefore eagerly take this opportunity of writing a private letter to you for the purpose of introducing a friend of mine to you. His name is Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. He has passed his B.A. examination this year and further intends to study law in London. But he is unable to bear the expenses and therefore is trying to get some help from outside. He will be highly obliged if he gets one of the scholarships that you have so generously offered in a notification in your paper. With regard to his qualifications I can safely say that he is an enthusiastic speaker and a sincere patriot. He is at present conducting a vernacular paper in a vigorous manner, but he has already done a still more vigorous [sic] in Ganpati and Shivaji festivals, and many other patriotic movements. He is sending a formal application to you separately and I shall deem it a great [sic] if you can see your way to giving one of the scholarships to him. <sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, Vinayak's principal at Fergusson College, Wrangler Paranjpe, who had earlier rusticated him for participating in the 1905 bonfire of foreign goods, also sent in a recommendation letter. <sup>75</sup>

By early May 1906, Vinayak learned that he had been offered the Shivaji scholarship by Shyamji. The total amount of Rs 2000 was to be paid to him in five instalments of Rs 400 each. The applicant had to enter into an agreement with Shyamji and also declare that he would not take up any government posts after utilizing the scholarship. Vinayak made it clear to Shyamji that he wished to pursue law and that it should not be construed as government service. The rates of residence at India House was 16 shillings per week for fellowship holders and 18 shillings and 6 pence for others. On 20 May 1906, Vinayak signed the agreement in the presence of his friend Daji Nagesh Apte and the sub-editor of *Kesari*, Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar, and received Rs 400 from Tilak as the first instalment. On 25 May, he sent a letter to Shyamji with his declaration:

I do hereby pledge my word of honour and solemnly declare that I will not accept either directly or indirectly any post or honorary office, title, favour or seat on any council (Municipality, District Board, etc.) or service under the British Government and that I will not advise anyone to serve the government in any capacity and also that I will not accept any emolument from them. <sup>76</sup>

Before his departure to England, Vinayak made several speeches in Nashik. On 1 January 1906, he spoke at the Brahmanand Theatre with about 200 to 300 people present. One of the members of Abhinav Bharat, Waman Narhar Dani, was a police constable who was taking down notes of what Vinayak was saying. The subject was on the practice of distributing *til-gul* (sesame seeds and jaggery) during the upcoming festival of Makar Sankranti. Exhorting the audiences, Vinayak told them:

I would ask you not to mix the seed with foreign sugar and if you like to do it better mix swadeshi sugar with the seed . . . do not even touch that boycotted foreign sugar . . . On the occasion of this holiday people say ‘Take *til-gul* and speak sweet words.’ We should rather say, ‘Take *til-gul* and do not speak sweet words.’ For to speak sweet words every heart must be happy. How will he whose heart or mind is not glad speak sweet words? . . . we are completely without arms. Although we are disarmed if we require any weapon we can procure it from somewhere. Does it mean we require a sword, which resembles a sword or a gun, which resembles a gun? No! If we make up our mind to lose (or acquire) a kingdom [overthrow the government] why is a weapon

needed? Are there no weapons except arms and no other means? There are many. They need not be more fully explained here. Many have understood me. Hence you have to enter a good stage, i.e., you must first improve your condition. The reason why our country has reached the most wretched condition is that we have given up our religion, our industries and our trade, which has been taken up by others. They have completely monopolized our trade and hence their country is rich and ours is going down. Nay it has already gone down. Let us bear this fully in mind and fight with them with weapons, that is, we must abide by our religion and we carry on our trade, which has gone into the hands of others. It means we must use goods produced in our country, i.e. *swadeshi* sugar, cloth, and other *swadeshi* articles . . . hence instead of sweet words let there be fire in your heart, let it blaze there. <sup>77</sup>

On 21 and 22 April 1906, he delivered two speeches—one in front of the gymnasium of Rokdya Maruti near the Nao Darwaja at Nashik and another at the Sundar Narayan Temple. Once again, the police spy, Waman Narhar, dutifully noted down the contents of both speeches and promptly reported them to his superiors in the force. Vinayak implored the audience to train both their minds and bodies. He asked them to impress in their hearts the spirit of patriotism. Pointing to the idol of Maruti (Hanuman), he told them that the God held a mace in his hand and was crushing a demon under his feet. If they observed carefully, he stated, they would see the demon's complexion to be white or red. The police deduced that this was a veiled reference to using physical power to vanquish the white-skinned foreigners. <sup>78</sup>

Private farewell parties were organized on 28 May 1906 in Aabaa Darekar's house and on 31 May 1906 by Amar Singh Pardesi, another police spy. <sup>79</sup> After the party at Aabaa's house, a photograph of Vinayak and his revolutionary comrades was taken. This was confiscated later and produced in court in the trial against Vinayak and his associates. <sup>80</sup>

A grand public reception to felicitate Vinayak was organized at Nashik's Bhadrakali temple on 28 May 1906. Vedic scholar Harihar Shastri Garge presided over the programme that was attended by nearly 400 people. A son of the town had battled all odds, made a name for himself and was now sailing ashore to distant England for higher studies on a prestigious scholarship. Several citizens, family members and friends gathered and

showered praises on him on this joyous occasion. A grateful Vinayak told them that he was proceeding to England with the singular intention of discharging the debt of obligation to his beloved motherland. His real intention to go to England was, however, to impress upon the people there about the atrocities faced by Indians and the need for revolution. He also wanted to procure arms for the revolution and learn the technique of manufacturing bombs, in addition to creating a worldwide network of revolutionaries in support of the Indian cause.<sup>81</sup> During this meeting, Vinayak quoted Shivaji's guru in his speech: '*Sakal lok ek karaave, ek vichaare bharaave, kashte karun ghasaraave, mlenchaanvari*' (Gather and organize everyone, then inspire them and prepare them for the struggle to expel the foreigners).<sup>82</sup> In his emotional speech, Vinayak said:

If *dharma* is observed, then this country which belongs to Hindus as well as Muhammadans would prosper. It belongs to whoever is born there, it belongs to those who are grown on the food it offers; whose children are to grow on the same. The last in the grade are the *shudras* and people think they are base born because they are born for service. But even if they are born for service whose service is that? It is not the service of slaves as we have all become now, but the service they are to render is to their country . . . everyone should, while sitting, talking, sleeping, nay even when winking, remember of '*Swadesh Bhakti*' that is the devotion to one's own country.<sup>83</sup>

Little did Vinayak know that these five speeches—four in Nashik and one in Poona—that he made in 1906 would be held against him several years later to build a case of sedition against the emperor.

Vinayak then proceeded to Bombay to depart for England on 9 June 1906 on the ship S.S. *Persia*. He was given a tearful farewell by Babarao, his wife Yamuna and their eighteen-month-old son Prabhakar (born in September 1905, a month before the bonfire event that Vinayak organized in Poona). Fondly taking Prabhakar from Yamuna's hands, he advised her: '*Tyala deviche injection dyaa, nahitar to devakade jae l*' (Give him smallpox vaccination,<sup>84</sup> otherwise he will go to the goddess).<sup>85</sup> In his wildest dreams, Vinayak would not have dreamt that this alliterative slip of the tongue would unfortunately come true.



A new world of experiences and opportunities awaited Vinayak. Still, the grief of departing from his loved ones tugged at his heartstrings. He writes about this emotional experience in his memoirs:

The ship that was carrying me to England left the shores of Bombay and began to roll and pitch, as it sailed towards the open seas. Soon my relatives and friends who had gathered on the pier to bid me loving goodbye slowly went out of sight. As the shore receded, the picture of my friends and family that was cast on my mind began to dance before my eyes. Other passengers, who had also seen off their relatives, had already moved inside and were busy finding their rooms and arranging their bags. But I was steadily looking in the direction of the shore, and my mind, hurt by the separation began to ask itself piteously: 'Will I safely come back to India at least after three years? Will I be able to meet them all again?' <sup>86</sup>



4

## Inside the Enemy Camp

Onboard the S.S. *Persia* , June–July 1906

Even as the S.S. *Persia* sailed away from Indian shores, Vinayak stood on the deck for a long time, ruminating. The laughter and cheer of many of his co-passengers on the deck, mostly Europeans, was in direct contrast to his own state of mind. He could perceive the contempt in their eyes for this ‘native’ amidst them. Since this was his maiden sea journey, Vinayak was unsure how to find his room, and any European passenger he asked for help contemptuously looked away. He finally found a cabin officer who assigned his Indian assistant to help him settle in. As he entered his cabin, Vinayak saw a young Sikh, some three years younger than him, arranging his bags. Fair, well built and good-looking, there was relief writ large on the Sikh’s face as he inquired if he was Mr Savarkar. Being his first journey by sea as well, the Sikh too was diffident and was looking for an Indian companion. A couple of Punjabi fellow-travellers had cabins further down the row.

The Sikh gentleman was Harnam Singh from Amritsar. Son of a district judge in Punjab, he had lost his father at a young age and had been brought up by his mother. He passed his BA examinations and was married at eighteen. The maharaja of the princely state of Nabha was impressed with

his intelligence and had awarded him a scholarship to study agriculture at the Royal Agriculture College of Cirencester in England. <sup>1</sup> Being the only child, his mother was reluctant to let him go so far away, but finally acquiesced. It was common those days to be wary of sea travel and orthodox Hindus looked upon it as entailing a loss of caste. The Congress veteran, Surendranath Banerjea, had mentioned in his autobiography that when he had travelled to England in 1874, the matter was kept a strict secret from family and friends, as though some nefarious conspiracy was being plotted. None but his father knew about the plan and when his mother was told about it on the eve of the journey, she fainted in utter shock. People were alarmed by the anglicized habits of those who returned from England. Being from an upper-caste Brahmin family, Banerjea was virtually ostracized by the community, and he writes: ‘ . . . those who used to eat and drink with us on ceremonial occasions stopped all social contacts and refused to invite us.’ <sup>2</sup> Things were not this bad when Vinayak and Harnam travelled, but apprehensions were still aplenty. The two young men struck up a conversation and found that they got along pretty well.

Sauntering around the deck, Vinayak made the acquaintance of the other Indians that Harnam had spoken about. There were about ten of them on board. Among them was a rich young man from Punjab whose name Vinayak does not reveal in his memoirs and instead cryptically calls him ‘Mr Etiquette’. Having travelled to Europe several times, he had adopted a Western way of life. He believed that Indian students going to England needed to adopt European manners and customs in matters of dressing, dining and take to smoking cigars or pipes and drinking wine. Only then would the Europeans accept them as one of them. Vinayak agreed partly with his suggestion to the extent that one is not humiliated by doing so and it also gives one a chance to compare our traditions with theirs. Given his departure to England was so sudden, Vinayak hardly had much time to get accustomed to the English ways. ‘Mr Etiquette’ offered to help him how to dress and wear a tie, and the difficult business of eating with forks, knives and spoons. A diehard vegetarian till then, Vinayak had no qualms about compromising on eating meat. But he made quite a mess of himself with

the fork and knife by putting the knife that was in his right hand straight into his mouth, causing his lips to bleed. Eating fish and separating the bones from the flesh was another embarrassingly painful exercise. Most of the vegetarians on board virtually starved since the menu had very few options for them.

Harnam Singh, sporting his colourful turban, was a sight for the Europeans on the ship. Each time he went up to the deck to catch some fresh air, the white children pointed at him and laughed at what they considered a strange appearance. Their parents, instead of reprimanding their boorish behaviour, joined in the mockery. 'Mr Etiquette' felt embarrassed by this and told Vinayak to advise Harnam to stop wearing the turban. But Vinayak protested. He told him:

Some of our customs are surely outdated and I am ahead of you in proposing their abandonment. I am a reformist at heart. However I consider it sheer cowardice to eschew our culture and traditions merely because some ignorant and arrogant Europeans laugh at it. I feel our turbans look colorful and aesthetic, unlike their hats that seem to me like dustbins. It is a national insult to tell a Sikh for whom it is a matter of his faith to wear a turban to stop wearing it. Why don't we all sport turbans so that seeing us in large numbers their ridicule would stop? <sup>3</sup>

Vinayak argued that being a subservient nation it was natural for Indians to feel inferior and odd in comparison to British customs. One had to only spare a thought for the early East India Company traders who might also have felt equally at sea in a strange, new land and whom our forefathers might have mocked for being unaware of Indian customs. He added, 'But these English men and women do not laugh at us merely as a matter of fun. They mock us out of arrogance and truly despise us. They thereby imply that they are the rulers and we, the ruled and hence all their customs, traditions and culture are way superior to ours. Therein lies the problem.' <sup>4</sup> Thus, even on board Vinayak managed to bring in political and cultural discussions around India, her slave status and the need for liberation among his fellow Indian passengers.

As the ship sailed on, many passengers suffered from both seasickness and homesickness. Vinayak missed his home. There were several occasions when he felt an intense longing to return home to his loving brothers, wife, son and sister-in-law. The tragedies of childhood had cemented ties among the Savarkars and they loved one another deeply. Meanwhile, Harnam fell ill, throwing up everything he ate. As Vinayak nursed him, he held Vinayak's hand and cried that he had had enough and wanted to return to his family that very moment. He resolved to alight at Aden, buy a return ticket and go back to India. Vinayak counselled him about how sometimes we must be prepared to suffer for the sake of the very people we love for a higher purpose in life. To instil courage in Harnam, he narrated the story of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last guru of the Sikhs. Fighting against the cruelty of the Mughal onslaught, he had lost his sons Ajit Singh and Jhujhar Singh, aged seventeen and thirteen respectively, on the battlefield. His younger sons were entombed alive for refusing to accept Islam. He himself was martyred. Vinayak argued that had Guru Gobind Singh or his sons felt the way Harnam did, none of them would have gathered the courage to fight for the larger cause.

It might take a month to receive a reply to a letter written to family members back in India. But in the earlier centuries, when the East India Company officers came to India it took them six months or more to communicate with their families as the ships travelled to England from India via a circuitous route through the Cape of Good Hope. But they persevered since their goal was to vanquish India and become its rulers. Shouldn't young Indians similarly persevere to liberate their motherland? At the end of the discourse, Harnam was a transformed man. He cancelled the idea of alighting at Aden and instead asked Vinayak what he could do for his motherland. Such was the power of Vinayak's logical reasoning.

Vinayak circulated an English biography of Italian revolutionary Mazzini that he had with him among the Indians on board. He wanted to assess their inclination and opinion about revolution. While several of them were inspired, they felt it was the work of national leaders like Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, or of the maharajas, to take up such a cause. At best,

they could be mere foot soldiers. Vinayak told them that when Mazzini's 'Young Italy' began, it was the work of a handful of unknown youngsters. He reminded them about Wasudev Phadke and the Chapekar brothers who were virtually unknown but had done their bit for the cause.

One of them, whom Vinayak again cryptically describes by a pseudonym 'Keshavanand', was thoroughly inspired. He said that if such a secret society existed in India, he would be more than happy to join it. It was then that Vinayak revealed the details about Abhinav Bharat and its activities across the country. While he was going to England to become a barrister, that was only an excuse. The real motivation was to carry on large-scale propaganda and draw eminent citizens of England to their side. He also wanted to learn how to manufacture cheap and effective hand bombs. Finally, creating an international network of revolutionaries and collectively raising a banner of revolt in India was part of his agenda. The fellow passengers were awestruck. The very next day, both Keshavanand and the fastidious 'Mr Etiquette' ended up taking the oath of Abhinav Bharat right there aboard the S.S. *Persia*. Thus, Vinayak's passion for the revolution did not wait till he reached London.

These gentlemen helped Vinayak in his activities in London but requested anonymity as they feared police retribution. 'Mr Etiquette', for instance, helped Vinayak deliver many of his explosive writings back to India. He had a textile business and thus managed to craftily conceal the manuscripts among his cloth consignments and had them shipped to India. This attracted no attention from either the police or the spy agencies that were constantly on the watch.

The three-week-long journey not only gave Vinayak an opportunity to induct new members into Abhinav Bharat, it also gave the poet in him some much-desired solitude. He sat in the open air, bewitched, witnessing the vast and limitless sea and the countless stars above. He had read about astronomy and oceanography and this was an occasion to see all of it up close. In his memoirs, he writes about the thoughts that crossed his mind during this time:

What is the purpose of creation? The countless species that exist in the ocean and on land would all disappear, the stronger devouring the weaker. Are earthquakes, comets, snowstorms and other destructive phenomena an act of God or of the Devil? Where does Man fit into all of this, if everything is just a play of someone sitting up there and pulling strings? How is it that the creator never gets tired and manages to regenerate everything after destruction? <sup>5</sup>

He wrote several poems during this journey, including the delightful ‘Tarakans Pahun’ (After Looking at Stars). The poem begins with these evocative lines:

*Sunil nabh he, sundar nabh he, nabh he atal aha!  
Sunil sagar, sundar sagar, sagar atalachi ha!  
Nakshatrahi tarankit he, nabh tarankit bhase  
Pratibimbahi tasa sagarahi, tarankit bhase  
Numje lage kuthe nabh kuthe jalaseema hoi  
Nabhat jal he, jalat nabh te sangamuni jai*

Deep blue, beautiful, boundless sky!  
Deep blue, beautiful, deep and fathomless sea!  
Adorned with stars and constellations, the sky smiles enchantingly,  
The sea returns the same, as it is but a reflection of the sky.  
Where does the sea end, where does the sky begin  
In their vast intermingled union? <sup>6</sup>

The contempt and indifference that Vinayak, Harnam and others felt aboard the S.S. *Persia* were not unique. The knighted correspondent of the *Times of London*, Sir Valentine Chirol, writes about the experiences that several Indian students like them might have felt during their stay in England:

It would be almost impossible for an Englishman who has never been in the East to realize the enormous difference between the life to which the student has been used and the life to which he has come . . . he may have been to some town to study in a Government or missionary school or college. But that has not given him an insight into English life . . . he comes to England feeling there is a gulf between the East and the West . . . he is by nature extremely sensitive. On board ship he and his brother Indians keep together. The English passengers, fatigued after a period of hard work in a hot climate, have no energy left for the effort of trying to draw out and know this

batch of silent Orientals. So the gulf gapes wide . . . Some of them go to Oxford and Cambridge. They have heard in India, from some Indians who were up at these Universities from ten to fifteen years ago, how delightful the life is—how sociable the undergraduates, how hospitable the dorms . . . they go up only to find disappointment . . . colleges are reluctant to admit them. The English undergraduate accepts any man who is good at games and ready to enter into the university life, but leaves severely alone the man of any nationality who has had no opportunity of learning English games, and who is too shy and sensitive to show what he is worth. <sup>7</sup>

The ship sailed via Aden, crossed the Red Sea and entered the port of Suez, before reaching Marseilles in France. Marseilles had a special attraction for Vinayak as his Italian revolutionary hero, Mazzini, had sought refuge there when he was persecuted. With the help of a local travel guide, he tried to locate the place where Mazzini hid, but it was in vain as no one there had a clue about it. The narrow lanes of the old city had a striking resemblance to Nashik. But it was soon time for him to catch the train and he bid Marseilles goodbye. Little did he know that this French town was something he would revisit under dire circumstances just a few years later.

From Marseilles, Vinayak took a train to Paris and then Calais, crossed the English Channel by boat, arrived at Dover and then took a train to London's Charing Cross. He finally reached London on 3 July 1906. Some residents of Shyamji Krishna Varma's India House were at the station to receive him. On Vinayak's advice, Harnam Singh too decided to join him at India House.

Interestingly, even as he was en route to England, the Special Crime Branch in Poona had sent a report about Vinayak's proposed arrival to London. In a confidential letter dated 14 June 1906, S.W. Wyerley from India wrote to the R. Ritchie of the India Office Crime Branch in London. He added that while 'he is not, of course of any personal importance but holds somewhat the same opinion as Damodar Hari Chapekar who was responsible for the murder of Mr Rand in 1897. In short, he promises to be a firebrand.' <sup>8</sup> The detective agencies in India and England were keeping a keen watch on young Vinayak's every move.



London, July 1906

Vinayak was admitted to The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, commonly known as Gray's Inn, for his legal studies on 26 July 1906. It was one of the four Inns of Court, or professional associations for barristers and judges in London. By 1890, there were at least 200 Indian students in Great Britain, many of whom were studying at the Inns of Court.<sup>9</sup> Apart from Vinayak, Indian students, including Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru travelled to Britain for higher studies. The motivations of Indian students were varied: the prestige that came with an education in Britain, the excitement of being abroad and away from home, and the hope of engaging with 'an English gentleman of good birth and education'<sup>10</sup> at the very heart of the Empire.

Most young men took the same route of sea to England and then trains to their respective university locations. It was most often their first experience outside their country and hence a deeply distressing and confusing one. Finding affordable accommodation and vegetarian food were other problems to grapple with, in addition to homesickness. Thrown into a culture completely alien to their own, many of them formed local associations to provide support to each other and to new incoming students. The Edinburgh Indian Association (EIA), which had nearly 200 members by 1900, and the Cambridge and Oxford Majlis were some such groups. In such a context, Shyamji's initiative of India House as a boarding and community centre for Indian students was all the more important.

It also appears that becoming a barrister in Britain was relatively easy and this made it an attractive proposition for Indian students. As Gandhi writes about his experience of the process through which one earned a place as a barrister:

There were two conditions which had to be fulfilled before a student was formally called to the bar: 'keeping terms', twelve terms equivalent to about three years; and

passing examinations. ‘Keeping terms’ meant eating one’s terms, i.e., attending at least six out of about twenty-four dinners in a term. Eating did not mean actually partaking of the dinner, it meant reporting oneself at the fixed hours and remaining present throughout the dinner. <sup>11</sup>

He also talks about two examinations—one on Roman law, and another on common law—that could be easily passed. The first by ‘scrambling through notes on Roman Law in a couple of weeks, and the Common Law examination by reading notes on the subject in two or three months’. <sup>12</sup> A leisurely schedule such as this was exactly what Vinayak would have sought to further his real intention of going to London.

Even before being admitted to the Inn, Vinayak wrote to the Secretary of State for India on 15 July 1906 about his great curiosity to hear the budget speech in British Parliament scheduled for 20 July and requested for entry passes to the House of Commons. On 18 July, he had to meet Sir William Hutt Curzon Wyllie, a distinguished British officer who was earlier the political aide-de-camp to the Secretary of State, Lord George Hamilton, to collect his passes. Wyllie recounts his meeting with Vinayak, describing him as ‘a small man with an intelligent face and a nervous manner . . . we agree in thinking that there is no objection to his being given the order he asks for’. Entering the heart of the British Empire and its seat of power and to see Parliament in action was a great learning experience for Vinayak.

In the first of many newsletters, known as *Londonchee Batamipatre* , that he sent to India on 17 August 1906, Vinayak talked about the Indian budget being discussed in the British Parliament as merely a documentation of how much money was looted in this financial year and the targets for the following one. ‘Our leaders,’ lamented Vinayak, ‘have been begging for concessions for the last decade. And what did they get yesterday apart from Mr Morley’s <sup>13</sup> crafty speech? Did he not say that the leaders of the Indian National Congress are opium eaters? You misguided folks, when are you going to come to your senses?’ <sup>14</sup>

Through the rest of 1906, he wrote several such newsletters and articles on the need for a national Indian army, mocked the pusillanimity of Congress leaders such as Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjea with his sharp sarcasm, documented the various discussions related to India in British Parliament, and the need for revolution. Keeping himself abreast of the various political movements in London, he noted in his newsletter dated 28 September 1906:

Many people in India are demanding independence, so Sir Henry Cotton <sup>15</sup> calls them extremists. But in England too there is another political movement that can be called 'Extremist.' They recently had a huge meeting in Hyde Park. Large numbers of English women have joined this new movement. They want political rights at par with men (the Suffragette movement). Miss Emmeline Pankhurst spoke at the meeting at Hyde Park. She said, 'We know that pitiable condition of women in England is a result of our political slavery. We want political freedom and men folk to co-operate with us for achieving it. But if they do not give us that freedom, we are quite capable of snatching it from their hands. If we wish we can bring England to a halt within a day and seize our political freedom.' Listen fellow countrymen! An Englishwoman is saying this and we call ourselves moderate Indian men!! Never again should any country grind under slavery. <sup>16</sup>

There were innumerable people of great merit whom Vinayak met during his stay at India House and in London. These known and unknown heroes of the Indian freedom struggle played an important role in Vinayak's life. Among them were Lala Har Dayal, Virendranath Chattopadhyay, Senapati Bapat, V.V.S. Aiyar, M.P.T. Acharya, J.C. Mukherjee, Madan Lal Dhingra, Gyanchand Verma, Bhai Parmanand, Sardar Singh Rana and Madame Bhikaji Cama. They all had a story of struggles and tribulations, and had traversed different journeys before destiny had brought them together in London for a brief while. Their stories and destinies became deeply intertwined with Vinayak's in the years to come.

Lala Har Dayal (1884–1939) was about the same age as Vinayak. Born on 4 October 1884 to an upper-caste Kayastha family in Delhi, he was the youngest of four brothers. He attended Christian mission schools, completed his education at Cambridge Mission School and thereafter

received a bachelor's degree in Sanskrit from St Stephen's College, Delhi. In his youth, he was also a member of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). He then went on to do his master's degree in Sanskrit from Punjab University in Lahore in 1905.<sup>17</sup> He topped his batch at both levels. Even British official accounts stress his several academic achievements: 'Throughout his academic career he has been a scholar of exceptional qualifications always being first in his examinations and scholarships.'<sup>18</sup> As hostile an evaluator as the lieutenant governor of Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who called Har Dayal 'the most sinister figure in the revolutionary movement', made references to his 'brilliant academic career'.<sup>19</sup> His disenchantment with convent education came early and he was later to become one of the loudest voices that called for a Hinduized 'national' education and castigated the missionary attempts of proselytization of Hindu students in Christian institutions.<sup>20</sup> He was deeply influenced by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj. In his Lahore days, he became closely associated with both Bhai Parmanand (1874–1948) and Lala Lajpat Rai.

Parmanand was also pursuing his Master of Arts degree at the Punjab University and was teaching history and political science at the D.A.V. College. In London, during his stay at the India House, the quintessential historian that he was, under Vinayak's guidance, Bhai Parmanand made an intensive research of over an year and a half at the British Museum Library and wrote a thesis on the 'Rise of British Power in India', as part of his MA degree from London University. While his guide at King's College found the thesis compelling, government pressure due to the 'libellous contents' of the thesis resulted in it being rejected. Parmanand returned to Lahore in 1908 to resume teaching, writing and working for the Arya Samaj.

Meanwhile, during his teaching stint at St Stephens College, Har Dayal received a scholarship of £200 for three years and in 1905 joined St John's College, London, to study history. On reaching London, he had to report to Sir Curzon Wyllie and present a choice of an institute of study. Like Shyamji, Har Dayal too became a Boden Scholar at Oxford by 1907. With

no intention to join government service, Har Dayal was committed to the cause of Indian independence, but not through the moderate means advocated by Gokhale and the Congress. Like Vinayak, Har Dayal too drew inspiration from Mazzini, while also admiring the philosophies of Karl Marx and the Russian revolutionary anarchist and founder of collectivist anarchism, Mikhail Bakunin. During his visits to London, Har Dayal stayed at India House and this was where he met Vinayak. About these two it is said:

Savarkar and Har Dayal—the twin souls of Pandit Shyamaji Krishnavarma . . . became the magnetic centre of attraction and activity in the years to come. It was, as it were, the manifestation of thunder and lightning, which, on the one hand, gave an alarming shock to the British Rule, and, on the other, startled the beholders with its brilliance. It may not be said that the two patriots of sterling worth were the products of Shyamaji Krishnavarma, though indeed they were his wards. Lala Lajpat Rai has very clearly stated in his biography. It is almost an affront to the born genius of these two patriots, who were themselves the born devotees of freedom, to say that they were the disciples of Pandit Shyamaji Krishnavarma. <sup>21</sup>

Har Dayal readily joined Abhinav Bharat and took its oath. Immediately after meeting Vinayak, his ‘studies were shelved’ and he ‘walked out of the Oxford University, abandoning English education of the hated race, whose power over India he had pledged to overthrow’, <sup>22</sup> and sacrificing ‘the last installment of his emoluments therefrom, stating that he disapproved of the English system of education in India’. <sup>23</sup> The *Indian Sociologist*’s October 1907 issue commended his example and hoped that ‘the demoralizing effect of the Government of India scholarships, which are offered as a bait to our best men at the Universities, will be perceived by all who wish to see their country rise in the scale of nations’. <sup>24</sup> He returned to India and became renowned for his role as the founder of the Ghadr Party that carried out the task of Indian revolution in America and Canada.

Virendranath Chattopadhyay (1880–1937) was another early convert of Vinayak at India House. Second of eight children of renowned linguist, ex-principal and professor of science at Nizam’s College, Hyderabad, Dr

Aghore Nath Chattopadhyay, Virendra graduated from Calcutta University in 1903. 'Chatto', as his comrades at India House lovingly called him, was the brother of the famous Indian poet and 'nightingale', Sarojini Naidu. He went to England in 1903 to study for the Indian Civil Services (ICS) examinations but failed twice. He then enrolled at Middle Temple Inn to study law. He was very clearly attracted by what could be called the 'underground movement' for the liberation of India. It does not seem like he continued his studies after he became closely associated with Vinayak and the activities at India House. From the library he left behind in Sweden, it is clear that he was a very well-read man, with a vast knowledge of several subjects and languages. To make a living, he worked as a freelance journalist and contributed several articles. Jawaharlal Nehru writes about him in his *Autobiography*:

He was a very able and a very delightful person. He was always hard up, his clothes very much the worse for wear and often he found it difficult to raise the wherewithal for a meal. But his humour and light-heartedness never left him. He had been some years senior to me during my educational days in England. He was at Oxford when I was at Harrow. Since those days he had not returned to India and sometimes a fit of homesickness came to him when he longed to be back. All his home-ties had long been severed and it is quite certain that if he came to India he would feel unhappy and out of joint . . . Chatto was not, I believe, a regular communist, but he was communistically inclined. <sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, it is said that the renowned British playwright and novelist Somerset Maugham fashioned the character and narrative of an Indian revolutionary in a chapter of his short-story collection, *Ashenden: Or the British Agent*, on Virendranath's activities. <sup>26</sup> He made the acquaintance of an Irish girl whom he lived with for about five years at Notting Hill. A Bengali revolutionary, Chandra Chakraberty, who met him in Berlin in 1915 recounts:

Chatto was one of the ablest revolutionaries I have known. Not only he understood international politics, but he had also a good knowledge of food chemistry, which we discussed very often on the dinner table during my stay with him in Berlin. His

relation with the German government was cordial and friendly. He never lowered the national dignity and self-respect as a representative of India.<sup>27</sup>

Panduranga Mahadev Bapat (1880–1967), better known as Senapati or Commander-in-Chief Bapat was born into a Chitpawan Brahmin family like Vinayak's in the Ahmednagar district. After his primary education at his hometown, Parner, he went to study at New English School in Poona. Completing his matriculation in 1899, he secured the coveted Jagannath Shankersheth Scholarship for his proficiency in Sanskrit and joined Deccan College, Poona. Here, he met Damodar Balwant Bhide, who belonged to the Chapekar Club, and who initiated him into the revolutionary path. The politically surcharged atmosphere at Poona shaped young Bapat's nationalist ideas and vision. After completing his BA, he secured the Mangaldas Nathubai Scholarship and proceeded to United Kingdom in 1904 to study at Herriot-Watt College, Edinburgh. He learnt shooting at Queen's Rifles Club of the college. Being politically active and interested, he attended several political meetings of British leaders. During one such meeting he met socialist leader John Dingwall who was a leading member of the Labour Party that sympathized with India's freedom struggle. Bapat made an in-depth study of India's condition under the British and this moved Dingwall deeply.

Bapat began giving bold speeches on the depravity of India's alien rule. In 1906, in his paper 'What shall our Congress do?', he appealed to the Congress leaders to give up their politics of petitions and prayers and resort to agitation politics. This paper cost him his scholarship. Left with no other option, Bapat moved to India House. This is where he met Vinayak in September 1906 and was deeply inspired by him. In 1907, his paper 'India in the year 2007', delivered at Edinburgh, advocated the use of violent means to secure justice and liberation. 'To secure and preserve high ideals,' explained Bapat, 'human killing is perfectly justified.'<sup>28</sup>

Writing about Vinayak's influence on him, Bapat states:

Before I met Savarkar, I had planned a revolutionary pamphleteer and lecturer's life for myself. A few months after I met him, I cancelled my plan and took up the idea of going to Paris for learning bomb-making . . . One chief reason for change of mind was the impression that Savarkar made on me by his brilliant writing and speaking. Here was a born revolutionary, writer, and speaker. I said to myself, I may well leave writing and turn to revolutionary work. <sup>29</sup>

On Vinayak's advice, Bapat, along with Hemchandra Das and Mirza Abbas, went to Paris to learn how to make bombs with the help of his Russian friends. Significantly though, despite his close ties with Vinayak and a perfect alignment of thoughts on the issue of armed revolution, Bapat never became a member of Abhinav Bharat despite several attempts by Vinayak. The reason for this is unclear. <sup>30</sup>

V.V.S. Aiyar (1881–1925), or Varahaneri Venkatesa Subramania Aiyar, was born in the hamlet of Varahaneri in Trichinopoly in the Madras Presidency. His Brahmin father, Venkatesa Aiyar, had a small banking business and a sales and credit society that specialized in the audit of accounts. He was deeply concerned about the virulent propaganda of Christian missionaries and their proselytization efforts and consequently undertook door-to-door canvassing to bring neo-converts back into the Hindu fold. He even approached the venerable Shankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham for permission to reconvert them but failed. Disappointed, Venkatesa Aiyar continued his efforts by word of mouth and through printed leaflets. To combat the rapid loss of culture and reverence for one's faith among Hindu children, he would take them on tours to the famous temples of Tamil Nadu and narrate fascinating tales of their history and mythology. Born into such a Hindu-conscious family, Subramania too was deeply religious. Passing his matriculation in 1895, he ranked fifth in the entire presidency. He attended St Joseph's College at Trichinopoly and in 1899 passed his BA examination meritoriously, standing first in Latin.

After passing a pleader's <sup>31</sup> examination in Madras in 1902, Subramania settled into a comfortable domestic life. That was when his wife's cousin suggested that he take up legal practice in Rangoon (Yangon). Despite the



taboo associated with ‘crossing the seas’, his father allowed young Subramania to leave for Rangoon. In Rangoon, his friend T.S.S. Rajan noticed Subramania’s talents and suggested that he go to London to study and become a barrister, and also offered to finance his travel. Accordingly, he left for London in late 1907. Aiyar’s search for a vegetarian mess in London took him to India House. It was here that Aiyar first met Vinayak. Vinayak describes their first meeting thus:

In 1907, one day the maidservant at the famous India House in London handed a visiting card to us as we came downstairs to dine and told us the gentleman was waiting in the drawing room. Presently, the door was flung open and a gentleman, neatly dressed in European costume and inclined to be fashionable, warmly shook hands with us. He told us he had been a pleader in Rangoon and had come over to England to qualify himself as a full-fledged barrister. He was past thirty and seemed a bit agreeably surprised to find us so young. He assured us of his intention to study English music and even assured us that he was keen to get a few lessons in dancing as well. We, as usual, entered our mild protest against thus dissipating the energy of our youth in light-hearted pastimes when momentous issues hung in the balance. The gentleman, unconvinced, though impressed took our leave promising to continue to call upon us every now and then. He was Shrijut V.V.S. Aiyar. <sup>32</sup>

Vinayak was wrong about Aiyar’s age; he was only twenty-six but looked older because of his sturdy build. Before joining India House, Aiyar was deeply suspicious and resentful of Vinayak and had even said to a few friends: ‘I will have nothing to do with that firebrand.’ <sup>33</sup> But at the Inns of Court, where both of them serendipitously worked together, Aiyar began to realize how wrong his assessment of Vinayak had been. They went on to become lifelong friends. Aiyar soon moved into India House as a permanent lodger and was Vinayak’s second-in-command and trusted confidant. A little later, T.S.S Rajan also left Rangoon for London and joined India House.

M.P. Tirumala Acharya was a Tamil scholar, journalist and patriot. Born in 1887 in Madras, his father M.P. Narasimha Ayyangar was a supervisor in the Public Works Department. His forefathers hailed from Mysore and had migrated to Madras. Coming from a family steeped in patriotic values,

young Tirumala joined hands with the famous Tamil poet and nationalist, Subramania Bharati, to run a weekly journal titled *India*. The patriotic editorials and interesting cartoons—the first in any language in south India—made the newspaper very popular. It also attracted British ire. They decided to arrest Bharati, after which Tirumala Acharya fled to the French territory of Pondicherry. The British government began putting immense pressure on France to ban ‘seditious literature’ and hand over these ‘refugees’.

This marked a turning point in Acharya’s life. To hide his identity, he cut off the pigtail that orthodox Brahmins like him sported, bid an emotional farewell to his ailing father; and in the best interests of the country, decided to leave India. With a small suitcase and merely Rs 300 on him, Tirumala had no idea where to proceed. He first moved to Colombo and from there escaped to England. During the passage, since there was no vegetarian food on board, he kept a fast for twenty-two days. In Paris, he met Moniers Vinson, a professor of Tamil in Paris University who was recommended by a mutual acquaintance as someone who might help him earn a living in the city. But he was sadly mistaken and the professor refused to help. Desperate to find a way to survive in a new city, Acharya met a few Indian patriots whom he was in correspondence with while he co-edited the *India* weekly. They advised him to leave Paris and go to London to seek refuge at Shyamji’s hostel. At India House, Acharya too came under Vinayak’s spell, becoming an ardent follower. He reminisces about his association with Vinayak thus:

His personal charm was such that a mere shake hand could convert men as V.V.S. Aiyar and Har Dayal—not only convert but even bring out the best out of them. Sincere men always became attached to him whether they agreed with or differed from him. Not only men in ordinary walks of life but even those aspiring to high offices, recognized the purity of purpose in him, although they were poles apart from him, and deadly opponents as regards his political objectives. They even opened their purse for his propaganda. That means Savarkar had a rare tact in dealing with men of every variety. Savarkar’s austerity was itself a discipline to others, which easy-going people hated and shunned. England was a country for amusement and most people wanted to make the most of it. <sup>34</sup>

The Bengali ‘Dada’ (elder brother) as he was called, J.C. Mukherjee was an elderly person and wrote regularly for Gandhi’s *Indian Opinion*. After meeting Vinayak, his political thoughts changed and he devoted himself to the revolutionary cause.

Among Vinayak’s closest aides at India House was Madan Lal Dhingra (1883–1909). Madan Lal was born on 18 September 1883 in Amritsar, the sixth of seven sons. His father was a renowned eye specialist and civil surgeon in Amritsar. Two of Madan Lal’s brothers were doctors, while two others were barristers. In 1906, Dhingra went to London to pursue his higher studies—a diploma in civil engineering at University College. Tall, well built and handsome, Dhingra was blithe and jovial and the centre of attraction of young men and women. His friends were as boisterous and often sang romantic songs. Matters of freedom or revolution were the last things on Dhingra’s mind. But he was transformed under Vinayak’s influence. One Sunday afternoon, when Vinayak was delivering a lecture at India House, Dhingra and his friends were creating a ruckus in the adjoining room. An incensed Vinayak barged into Dhingra’s room and gave him an earful about his irresponsible behaviour while millions in his country were dying of slavery. Those harsh words shamed Dhingra so much that he quietly left India House for several days thereafter. After mustering the courage, Dhingra returned to seek Vinayak’s pardon and was further embarrassed when he saw the latter behaving with him as normal as before. He vowed to dedicate himself to the cause of the revolution.

Famously known as the ‘Mother of Indian Revolutionaries’, Madame Bhikaji Rustom K.R. Cama (1861–1936) was one of the high priestesses of Indian nationalism. Her portrait appeared in French papers along with that of Joan of Arc. British intelligence reports state that she ‘was regarded by the Hindus as a reincarnation of some deity, presumably Kali’.<sup>35</sup> Born into a rich Parsi business family in Bombay, Bhikaji was educated at Alexandra Parsi Girls School. Right from her childhood, tales of heroism and the freedom struggle attracted her. Her orientation deeply offended her father, Sorabji Framji Patel, who decided that the best panacea to this was getting her married. So, he chose a handsome young man, Rustom Cama, a lawyer

and a pro-British social worker and son of the famous Orientalist and social reformer, Professor Khurshidji Rostomji Cama. It seemed like the perfect, cultured household that could 'cure' the little girl of her madness for revolution and freedom. On 3 August 1885, their wedding was celebrated with much grandeur. However, Sorabji's strategy failed.

In 1896, when plague broke out in Bombay, Bhikaji wilfully left the comforts of her home and went to slums to serve victims. She had not even been vaccinated and so was afflicted by plague herself. All of this and her frequent dabbling with thoughts of freedom and armed struggle created major rifts in the household. The marriage terminated in 1901 and a thoroughly frustrated Bhikaji decided to leave India for good. Her father wanted to send her to London to convalesce. But Bhikaji had other plans. She plunged into politics straightaway. She stayed in London from 1902 to 1907 and came in contact with Shyamji Krishna Varma. Initially, a proponent of the moderate faction of Congress, she served as Dadabhai Naoroji's private secretary. But she was soon captivated by the story of Mazzini and other revolutionaries and decided to switch sides to support the Lal-Bal-Pal trio of extremists. She was a regular contributor in the *Indian Sociologist*. Her propaganda for the cause of Indian freedom took her to New York in 1907. Staying at Martha Washington Hotel there, Bhikaji, when questioned about her political aim, replied:

*Swaraj*, self-government. No one conceives how we are prosecuted. I could not return to India . . . the most hopeful thing is the enthusiasm that is spreading over our entire people. Starved and uneducated as many of us are, the past few years have shown an increase of millions of patriots. We shall have liberty, fraternity, and equality someday. We hope for freedom within ten years. <sup>36</sup>

Madame Cama became an active member of Abhinav Bharat. She justified her deep faith in armed struggle towards liberating India in these words:

I want to speak on the methods, as I cannot keep quiet. Since such tyranny is going on in our country, so many deportations are cabled everyday, and all peaceful methods are denied to us. Some of you may feel that as a woman I should object to violence. The price of liberty must be paid. Which nation has got it without paying for

it? Hindustanis! Our Revolution is holy. May our country be emancipated speedily. My only hope in life is to see our country free and united. I beg of you young men to march on to the goal of *swaraj* in its right sense. Let the motto be: We are all for 'India for Indians'.<sup>37</sup>

Others in Vinayak's group in London included W.P. Phadke of Bombay who abandoned his plans to write the ICS examinations to join Abhinav Bharat, K.V.R. Swami, Niranjana Pal, Hemchandra Das, Sukhsagar Dutt, Bapu Joshi, M.C. Sinha, Harishchandra Krishnarao Koregaonkar, Hotilal Varma, Mirza Abbas, R.M. Khan of Nabha, Abdullah Suhrawardy who was vice-president of the Home Rule Society, and Sikandar Hayat Khan who later became the prime minister of Punjab.

As is evident from the descriptions of the various characters within and closely associated with India House, and their backgrounds, it was indeed a microcosm of India itself. They were young people from different parts of the country, all highly educated and intelligent, with bright prospective futures; yet they willingly gave up their careers, families and their very lives for the cause of liberating their motherland. And with Vinayak as the group's leader, they were bracing themselves for creating a huge impact in the very heart of the mighty British Empire.

Although there were a few Muslim young men who were part of this group, there are indications that Shyamji and India House were viewed with suspicion in certain Islamic quarters. One of the inmates of India House, Abdullah Suhrawardy, repeatedly received letters from someone called Ziauddin, who was also studying in London, and who later went on to become the vice chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University:

I understand that Mr Krishnavarma has founded a society called 'India Home Rule Society' and you are also one of its vice presidents. Do you really believe that the Mohammedans will be profited if Home Rule be granted to India? . . . There is no doubt that this Home Rule is decidedly against the Aligarh Policy . . . what I call the Aligarh policy is really the policy of all the Mohammedans generally—of the Mohammedans of Upper India particularly.<sup>38</sup>

Despite these apprehensions from various quarters, Vinayak decided to create a version of Abhinav Bharat in England as well in order to organize these young men from different parts of India into a cogent force. The 'Free India Society' was thus formed within India House towards the end of 1906. It held regular meetings, celebrated Indian festivals such as Dussehra, birth and death anniversaries of great Indian leaders and spiritual masters such as Shivaji, Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh and others, and held debates and discussions on the political situation in India and possible solutions. The society's weekly Sunday meetings drew large crowds and were conducted openly. In these meetings, Vinayak delivered masterly speeches on the history of Italy, France and America and their revolutionary movements. He would often point out that 'peaceful evolution had a meaning and a sense, peaceful revolution had neither'.<sup>39</sup> With forceful and erudite arguments he managed to convince even those who disagreed with him.

Many young men were influenced and would soon enrol into the society. Vinayak would carefully assess them and only those whom he found suitable were included in Abhinav Bharat's core group. Several Indian students from 'Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburg, Manchester and other centres of education were rapidly brought under the influence of the revolutionary tenets'.<sup>40</sup> Gyanchand Verma, a law student who came from a poor family background in India, became the secretary of the Free India Society. On 29 December 1908, Guru Gobind Singh's anniversary celebration at Caxton Hall was a spectacular performance with numerous stalwarts such as Vinayak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal attending and delivering passionate speeches.

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Right from childhood, the life and struggles of Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72) had influenced Vinayak. Instead of positing his revolutionary thoughts within Marxist ideology, Vinayak made Mazzini his role model. It was Mazzini's efforts that had created a unified

Italy in 1861 from a conglomerate of disparate states ruled by the Austrian Empire. Mazzini's interactions with fellow revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–82) were significant for Vinayak in his understanding of warfare. Returning from exile in Brazil and Uruguay, Garibaldi formed an alliance with Mazzini to fight with the kingdom of Sardinia against the Austrian Empire. Despite these efforts, the imperial rule did not end in Italy, till later wars finally led to its liberation and unification.

Vinayak's Mitra Mela and Abhinav Bharat were modelled on Mazzini's idea of 'Young Italy' and his modus operandi as perfect templates for the Indian struggle for liberation. Several Indian nationalists were influenced by Mazzini, including Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, S.M. Paranjpe, Surendranath Banerjea and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.<sup>41</sup> They had written critiques or given lectures on the Italian's political philosophy. But many stopped short of incorporating his revolutionary or violent zeal. As Banerjea points out in his autobiography:

I lectured upon Mazzini but took care to tell the young men to abjure his revolutionary ideas and to adopt his spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the path of constitutional development . . . Mazzini's tactics will be disastrous in our country. Our efforts must be legal, constitutional and absolutely peaceful.<sup>42</sup>

But Vinayak had no such qualms. Mazzini and his revolutionary ideas formed a regular feature of the Free India Society lectures. The details of how Mazzini 'induced Italian soldiers employed by Austrian rulers to join in the freedom struggle, how he took help from various princely states in Italy to liberate his country'<sup>43</sup> seemed the perfect prescription for Indians yearning for freedom. There were undoubtedly sceptics who wondered how a prototype of an advanced European country like Italy, whose people and princely states craved for freedom and who had ample supply of arms, could be replicated in India. They felt that suggestions of a similar armed struggle in India were impractical, laughable and even suicidal. To these, Vinayak would respond:

The arms being borne by Indian soldiers under the British command are our arms. True, our Indian soldiers are illiterate, but they too must have some desire to make our country independent. Spread the fire of movement for freedom among them and see how the same soldiers turn against the English with the same arms and ammunitions!

44

Within barely a week of his arrival at India House, a restless Vinayak approached the manager, Mr Mukherjee, with a query of whether the library had Mazzini's autobiography (*Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini*) and articles.<sup>45</sup> After finding just one volume, he managed to procure three of the six volumes. Vinayak felt as though some secret treasure had been unearthed. In just a week, he read the three volumes. Impressed by his dedication, Mukherjee managed to get him the missing volumes from elsewhere. Towards the end of the study, Vinayak realized the remarkable similarity in the thought and approach proposed by Mazzini and his own efforts in India. This bolstered his confidence that his method was right after all. He writes:

Secret societies must work on two fronts: Propaganda and Action. Some work has to be done in secret and some in the open. It is impossible to regain independence without resorting to force of arms. However, it is also essential to carry out propaganda by peaceful means to prepare the masses for their part in the revolution. It is essential to join forces with the enemies of Britain in Asia and Europe and sympathetic elements in America. Guerrilla tactics must be used to attack British sources of power, its centres, its officers; individually and in groups, to induce Indians employed by British such as soldiers to rise in revolt, to rise whenever there was a war between Britain and other foreign power, to carry out revolutionary activities one after the other—that was my plan of action. And I used to argue my case in open but still keeping within the legal limits. I was surprised to find that Mazzini had followed the same path for liberation of his country . . . I realized that if my friends and followers were to read Mazzini's articles that will increase their faith in our methods enormously. In 1906, I and my colleagues in Abhinav Bharat were hardly twenty to twenty-two years of age. Our leaders, both Moderates and Militants dismissed our activities as 'childish'. They were the leaders of our society at that time. But then Mazzini and his fellow revolutionaries were similarly ridiculed as 'childish' and 'absurd' by contemporary elders in Italian society in 1830s. Mazzini had replied to such ridicule in his articles. The funny thing was that in 1906 persons like Mazzini and Garibaldi were regarded as 'great patriots' by Indian leaders without realizing that in their days Mazzini and Garibaldi too were being branded as 'foolhardy' and



‘childish’. Mazzini’s articles were going to make firm our plans of action and induce faith among people of India in our methods. <sup>46</sup>

It was with this intention that Vinayak resolved to translate Mazzini’s autobiography into Marathi. His idea was not to merely write a widely read historical account but to inspire fellow Indians to emulate Mazzini’s path. He therefore decided to add a preface to demonstrate the parallels between India and Italy, and how Mazzini’s strategy could be customized and followed by Indian revolutionaries. Fired with this zeal, in a record two-and-half months since his arrival in London, by 28 September 1906, Vinayak managed to complete the translation titled *Joseph Mazzini yanche Atmacharitra va Rajkaran* (Politics and Autobiography of Joseph Mazzini). It had nine selected essays that ran into nearly 300 pages. The preface itself was about twenty-five pages long. In the introduction, Vinayak emphasized the importance of kartavya (duty) to Mazzini’s political philosophy. The sense of duty remained an important aspect of Vinayak’s political philosophy all his life.

Referring to the uprising of 1848 in Italy, Vinayak implored Indians to consider their own experiences in the 1857 uprising. He opines that although the Italian revolution led by Mazzini was unsuccessful in reaching its objectives it must not be construed as a failure; Indians must learn from their mistakes and carry on a relentless war in India against the British Empire. He refers to the resolve of the Italians that freedom was not to be got through begging. Hence, looking at the examples of other European nations, they decided to take recourse to secret societies where men were trained for revolution. The lack of arms did not deter Italy, wrote Vinayak. Instead, young Italians went to Spain, America, Germany, Poland and other countries to smuggle arms and also learn the art of war. In his preface, Vinayak mentions how arms managed to cross borders and enter the country as a result of widespread disaffection in the army and by administering the oath of Young Italy to many soldiers. A lot of what he wrote in the preface had less to do with Mazzini or Italy but was a clear strategy of action for India and her revolutionaries. It was masked in such

coded language that no one could point a finger at him for inciting sedition against the British government. The readers too were smart enough to catch the author's message.

Publishing the book was no easy task. Vinayak turned to his elder brother Babarao back home for support. He sent him the manuscript in October 1906. By then, Babarao and his activities in Abhinav Bharat in Nashik had already caught the attention of the local police. He had been detained during a Dussehra procession for his loud slogans of *Vande Mataram*, and for roughing up policemen who objected to such 'calls of sedition'. He was questioned till late in the night and the following day nearly 200 people, including Babarao and the youngest brother Narayan, were arrested. Ironically, many of them were not even present in Nashik during the said incident; this was a clear pretext to intimidate the members of Abhinav Bharat. A year-long trial before the first class magistrate of Malegaon division, W. Plunkett, was held in different parts of Nashik district. This soon became famous as the 'Vande Mataram Trial case'. While Narayan and a few others were acquitted in the judgment delivered on 8 May 1907, the rest were convicted under Section 332 of the IPC. Abhinav Bharat and Babarao were clearly on the radar of the intelligence agencies.

Despite this, Babarao got the manuscript that Vinayak sent him from London printed. Vinayak had dedicated the book to his two mentors—Tilak and S.M. Paranjpe. Babarao thought it prudent to show a copy of the manuscript to Tilak for his suggestions. Tilak was alarmed by its explosive content and warned Babarao that while he had no objection to what he wished to do with it, he would advise caution since it was dangerous to publish such a book. But Babarao was undaunted. It was a difficult task to find a printer. But with the help of some Abhinav Bharat members who had influence with the printing press of the newspaper *Jagadahitechchhu*, by June 1907, 2000 copies of the book were printed.

In order to avoid police scrutiny, Babarao had already published a series of other books under the name of *Laghu Abhinav Bharat Mala* (small books and pamphlets), Vinayak's ballads *Singhadacha Powada* and *Baji*

*Prabhucha Powada* and Govind Kavi's ballad on the assassination of Afzal Khan by Shivaji. A new publication series titled *Thorali Abhinav Bharat Mala* (books and biography series) was started and the first book to be released was the Mazzini biography, priced at Rs 1.50. Within a month, the entire first print was sold out, and many asked for advance pre-orders even before the second edition could be printed. This was an indication of the public sentiment and its inclination to read both Vinayak's writings, as well as the biography of a distant, largely unknown European revolutionary. People read the book in groups and at Abhinav Bharat meetings in different cities and towns. The *Kal* gave the book a rousing review:

Patriot Savarkar is well known to Marathi readers. His enthusiasm, fierce patriotism, superb articles and oratory have made him well known. Having passed his BA examination from Bombay University he had recently left for England to study to become a Barrister. Though he has gone abroad, he has not forgotten his country, his people and his language for one moment. It is persons like him who should be going abroad. The large buildings, big factories and enormous wealth of England, did not impress him; but he has been all the time thinking of uplifting our country from slavery and to progress it to the level of advanced countries . . . Savarkar has written this book in Marathi, while staying in London, the heart of the English language. This is probably the first literary work, which was written in London for the benefit of our people. There is a wonderful confluence of three—Mazzini's articles devoted to the goddess of freedom, its translation by Savarkar in the free atmosphere of England, and the anxious readers in Maharashtra. This is bound to relieve us from all the pain. These articles by Mazzini are streams of nectar. Like the Mantras of Vedas, they have tremendous power . . . One cannot thank Savarkar enough for making these articles available. Those who can read must study such works of literature. Those who cannot read can still benefit, if someone reads it out for them. <sup>47</sup>

With advertisements of the second edition of the book coming out, the authorities were alerted. The government had an option of confiscating the book and also prosecuting the author and publisher for sedition. But Vinayak had taken extreme care to ensure that no law of the land was broken. He had simply translated Mazzini's thoughts and nowhere had he propagated rebellion against the British Empire in India. In a confidential

note regarding the book, E.B. Raikes, the advocate general for the judicial department, Government of Bombay, wrote:

On the summary before me I have no doubt that the Preface [introduction] was written with a directly seditious intention and that almost every native of this country who reads it will know this, but at the same time it is very difficult to point to a single line of it which can be said to be directed against the British Government . . . A regular attempt is being made to preach sedition under the guise of teaching historical lessons in this and many other articles . . . I cannot, however, advise that such a prosecution is certain of success . . . I incline to think that if the accused person were skilfully defended, he would have a good chance of getting off. <sup>48</sup>

Thus, knowing that the case would fail in a court of law, the government decided to proscribe the book in July 1907. Extensive searches were conducted in homes and shops to confiscate copies. People hid their copies in compartments and recesses of old walls that were later bricked and plastered over. Any person found possessing a copy of the book was presumed a revolutionary and automatically came under surveillance. It was only forty years later, in 1946, that the ban on the book was lifted, and Vinayak presided over an official release of the second edition.

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Meanwhile, in October 1906, there was an interesting encounter between two individuals in London. They were to be political rivals for several decades thereafter, and their respective ideologies were to divide Indian polity irrevocably. This was when Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi came calling to India House and met Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

In 1893, Gandhi had gone to South Africa as a young twenty-four-year-old lawyer. He was there on a temporary assignment, to settle a commercial dispute for an Indian trader. A year after his arrival, the court ruled in favour of his client. Just when he was preparing to return to India, a group of Indian merchants requested him to stay on and fight a bill before the Natal Assembly, a British colony, seeking to remove Indians from the voters' list. Within a month, more than 10,000 signatures had

been gathered and presented to the colonial secretary, Lord Ripon. The bill was temporarily set aside, but eventually passed as law in 1896, disqualifying voters of non-European origin. These events serendipitously catapulted Gandhi into the role of an unofficial campaigner for the rights of the disenfranchised.

While Shyamji was aware and appreciative of Gandhi's work, he was deeply critical of the latter's role in the Anglo-Boer War. The war broke out in 1899 between the British Empire and the Boers of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The Boers, or Afrikaners, were the descendants of original Dutch settlers of southern Africa. Following skirmishes with the British, they moved away to form their own independent republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. They lived peacefully with the British colonizers in their neighbourhood, till the discovery of diamonds and gold in the region aroused British avarice. The Boers offered a rigorous resistance to the British colonists in Natal and Cape Colony. Indians too were called upon to take sides. While Gandhi mentions that his 'personal sympathies were all with the Boers', his 'loyalty to the British rule' drove him 'to participation with the British in that war'. His argument was:

I felt that, if I demanded rights as a British citizen, it was also my duty as such, to participate in the defence of the British Empire. I held then that India could achieve her complete emancipation only within and through the British Empire. So I collected to gather as many comrades as possible, and with very great difficulty got their services accepted as an ambulance corps. <sup>49</sup>

More than 500 Indians had signed up for the Indian Ambulance Corps and attended the wounded British soldiers at Spioenkop in Natal. Gandhi and others received war medals for their chivalry and loyalty to the Queen. In June 1903, Gandhi began a weekly called *Indian Opinion*—originating in four languages (English, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil)—as a mouthpiece for the Indian community.

Despite his own non-confrontationist attitude with the British, Shyamji was critical of the support that Gandhi and the Indians gave to the British against the native Boers. Some of Gandhi's critical and racist comments

against the ‘blacks’ of Africa too drew the ire of the *Indian Sociologist* . Addressing the native Africans by a derogatory term ‘*Kaffir*’, Gandhi had demanded separate entrances for whites and blacks at the Durban post office and had objected to Indians being classed with the South African black natives. In Gandhi’s own words:

Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw *Kaffir* whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness<sup>50</sup> . . . *Kaffirs* are as a rule uncivilized . . . they are troublesome, very dirty, and live almost like animals.<sup>51</sup>

Just before Gandhi’s visit to India House in 1906, the Bambatha Rebellion was spearheaded by the Zulus protesting against unjust British taxes after the Boer War. Thousands of Zulus were ruthlessly massacred and several injured. Here too Gandhi supported the British and requested them to recruit Indians in the British army fighting against the Zulus. In the July 1906 issue of the *Indian Sociologist*, Gandhi was bitterly criticized for his role in aiding the suppression and massacre of the Zulu rebels.

It was against this strained background with Shyamji on political ideology that Gandhi visited India House on 20 October 1906. Writing about Shyamji, Gandhi says:

He has founded India House at his own cost. Any Indian student is allowed to stay there against a very small weekly payment. All Indians, whether Hindus, Muslims or others can and do stay there. There is full freedom for everyone in the matter of food and drink. Being situated in fine surroundings, the place has a very good atmosphere. On the first day of our arrival, both Mr Ally and I went to stay at India House, and we were very well looked after. But as our work requires our getting in touch with important people and as India House is rather remote, we have been obliged to come and live at his Hotel at great expense.<sup>52</sup>

While no record is extant of an exclusive meeting or the experiences that Vinayak and Gandhi had at the latter’s short stay at India House, Harindra

Srivastava quotes an anecdote narrated to him by an eyewitness, Pandit Parmanandaji of Jhansi, a veteran freedom fighter. Vinayak was busy cooking his meal when Gandhi joined him to engage in a political discussion. Cutting him short, Vinayak asked him to first eat a meal with them. Gandhi was horrified to see the Chitpawan Brahmin cooking prawns, and being a staunch vegetarian refused to partake. Vinayak had apparently mocked him and retorted: ‘Well, if you cannot eat with us, how on earth are you going to work with us? Moreover . . . this is just boiled fish . . . while we want people who are ready to eat the British alive.’<sup>53</sup> This was obviously not a great first meeting and their differences only widened with time.

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The history of the Sikhs also intrigued Vinayak. He learnt the Gurumukhi script and read almost all Sikh religious books and original writings, including the *Adi Granth*, the *Panth Prakash*, the *Surya Prakash*, *Vichitra Natak* and other works by the revered gurus of the Sikh pantheon. He distilled these writings and issued several pamphlets including a famous ‘Khalsa’ series that created quite an impact on the Sikhs both within and outside India, arousing a sense of nationalism in them. He also issued a pamphlet under the series, with a clarion call to the Sikhs to abandon the British Indian Army, or at the very least assist the Indian freedom struggle. Sikhs made up an important 20 per cent of the Indian Army in the early part of the twentieth century. Appealing to their sentiments through the name of the army, the Khalsa, that their tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, had formed to fight the Mughals, was thus an important strategy. The British government sought an urgent interception and ban on the pamphlets under the India Post Act.<sup>54</sup>

Scotland Yard wired messages to inform the Criminal Intelligence Department in India that a considerable number of pamphlets had been posted to India to be carried in native newspapers.

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Soon after completing Mazzini's biography, Vinayak was keen on writing about the Indian uprising of 1857. It was the first widespread revolutionary movement across most of British India that shook the foundations of the East India Company. The helpful India House manager, Mr Mukherjee, brought him a book, *The History of the Indian Mutiny* by Sir John William Kaye. Much to his disappointment, Vinayak found that there was hardly any detailed mention of the various tumultuous events of 1857 or its protagonists such as Mangal Pandey, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Nana Saheb, Tatyá Tope, Maulvi Ahmed Shah or Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. Later, he realized that like Mazzini's writings this too was a six-volume epic that combined Kaye's *History of the Sepoy War* in India with the writings of Colonel George Malleison to produce this elaborate treatise in 1890. The vindictive nature of the accounts documented from a British viewpoint was obviously offensive to Vinayak.

He decided to research the story himself and sought Mukherjee's help. The latter took him to the India Office that controlled the affairs of India from London, which had a library with exhaustive resources, private papers and correspondences.<sup>55</sup> The library was located inside the office of the Secretary of State for India and needed special permission for entry and access. Through Mukherjee's contacts, Vinayak managed to get a reader pass to the library. He humoured the librarian who loved to shower invectives against the treacherous Indian sepoys for their massacres of 1857 to gain his confidence and get as many secret files as possible. His research carried on for months. He read the works on 1857 of several British historians, army generals and scholars such as Sir Edwin Arnold, Dr Alexander Duff, Sir James Hope Grant, Meadows Taylor, Sir George Traveyan and others.<sup>56</sup> Vinayak noted that all the sources of his book were based on the works of English authors, for whom 'it must have been impossible to paint the account of the other side as elaborately and as faithfully as they have done their own'.<sup>57</sup>

Even as the research for this book was under way, a new development was taking place in London. The first day of May was commemorated in Britain as a day of thanksgiving for the sacrifices of the British soldiers



and officers who were martyred in the 1857 ‘mutiny’. In 1907, this day held an added significance, as it was the Golden Jubilee year. Leading London newspapers carried prominent headlines to mark this occasion. The *Daily Telegraph* flashed its headline on 6 May 1907: ‘Fifty Years ago, this week, an Empire saved by deeds of heroism.’ Plays, lectures, editorials and articles were organized and written by the British that portrayed the Indian mutineers as marauders and ruffians. Memoirs and reminiscences of some of the survivors or the kith and kin of those killed in India in 1857 were published. Services were held at various churches and public places. A big congregation at Christ Church on London’s Victoria Street recalled the ‘martyrdom’ of the founder of the Delhi Mission, Reverend Midgley John Jennings. Since it was presided over by the master of Trinity College of Cambridge, the Reverend Dr Butler, a resolution was passed that ‘Cambridge amid so many appeals to intellectual ambition, so many temptations to ignore the spiritual and unseen, might never forget what one owed to Jesus Christ, nor neglect his “other sheep” who were not of the Christian or European fold’.<sup>58</sup>

There were also reassurances given on behalf of several British officials that the ‘mutiny’ was merely an aberration and such a disaster would never recur. None less than Sir Henry Cotton, one of the pioneering members of the INC and president of its 1904 Bombay Session said:

There is no real danger of any general outbreak consequent on the present unrest in India. The people of India are disarmed, and it is needless to add that there is no organization amongst them, which could lead to any such general uprising. The 1857 Mutiny was only a mutiny of Sepoys who were armed. We have now only a very small number of Sepoys and a very large number of British troops. There is thus not the smallest reason for any panic. But there is every reason for a wise and careful inquiry into all the circumstances, which have led to the unrest, and the mere fact of that inquiry being undertaken would have a most beneficial effect.<sup>59</sup>

The youngsters at India House were witnessing all these happenings in and around London and were unwilling to take this lying down. Under Vinayak’s leadership they decided to put up a grand counter-celebration to

honour the Indian martyrs of 1857. It is noteworthy that no political party or groups back in India organized any commemoration of such an important milestone of the nation's past and the task was left to a few young students in distant London. India House was grandly decorated with festoons, bouquets, flowers and arches. Portraits of the heroes and heroines of 1857 were hung on stage. The invitation to the event is published in Mukund Sonpatki's book *Daryapar* : 'Under the auspices of the Free India League it is decided to commemorate the golden jubilee of the patriotic rising of 1857. The meeting is to be held on Saturday, 11th of May, the day of the declaration of Independence.' <sup>60</sup>

More than 200 people attended the event at India House, even as a parallel event was also held at Shyamji's brother-in-law Nitin Sen Dwarkadas's house (known as Tilak House) in Acton. In a stirring speech evocatively titled 'O! Martyrs!', Vinayak asserted that one should stop calling the 1857 episode a 'mutiny' or 'uprising', and instead use the nomenclature 'First War of Indian Independence'. It was a rehearsal of sorts for a permanent war in India that would not rest till it witnessed a complete overthrow of the Empire. He roared:

Today is the 10th of May! It was on this day that, in the ever memorable year of 1857, the first campaign of the War of Independence was opened by you, Oh Martyrs, on the battlefield of India . . . all honour be to you, Oh Martyrs; for it was for the preservation of the honour of the race that you performed the fiery ordeal of a revolution . . . this day . . . we dedicate, Oh Martyrs, to your inspiring memory! It was on this day that you raised a new flag to be upheld, you uttered a mission to be fulfilled, you saw a mission to be realized . . . We take up your cry, we revere your flag, we are determined to continue that fiery mission of 'away with the foreigner', which you uttered, amidst the prophetic thunderings of the Revolutionary war. Revolutionary, yes, it was a Revolutionary war . . . No, a revolutionary war knows no truce, save liberty or death! Indians, these words must be fulfilled! Your blood, oh Martyrs, shall be avenged! . . . For the War of 1857 shall not cease till the revolution arrives, striking slavery into dust, elevating liberty to the throne. Whenever a people arises for its freedom, whenever that seed of liberty gets germinated in the blood of its fathers, whenever there remains at least one true son to avenge that blood of his fathers, there never can be an end to such a war as this. <sup>61</sup>

Vinayak designed small medallions with the words ‘In Memory of the Martyrs of 1857’ and ‘Bande Mataram’ displayed prominently, which had to be worn by all the Indian students of India House. Harnam Singh and another student at Cirencester, Rafiq Mohamed of Nabha, wore these medallions to college. The horrified professors ordered them to remove them. This led to a confrontation between Harnam and the principal of the college—something that was picked up by the London newspapers and subsequently the India Office. Harnam was expelled from college but he was feted with a hero’s welcome when he came to London to visit his comrades at India House. Rafiq Mohamed too faced expulsion and several others lost their scholarships. Mohamed, however, apologized to the principal, was re-enrolled and struck off the surveillance list by the India Office. <sup>62</sup>

As news of the India House celebrations and Vinayak’s speeches started appearing in newspapers, the intelligence agencies of Scotland Yard became extra cautious. A few pages of Vinayak’s manuscript on 1857 were smuggled out through a treacherous mole planted by the agencies at India House. Vinayak’s reader pass was cancelled and his entry into the library was subsequently debarred. But luckily for Vinayak most of the research for the book had already been completed by then. A few references to the quotations needed to be cross-verified. V.V.S. Aiyar was given the task and he managed to complete it successfully.

The title of Vinayak’s book, *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* (the Marathi title was *Atharashche Sattavanche Swatantra Samar*), was captivating because it gave status to the historical event hitherto despised as a ‘mutiny’. Vinayak says that he began his journey with the investigative mind of a historian, scanning all the documents of that era only to find to his utter surprise the brilliance of a war of independence shining in the mutiny of 1857. Quite dramatically, he states: ‘. . . the spirits of the dead seemed hallowed by martyrdom, and out of the heap of ashes sprung forth the sparks of a glorious inspiration.’ <sup>63</sup> In the introductory chapter, Vinayak focuses on the principles of great religious

and political revolutions, such as in France or Holland. But to clarify the point with regard to the Indian context, he writes:

Every revolution must have a fundamental principle . . . A revolutionary movement cannot be based on a flimsy and momentary grievance. It is always due to some all-moving principle for which hundreds and thousands of men fight . . . The moving spirits of revolutions are deemed holy or unholy in proportion as the principle underlying them is beneficial or wicked . . . In history, the deeds of an individual or nation are judged by the character of the motive . . . To write a full history of a revolution means necessarily the tracing of all the events of that revolution back to their source—the motive. <sup>64</sup>

Vinayak argued that the general historiography of 1857, largely written by Western scholars, failed to acknowledge or appreciate the true reason for its outbreak. Most historians had also adopted methodologies that neglected ‘native’ voices. According to Vinayak, the common attribution to the greased cartridges layered with the lard of beef and pork was too simplistic. To keep harping on these ‘temporary’ or ‘accidental’ causes of the war was to completely ignore the ‘real spirit’ of the revolution. He writes about the English historians:

Some of them have not made any attempt beyond merely describing the events, but most of them have written the history in a wicked and partial spirit. Their prejudiced eye could not or would not see the root principle of that Revolution. Is it possible, can any sane man maintain, that that all-embracing Revolution could have taken place without a principle to move it? Could that vast tidal wave from Peshawar to Calcutta have risen in flood without a fixed intention of drowning something by means of its force? Could it be possible that the sieges of Delhi, the massacres of Cawnpore, the banner of the Empire, heroes dying for it, could it ever be possible that such noble and inspiring deeds have happened without a noble and inspiring end? Even a small village market does not take place without an end, a motive; how, then, can we believe that that great market opened and closed without any purpose—the great market whose shops were on every battle field from Peshawar to Calcutta, where kingdoms and empires were being exchanged, and where the only current coin was blood? <sup>65</sup>

The two cornerstones for the war, he postulated, were swaraj and swadharma—love for one’s country and one’s religion. These were the

guiding principles for all revolution, in India or elsewhere. He quotes the proclamations of the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar exhorting fellow Hindus and Muslims alike to arise and fight to protect their lands and faith. Vinayak traces the same trajectory for revolutions elsewhere, including the one in Italy under Mazzini. His conceptualization of revolution and its causes is thus at variance with the general Marxist hypothesis.

Having thus laid out his thesis on the principles guiding a revolution, Vinayak forcefully argues that the histories of revolutionary wars need to be written as part of a nation's strategy. His book was an attempt to do precisely that and present a correct analysis of the 'war', not a 'mutiny'. He repeatedly mentions that the motive behind writing the book was to instil a burning desire among his countrymen to wage a well-planned armed struggle against foreign rule. He expected this historical account to also place before the revolutionaries an outline of a programme, plan of action and organization to achieve that end. There are delightful and dramatic pen pictures and anecdotes of Lakshmi Bai, Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope, Bahadur Shah Zafar, Mangal Pandey, Maulvi Ahmed Shah, Kumar Singh, Rana Amar Singh, Begum Hazrat Mahal and others. From Delhi, Ayodhya, Kanpur, Bihar and Jhansi to Benares, Rohilkhand, Allahabad, Meerut, Aligarh, Lucknow and Oudh, the narrative traverses the entire spread of the revolution. The book is rich in historical details, citation of sources and has a narrative flourish to it. He credits the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar for providing the movement a symbolic leadership and that it was in the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audiences at the Red Fort) of Delhi that the seeds of revolution began to take root. Sympathizing with the Mughal plight, he writes:

The English had not stopped at merely taking away the Padshahi of the Padshah of Delhi, but had recently decided even to take away the title of Padshah from the descendants of Babar. The Emperor, though reduced to such an extremity, and Zinat Mahal, the beloved, clever, and determined Begum of the Emperor, had already decided that this last opportunity of regaining the lost glory should not be allowed to

go by, and if dying was the only resource, then they should die the death which would only befit an Emperor and an Empress. <sup>66</sup>

Agreeing with Nana Saheb's belief, Vinayak also suggests that the 1857 movement was one that brought Hindus and Muslims together; that Hindustan was 'thereafter the united nation of the adherents of Islam as well as Hinduism'. <sup>67</sup> The animosity between the two communities, he explains, was necessitated in the past when the Muslims were aggressive invaders and rulers and the Hindus the submissive ruled. But now, both of them had a common enemy in the British who threatened both their regime and religion. Hence that antagonism of the past was buried and common cause was made. Thus, to protect their respective swadharmas and swaraj, it was necessary for Hindus and Muslims to join hands. Elaborating on this point, he states:

As long as the Mahomedans lived in India in the capacity of the alien rulers, so long to be willing to live with them like brothers was to acknowledge national weakness. Hence it was, up to then, necessary for the Hindus to consider the Mahomedans as foreigners. And moreover this rulership of the Mahomedans, Guru Govind in the Panjab, Rana Pratap in Rajputana, Chhatrasal in Bundelkhand, and the Maharattas by even sitting upon the throne at Delhi, had destroyed; and, after a struggle of centuries, Hindu sovereignty had defeated the rulership of the Mahomedans and had come to its own all over India. It was no national shame to join hands with Mahomedans then, but it would, on the contrary, be an act of generosity. So, now, the original antagonism between the Hindus and the Mahomedans might be consigned to the past. Their present relation was one not of rulers and ruled, foreigner and native, but simply that of brothers with the one difference between them of religion alone. For, they were both children of the soil of Hindusthan. Their names were different, but they were all children of the same Mother; India therefore being the common mother of these two, they were brothers by blood. Nana Sahib, Bahadur Shah of Delhi, Moulvi Ahmad Shah, Khan Bahadur Khan, and other leaders of 1857 felt this relationship to some extent and, so, gathered round the flag of *Swadesh* leaving aside their enmity, now so unreasonable and stupid. In short, the broad feature of the policy of Nana Sahib and Azimullah were that the Hindus and the Mahomedans should unite and fight shoulder to shoulder for the independence of their country and that, when freedom was gained, the United States of India should be formed under the Indian rulers and princes. <sup>68</sup>

He even praised the spirit of *'jehad'* that 'the great and saintly' Maulvi Ahmed Shah had so cleverly woven through every corner of Lucknow and Agra. Delhi was liberated on 11 May 1857 and by 16 May all remnants of British rule were erased, and Zafar was declared the emperor of India. Celebrating this momentous episode, Vinayak writes: 'The five days during which Hindus and Mahomedans proclaimed that India was their country and they were all brethren, the days when Hindus and Mahomedans unanimously raised the flag of national freedom at Delhi. Be those grand days ever memorable in the history of Hindusthan.' <sup>69</sup>

He emphasized how the event had helped unite Indians against all divisions of caste, creed, religion and region. It was this unity and sense of national identity that he wanted to tap into and mobilize yet again for a unified struggle against British tyranny.

Not one individual, not one class, alone had been moved deeply by seeing the sufferings of their country. Hindu and Mahomedan, Brahmin and Sudra, Kshatriya and Vaishya, prince and pauper, men and women, Pandits and Moulvies, sepoy and the police, townsmen and villagers, merchants and farmers—men of different religions, men of different castes, people following widely different professions—not able any longer to bear the sight of the persecution of the Mother, brought about the avenging Revolution in an incredibly short time. <sup>70</sup>

The book ends on a note of both poignancy and optimism in which he describes a scene in the Delhi Durbar of the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar:

During the heat of the Revolution he (Zafar) composed a *Ghazal*. Someone asked him:

*Dumdumay mein dam nahin khair maango jaanki  
Ai Zafar thandi hui shamsher Hindusthanki.*

(Now that, every moment, you are becoming weaker  
pray for your life [to the English]  
for, Oh! Emperor, the sword of India is now broken forever!)

The Emperor replied:

*Ghazion mein bu rahegi jab talak iman ki  
Tab toh London tak chalegi teg Hindustan ki.*

(As long as there remains the least trace of love of faith in the hearts of our heroes  
so long, the sword of Hindustan shall remain sharp  
and one day shall flash even at the gates of London.) <sup>71</sup>

For Vinayak the historical legacy of India was an important aspect of all his writings. History was a tool that served to propagate a particular reading, and evocation, of Indian national identity from time immemorial. He hoped that a historically enlightened Indian would identify with a sense of national pride and move forward, just as the revolutionaries in America (1776), France (1789) and Italy (1848–49) had done.

Just like the Mazzini biography, this book too had a tortuous route to publication and sale. The journey of the book towards its publication is as fascinating as its contents and the research that went into it. In fact, it created a literary history of sorts by being the first book to be proscribed even before it was published. By 1907, the British government had enough suspicions about the activities at India House and had planted several moles there to get regular feedback. As mentioned earlier, a few chapters of Vinayak's book on 1857, which were in Marathi, were found missing from the House. They found their way to the British Intelligence Headquarters at Scotland Yard. Yet Vinayak and his associates in Abhinav Bharat managed to smuggle the manuscript out of London and dispatched it to India, foiling the strict customs vigilance at Indian ports.

Babarao tried his best to find a printer, but no one dared to take the risk. Mr Limaye of Solapur, editor of the weekly *Swaraj*, agreed to print it. But the authorities got wind of it and with the threat of an impending raid looming large, Limaye backed out. Simultaneous raids took place at several prominent printing houses across Maharashtra. Finding it impossible to get the book printed in India, Babarao sent the manuscript to Paris. Here too, as Vinayak noted, 'the French detectives were working hand in hand with the British Police to suppress the . . . revolutionary



activities in France; and under their threat even a French printer could not be found ready to run the risk of printing this history'.<sup>72</sup>

Thereafter, it was decided that the book should be printed in Germany. Since Germany was a seat of Indology and Sanskrit learning, it might have the Devanagari script. However, the compositors there were totally ignorant about Marathi and did a shoddy job. In London, a few Abhinav Bharat members—Koregaonkar, Phadke and Kunte—decided to translate the book into English, under the supervision of V.V.S. Aiyar, to enable a wider readership. Once again, they tried to publish the translated version and the original in France and Germany but met with little success as both countries did not want to offend Britain. The German publisher showed the manuscript to his lawyer who warned him that his 'business would be ruined if the firm is known to undertake such works'.<sup>73</sup> Finally, the manuscripts made their way to Holland where a printing press was convinced to publish it. The revolutionaries spread rumours that the book was being printed in France in order to hoodwink and distract the British intelligence and police. The book was finally printed and was ready for distribution.

The British intelligence carried reports about the book, and the viceroy, Lord Minto, sent back a terse message on 14 December 1908: 'I hope we can stop Savarkar's book on the Mutiny from entering India.'<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, J.C. Ker, personal assistant to the director of criminal intelligence, noted that to prevent the import of the book they would need to use Section 19 of the Sea Customs Act,<sup>75</sup> given it was a 'most objectionable book'. However, he advised caution that it would be unsafe to publicly notify it as such, prior to examining the title, contents and the tone of the book through a proof copy that could be procured.<sup>76</sup> An alternative route of using the Post Office Act was also considered but vetoed by C.J. Stevenson-Moore, the officiating director of criminal intelligence.

The British newspapers carried reports of the proscription of the book and ban on its sale in British India. *The Homeward Mail from India, China*

and *The East* dated 9 August 1909 and the *Times* , dated 11 August 1909, reported:

The mail from India brings the following notification issued at Simla on July 23—‘In exercise of the power conferred by Section 19 of the Sea Customs Act 1878 (viii of 1878), the Governor-in-Council is pleased to prohibit the bringing by sea or by land into British India of any copy of the book or pamphlet in Marathi on the subject of the Indian Mutiny by Vinayek Damodar Sarvarkar or any English translation or version of the same. <sup>77</sup>

Vinayak wrote a spirited letter challenging the proscription. This was published in *The London Times* :

It is admitted by the authorities that they were not sure whether the manuscript had gone to print. If that is so, how does the government know that the book is going to be so dangerously seditious as to get it proscribed before its publication, or even before it was printed? The government either possesses a copy of the manuscript or does not. If they have a copy, then why did they not prosecute me for sedition as that would have been the only course legitimately left to them? On the contrary, if they have no copy of the manuscript how could they be so cocksure of the seditious nature of a book of which they do not know anything beyond some vague, partial, and unauthenticated reports? <sup>78</sup>

On 17 September 1909, Vinayak wrote in the *Kal* :

My attention has been drawn to the orders issued by the Government of India under the Customs Act, prohibiting the entry of a History of the Indian Mutiny alleged to be written by me, into India. It may be legal to suppress a book even before it is published. But certainly it can never be just. The Governor-General of India has mentioned my name in this connection without any inquiry and thereby laid himself open to censure. If the evidence in the hands of Government was reliable, they should have informed me of the charge and heard me. If the proper evidence was not forthcoming, it was the moral duty of Government to ask me to enter on my defense before condemning me. But it appears that Government are pleased to attack me unawares. Under such circumstances, I can declare that I have no connection with any book of such a nature as is indicated in the orders of the Government of India. <sup>79</sup>

The revolutionaries of Abhinav Bharat however found ingenious ways of having the book smuggled to India. Copies were wrapped in artistic covers printed with innocuous and bogus names such as ‘The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club’,<sup>80</sup> ‘Scott’s Works’ and ‘Don Quixote’. Boxes with false labels were used and one such box was smuggled into India by Sikandar Hayat Khan. However, since there was no ban on its sale in England, books were secretly sold and distributed at several places. The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the India Office Library (IOL) hold copies of the first edition. Madame Bhikaji Cama, who was in Paris, made copies available at a price of 10 shillings. She also got a second edition published in France. Vinayak had given her the original Marathi manuscript for safekeeping, which she had deposited in a bank locker in Paris. However, it was generally believed that during the First World War, the bank was destroyed and with it, the manuscript. It was only in 1947 that Savarkar received a letter from one Ramlal Bajpayee in America stating that the original was safe with his friend D.D.S. Kutinho in London, and two years later he managed to get the copy back through one Dr Gohokar of America.<sup>81</sup> A third edition was published by Lala Har Dayal and the Ghadr Party in America. Copies were sold in New York at \$2 for a hardback and \$1.50 for paperback versions.

A few decades later, the great Indian revolutionary Bhagat Singh had the fourth edition of the book secretly published in India.<sup>82</sup> There are references of how Bhagat Singh was deeply influenced by a small English biography of Savarkar that he read in the Dwarkadas Library of Lahore.<sup>83</sup> Copies of the book were found during raids conducted on all the members of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) who were accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case (1928–31), including Bhagat Singh. This fact is bolstered by a first-person account given by Durga Das Khanna in an interview in 1976.<sup>84</sup>

Khanna was the former chairman of the Punjab Legislative Council in independent India but in his younger days he had been a revolutionary. He recalls his first meetings with Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev Thapar, the Punjab revolutionaries who had formed the HSRA in the 1920s. During

their recruitment drive for the organization they had met Khanna, spoken to him about politics and a wide range of issues to gauge his political orientation, and they had also recommended several books. These included Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhensky's *The ABC of Communism* (1920), Daniel Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (1924), and Chitragupta's *Life of Barrister Savarkar*. It hence becomes clear that Bhagat Singh and his associates expected new recruits to the HSRA to not only read about the Russian Revolution and the Irish Republican Army, but also Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's life story.

A decade later, in the 1940s, the other major national heroes, Rash Behari Bose and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, also got an edition of *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* printed in Japan. A Tamil edition of the book, edited by Jayamani Subrahmanyam, one of the publicity officers of Netaji's Indian National Army (INA), was also discovered in tatters in one of the raids.

Thus, for almost three-and-a-half-decades the book served as a veritable Bible for all revolutionaries. Through the book, Vinayak managed to draw a lineage of revolutionaries starting from its roots in the 1857 war till the time of India's independence, positing himself at the centre as one of its important intellectual fountainheads. Subbarao, editor of *Gosthi*, notes about the book:

The British Raj in India has treated Savarkar's book as most dangerous for their existence here. So it has been banned. But it has been read by millions of our countrymen including my humble self. In trying to elevate the events of 1857, which interested historians and administrators had not hesitated to call for decades as an 'Indian Mutiny', to its right pose of Indian War of Independence, albeit a foiled attempt at that, it is not a work of patriotic alchemist turning base mutineering into noble revolutionary action. Even in these days, what would the efforts of Subhas Bose's Azad Hind Fouj be called if Savarkar's alchemy had not intervened? True, both the 1857 and 1943 'wars' have ended in failure for our country. But the motive behind—was it mere mutineering or War of Independence? If Savarkar had not intervened between 1857 and 1943, I am sure that the recent efforts of the Indian National Army would have been again dubbed as an ignoble mutiny effectively crushed by the valiant British-cum-Congress arms and armlessness. But thanks to Savarkar's book, Indian sense of a 'mutiny' has been itself revolutionized. Not even Lord Wavell, I suppose can now call Bose's efforts as a mutiny. The chief credit for

the change of values must go to Savarkar, and to him alone. But the greatest value of Savarkar's book lies in its gift to the nation of that Torch of Freedom in whose light a humble I and a thousand other Indians have our dear daughters named after Laxmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi. Even Netaji Bose in a fateful hour had to form an army of corps after Rani of Jhansi. But for Savarkar's discovery of that valiant heroine, Rani of Jhansi should have been a long-forgotten 'mutineer' of the nineteenth-century. <sup>85</sup>



5

## And the Storm Breaks

London, 1907

The commemoration of the martyrs of 1857, speeches at India House and the articles in the *Indian Sociologist* brought Shyamji and his boarding house under the surveillance and attack of the British government and press. On 9 May 1907, as news came in about Lala Lajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh's deportation, without trial, to prison in Mandalay, Burma, for alleged sedition, a wave of indignation swept through Indians in London. The *Indian Sociologist* carried several articles and letters from leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Bhikaji Cama and others condemning this act. Shyamji wrote in the June 1907 editorial:

To us personally the sudden disappearance of Lala Lajpat Rai from the field of operations in India under such painful circumstances has given a shock, which we cannot describe in words. On almost the very day of his arrest we received a highly pathetic letter from him imploring us to do all in our power to bring the 'Panjabee' case to the notice of the British Public and Foreign Press. Little did he think when he penned that letter that in less than three weeks he would be arrested and deported under a cruel and oppressive regulation of the so-called civilized Government of India. <sup>1</sup>

Thereafter, a public meeting of Indians was held at India House on 7 June 1909. Presiding over it, Shyamji passed a public resolution condemning the unjust deportation by a ‘tyrannical and oppressive alien Government of India’.<sup>2</sup> In the course of his speech, Shyamji remarked: ‘We, representing the advanced section of the Indian people, absolutely deny the right of the British to remain any longer in India, and are prepared to achieve Indian Independence at all risks.’ He declared that all Indians serving the British government must be treated with suspicion and that they could not trust British promises any longer.<sup>3</sup>

A litany of abusive articles by several eminent British gentlemen began appearing in newspapers after this. F.F. Skirme, a retired ICS officer, denounced the activities of India House and Shyamji, saying that several young fellows coming to England for studies ‘have been ruined by these scoundrels’,<sup>4</sup> who have plenty of money and assist their young compatriots in finding tuition and lodgings. Sir Evan James, KCIE, wrote in an article titled ‘Ambition and Seditious in India’, in the June issue of the *National Review* :

Curiously enough, even in England exists an ardent Indian rebel, a Mr. Shyamaji Krishnavarma, President of the Indian Home Rule Society, numbering 150 members, whose influence over the young Indians who come to England for legal or other education can scarcely be very good from the British Government’s point of view . . . That the desirability of ousting the English from India is being widely taught is a fact . . . if once the tolerant millions are fully imbued with hatred of the British, our rule has gone. Our Army may be strong, but it will be impossible to hold hundreds of millions in check if they are determined to get rid of us . . . the perambulation of political missionaries should be stopped and the prosecution of seditious speeches and articles in the Press revived . . . we might give India autonomy, but it must be complete, as we cannot leave our white troops to be used as mercenaries by native rulers.<sup>5</sup>

In response, Shyamji wrote that he considered it an honour to be called an ‘ardent Indian rebel’ for advising his countrymen to shake off an ‘oppressive foreign yoke’.<sup>6</sup> The issue regarding India House and Shyamji even reached the British parliament where Mr Rees, a member of the House of Commons, questioned the Secretary of State, Lord John Morley,

if he was aware of the speeches, the tone and tenor of the editorials of the *Indian Sociologist*, and the comment of considering it an ‘honour to be an ardent Indian rebel’. He was also asked if the government was aware of ‘the boarding house to which young Indians are attracted for the purpose of perversion’ on their arrival in England.<sup>7</sup> He also urged the government to prosecute Shyamji to ‘his ultimate expulsion as an undesirable alien who endeavoured to debauch the loyal subjects of His Majesty’.<sup>8</sup> Morley brushed away the question. But the London press was captivated by the subject. The *Daily Telegraph* had a heading ‘Debauching the King’s Subjects’<sup>9</sup> while the *Standard* screamed: ‘British Rule Defied: Occupation of England by India Suggested’.<sup>10</sup> The *Globe* went further:

Mr Rees will ask Mr Morley in the House today whether a gentleman of the name of Shyamji Krishnavarma may receive it in the neck for sedition. He edits in London a paper called *The Indian Sociologist*, and it is fearfully bitter. In fact its subscribers say that if it would only start a good limerick competition as well, it would shake London to its core.<sup>11</sup>

An article in the *Indian Sociologist* in July 1907 titled ‘British Financial Jugglery in India: Beware of Indian Rupee Promissory Notes’ warning potential investors against placing their money in Indian securities further raised British hackles.<sup>12</sup> In July 1907, under Section 26 of the Post Office Act (1898), the Government of India intercepted copies of the *Indian Sociologist* sent to British India. Along with the *Indian Sociologist*, a ban was imposed on the import of newspapers, for example, the newsletter *Justice* of H.M. Hyndman and the *Gaelic American*, given their revolutionary content.<sup>13</sup>

Shyamji realized that it would be impossible for him to continue his work in this hostile situation in London. The breaking point came when O’Brien, a detective from Scotland Yard, arrived to India House posing as an Irish sympathizer and a staffer of the *Gaelic American*. He had attended meetings of India House as a spy from early 1907 itself. On this occasion, he solicited Shyamji for an interview in such a clumsy manner



that it alerted the latter. Shyamji thereafter decided to leave Britain for good and move to Paris in September 1907.<sup>14</sup> The October 1907 edition of the *Indian Sociologist* mentions this change of address to: 10 Avenue Ingres, Passy, Paris. By 1909, there were nearly 250 politically active Indians in Paris.<sup>15</sup>

It is worthwhile examining why western Europe was fast emerging as a nerve centre of activities of several anti-colonialists. Many of them, like Ho Chi Minh and Jomo Kenyatta (and men like Gandhi and Vinayak), would become leaders of independence in their own home countries. Compared to the autocratically ruled colonies, more liberal laws were in place in these metropolises. Anti-colonialists were thus able to make use of this to protect themselves from persecution by the colonial governments back home. They could take advantage of the fact that European empires did not constitute unified legal spaces. This means that the laws that existed in Europe were entirely different from those in the colonies. The anti-colonialists were thus free here to carry on their political work without the threats of immediate imprisonment or accusations of sedition being slapped on them. In France, publication of material considered anti-British was easy as there were no legally binding restrictions. The Russian revolutionaries too were successfully evading government surveillance and printing their pamphlets in Switzerland.<sup>16</sup> Continental Europe was also considered a safe place to learn how to manufacture bombs and explosives. As an officer noted in his official report of 6 December 1910 that Miss Perin Naoroji, granddaughter of Dadabhai Naoroji, ‘with one or two others, was recently receiving instructions in the manufacture of bombs from a Polish engineer named Bronjesky in a private flat in Paris’.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, weapons could also be purchased and smuggled back to India from these countries. Innovative methods were used to achieve this end. For instance, Virendranath Chattopadhyay and Madame Cama sent revolvers to India in 1910, by concealing them in toys ‘forwarded ostensibly as Christmas presents’.<sup>18</sup>

Anti-colonialists moved from Britain to France prior to the First World War, and after that from France to Germany or Switzerland in the inter-

war period. This transnational dimension of anti-colonial activity contributed significantly to the extension of colonial surveillance institutions across countries and continents in the early decades of the twentieth century. Anti-colonialists created alliances with local liberation movements, white politicians, writers, intellectuals and the press in order to amplify their views to a larger global audience. They succeeded in tapping the strong nationalistic sentiments and the fascination with justice, liberty and democracy that existed in different European countries.

With Shyamji's exit from London, the responsibility of the management of India House fell on Vinayak. He decided to concentrate largely on foreign propaganda—showcase the cause of India's liberation in countries outside England and enlist their support. The Irish press came out in open support and regularly carried his articles. The *Gaelic American* of New York and its editor, G.F. Freeman, also became a willing partner in Vinayak's efforts. His articles were soon translated in French, German, Portuguese, Italian and Russian newspapers and, thereby, managed to thrust India's politics on to the world stage.

A diehard supporter of Shyamji and Vinayak, and an avowed communist, Guy A. Aldred, brought an important Russian revolutionary to India House for an interview with Vinayak in mid-March 1909. Madan Lal Dhingra too was part of these meetings. The revolutionary was none other than Vladimir Ilich Lenin. What transpired between them is unknown and even Vinayak concealed these details till almost 1937.

Under Vinayak, the atmosphere at India House was completely transformed. The London press began to call it 'The House of Mystery' as one did not know what transpired behind its seemingly innocent high walls. A young Irish revolutionary, David Garnett, who was living in London, and had visited India House several times before, notes its atmosphere during a visit in 1909:

At my entrance there was some surprise. Nanu (Niranjan Pal) came forward and welcomed me and stopped a young man, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, and introduced me to him. He was small, slight in build, with broad cheekbones, a sensitive refined mouth and an extremely pale skin which was almost as pale as ivory on the forehead

and cheekbones, but darker in the hollows. Soon after my arrival we trooped into the dining room and Savarkar, after addressing the company in Hindi, stood up and began to read aloud. I looked at Savarkar and thought that his was the most sensitive face in the room . . . the sight of those brown men, some sitting round a long table, others leaning against the walls, all listening intently to the staccato voice of the speaker, was very strange to me . . . I listened attentively and made out that he was reading about a battle in which an Indian General called Tatia Tope had been defeated by English troops and Sikhs. Savarkar was, although I did not know it, reading aloud a chapter from his extremely propagandist history of the Indian Mutiny called *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* . . . when he had finished his chapter, the greater part of the audience went into an adjoining room and someone put a record of Indian music on the gramophone. It was ‘*Vande Mataram*’.<sup>19</sup>

The ‘seditious activities’ and pamphlets of India House became a constant feature in the London press towards the end of the decade and also a topic for discussion in the British parliament. Campbell Green wrote in the *Sunday Chronicle* dated 14 March 1909:

India House looks pretty much like a hostel or a lodging house for students. That is the truth. The point of moment is—is it the whole truth or nothing but the truth? Those who profess to know, not only in London but in Calcutta and Bombay, will tell you that it is not the whole truth; that in fact it is far from the whole truth!<sup>20</sup>

Around the same time that Vinayak took over the leadership of India House, news emerged that the International Socialist Congress was going to be held at Stuttgart in Germany from 18 to 24 August 1907. Nearly 900 delegates from across the world were expected to participate and discuss matters related to colonialism, militarism, immigration and women’s suffrage. It was organized by socialist and labour parties in Europe. This was too big a platform to let go for Vinayak and his associates. They hoped to enlist the support of the powerful working-class movements and other socialist parties from across the world; more so when colonialism was listed as a topic of discussion. It was decided that Madame Bhikaji Cama and Sardar Singh Rana would attend the Congress as Indian delegates. Vinayak designed what was to become one of the earliest flags conceptualized for free India.<sup>21</sup> It had three horizontal stripes of equal

width, each of three colours—‘green (the sacred colour of Muslims), the centre band was saffron (the sacred colour of the Buddhists and Sikhs) and the lower stripe being Hindu red’.<sup>22</sup> In the centre, *Vande Mataram*, or Salutations to the Motherland, was embroidered on a golden band. The top section had eight stars in a row, the middle had the sun on the left and the moon on the right. These symbolized the different faiths and provinces of India.

Speaking about this flag on the occasion of its anniversary celebrations in 1937 in Poona, Vinayak said: ‘When we designed this national flag, we had many flags of different nations in view. On the USA flag a bunch of stars is depicted. Each star represents one state of the United States of America. Abhinava Bharat Society was founded by a band of young Indian patriots. The green colour on the flag suggests this sense. Saffron is the colour of glory and victory. Red colour implies strength.’<sup>23</sup>

The British Labour leader, James Ramsay Macdonald, who later went on to become the prime minister, tried his best to scuttle the invitation to Madame Cama and Rana as delegates. But the Indians were supported by Marxist labour leaders such as French socialist leader Jean Jaurès, German leaders August Bebel, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and the British representative of the Social Democratic Federation, H.M. Hyndman. In fact, in his speech there, Hyndman made a passionate plea for Indian freedom:

India was conquered for the Empire not by the English themselves but by Indians under the English and by taking advantage of Indian disputes . . . if civilization is to be gauged by the standard of science, art, architecture, industry, medicine, laws, philosophy and religion, then the great state of India at that period was well worthy of comparison with the most enlightened and cultured parts of Europe, and no European monarch could be reckoned in any way superior to Akbar, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb or Shivaji; while it would be hard to name any European Minister of Finance equal to the Hindu Rajahs: Todar Mal and Nana Furnavis.<sup>24</sup>

Madame Bhikaji Cama made history at the Congress by proudly unfurling the Indian flag of independence on 18 August 1907, overcoming all odds

and opposition. She thundered with pride, amid a protest walkout by Ramsay Macdonald:

This flag is of Indian independence. Behold, it is born. It is already sanctified by the blood of martyred Indian youth. I call upon you, gentlemen, to rise and salute the flag of Indian independence. In the name of this flag I appeal to lovers of freedom all over the world to cooperate with this flag in freeing one-fifth of the human race. <sup>25</sup>

Moving a resolution in English, she went on to add:

The continuance of British rule is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of Indians. Lovers of freedom all over the world ought to cooperate in freeing from slavery the one-fifth of human race inhabiting the oppressed country, since the perfect social state demands that no people shall be subject to any despotic or tyrannical form of Government. This Congress calls upon the socialist members of the Parliament to urge the government to give self-government to the Indian people . . . you are discussing colonies all the time, but what about dependencies? Take up the cause of justice and make it a point to bring India to the front at every Socialist Congress. <sup>26</sup>

Madame Cama's speech was widely appreciated by the delegates and she was hailed as India's Joan of Arc. Several Independent Labour Party delegates stoutly opposed the resolution being brought to the Congress. Anglophile Miss Mchillan strongly upheld the view that British rule was greatly beneficial and necessary for Indians. However, Hyndman and other pro-India leaders vociferously opposed this view. <sup>27</sup>

A few months after the Socialist Congress, Bhikaji Cama made a whirlwind tour of America to spread the propaganda and enlist support for Indian freedom. She was widely interviewed by the American press. In one such interview given at Hotel Martha in Washington where she was staying, Madame Cama called for total liberation of India from British control. On 28 October 1907, addressing the members of Minerva Club at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, she said:

The people here know about the conditions in Russia, but I don't think they know anything about the conditions in India under the English Government. Our best men

are deported or sent to prison like criminals and there they are flogged so that they have to go to the prison hospitals. We are peaceful, we do not want a bloody revolution, but we do want to teach the people their rights and to throw off despotism.

28

Such calls for complete freedom and an uncensored view of British rule to the international community were a far cry from the patient demands and respectful petitions that were still being made by the INC back home. The narrative of the discourse on independence had suddenly been changed.

Thrilled by the success at the Socialist Congress, Vinayak and his comrades drew out an elaborate plan of action for the future. The main task on their agenda was the purchase and manufacture of arms from within and outside England and smuggling these back to India. The Indian Arms Act of 1878 made it illegal for any Indian to possess a weapon of any kind without a licence that was most cumbersome to procure. Abhinav Bharat was in constant touch with revolutionaries in Russia, China, Ireland and Egypt. Vinayak and V.V.S. Aiyar met Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), the Turkish revolutionary who was fighting for the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, when he came to London. They drew plans to orchestrate a simultaneous armed uprising in different parts of the British Empire. The blockage of the Suez Canal to limit the British further was also planned, with the promise of active support from Egyptian revolutionaries. As writer Emily Brown states:

Savarkar had gained a valuable support from students and sympathizers in the United States and most of the European countries. The extent and importance of this international propaganda, which had its focal point at India House, was not fully realized by either the Indians or the British until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

29

Vinayak also wanted Abhinav Bharat members to gain experience in warfare. With the outbreak of war between Spain and Morocco, he dispatched his associates, M.P.T. Acharya and Sukhsagar Dutt, to join the Riffs of Moors—a coloured people who were fighting against the imperialist invaders, the Spaniards. A lot of money was spent in the

procurement of guns, uniforms and their training. The duo were given a grand farewell, seen off by Vinayak and Aiyar. They left on the German Far East liner *Luetzow* to Gibraltar. But after seven months, they returned in unkempt and dirty uniforms, crestfallen and worn out. Neither the Moors nor the Spaniards were willing to enlist their services because they thought the Indians had been planted by their opponent. The only result was the expenditure of ‘three hundred pounds, not to mention the physical sufferings undergone by the . . . volunteers’.<sup>30</sup>

Without letting his spirits dampen, Vinayak decided to create a laboratory of sorts to manufacture bombs within India House itself. It is said that he often appeared at Abhinav Bharat meetings with the yellow stains of the highly explosive chemical—picric acid—on his hands. Vinayak sent Hemchandra Das Kanungo of Anushilan Society of Bengal who had come to London, along with Senapati Bapat and Mirza Abbas to Paris to procure the ‘Bomb Manual’. It had detailed instructions on the ingredients that went into making a bomb, the process of manufacture and use. In an interview, Senapati Bapat mentions how they stayed in the faraway suburbs of Paris during this time.<sup>31</sup> Hemchandra was a skilled photographer and also knew the art of making cabinets. A Russian professor who never revealed his name but had been involved in a political assassination and was fleeing to Spain advised them about the organization of a secret underground society, even as Bapat assiduously noted it all down. They met a Russian tailor who gave them a copy of the ‘Bomb Manual’. Hemchandra quickly took about fifty photographs of it and returned the manual. Some opine that it was Russian revolutionary, Nicholas Sanfranskie, who had given them the manual in Paris.<sup>32</sup>

However, the manual was in Russian and none of them could read the script. The tailor then introduced them to two young Russian ladies, one of whom had completed her MA and the other her MBBS. The latter, Miss Amaya, was studying in Berlin and asked them to come there so that she could assist them in translating the text. Bapat and the others hid the photographed manual, escaped two custom checks in Belgium and Holland, reached Berlin where they kept shifting homes to avoid police

scrutiny, and finally reached Amaya. She took a long time to translate the manual, and eventually a translated copy was printed and brought back to London. Another version of this story is that the manual was translated by Bapat's German girlfriend, Anna Klauss, who lived in Berlin and was well versed in Russian.<sup>33</sup>

Bapat mentions in the interview that he met Vinayak and expressed a desire to bomb the British Parliament, but the latter dissuaded him and asked him to instead go with copies of the manual to India where it could be put to good use. The copies were smuggled into India in boxes with false bottoms to escape customs.

Bapat reached Bombay on 26 March 1908 and met several Abhinav Bharat members in Maharashtra. Thousands of cyclostyled copies of the manual were distributed to Abhinav Bharat cells in Bombay, Poona, Nashik, Kolhapur, Aundh, Satara, Gwalior, Baroda, Amravati, Yavatmal, Nagpur and other places. Hemchandra returned to Calcutta to his comrades Barin Ghose and Aurobindo Ghose, and began utilizing the manual for manufacturing bombs across Bengal. Their activity led to the famous Alipore Bomb Case, or the 'Maniktala Bomb Conspiracy'. This was the famous trial conducted against Bengali revolutionaries for throwing bombs in Muzaffarpur. Executed by Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose on 30 April 1908, it was masterminded by Aurobindo Ghose, his brother Barin Ghose and many young revolutionaries of the secret society Anushilan Samiti. A nineteen-year-old Bengali member of the society, Khudiram threw a bomb into a carriage carrying two Englishwomen, mistaking it to be that of Calcutta magistrate Douglas Kingsford. While Chaki committed suicide when cornered by the police, Khudiram was later hanged. In a harsh and swift reaction, the Government of India enacted the Explosive Substances Act and the Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act in June 1908. District magistrates were empowered to seize newspapers and presses deemed to be of seditious nature. Incidentally, for defending Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose in the *Kesari*, Tilak was charged with sedition, tried and sentenced to six years' imprisonment in the prison in Mandalay, Burma. It is said that a copy of the 'Bomb Manual' also



reached Tilak.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the activities originating from India House sparked off explosions literally all across British India.

In his newsletter dated 19 July 1907, Vinayak theorized the action of armed struggle, making a case against the ‘passive resistance’ that Tilak and later Gandhi postulated. He argued that the French had tried innumerable political experiments and various models of governance—uncontrolled monarchy, controlled monarchy to anarchy, monarchy appointed by the people and democracy. They had even toyed with the idea of passive resistance. Through passive resistance, the French intended to bring the government to its knees by not cooperating with it at all levels. Such an experiment was conducted by some farmers, protesting against government taxes, in a vineyard of southern France. Large groups congregated and the passive resistance began meticulously with the chiming of church bells across Narbonne. From students, workers, municipal councillors, to representatives of local councils, soldiers and even members of Parliament participated. But in no time the government clamped it down with martial law and excessive use of force and arms. The balance was to tilt, invariably, in favour of the one who had more arms. Thus, passive resistance, argued Vinayak, was futile without the backing of arms. He wrote:

When attempting passive resistance, it is assumed that all the human beings are noble. It is presumed that all government employees will leave their jobs—that is the beginning. But poverty stricken people do not have the strength to live without government service; howsoever they may like to do that. Moreover, it is assumed that the rulers are also noble. It is assumed that they will not break existing laws and will not promulgate new ones—that is the theory. But this is impossible. Rulers who are prepared to go against public opinion are also capable of making new laws and implementing old ones that were not used for years.<sup>35</sup>

Even as he was managing and coordinating the logistics involved in procurement and shipment of arms to India, Vinayak was also building a strong intellectual case for the same, with references from various episodes in world history.

That the British considered Vinayak and his associates at India House a major threat is confirmed by the enormous amounts of money and time that Scotland Yard invested in gathering intelligence about its activities. There was always some Scotland Yard policeman hanging about on the street outside India House.<sup>36</sup> The quantum of correspondence between various colonial policemen and officials of the intelligence branch and India Office reveal the extent of this surveillance.<sup>37</sup>

But what exactly was the architecture of this British surveillance on India House and Indian students? What one often calls Scotland Yard was the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police at Scotland Yard, a group that was tasked with maintaining a keen watch over ‘anarchists in London’.<sup>38</sup> By the turn of the century, this Special Branch had merely twenty-five detectives.

The counterpart of this Special Branch in India, at Simla (Shimla) and Calcutta, was the Department of Criminal Intelligence (DCI),<sup>39</sup> which worked closely with the home department and also local governments to gather intelligence. It was after the spurt of revolutionary activities in India, following the Partition of Bengal in 1905, that Lord Morley and Lord Minto were convinced of the need to further activate the DCI that was established in 1903. In 1907, H.A. Stuart, the director of the DCI, expressed the reasons for the creation of such a department:

The formation of the Criminal Intelligence Department in 1903 was justified by the fact that the operations of the modern criminal in India extend over several provinces and cannot be traced by the local police . . . The operations of the professional sedition-mongers are far more widespread, far better organized, and far more advanced than those of any professional criminals . . . The range of their activities includes England, America, Egypt and Turkey, and they have no hesitation in allying themselves with our enemies and rivals in any part of the world.<sup>40</sup>

The director of DCI was a figure of importance within the Indian government and provided weekly reports to the home department and local governments on the emergent political situation. But his initial fund outlay

was Rs 12,000 with a nominal staff of twenty-six that made surveillance a difficult task.<sup>41</sup>

Stuart advocated the creation of a branch within the department that focused specifically on ‘sedition’. An act or word that was spoken or printed and which was deemed offensive or threatening to the security of the Crown was deemed as sedition. Closely linked with it was the idea of conspiracy, where an individual joins a group to politically harm the state. The British government was deeply aware of the nature of activities the revolutionaries were carrying out. Stuart’s deputy, who later became the director, C.J. Stevenson-Moore, writes:

The chief centres of the Indian political movement are Calcutta, Lahore, Poona, New York, London, Paris, and perhaps Japan. The chief agitators in these places are in close connection with each other, and the necessity for secret agents in America and London has recently been brought to notice in letters from London and Dublin. From Calcutta in the old province, the agitation in the new province has been engineered. The Punjab sends money down to Calcutta, which is probably distributed to the lead agitators in Eastern Bengal and Assam. An outbreak of disturbances in Bengal is reflected in an outbreak of disturbances in Madras. Lahore and Rawalpindi in the Punjab send money to Peshawar in the NWFP, which is again used for stirring up the Frontier Tribes over the border. Political *Sadhus* or missionaries tour all over India, New York, and Paris; send out letters which are used for disaffection in the Army and among the civil population; and Shyamji Krishna Varma from London offers prizes and other attractions to those who will devote themselves to preaching the subversion of our rule in India.<sup>42</sup>

Despite all this knowledge of ‘subversive’ activities across continents, the two organizations—the Special Branch in London and the DCI in India—hardly interacted across the seas. It was only by 1909 that Scotland Yard began sending weekly reports on Indian agitators to the DCI. On its part, the DCI often scoffed at the alleged incompetence of the London Special Branch. This was an open secret, and was discussed at the highest level between Secretary of State Lord Morley and Viceroy Lord Minto:

Experts from the Home Office and Scotland Yard pointed out that their men are wholly useless in the case of Indian conspirators. They have no sort of agency able to distinguish Hindu from Mahomedan, or Verma from Varma. The whole Indian field is

absolutely unfamiliar, in language, habits, and everything else. In short, both you and I can easily understand that the ordinary square-toed English constable, even in the detective branch, would be rather clumsy in tracing your wily Asiatics. <sup>43</sup>

Initially, white policemen were used to shadow the revolutionaries. But police detective Harold Brust found out to his peril when Indians whom he was shadowing in Oxford, Cambridge and London beat him up. He later reminisced that most members of the Special Branch ‘held a sneaking admiration for the ardour of these lads who mistakenly believed themselves the appointed “saviours” of their “downtrodden country”’. <sup>44</sup>

The first of the preliminary attempts at surveillance was in May 1907 when a member of the Scotland Yard infiltrated into an India House meeting and reported that ‘seditious pamphlets were distributed’. <sup>45</sup> M.P. Tirumala Acharya writes that within a few days of his arrival at India House (possibly in 1907), he found that ‘all the inmates had detectives shadowing’ <sup>46</sup> them wherever they went. The place was considered as the ‘hot-bed of sedition’. <sup>47</sup> He describes the barrier that existed between the India House residents and all other students. ‘It was like a lepers’ home,’ he rues, adding that, ‘. . . patriotism and sedition were synonymous, as far as Indians’ were concerned in England. <sup>48</sup> Having left India after being hounded by the British intelligence, it pained Acharya to see a repeat of the same in a supposed land of liberty. Indian students outside India House were extra anxious to maintain complete distance from its inmates, lest the British suspect their motives too. <sup>49</sup>

In September 1908, intelligence was gathered that *Free Hindustan*, a US-based newspaper ‘devoted to the cause of Indian freedom was distributed at the meeting’. <sup>50</sup> However, no structured and organized framework was created for intelligence gathering nor had the process of infiltration been described. Acharya writes about this vague method of intelligence gathering and how the India House members dealt with it:

Early in the morning, the detectives used to stand or loiter about near the house to follow anyone who went out of the India House. First it was disgusting to me to see their faces. I wanted to make use of them as my guide. I went out for a walk. About

50 yards behind me one detective followed me like shadow. I went on walking till I passed a post office. Then I walked back. The detective was waiting before the post office to let me pass. Suddenly, when I came in front of the post office, I asked him, 'Where is the post office, please?' The man answered, 'I do not know.' I asked him then, 'If you cannot help me find out the post office and other places I want, why do you follow me?' He was very perturbed and angry. I used to try the same method upon every new man that was set against me, to show that I know who he was. Sometimes, Savarkar and other members of the House tried to get rid of the detectives in a peculiar manner. They walked till they came to a lone taxi and suddenly jumped into it and drove away, while the detective used to stand helpless, looking for a free taxi. <sup>51</sup>

There are a few documented instances of how spies were implanted at India House. For instance, there was an informant named Sukhsagar Dutt (which was the nom de plume of Sajani Ranjan Banerjea) who also stayed here. The DCI had engaged him as an informant from October 1909 until June 1913. His passage and outfit (£100), fees for admission to the bar (£90), final fee when called to the bar (£40), purchase of law books (£10), purchase of other books and instruments (£10), cost of a course of study at the Imperial College of Science (£124–10) and passage back to India on completing the course (£42–2–8) were fully borne by the intelligence department and paid through Thomas Cook & Sons. In addition, he was paid a monthly allowance as retainer fee for £20 for forty-five months during this period. Close to £1316 was spent on merely one informant at India House.

Dutt claims to have turned informant to pay off his family debts. He reported to the superintendent of the Special Branch, P. Quinn, and gave him regular updates. His letter dated 20 November 1912 to Quinn mentions how it was settled even before his departure to London that he should stay there till July 1913 and supply information. The approval of his science course was to ensure he came in touch with several Indian students as science was what 'appeals to Indians with extremist tendencies'. But his studies at the Royal College of Science were discontinued after a short while when the money sanctioned for that purpose was not paid to him. Now that he was being called by the bar after

finishing with the Inns of Court, he wanted to encash the money owed to him, in order to stay on for longer, so that 'my friends here may get suspicious of my stay till June next, but if I join a barrister's chamber for practical work for the period of six months there will be no cause for my friends to question about my stay here till June 1913'.<sup>52</sup> If his services were needed for a longer period, he was 'glad to continue it for another three to six months'. His case was recommended thereafter to Sir Thomas W. Holderness, the undersecretary of state, mentioning that Dutt had 'been of great use' and had 'a good knowledge of Indian seditionists'. He was assessed as having 'the great merit of reporting, truthfully, and not making sensational statements in order to magnify his usefulness'. Dutt was 'also eager to know if he is to put himself in touch with any official of the Criminal Intelligence Department on arrival in India. He will probably on the way back call and see Madam Cama and Virendranath Chattopadhyay in Paris and if thought advisable would go to Pondicherry to see V.V.S. Aiyar.'<sup>53</sup> Dutt managed his work so adroitly that neither Vinayak nor his associates ever found out about the mole in their midst.

However, not everyone the British intelligence employed was so skilled. Kirtikar was one such person. In the early summer of 1909, Kirtikar arrived at India House unannounced, bags in hand, and managed to get close to Vinayak with his fluent Marathi. He claimed to be of aristocratic descent and that he had come to London to study dentistry. But this was merely a pretext and he was given a year's leave by Indian authorities. He registered himself at a London hospital as a cover. Kirtikar was indolent and lazy, came late for breakfast, often skipped hospital and returned very late at night. He soon began a romantic dalliance with the English maid at India House, forcing Vinayak to relieve her of her duties. But Kirtikar managed to find her a new accommodation nearby where he frequently visited her. He was a regular at all meetings of the Free India Society and also donated a pound every month to its cause.

His actions roused suspicions and Vinayak asked Dr T.S.S. Rajan to casually inquire about him at the hospital. To their horror they discovered that he had barely attended classes for a week since his admission. It

became clear to them that he was a spy and had not come there to study. One night, when Kirtikar had gone to watch a play with his English girlfriend, Aiyar opened his room with a master key. In a box there he discovered a report prepared by Kirtikar on the activities of the week at India House, to be passed on to British intelligence agencies. They decided to confront him on his return. Aiyar locked the room and held a loaded revolver to Kirtikar's head, forcing him to confess after much denial. He fell at Aiyar's feet and begged for pardon. Vinayak decided that Kirtikar should be allowed to stay on at India House on the condition that all reports sent by him to the British would first have to pass their scrutiny. The British were thus fed false and concocted information by Vinayak and his associates through their own spy.<sup>54</sup>

Given Scotland Yard's general incompetence, it is unlikely that they might have had a role in planting Kirtikar. Lord Morley had asserted that the Yard did not know a Verma from a Varma. To infiltrate India House with a Marathi speaker so that the spy could get close to Vinayak, the leader, was a well-planned strategy, and expecting this level of detail from Scotland Yard is hard to believe. The DCI had an agent whom they enigmatically called 'C' who had been dispatched to India House along with two other Indians in early 1909. The identity of Agent C was a secret, more so because the DCI distrusted their counterparts in the Special Branch. It was Agent C who sent a secret report in June 1909 that India House members had accelerated the levels of their revolver practice at a shooting range on Tottenham Court Road in London.<sup>55</sup> It is quite possible that the secret Agent 'C' was Kirtikar. The information that he provided was to prove very beneficial, as time would tell.

Vinayak then decided to place his own double agent, twenty-year-old M.P. Tirumala Acharya, to convey misinformation to Scotland Yard. Vinayak and Aiyar were initially wary of Tirumala Acharya and watched him closely to ensure there were no dubious activities. He was given the task of a double agent only after being convinced of his loyalty. Acharya was an affable young man who managed the kitchen too and shopped for groceries and other requirements at India House. He managed to make an

extra £5 with the false information that he was supplying to a happy and satisfied Scotland Yard.

In India too there were several Abhinav Bharat members who acted as double agents. Balkrishna Janardhan Marathe, Bhaskar Ramachandra Khare, Gangadhar Ganesh Chitale, Shankar Narayan Moghe and G.R. Vaishampayan were some of the members who helped leak government messages exchanged between India and England regarding the activities of the revolutionaries.<sup>56</sup> Many of them joined the postal department and worked in the telegraph service. The exchange of telegrams between the two countries was usually during the night in India, given the time difference. The British assigned only Anglo-Indian workers during such sensitive shifts. But these double agents somehow managed to befriend them and offered to bear their burden, while they could steal some time out at night with their love interests! Moghe, for instance, had once managed to procure an entire cache of telegrams on the subject. Since he was unaware of the code language in which the messages were transcribed, he secretly broke open the cupboard that explained the codes. Using this, he managed to decode the messages dispatched. Moghe was shocked to find a telegram from Lord Morley to Lord Minto that referred to a certain 'G.K.' who had informed him that given the proximity between Tilak and the Savarkar brothers and Bapat, a close watch on them was necessary. Given that Gopalkrishna Gokhale was then touring London and was regularly meeting Lord Morley, they deduced that the mysterious 'G.K.' was none other than him and that he was passing on information about the revolutionaries to the British. Coincidentally, a few days after this, the police instituted a regular surveillance on Babarao. This enraged many revolutionaries such as Brahmagiri Bua, Palande, Paranjpe and Shidhaye from Poona and there was an unsuccessful attempt on Gokhale's life. Much later, they all confessed to their crime and were sentenced.<sup>57</sup>

Another important link for the Abhinav Bharat who acted as a mole was Bhaskar Ramchandra Khare. On completing his matriculation, Khare joined a European company, mastered shorthand and typing and thereafter got introduced to the influential barrister Jamnadas Mehta. Mehta



recommended Khare to Dorabji Tata who was in urgent need of a good typist and shorthand expert. Joining the Tata group gave Khare easy and regular access to the Imperial Secretariat at New Delhi. Excelling at his work, Khare secured several promotions, including one with Sir Reginald Craddock of the sensitive home department. Yet, all the time, his motive remained constant—leaking information out to the revolutionaries.<sup>58</sup> Thus, either side kept a track of developments happening on the other, through their own ingenious ways.

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On 10 May 1908, Vinayak distributed copies of the ‘O! Martyrs!’ pamphlet on the occasion of the anniversary of 1857 War of Independence. Unsurprisingly, within a month, on 8 June 1908, C.J. Stevenson-Moore of the Department of Criminal Intelligence wrote to the home department about the pamphlet and its seditious and incendiary content. The home department noted that quite possibly the pamphlet was written and printed in England as the ‘phraseology is better than usual, and unlike other fulminations we are accustomed to here’.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, one also finds a nationalist like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya informing J.W. Hose of the United Provinces government about the pamphlet, but without taking Vinayak’s name:

I enclose a most seditious leaflet, which I received yesterday with the English mail. Evidently it is a copy of the same to which his Honour referred in his speech on the political situation. I was going to tear and throw it away as I did not wish that it should fall into the hands of any person; and as I thought it was not necessary to send it to Government as the contents of it are already known to them. But it struck me that I should yet inform you that this incendiary leaflet is still being mailed out to this country, so that the Government may take such further steps as it may deem proper to prevent the circulation of such poisonous matter.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to surveillance, the British government decided to also issue ‘Certificates of Identity’ to Indian students living in Britain. These were intended to be simple forms that provided the government biographical

details of Indians living in Britain, while ensuring that the India Office would have a record of every Indian in the country at any given point of time. Indian students found the process cumbersome, discriminatory and highly denigrating. In the nationality column, the applicants had to fill 'British subject by birth' in clear, black ink. The assertion here was that the nationality of Indians or their Indianness did not matter. Such documents existed throughout the Empire. Gandhi, commenting on the use of these documents in the Transvaal during the early twentieth century, argued that the use of such permits set Indians apart as a separate, polluted class, akin to the treatment of 'bhangis' by upper-caste Indians.<sup>61</sup> Indians travelling to Britain most probably associated these new certificates of identity with these earlier documents of negative and discriminatory racial profiling.

By 1909, under the leadership of the undersecretary of the Political and Secret (P&S) Department, William Lee Warner, a kind of a bureau of information for Indian students was created. While on the outside the bureau appeared to provide career-related guidance and advice to Indian students coming to Britain, it also managed to control and gather information about them. While the bureau failed to penetrate India House, it helped prevent, to a certain extent, some of the new migrant students from switching over to the revolutionary side or get influenced.

Despite knowing fully well that they were perpetually on the radar, several members of India House wanted to learn how to wield a gun. But they were never allowed membership at the shooting range. On 14 January 1909, the home department even wrote to the India Office in London with a sense of alarm about how permission could be granted for the establishment of a miniature rifle shooting range by Lord Robert's Association, close to India House.<sup>62</sup> To circumvent the problem, Dr T.S.S. Rajan decided to join a polytechnic in London that imparted skills in cooking, saloon services, photography and so on. After giving them the impression of being a very diligent student and learning a few skills, he requested to be taught shooting as well. The unsuspecting institute allowed him to, and soon he was adept at shooting a revolver at short and long

range. Meanwhile, Mirza Abbas and Sikandar Hayat Khan organized to smuggle a large cache of arms—twenty automatic Browning pistols purchased from Paris, and thousands of cartridges. They were neatly packed in a false-bottom box and dispatched to India with the India House chef, Chaturbhuj Amin, who had done diplomas in cooking and tailoring in London.

Leaving London on 15 February 1909, Amin set sail, dodging detectives and customs officials, and reached Bombay on 6 March.<sup>63</sup> The parcel was delivered to Gopalrao Patankar as Hari Anant Thatte, then president of Abhinav Bharat in Maharashtra, could not be reached due to surveillance troubles. By March 1909, Amin was back in London with the news of the safe delivery of the consignment.

But along with this news, Vinayak also received the tragic message of the death of his four-year-old son, Prabhakar, due to smallpox. His comment, made in jest while departing from India, that Prabhakar might reach the God's abode if not vaccinated, had unfortunately come true. He was overwhelmed with emotion and he poured his heart out in a very poignant elegy—'Prabhakaras'. Suddenly, everything seemed to unravel in the most unfortunate manner for Vinayak.

## Nashik, 1909

Misfortunes, they say, never strike alone. Even as Vinayak was grappling with the tragedy of the death of his only child, he received another alarming news from back home. On 28 February 1909, Babarao had gone to Bombay to visit his maternal cousin, V.M. Bhat, in Girgaum, when there was loud banging on the door of their home. The police had come looking for Babarao and arrested him under Sections 121 and 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Babarao had mentioned to a friend about Amin's delivery of pistols from London. The police got wind of this and an arrest warrant was issued for him. The dreaded Section 121 referred to aiding and abetting treason against the king and if convicted, it could result in confiscation of property and death by hanging or 'transportation for life'.

A year earlier, on 17 June 1908, Babarao had been convicted under Section 151A of the IPC and Section 127 of the Bombay Police Act, on extremely frivolous charges of inciting a mob of 500 to 600 people to help free S.M. Paranjpe who had been arrested on charges of sedition. At the time, Babarao was sentenced to a month-long rigorous imprisonment at Dongri Jail in Bombay and later, Thane Jail.

This time, Babarao was taken back to Nashik in a police vehicle and constantly questioned en route. Even before he could alert his younger brother to destroy or hide some of the explosive literature at home, the police raided their house in Nashik on 2 March 1909. Among the documents found concealed in the eaves were about sixty pages of closely typed material in English, which was in fact the ‘Bomb Manual’ that Hemchandra and Bapat had procured. The intelligence agencies verified that similar copies had been found in Bengal in connection with the Maniktala Case. The book had about ‘45 sketches of bombs, mines, and buildings to illustrate the text’.<sup>64</sup> They also discovered Frost’s *Secret Societies of European Revolution, 1776 to 1876*<sup>65</sup> that contained details of the ‘Russian nihilists consisting of small circles or groups affiliated into sections, each member knowing only the members of the group to which he belonged’<sup>66</sup>—quite like how Abhinav Bharat was structured. Four poems of Aabaa Darekar, alias Kavi Govind, that Babarao had published were also confiscated. These included two Marathi poems—one was titled ‘Bodhapur Puratan Mauj’ that made Puranic references of gods and demons to assert Indian victory over the British. In another, titled ‘Shivakalin Lokamanovrutti’, the poet had imagined Indians requesting Lord Ganesha seeking the birth of an icon such as Shivaji.

C.J. Stevenson-Moore of the DCI elaborated to the district superintendent of police in Nashik, Mr J.F. Guider:

An incriminating letter written by Tatyā (Vinayak) to his brother was intercepted along with *The Indian Sociologist* in the Sea Post Office. The Bombay Police have now made an important find in the brother’s house. One item is the Manicktolla Explosive Manual. This is the first copy of the Explosive Manual, which has been found outside Calcutta and perhaps P.M. Bapat brought it. There was only one complete copy of it in

Calcutta. Were it and the Bombay copy written by the same hand? Deputy Director, please inquire regarding this and note. If necessary, get photos of the first page from Calcutta and Bombay. Neither original is available now. We should send to Bombay any information about the Savarkars, which they are not likely to have and ask for copies of the statements against them when complete. <sup>67</sup>

The ‘incriminating’ letter that the police had confiscated was of Vinayak writing to Babarao to send him the *Bande Mataram* essay. <sup>68</sup> Vinayak was termed as a ‘well-known rank extremist’ <sup>69</sup> and it was decided that his residence in London, India House, needed to be searched thoroughly. Eight letters written by Vinayak to Babarao were translated and sent to the India Office on 13 May 1909. Stevenson-Moore himself admits to the letters being hardly ‘dangerous’:

The Taty letters do not in themselves amount to much; the worst document in that collection is the *Vande Mataram* effusion; which, however, was not, as I gather, the production of Vinayek Damodar Savarkar at all. It is found in his brother’s house at Nasik, and in several of his letters Vinayek asks for it to be sent to him. Vinayek gives mostly the facts reported by secret agents of Scotland Yard as to his doings and speeches at the India House. These are ostensibly private meetings, and I question whether these reports would carry much weight with the Benchers of Gray’s Inn. It seems that the only public occasion on which Vinayek really let himself go was the Guru Govind meeting in London on 29th December 1908. But I question whether a single wild utterance would tell much against him. <sup>70</sup>

On the one hand, attempts were being made to find evidence against Vinayak and build a legally tenable case to justify his possible arrest and extradition to India. While the government could justify its detention of Babarao with the excuse of having found the ‘Bomb Manual’ and other revolutionary literature, in Vinayak’s case, was he to be tried only through guilt of association? On the other hand, the idea was to influence the Gray’s Inn to prevent admission to Vinayak at the Bar, now that he had completed his course in London. This is the dilemma that Stevenson-Moore discusses in his letter above.

Babarao’s trial was initially conducted before the district collector of Nashik, Arthur Mason Tippetts Jackson. Advocate Gole was the public

prosecutor with the deputy superintendent of police assisting him. The youngest of the three brothers, Narayanrao Savarkar, desperately tried to find an advocate to represent Babarao and even managed to raise Rs 200 for the trial costs. No one was prepared to take up the case. He finally went to advocate Thosar in Thane and pleaded with him to help them in this hour of crisis. Thosar was moved and agreed to assist along with his fellow advocates, Pradhan, Sathye, Ketkar and Gadre. Advocate Gole brought to the judge's notice the seditious content of the literature seized from Babarao's house, including the 'Bomb Manual', revolutionary poems by poet Govind, and the books and pamphlets published under the Abhinav Bharat Mala series.

In his written deposition to the court, Babarao said:

I published these materials but due to the tumultuous situation in India, I had neither time nor inclination to look into their sales. I am solely responsible for my actions. Though I have not written the books or poems, I do not think that they were written to preach treason or incite people to rebel against the King . . . Some of the items found in the raid on my house on 12 March 1909 belong to me. The other items have been planted in my house by the police who bear ill will towards me. For the last three-four years, there has been enmity between the police and myself and they have built up a false case against me. <sup>71</sup>

The judge, Justice B.C. Kennedy, was not convinced and on 8 June 1909 he pronounced his verdict:

The Penal Code has given me very little leeway to decide the quantum of punishment. Under Section 121, I sentence Ganesh Damodar Savarkar to Transportation for Life in the Andamans and order forfeiture of his entire property. Under Section 124A, I sentence him to two years' rigorous imprisonment. This sentence has to be served simultaneously with the sentence given under Section 121. <sup>72</sup>

It was a severe blow for the Savarkar family. But as the *Kesari* of 15 June 1909 reports: 'Babarao heard this terrible punishment stoically.' <sup>73</sup> The Black Waters, or Kalapaani, of the Andamans was notorious for its monstrosity and torture. Convicts seldom returned alive or healthy from

this hellhole. Babarao's wife, Yesu Vahini, had lost two children in their infancy and now with her husband transported for life, she had nothing to look forward to. Yet, she bore the verdict with determined courage. The police confiscated all their belongings including utensils. It is said that when neighbours came to offer their condolences and sobbed at her piteous condition, she remained resolute and consoled them instead: 'Do not cry! It is only when several homes such as ours are devastated that the nation will prosper!' <sup>74</sup>

People began to shun Yesu and hurl insults at her since they considered her to be from a family of convicts. She was boycotted from all social events. If they had to share a bullock cart with her anywhere, they would turn away or insist that she dismounted. She was often abused in public as *kaidyaachi baayko* (wife of a convict). Each time she visited her maternal home, the women in the neighbourhood passed jibes at her being a woman who was a 'burden on her maternal home'. <sup>75</sup> Yesu bore these abuses and insults with immense fortitude.

However, the Abhinav Bharat members and family friends took care of Yesu and Narayanrao who was still completing his studies. Madame Bhikaji Cama began sending Rs 30 every month for the family's maintenance. Aabaa Darekar, or the poet Govind, was so moved by the Savarkar family's condition that he raised money for them and boosted their morale. He even composed a poem for her in the form of a prayer seeking protection for Babarao—'*Sankati raksha mama kaant, kaant*' (Protect my husband from crisis!). Yesu would often keep humming this prayer to herself.

Before being taken to the jail, Babarao was publicly humiliated by being paraded on the streets of Nashik in fetters and handcuffs, wearing prisoner clothes, his meagre belongings of a small bundle of clothes, a rusted plate and water pot balanced precariously on his back. He spent a month in a Nashik jail before bidding adieu to Nashik and his family. Babarao was then shifted to the Yeravada jail in Poona as convict number 4193. As a precursor to the harsh times ahead in the Andamans, his abusive jamadar, or constable, Malhari ordered him to grind 25 pounds of grain each day.

This was then increased to 35 pounds. He was then given the punishment of ‘standing handcuffs’<sup>76</sup> which entailed standing with his arms hung to the wall for six hours in the morning and four hours in the evening. This would go on for several weeks. At times he remained handcuffed all through the night and had to sleep in the same standing position. The half-cooked food of millet or wheat breads caused bouts of intense diarrhoea. Convicts even had to pass stools in their cells standing handcuffed. He was administered electric shocks in a bid to make him confess to his crimes. In about six weeks, his body gave in and he developed high fever. He was then shifted to the hospital for treatment. Thereafter, he was given a lighter job of spinning wool.

Narayanrao came to see his elder brother and his heart broke at the hardships Babarao was undergoing. They decided to appeal against the verdict at a higher court. But on 21 November 1909, the Bombay High Court upheld the sentence. Babarao was shifted to the Alipore prison in Calcutta and from there transported to the Andamans in the S.S. *Maharaja*. Prisoners and convicts were locked in the ship’s basement. Suffocated by the stench and in the inglorious company of thugs, murderers, dacoits and rapists, Babarao reached the wretched Cellular Jail of the Andaman Islands. Little did Babarao know that he would soon get a companion in the dreaded jail—his younger brother Vinayak.

London, 1909

Vinayak’s grief knew no bounds when he received the telegram informing him about Babarao’s transportation for life to the Andamans. He longed to be back in Nashik with his family. But there were responsibilities in London that he could not run away from. On 20 June, at a public meeting in London, Vinayak swore vengeance against the British for their treatment of Babarao.<sup>77</sup> As he had expected, two days after his fiery speech, on 22 June 1909, Vinayak received information from Gray’s Inn that they had decided to postpone admitting him to the Bar. Right from May 1909, given the wide negative publicity that Vinayak had received in



the British press and his brother's conviction, speculation was rife about the Bar's attitude towards him. On their part, the British authorities in India were keen to nab Vinayak as well and have him arrested and extradited to India. In a demi-official, J.H. DuBoulay writes from Bombay to Sir Harold Stuart in London on 8 May 1909:

The other day I was directed to send you copies of Savarkar's letters from the India House to his brother in Nasik, with the suggestion that they should be brought to the notice of the Secretary of State. In Reuter's telegram of 7th received this morning, I see that one student about whose call to the Bar they are hesitating has been one of the managers of the India House. We know that Savarkar has been the Manager of the India House and also that he has had some examination before him. It occurs to me that it might be worthwhile wiring to the India Office to tell them that you have papers showing a clear connection between Savarkar and his brother who has now been committed for trial on charges of waging war and sedition, in whose possession was found a voluminous typed document giving detailed instructions as to the manufacture and use of bombs, besides the draft of a most violent essay in praise of various Bengal murderers. If the India Office laid this information before the proper authorities, their hesitation should give way to decision presuming the student in question *is* Savarkar, and the effect would be excellent. In any case I trust you will not think the suggestion an impertinence. <sup>78</sup>

This was possibly the lowest ebb in Vinayak's life, with both his personal and professional lives in the doldrums. But being committed to the revolutionary cause, he was prepared to face such seemingly insurmountable challenges. He shifted out of India House temporarily to deflect the attention the place was gathering in the press. On 3 April, he moved to Bipin Chandra Pal's residence at 140, Sinclair Road.

One of the key influencers of the Gray's Inn decision with regard to Vinayak's admission was Sir William Hutt Curzon Wylie (1848–1909). He was a British Indian Army officer who rose to the position of a lieutenant colonel. He had served as the British resident to Nepal and one of the princely states of Rajputana. On his return to Britain, he was appointed aide-de-camp to the Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton. One of his main tasks was the control of high-ranking Indian visitors to Britain and the continent who were suspected of seditious

activities. This included native Indian princes such as Gaekwad, the Maharaja of Baroda.<sup>79</sup> He kept a close watch on their movements, the contacts they made while in Europe and the level of official recognition that they were awarded by continental governments.<sup>80</sup> Wyllie also made personal contacts with several Indian students, on occasion inviting them home for a drink or dinner and craftily extracting information from them, all the while behaving as their well-wisher. If any of this information merited attention, he passed it on to his superiors.<sup>81</sup>

In late April 1909, Curzon Wyllie had personally written to the benchers of Gray's Inn dissuading them from calling both Vinayak and Harnam Singh to the Bar. Through May 1909, he wrote several letters and supplied a plethora of information to Gray's Inn about Vinayak's 'undesirable' activities, terming him a particularly dangerous and seditious force. While Harnam Singh was called to the Bar, it charged Vinayak with 'condoning assassination, inciting revolution and advocating against the nation'.<sup>82</sup> It is said that Curzon Wyllie even travelled to France to gather information about Vinayak and his associates at India House. He spearheaded a few unsuccessful attempts to establish a boarding house for Indian students sponsored by the India Office. He believed that this master stroke of his would help strip away the uniqueness of India House, wean away new recruits for Vinayak and also help foster loyalty towards the British government in the minds of young students.

The anger and resentment among several Indian students in London had reached its zenith and was all set to explode. It was merely a matter of time. On the evening of 1 July 1909, at about 8 p.m., a young, handsome Indian student left his room on the first floor of a lodging house on 106 Ledbury Road in the Bayswater neighbourhood of London. The National Indian Association (NIA) was holding one of its routine parties to encourage interaction between the British and Indians in London. It was being held at Jehangir Hall in the Imperial Institute at South Kensington. Miss Beck, the honorary secretary of the NIA, greeted him at around half past nine. She had met him a few months back and inquired how his studies were progressing. To this he replied that he had finished his course

at the University College and would take up the examination for qualifying as an Associate Member of the Institute of Civil Engineers (AMICE) later in October before heading back home to India. Since he knew quite a few people at the party he told Miss Beck that he would keep himself busy socializing with them.<sup>83</sup> The young man walked around confidently, waiting for the opportune moment. At around 11 p.m. William Curzon Wyllie, the honorary treasurer of the NIA, made his entry into Jehangir Hall. He exchanged pleasantries with a few Indian students and stopped by to have a longer conversation with the young man. Suddenly, the young man fished out a small Colt pistol and fired four shots at point-blank range, right into Curzon Wyllie's eyes.<sup>84</sup> Wyllie collapsed to the ground and died instantly. Cawas Lalcaca, a forty-six-year-old Parsi doctor from Shanghai, who rushed to Curzon Wyllie's aid upon hearing the first shot was also inadvertently hit and lay writhing in pain on the ground. He eventually succumbed to his injuries.

Douglas William Thorburn, a journalist of the National Liberal Club, and several others rushed towards the young man, leapt on him and grabbed him tightly, pinning him to chair, to prevent further harm. In the process, his large gold-rimmed glasses fell. The young man placed the revolver to his own temple and was going to kill himself, but he had used all the bullets. People jostled and struggled to get the pistol off him. In the scuffle, one of the guests, Sir Leslie Probyn, fell and injured his nose and ribs. Thorburn asked him why he had committed such a ghastly act. The young man looked at him sternly and stoically responded, 'Wait, let me just put my spectacles on!'<sup>85</sup> He seemed unruffled and calm.

*The Evening Telegraph* described this trait of his in its report of him: '... not only being an expert revolver shot, but was the calmest man in the room after the tragedy, coolly inquiring if he might have his glasses'.<sup>86</sup> A fellow Indian, Madan Mohan Sinha, who was at the party, questioned him in Hindustani but the young man remained silent. The former wondered if the young man was under the influence of intoxicants as he appeared in a half-dazed and dreamy condition. Captain Charles Rolleston who held the

young man tightly asked him repeatedly what his name was. Finally, he shouted: ‘Madan Lal Dhingra.’

The police came in no time and arrested Dhingra. Constable Frederick Nicholls and Detective Sergeant Frank Eadly testified that Dhingra also carried a dagger, a Belgian revolver with six chambers and extra ammunition.<sup>87</sup> A search at his apartments in Ledbury Road by Inspector Draper yielded seventy cartridges and another magazine revolver. There was a letter by Curzon Wylie to Dhingra lying on his table. It was dated 13 April, asking Dhingra to meet him for any assistance that he might require. In fact, Dhingra’s brother, having heard that he was associating with members of India House, had written to Curzon Wylie to counsel him. The letter was as follows:

Dear Sir: Your brother, Mr K.L. Dhingra, whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of making in England, has written to tell me that you are in London, and asking me to be of any assistance I can to you. I expect to be abroad . . . but on my return I shall be very pleased to see you at the India Office, if you can conveniently call between 11 and 1 or 2:30 and 3:30.<sup>88</sup>

Curzon Wylie had tried the same trick of creating goodwill among Indian students, extracting information from them and passing these on to his superiors. But Dhingra did not respond to his overtures, viewing him as emblematic of the establishment’s efforts to track his doings.<sup>89</sup> A diary of his shooting practice was also discovered.<sup>90</sup>

But how did Dhingra, the most unlikely candidate to undertake a political assassination, who barely participated in India House events, end up pulling the trigger? He would dismiss the lectures of India House as ‘mere talk’ not worth attending and believed in action rather than discourses. He considered the Indian revolutionary Kanailal Dutta of the Jugantar group as his role model. Dutta, along with fellow revolutionary Satyendranath Bose, had shot dead Narendranath Goswami, an approver of the British in the Alipore Bomb case. Dutta was hanged to death on 31 August 1908.

As a young man in Punjab, Dhingra had worked at the settlement department where he had been badly treated and racially discriminated against by Englishmen. Harishchandra Krishnarao Koregaonkar was one of Vinayak's trusted translators of his book on 1857 and a member of India House. He was arrested by the DCI in Bombay after he returned to India in December 1909. He turned into a government approver and his testimony was collected to build a case against Vinayak. Koregaonkar testified in the trial about Dhingra:

His (Dhingra's) hatred of Englishmen was intense. This was fed by the articles against Indians that used to appear in the English papers from time to time. He used to read them over and over again, articles like 'Coloured men and English women' which appeared in London Opinion, 'Babu, Black Sheep', which appeared in Cassell's Weekly.<sup>91</sup>

Dhingra had prepared for the assassination assiduously. As early as 26 January 1909 he had procured a gun licence and purchased a Colt automatic magazine pistol for £3.5s from Gamage's Limited, Holborn. Thereafter, for three months, he made regular visits, thrice a week, to the shooting range at 92, Tottenham Court Road, to practise. Given that he had a valid licence, he managed to gain entry to the shooting range. He fired nearly twelve shots on each visit and soon 'acquired considerable proficiency'.<sup>92</sup> Dhingra had supreme confidence in himself in the run-up to the assassination. The evening before the murder, Dhingra had come looking for Vinayak at Bipin Chandra Pal's house. M.P.T. Acharya who received him there recollects that he found Dhingra 'happy like a bird. He was always of a brooding temperament when he was in India House but not so that evening. But it is true that he spoke very little so that one could have no inkling of what was going on in his mind.'<sup>93</sup> Even on the day of the murder, before heading to Kensington, Dhingra stopped by at the shooting range at around 5.30 p.m. and fired twelve shots from a distance of 18 feet; eleven of them hit the target accurately.<sup>94</sup>

There was reason why Dhingra was so fastidious about his practice sessions. His real targets were Lord Curzon, the villain of the Partition of Bengal who was back in Britain, and Lord Morley.<sup>95</sup> He had narrowly missed assassinating both on earlier occasions. His icon and leader, Vinayak, met him at the Notting Hill Gate Station on the evening before the assassination and, while bidding him farewell, told him sternly: ‘Don’t show me your face if you fail this time!’<sup>96</sup> Vinayak has been criticized by commentators for leading Dhingra to act as if in a haze, hypnotized by blind obedience to him. As the mastermind behind attacks who goaded his followers, Vinayak himself stayed away from wielding any weapon in his life. His threat to Dhingra to not show his face in case he failed in this attempt too was taken so seriously by Dhingra that he resolved to succeed at all costs.<sup>97</sup> But like every revolutionary organization, Abhinav Bharat too needed an intellectual strategist and mastermind—a role that Vinayak played—and several foot soldiers to implement the plans.

After the murder, Dhingra was taken away to Marylebone Police Station and was formally charge-sheeted. The charges were read out to him and he nodded.<sup>98</sup> When asked if he wished to communicate with his friends in London, he replied nonchalantly: ‘I do not think it is necessary tonight, they will know later on.’<sup>99</sup> On the morning of 2 July, Dhingra was taken to Westminster Police Court. Just before being remanded, he told the magistrate: ‘The only thing I want to say is that there was no wilful murder in the case of Dr Lalcaca; I did not know him; when he advanced to take hold of me I simply fired in self-defence.’<sup>100</sup> The magistrate adjourned the case for a week and remanded Dhingra to judicial custody.

The incident shook London to its core. The press was inundated with reports on the murder. Eyewitness accounts and graphic details of the scene of crime were reported in almost all the major newspapers. The issue rocked the British Parliament as well. Dhingra’s father, Dr Sahib Datta Dhingra, sent a telegram to Lord Morley informing him that the family had disowned their son forthwith. He also wrote to the *Pioneer* asking them to publish his public ‘abhorrence of the dastardly deed,

depriving the family of one of the kindest of friends'. <sup>101</sup> Dhingra's two brothers, Bhajanlal and Beharilal, were also in London, and they quickly followed their father in publicly disowning him. Condolence messages poured in from various vassals of the Empire. The raja of Benares, Sir Prabhu Narain, in a long demi-official dated 14 July 1909 stated:

It is superfluous, rather useless, on my part to tell you how very horrified and shocked, I feel at the atrocious crime which has been perpetrated in London by an Indian student and which cost the life of the two best friends of India. No man who has any stake in the country, can look with indifference upon such matters. These crimes which only a year or two before were quite unknown to this country are now becoming only too frequent and it is a wonder—rather I might be pardoned to say—a pity, nay, a shame, that nothing is being done seriously to eradicate this evil . . . it is rather a question of life and death to us. England might not think it necessary to care much for the Indians, but we Indians cannot afford to lose England's protection. Our wealth, our happiness, our stability, even our very existence as a nation, depends upon England, and woe be the day when she would think of giving up hold upon this country . . . Indian students such as Savarkar and his associates are openly expressing their sympathy with the murder and men like Veerendra Nath Chatterjee are publishing letters in public papers and declaring that 'the catalogue of coming assassinations will be probably a long one . . . Anarchical attempts to murder should be treated as murder and their sympathizers dealt with as felons. Until such sorts of drastic measures will not be carried out at least for a year or two, I have no doubt these crimes will rise by leaps and bounds. <sup>102</sup>

The entire Indian community and its political leaders too began a series of condemnations of Dhingra. On 3 July, a meeting presided by Surendranath Banerjea and on 4 July, one by Gopalkrishna Gokhale, castigated Dhingra for this brazen act. Gokhale mentioned that the foul act had 'blackened the Indian name and is one for which Indians would have to hang their heads in shame before the whole civilized world'. <sup>103</sup>

In retaliation, Madame Cama's *Bande Mataram* was scathing in its attack on leaders such as Gokhale for their denunciation of Dhingra. In its 10 September 1909 issue, it stated:

The clique of ignoble and cowardly politicians who trade in the tears and groans of their countrymen and who are represented by that conscienceless shameless poltroon, Gokhale of Poona, have been doing their best to mislead our young men by means of

utterances and writings as specious as they are mischievous. All these pseudo-patriots resort to the same tricks to win the favour of the Government and secure their personal safety in the midst of the general ruin of their nation. It is amusing to see that these selfish and unprincipled wretches sometimes quarrel among themselves out of vanity and personal jealousy. So much the better for us. A house divided against itself cannot stand, and already the Moderates are showing signs of disunion and internal collapse. Gokhale has been treating the people to some fine speeches: he is a past master in the art of clothing mischievous nonsense in the garb of high-sounding phrases . . . meanwhile Surendra Nath Banerji has been licking the shoestrings of the British people and making himself ridiculous in the eyes of the whole world. <sup>104</sup>

On 5 July, the Indian community congregated in large numbers in London's Caxton Hall to condole the assassination and to condemn Dhingra. Several Parsi ladies, reported the *Daily Telegraph* of 6 July, 'came attired in their picturesque costumes'. His Highness the Aga Khan presided over this distinguished audience and said that they were meeting to see how best they could 'rehabilitate themselves among their fellow-subjects of the Empire in the face of a dastardly act of revolt'. <sup>105</sup> Among those who spoke on this occasion were distinguished Indians such as Sir Mancherjee Bhowmagari, Surendranath Banerjea, Bipin Chandra Pal and G.S. Khaparde. The audience included several eminences such as the maharajkumar of Cooch Behar, Sir Dinshaw Petit, Fazalbhoy Karimbhoy, Syed Hussein Bilgrani, K.C. Gupta and others. The speakers used disparaging terms for Dhingra, ranging from 'savage', 'brutal', and 'treacherous' to 'cowardice', 'unpardonable' and 'inhuman'. Sir Bhowmagari moved a resolution to express the community's horror and indignation at the crime and this was seconded by Ameer Ali. It also conveyed condolences to Lady Wyllie and the family of the assassinated. The resolution stated:

The general meeting, consisting of representatives of all communities of India, and the bulk of the Indian residents in Great Britain, desires to express the horror and indignation with which they in common with the whole of the people of India view the terrible crime committed by an Indian youth last Thursday, which resulted in the deplorable death of Sir Curzon Wyllie and also of Dr Lalkaka. <sup>106</sup>



Going into an oratorical flourish, Bhownagari said that there could be no sane man, woman or child within the confines of that hall or throughout the length and breadth of British India who did not regard this catastrophe as a national disaster. He lamented that in this fallen moment, the misguided youth Dhingra had given a death blow, albeit temporarily he hoped, to the amazing success with which Indians had been negotiating their demands with the British government and especially Lord Morley.

After his speech, something dramatic happened. Theodore Morrison, a member of the India Council, led a shy young Indian youth to the dais. He was seemingly in grief and shame, dressed in a grey, lounge suit and wearing gold-rimmed glasses. He was introduced as Dhingra's younger brother who lived in London. Morrison claimed that the younger Dhingra had visited his office earlier that morning and conveyed his family's extreme consternation at Madan Lal's renegade behaviour. He asked Morrison what he could do in his capacity to show his repugnance to his brother's act. He was told by Morrison that it was his duty to come to Caxton Hall that evening and publicly express his sentiments and also disassociate himself and his family from the crime. As the *Dublin Daily Express* reports: 'The dramatic suddenness of this incident created a considerable sensation in the hall and many were moved to tears.' The young man was not allowed to speak a word and it was Morrison who did all the talking while the former just hung his head nervously. He was guided back to his seat and the meeting proceeded. A new resolution was moved:

That this meeting considers it due to the British public to assure them that they deplore with feelings of humiliation, an act of heinous character, committed in the metropolis of the British Empire, and beg that they realize that this is the act of a fanatic or madman, which had aroused the deepest indignation of all the people of India. <sup>107</sup>

When the meeting was deciding to unanimously adopt the resolution and condemn Dhingra for his lunatic act, a young man leapt on his feet and screamed defiantly: 'No! Not unanimously!' The congregation was

stunned into silence. They turned to see who had made this audacious assertion. It was Vinayak coming out in support of his friend and protégé, Madan Lal Dhingra, even as the latter's family and friends were publicly dissociating themselves with him. Cries of 'Turn him out', 'Pull him down,' were made by the shocked leaders as people rushed towards Vinayak who stood there calmly with his arms folded and head held high. 'It is all right,' he muttered confidently even as a well-built Eurasian, Edward Parker,<sup>108</sup> sprang on Vinayak and struck him in the right eye. His spectacles broke and he suffered a broken nose. Blood all over his face, Vinayak leapt on to a chair and in a loud ringing voice announced that he was against the resolution and that he would oppose it till the last drop of his blood. M.P.T. Acharya had a stick in his hand and 'instinctively struck him (Parker) on his head'.<sup>109</sup> The assailants however pulled Vinayak down and he was eventually thrown out. V.V.S. Aiyar, M.P.T. Acharya and Gyanchand Verma who were also present in the hall followed Vinayak out. Surendranath Banerjea walked out in protest against what he termed a cowardly act against an unarmed Vinayak, and the Aga Khan too did not quite relish the manner in which the sombre evening had turned out.

Vinayak and his associates rushed back to their Sinclair Road residence and the same night, he wrote an elaborate letter to *The Times* that was published.

Sir,

In all fairness to me, will you kindly insert the following lines in the next issue of your valuable paper? In reference to the unfortunate incident, which happened in the meeting held at Caxton Hall this evening in order to express horror at the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie, it is to be feared that my attitude would be open to misinterpretation.

The fact is that when the President put the resolution before the meeting and asked those in favour of the same to raise their hands, he acknowledged the right, in accordance with the invariable practice in all public meetings, of everyone who was present to vote according to their choice. The resolution was explained by those who proposed and seconded it, so as to presume the criminality of the man who is accused of having committed the murder. It seemed to me an encroachment upon the assumption of the authority of Law and Courts to declare a man, who is still under

trial, to be a criminal. So it seemed to me more just and appropriate to omit the word 'crime' and 'criminal' from the resolution. As the proceedings had advanced too far to effect this, I simply voted against the resolution as it stood and wanted to bring to the notice of the President the fact that the resolution could not be declared as passed unanimously. I was perfectly within my rights as a voter and the only proper way for the President was to count the votes against and for, and declare the result. But some excited spirits forgot themselves, so much as to shout 'eject him', etc. and even went so far, as to threaten me with physical force. I stood perfectly calm, simply asserting my right and without giving the least provocation. In a minute or two, one man, Mr Parker by name, reached to the place where I was standing and attacked me while I was actually in the act of explaining the meaning of my opposition in clear terms, though they were drowned into the city of the excited few.

The man who committed this unprovoked assault upon one who simply insisted upon either being heard or ejected will soon be brought before the courts. Meanwhile I hasten to write this letter to you to explain my conduct at the meeting and prevent any misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

Thanking you in anticipation,

I am,  
Yours faithfully,  
V.D. Savarkar.

140 Sinclair Road, July 5.

The contents of his letter and the meticulous legal position that Vinayak articulated was referenced by several other leading London newspapers. Even Parker who had punched Vinayak in the face wrote a rejoinder in *The Times* on 8 July alluding to the greatness of the British Empire and all his ancestors who had established English rule in India. His contention was that Indians in Britain were enjoying the hospitality of the 'noble British people' and hence someone who objected to the resolution at the Caxton Hall meeting was not worthy of his consideration. He also alleged that Vinayak's associates stood on a chair and struck him with a stick. This was the reason, he explained, why he 'planted a truly British blow between the eyes of Savarkar', <sup>110</sup> and that he was not at all sorry for what he did.

Newspapers also mentioned excitedly that the decision of the benchers of the Gray's Inn was impending. The *Daily Dispatch*, termed Vinayak as 'a fervent nationalist . . . an extremely brilliant scholar . . . a political

theorist . . . deeply versed in all the literature of political liberty . . . awaiting the decision of the House of Lords to whom he has appealed' <sup>111</sup> against the postponement of his call at the Bar. The *Bolton Evening News* too mentioned: 'Mr Savarkar occupies a rather prominent position in the community of Indian students in this country, and in fairness to the attitude, which he assumed at the meeting, allowance must be made for the point of view that a man in his position was bound to take.' <sup>112</sup> It spoke about the considerable attention and excitement that the decision regarding his call at the Bar was eliciting among legal circles. It was during the Easter term that his application to be called 'was defeated in a large meeting of benchers by a majority of only three votes' out of twenty-four and that his renewed application 'backed by a strong array of counsel' was being considered at a special meeting the following week. But an obvious outcome of the Caxton Hall altercation was that the benchers of Gray's Inn resolved at a meeting held on 14 July that Vinayak was not eligible for a call at the Bar. <sup>113</sup>

Scotland Yard found an excuse in the assassination to connect the inmates of India House with the act. The London Police went to every one of them to unearth the conspirators. They wanted M.P.T. Acharya and other Indians to leave London. <sup>114</sup> Detectives used Syed Haidar Raza to influence Acharya to leave for America, but he flatly refused. Many Indian revolutionaries had been shipped off to America simply on the suspicion that they might give cause to some sensation to the press. <sup>115</sup>

Meanwhile, Dhingra's trial recommenced on 10 July. Sir Edward Henry, the commissioner of police, Sir Charles Mathews, the director of public prosecution, and others were present. Twenty-five-year-old Dhingra with 'dark olive complexion, with thick black hair . . . large gold rimmed glasses . . . dressed in a black and gray double-breasted suit' was brought in by the police. <sup>116</sup> The prosecution brought more witnesses before the court, including Dr Thomas Neville who had conducted a post-mortem of Curzon Wylie's body. He had found a bullet entrance wound on the right eye and an exit wound at the neck, two more wounds on the left eye, and the back of the neck, one below the left ear and another over the left

eyebrow. The bullets were found in the head and the cause of instantaneous death was ascertained as brain injury.<sup>117</sup> Throughout the proceedings, Dhingra stood leaning on the dock rail, 'his right hand behind his back, the left hanging idly by his side'.<sup>118</sup> Tindal Atkinson was present to represent Dhingra's family that once again said that they 'view this crime with the greatest abhorrence, and they wish to repudiate in the most emphatic way the slightest sympathy with the views or motives which have led up to the crime'. Atkinson also mentioned on behalf of Dhingra's father and the rest of his family 'that there are no more loyal subjects of the Empire than they are'.<sup>119</sup>

The judge then asked Dhingra if he wished to make any statements regarding the prosecution's case, to which he nonchalantly replied that he concurs with all the witnesses. He did not want to call any evidences in his favour but however wished to read his statement. The historic statement of Madan Lal Dhingra was as follows:

I do not want to say anything in defence of myself, but simply to prove the justice of my deed. As for myself, no English law court has got any authority to arrest and detain me in prison, or pass sentence of death on me. That is the reason I did not have any counsel to defend me.

And I maintain that if it is patriotic in an Englishman to fight against the Germans if they were to occupy this country, it is much more justifiable and patriotic in my case to fight against the English. I hold the English people responsible for the murder of 80 millions of Indian people in the last fifty years, and they are also responsible for taking away £100,000,000 every year from India to this country. I also hold them responsible for the hanging and deportation of my patriotic countrymen, who did just the same as the English people here are advising their countrymen to do. And the Englishman who goes out to India and gets, say, £100 a month, that simply means that he passes a sentence of death on a thousand of my poor countrymen, because these thousand people could easily live on this £100, which the Englishman spends mostly on his frivolities and pleasures.

Just as the Germans have no right to occupy this country, so the English people have no right to occupy India, and it is perfectly justifiable on our part to kill the Englishman who is polluting our sacred land. I am surprised at the terrible hypocrisy, the farce, and the mockery of the English people. They pose as the champions of oppressed humanity—the peoples of the Congo and the people of Russia—when there is terrible oppression and horrible atrocities committed in India; for example, the killing of two millions of people every year and the outraging of our women. In case this country is occupied by Germans, and the Englishman, not bearing to see the

Germans walking with the insolence of conquerors in the streets of London, goes and kills one or two Germans, and that Englishman is held as a patriot by the people of this country, then certainly I am prepared to work for the emancipation of my Motherland.

Whatever else I have to say is in the paper before the Court. I make this statement, not because I wish to plead for mercy or anything of that kind. I wish that English people should sentence me to death, for in that case the vengeance of my countrymen will be all the more keen. I put forward this statement to show the justice of my cause to the outside world, and especially to our sympathizers in America and Germany.

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The Court was stunned and the room fell silent. When asked if he still wanted recourse to legal aid, an irritated Dhingra said:

I have told you over and over again that I do not acknowledge the authority of the Court. You can do whatever you like. I do not mind at all. You can pass sentence of death on me. I do not care. You white people are all-powerful now, but, remember, it shall have our turn in the time to come, when we can do what we like.

The judge pronounced Dhingra guilty of the crime on 17 August and sentenced him to death by hanging. He was committed to the sessions trial held at Old Bailey, to be conducted by Chief Justice Lord Alverston. Even as he was being led away by the police, Dhingra addressed the judge and said: ‘Thank you, my Lord. I don’t care. I am proud to have the honour of laying down my life for the cause of my motherland.’<sup>121</sup>

Dhingra was lodged at Brixton Jail where Vinayak came to meet him on 22 July. While his entire family had disowned him, Vinayak stood firmly beside Dhingra. The two had an emotional meeting with tears streaming down their cheeks. ‘I have come to have the *darshan* (meeting) of a great patriot and martyr,’<sup>122</sup> Vinayak is said to have told Dhingra, to which the latter fell to his feet with tears of joy and gratitude. During their next meeting a few days later, Dhingra conveyed two wishes: that he should get a small mirror so that he may be sure that he was going to the gallows with the same cheerful face and that he be cremated in strict accordance with Hindu rites and that no non-Hindu should be allowed to touch his body. He

also decreed that his clothes and belongings be sold and the money thus obtained be utilized for the nationalist cause.

As disturbed as Vinayak was with the execution of Dhingra looming large, he resolved to commit himself to another duty towards his friend. He was determined to get Dhingra's voice published in the press so that he did not go down in history as the violent and misguided lunatic that the Indian community and his own family had portrayed him as. This was a dangerous and a seemingly impossible task. But Vinayak was adamant. There was a second statement that Dhingra wanted to read out in court but the police had confiscated it and prevented him from doing so. Vinayak and his associates managed to get a copy of this suppressed statement. The best tribute, they thought they could pay Dhingra, was to get this second statement published. Several British leaders, such as Hyndman, who were sympathetic to the Indian cause but did not approve of Dhingra's means, admitted that his indictment of the British government was stinging and true. The statement thus needed to be read and understood by a wide cross section of British people. Vinayak got copies of the statement printed and Gyanchand Verma rushed to Paris to post them to various American and Irish newspapers. The British intelligence reports contend that the style of writing was so like Vinayak's that it could have well been written by him. Vinayak approached David Garnett, a friend who worked with the *Daily News* in London, and asked him if he had the courage to publish the statement that no other London newspaper dared to. Garnett took the piece to his boss, Robert Lynd, who agreed to publish the 'scoop' as an exclusive for the morning edition of 16 August 1909—a day prior to Dhingra's execution. The editor's note had the following preface to Dhingra's final statement that was titled as 'Challenge': <sup>123</sup>

A copy has been placed in our hands of the statement, which Dhingra drew up before the murder, intending it to be read as if it had been subsequently drawn up. To this document, the prisoner referred in the course of the trial, but it was not given to the public. We may add that a copy has been, for some time, in the possession of certain of Dhingra's compatriots. The statement is as follows:

#### CHALLENGE

I admit, the other day, I attempted to shed English blood as a humble revenge for the inhuman hangings and deportations of patriotic Indian youths. In this attempt I have consulted none but my own conscience; I have conspired with none but my own duty.

I believe that a nation held in bondage with the help of foreign bayonets is in perpetual state of war. Since open battle is rendered impossible to a disarmed race, I attacked by surprise; since guns were denied to me, I drew forth my pistol and fired.

As a Hindu, I feel that a wrong done to my country is an insult to God. Poor in health and intellect, a son like myself has nothing to offer to the Mother but his own blood, and so I have sacrificed the same on her altar. Her cause is the cause of Shri Rama. Her services are the services of Shri Krishna. This War of Independence will continue between India and England so long as the Hindu and the English races last (if this present unnatural relation does not cease).

The only lesson required in India at present is to learn how to die and the only way to teach it is by dying ourselves. Therefore I die and glory to my martyrdom.

My only prayer to God is: may I be reborn of the same Mother and may I re-die in the same sacred cause till the cause is successful and she stands free for the good of humanity and the glory of God.

Vande Mataram!

Decades later, when Lloyd George explained to Winston Churchill his admiration for Dhingra's patriotism, it is said that Churchill exclaimed: 'Dhingra's last words are the finest ever made in the name of patriotism' and even compared him with Plutarch's immortal heroes. <sup>124</sup>

On the destined morning of 17 August, large crowds had gathered outside Pentonville Jail. Quite significantly, the 'crowd comprised hardly a handful of Indians'. <sup>125</sup> As the clock struck nine, Dhingra embraced death with cheer and the confidence that his martyrdom would inspire thousands of young men like him back home. In a vile move, the British turned down the petition for handing over the dead body for cremation and decided to bury it inside the jail as per usual practice, despite Dhingra's last wish. Gyanchand Verma, however, performed the obsequies as per Hindu traditions and even shaved his head. It was only on 13 December 1976 that Dhingra's mortal remains were repatriated by the Indian government led by Indira Gandhi, brought to his hometown Amritsar, where a memorial was built in his honour. <sup>126</sup>

Dhingra's martyrdom and his soul-stirring statements were covered widely by the American, European and Irish press. While most of them



honoured Dhingra's courage and conduct during the trial, the *New York Times* editorial, entitled 'British Complacency and Crime', found fault with both India House and British nonchalance when it came to Indian students in London. It said:

But other things were done at India House. Every week a secret society there whose members called themselves 'The Destroyers.' [sic] This society was formed to put into practice Mr Krishnavarma's principles . . . 'The Destroyers' were so many kittens that must be kindly stroked and not restrained, it was said. They must be taught the error of their ways by tracts and editorial articles setting for the magnanimity of British rule in the mother country. <sup>127</sup>

Undeterred by criticism, the Indian revolutionaries in London, under Vinayak's leadership, got pamphlets published titled 'To the memory of our patriot Madan Lal Dhingra':

This day the morning of the 17th August 1909 will remain engraved in red letters in the heart of every Indian who loves his Motherland. This is the morning that our great patriot, our beloved Dhingra, is swinging to and fro with his sacred neck in the grip of execution ropes in Pentonville prison. His high soul is rising from his earthly body, giving more spirituality to the cause on whose altar he is sacrificed. This great patriot is no more with us in his earthly body, but in spirit he is with us, will remain with us, will guide us in the battle of freedom of our motherland, and his name written in the history of India will go down to posterity. The alien oppression of his Motherland he could not bear, and he decided to help the movement, which is engaged in freeing Her, by giving his life . . . 'I told you that the English Court has no authority over me. I do not care for my life. You are all powerful. You can do what you like. But remember that one day we shall be powerful, and then we shall do what we like'— were his words when the English Judge, who must have been feeling demoralized in inner heart, told him that his life will be taken . . . and how our enemies have killed him! But let them remember that they will never, never succeed in suppressing or killing the movement. Moral force like gentle tides at the touch of storm sweeps away hills and lands. The act of a patriot comes like storm to the moral waves of human society, and sweeping away the barriers, leads the cause to success. <sup>128</sup>

The London newspaper, *New Age*, made a significant observation: 'India in the future will regard him (Dhingra) as a hero with full responsibility.'

We say India will be right. Our own opinion must be put on record. It is the beginning of the end of British Rule in India.’ <sup>129</sup>

The Dhingra episode—the first daring act of political violence against the British, right on their home turf—sent shock waves across the world and back home in India. V.V.S. Aiyar’s articles in *India*, a Pondicherry weekly edited by Subramania Bharati, created a stir. Bharati also resigned from the daily in protest following ideological differences with the owners of the newspaper. Aiyar continued to contribute to the newspaper under various pseudonyms such as ‘Deshabhaktan’, ‘Bharata Sevakan’ and ‘Bharata Priyan’. There were articles about Dhingra’s trial, his last days in prison and the well-behaved convict that he was, and how he only read spiritual books in his last days. G.S. Khaparde, political activist, lawyer and Tilak’s close associate, who was in England between 1908 and 1910, gave interviews about Dhingra’s martyrdom and what it meant for the cause of freedom. In a conversation with W.S. Blunt, he said that if ‘India could produce 500 men as absolutely without fear, she would achieve her freedom . . . no great fortitude was ever shown by a martyr for any faith. With such men to love her, Mother India must succeed’. <sup>130</sup>

There had been trouble brewing between Shyamji and the young revolutionaries of India House for a while now. This became more intense following Dhingra’s martyrdom, especially because of Shyamji’s stoic silence after Curzon Wylie’s assassination. It was ten days after the assassination that he broke his silence, after repeated entreaties by Vinayak and others. From Paris, he wrote a letter to *The Times* strongly condemning the search of the India House, but also hastened to add that he had never known or met Dhingra who had come to India House after his departure to Paris. However, Shyamji added:

Although I have had absolutely no connection with the assassination in question, which according to the patriotic and courageous statement made last Saturday by Mr Dhingra in the course of the police court enquiry was committed entirely on political grounds, I frankly approve of the deed and regard its author as a martyr to the cause of Indian Independence. The name of Madanlal Dhingra will go down to posterity as that of one who sacrificed his life by remaining faithful to the altar of the ideal . . . his

statement before the magistrate and his final declaration during the trial at the Old Bailey in London, conspicuous as they both are for their courage, truth, and patriotism, put him on the very highest plane among the liberated heroes in the world's struggle for freedom. <sup>131</sup>

Curiously enough, in the July 1909 edition of the *Indian Sociologist*, Shyamji had mentioned that, 'political assassination is not murder . . . we have the support of International Law according to which political offenders have not sinned against the morality of the universe but against the absurd laws of an antiquated political system, like the one now prevailing in India'. <sup>132</sup> The coincidence of the Curzon Wylie murder happening in the same month as this long article justifying political assassinations, naturally pointed the needle of suspicion directly to Shyamji as the mastermind. In all fairness, given he had no knowledge of Vinayak and Dhingra's plans, Shyamji thought it prudent to distance himself from the act, though not disagreeing with it in principle. This became a sore point for the young revolutionaries who felt let down by their mentor. This, despite the August 1909 edition of the *Indian Sociologist* heaping encomiums on Dhingra's bravery and martyrdom, and pronouncing that, 'the declaration of faith, as embodied in his statement and utterances . . . will no doubt be circulated among Indian Nationalists as a holy tract'. <sup>133</sup> Shyamji also announced four scholarships in Dhingra's memory.

Vinayak and his associates had strayed from the purely theoretical radicalism that Shyamji propounded. Shyamji's contradictory stands on the issue of political violence and assassinations caused consternation among the revolutionaries. They were naturally 'incensed and exasperated in an ever-increasing degree at the over-weening self-conceit and high pretensions of leadership that were implicit in Shyamaji's writings'. <sup>134</sup> His attempts to control the young revolutionaries from Paris did not go down well with many of them, leading to several open, ugly arguments. Vinayak however stayed away from attacking Shyamji as it was the latter

who had ‘installed him in the India House’<sup>135</sup> and also enabled his education through the scholarship.

However, a volatile young man like Virendranath Chattopadhyay had no such qualms. He wrote stinging indictments of Shyamji in *The Times*, saying, ‘He may call himself by whatever name he pleases but he is not in any sense of the word a Nationalist. He (Shyamji) has never been accepted as a leader even by a small minority in India, although during his seventeen years’ residence in this country he has striven hard by “patriotic gifts” to take part in a great movement that absolutely and categorically refuses his guidance.’<sup>136</sup>

Vinayak’s many revolutionary associates were absolutely dismayed by the meticulous care that Shyamji took to disclaim personal connections with the revolutionaries, and yet give theoretical support to political assassinations. Chattopadhyay writes in another letter to *The Times*: ‘The day that I feel convinced of the necessity of political assassination and underground work I shall cease to write. I shall return to my country and put my theories into practice. But I shall certainly not seek a safe retreat within the hospitable walls of a European city.’<sup>137</sup>

A year later, in April 1910, Chattopadhyay apologized and made up with Shyamji. Their relationship remained warm and cordial thereafter till Shyamji’s death in 1930.

For publishing Shyamji’s views supporting Dhingra in the July edition of the *Indian Sociologist*, the printer of the journal, Arthur Fletcher Horsley, was tried for sedition on the same day as Dhingra. Chief Justice Lord Alverston decreed that anyone writing or printing such seditious material in the future would be liable for prosecution. On 23 July, Horsley was also sentenced to four months’ imprisonment. Being a staunch advocate of free press, twenty-two-year-old Guy Aldred, a publisher and an avowed anarchist and supporter of revolutionaries, decided to defy this diktat. He published a long, bitter article attacking British imperialism and praised Dhingra and the other Indian revolutionaries in the August 1909 edition of the *Indian Sociologist*, in his own name. Among other things, he wrote:

In the execution of Dhingra that cloak will be publicly worn, that secret language spoken, that solemn veil employed to conceal the sword of Imperialism by which we are sacrificed to the insatiable idol of modern despotism, whose ministers are Cromer, Curzon and Morley & Co. Murder—which they would represent to us as a horrible crime, when the murdered is a government flunkey—we see practised by them without repugnance or remorse when the murdered is a working man, a Nationalist patriot, an Egyptian fellaheen or half-starved victim of despotic society's bloodlust . . . Why then should Dhingra be executed? Because he is not a time-serving executioner, but a Nationalist patriot, who, though his ideals are not their ideals, is worthy of the admiration of those workers at home, who have as little to gain from the lick-spittle crew of Imperialistic blood-sucking, capitalist parasites as what the Nationalists have in India. <sup>138</sup>

On 25 August 1909, Guy was picked up from his house at 35, Stanlake Road, Shepherd's Bush. The police confiscated 369 copies of the August edition of the *Indian Sociologist*. Guy admitted to printing 1500 copies of which 1000 had been sent to Shyamji in Paris. The police also seized copies of correspondences between Shyamji and Guy. In a letter dated 28 July, Shyamji had commended Guy for displaying rare courage of conviction and that he 'did not fear risk one bit' <sup>139</sup> by undertaking to print the *Indian Sociologist* even after Horsley's arrest. There was also a letter from Shyamji dated 10 August requesting Guy to ensure that the paper comes out at least a day or two before the fateful date of Dhingra's execution, so that 'the martyr should see in print' <sup>140</sup> what Shyamji had said about him. Guy's press itself was called Bakunin Press after the well-known Russian revolutionary. Guy was tried on 7 September at the sessions court and on 10 September, Justice Coleridge pronounced him guilty. He was convicted for resisting the laws in force in the British Indian Empire, raising discontent in the minds of native Indians against the king, and promoting the use of physical force, violence and disorder. He was sentenced to twelve months of rigorous imprisonment. <sup>141</sup>

The police, under Francis Powell, detective inspector of the Metropolitan Police, New Scotland Yard, also traced one James Tochatti who lived in Hammersmith in London. Tochatti was accused as Guy's associate, and who had in his possession copies of the seditious *Indian Sociologist*. It was also revealed that Tochatti was preparing to publish the

September edition of the magazine and the type too had been set for the same. Frank Kitz and five other men were assisting him in the process. The court ordered the rounding up of all the men involved. Thus, along with the Indian revolutionaries, several British and Irish men who supported the cause of Indian liberation and stood by the Indians also faced the brutal consequences of the law.

The Dhingra episode echoed across different parts of the world for a long time. The newspaper, *Vande Mataram*, that Aurobindo Ghose and others were bringing out in Calcutta, was suppressed after the Alipore Bomb case. This was revived as *The Bande Mataram—a Monthly Organ of Indian Independence* by Madame Bhikaji Cama and Lala Har Dayal. The Indian revolutionaries in Paris had also started the ‘Paris India Society’. The very first issue of *The Bande Mataram* that was published in Geneva on 10 September 1909 was dedicated to Dhingra and his memory. In a tribute titled ‘Dhingra—the Immortal’, it said:

Young India has produced another hero, whose words and deeds shall be cherished by the whole world for centuries to come. Dhingra’s declaration will be treasured in the archives of national and universal history as a precious heirloom for future generations. Dhingra has behaved at each stage of his trial like a hero of ancient times. He has reminded us of the history of Medieval Rajputs and Sikhs, who loved death like a bride. England thinks she has killed Dhingra: in reality, he lives forever and has given the death-blow to British sovereignty in India. Life immortal is his; who can take it away from him. All nations have watched Dhingra’s trial with bated breath, and have felt that New India is unconquerable because she can give birth to such heroic sons.

The Indian patriotic party, which has declared War of the Knife with England has issued a manifesto, in the course of which it says: ‘Dhingra has found out the secret of Life; he has discovered the path of Immortality. He has realized the highest destiny of Man . . . he has lifted himself above the common run of men and joined the company of the saints and heroes.’ These words sum up the attitude of India towards our patriot-martyr.

In time to come, when the British Empire in India shall have been reduced to ashes, Dhingra’s monument will adorn the squares of our chief towns, recalling to the memory of our children the noble life and the nobler death of him who laid down his life in a far-off land for the cause he loved so well. <sup>142</sup>

The inaugural issue of *Talwar*, started by Virendranath Chattopadhyay from Paris in November 1909, also paid rich tributes to Dhingra.

But even though there was overwhelming support and appreciation for Dhingra in the months following his execution, there was an equal amount of condemnation of his act by several elements of the political spectrum. Leaders of the moderate wing of the Indian National Congress, quite like the eminent members of the Indian community of London, were deeply critical of Dhingra's act. They believed that it decelerated the pace and tenor of the negotiations they had been having with the British for greater autonomy. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was stinging in his criticism of Dhingra. He wrote:

It is being said in defence of Sir Curzon Wylie's assassination that it is the British who are responsible for India's ruin, and that, just as the British would kill every German if Germany invaded Britain, so too it is the right of any Indian to kill any Englishman. Every Indian should reflect thoughtfully on this murder. It has done India much harm; the deputation's efforts have also received a setback. But that need not be taken into consideration. It is the ultimate result that we must think of. Mr Dhingra's defence is inadmissible. In my view, he has acted like a coward. All the same, one can only pity the man. He was egged on to do this act by ill-digested reading of worthless writings. His defence of himself, too, appears to have been learnt by rote. It is those who incited him to this that deserve to be punished. In my view, Mr. Dhingra himself is innocent. The murder was committed in a state of intoxication. It is not merely wine or *bhang* that makes one drunk; a mad idea also can do so. That was the case with Mr. Dhingra. The analogy of Germans and Englishmen is fallacious. If the Germans were to invade [Britain], the British would kill only the invaders. They would not kill every German whom they met. Moreover, they would not kill an unsuspecting German, or Germans who are guests. If I kill someone in my own house without a warning—someone who has done me no harm—I cannot but be called a coward. There is an ancient custom among the Arabs that they would not kill anyone in their own house, even if the person be their enemy. They would kill him after he had left the house and after he had been given time to arm himself. Those who believe in violence would be brave men if they observe these rules when killing anyone. Otherwise, they must be looked upon as cowards. It may be said that what Mr. Dhingra did, publicly and knowing full well that he himself would have to die, argues courage of no mean order on his part. But as I have said above, men can do these things in a state of intoxication, and can also banish the fear of death. Whatever courage there is in this is the result of intoxication, not a quality of the man himself. A man's own courage consists in suffering deeply and over a long period. That alone is a brave act, which is preceded by careful reflection. I must say that those who believe

and argue that such murders may do good to India are ignorant men indeed. No act of treachery can ever profit a nation. Even should the British leave in consequence of such murderous acts, who will rule in their place? The only answer is: the murderers. Who will then be happy? Is the Englishman bad because he is an Englishman? Is it that everyone with an Indian skin is good? <sup>143</sup>

Despite the criticism of the revolutionary methods, it was no mere coincidence that on 15 November 1909 the government introduced the Indian Councils Act, popularly known as the Morley–Minto Reforms. It was way back in 1906 that Viceroy Lord Minto had prepared a minute arguing for a greater say of Indians in governance, given their rising education levels and awareness. Yet till the revolutionary movement caught steam and a spate of bombings and political assassinations shook both India and Britain, there was little progress on the reforms. Finally, the Act legitimized the election of Indians to various legislative councils across India for the first time. The reforms also granted the request of Muslim groups that had come together under the umbrella of the Muslim League, formed in 1906, demanding separate electorates for their community. This remained a bone of contention for a long time, till it spelt its ultimate disaster on the subcontinent.

In fact, Gandhi too acknowledged the reason for the rapid implementation of these administrative reforms. When asked in an interview, if the Secretary of State Lord Morley's reforms were driven by the fear of the revolutionaries, Gandhi candidly admitted that: 'The English are both a timid and a brave nation. England is, I believe, easily influenced by the use of gunpowder. It is possible that Lord Morley has granted the reforms through fear, but what is granted under fear can be retained only so long as the fear lasts.' <sup>144</sup>

The questioner was confused with the self-contradiction in the reply and pointed that out:

Will you not admit that you are arguing against yourself? You know that what the English obtained in their own country they obtained by using brute force. I know you have argued that what they have obtained is useless, but that does not affect my argument. They wanted useless things and they got them. My point is that their desire



was fulfilled. What does it matter what means they adopted? Why should we not obtain our goal, which is good, by any means whatsoever, even by using violence? Shall I think of the means when I have to deal with a thief in the house? My duty is to drive him out anyhow. You seem to admit that we have received nothing, and that we shall receive nothing, by petitioning. Why, then, may we not do so by using brute force? And, to retain what we may receive, we shall keep up the fear by using the same force to the extent that it may be necessary. You will not find fault with a continuance of force to prevent a child from thrusting its foot into fire? Somehow or other we have to gain our end. <sup>145</sup>

In response, he was given an extremely long-winding series of justifications, theological and philosophical constructs that largely contradicted each other, forcing him to move on to another question.

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Exactly three years after their first meeting in October 1906, Gandhi met Vinayak again on 24 October 1909. The Indian community gathered to celebrate the festival of Vijayadashami, the tenth day following the nine-day festivities and fasting of Navaratri. To avoid British surveillance, Englishmen were also invited. Nearly seventy Indians participated. Gandhi was invited to preside over the meeting. He agreed on the condition that ‘no controversial politics were to be touched upon’ <sup>146</sup> and that he would rather speak on the greatness of the Ramayana. He was dressed in a swallow-tailed coat and stiff front shirt. In his address, Gandhi mentioned that the occasion of Vijayadashami that marked the victory of Lord Shri Ramachandra was a momentous one and that He needed to be honoured by every Indian as a historical personage. Gandhi went on:

Everyone, whether Hindu, Muslim or Parsi, should be proud of belonging to a country, which produced a man like Shri Ramachandra. To the extent that he was a great Indian, he should be honoured by every Indian. For the Hindus, he is a god. If India again produced a Ramachandra, a Sita, a Lakshmana and a Bharata, she would attain prosperity in no time. It should be remembered, of course, that before Ramachandra qualified for public service, he suffered exile in the forest for 12 years. Sita went through extreme suffering and Lakshmana lived without sleep all those years and observed celibacy. When Indians learn to live in that manner, they can,

from that instant count themselves as free men. India has no other way of achieving happiness for herself. <sup>147</sup>

It was then Vinayak's turn to speak. Indirectly puncturing holes in Gandhi's arguments, he said that it would be worthwhile to remember that Vijayadashami is preceded by a nine-day fast to propitiate Goddess Durga, who is a symbol of war and annihilation of evil. He concurred with Gandhi that Ramachandra was the life and soul of India but urged the audience to remember that even he could not establish Rama Rajya (his kingdom) without slaying Ravana who symbolized tyranny, aggression and injustice. If Ramachandra had merely sat on a fast, it was unlikely that his kingdom could have been established. He went on:

Hindus are the heart of Hindustan. Nevertheless, just as the beauty of the rainbow is not impaired but enhanced by its varied hues, so also Hindustan will look all the more beautiful across the sky of future by assimilating all the best from the Muslim, Parsee, Jewish and other civilizations. <sup>148</sup>

Vinayak's stirring speech won him many accolades from the audience. Barrister Asaf Ali who was present at the event described Vinayak as being as 'fragile as an anemic girl, restless as a mountain torrent, and keen as the edge of a torpedo blade'. He later wrote that it was not an exaggeration to say that Vinayak was 'one of the few really effective speakers I have known and heard, and there is hardly an orator of the first rank either here or in England whom I have not had the privilege of hearing'. <sup>149</sup>

The clash between the ideologies of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar had only just begun.

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As a consequence of the Dhingra episode and Curzon Wylie's murder, the attitude of the British government toward Indian students in London became harsher. It was a deeply embarrassing incident for Scotland Yard and the British intelligence community. People wondered how Dhingra

managed to take rifle-shooting lessons for months, with no detective ever being able to trace it. After the assassination, the letters exchanged between Morley and Minto convey their frustration and their disappointment especially with Sir Edward Henry, the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. 'I much fear,' Morley wrote, 'that Henry has no real grasp of a situation that has caught him entirely by surprise . . . On the whole the police frame of mind strikes me as extremely casual; either making needless fuss or else not making serious fuss enough.' <sup>150</sup>

Scotland Yard's response to the crisis was to put Morley and Lord Curzon under protective surveillance. Within three weeks of the assassination, Morley had his own personal retinue of three Special Branch detectives follow him to and from work at the India Office. <sup>151</sup> These additional agents and increased surveillance were cosmetic changes that were deemed inadequate by the British government, press and the public alike.

In the aftermath of Curzon Wyllie's assassination, the British government ordered a closure of India House as it was seen as the nerve centre of revolutionary activity. In the last meeting held at the House on 4 July 1909 before it was shut down, Vinayak made a speech eulogizing Dhingra's bravery. In a reference to Harishchandra Krishnarao Koregaonkar who had shadowed Dhingra during the assassination, Vinayak said: 'There was one man to watch and guide the whole thing and he says that Dhingra stood cool, and calm firing at the prostrate figure of his country's enemy, Wyllie.' <sup>152</sup> On 21 July 1909, a farewell meeting was held at an Indian restaurant at No 17, Red Lion Passage, Holborn, that was attended by all the India House inmates. They had gathered to wish Koregaonkar well, as he was on his way back to India, and to thank him for his contributions. Vinayak and others personally saw him off at Victoria Station.

The British were conscious that with the closure of India House and in view of heightened police surveillance, a flight of the revolutionaries abroad was imminent. Most revolutionaries would now find safer havens in other European cities, especially Paris. In October 1909, Sajani Ranjan

Banerjee, or Sukhsagar Dutt, was employed specifically for the purpose of a twenty-four-hour surveillance on Indian students who seemed suspicious. He was to act as a conduit between the DCI in India and Scotland Yard in London. It was decided to create an Indian secret service to facilitate easy communication and sharing of information between these two organizations spread across continents.

John Arnold Wallinger, who was to head this new secret service, began coordinating operations between the DCI, Scotland Yard and also the Paris Police Force.<sup>153</sup> Wallinger had earlier served as the superintendent of the Bombay Police and had an excellent grasp over several Indian languages. This appointment and the decision to work in coordination with Paris were to prove fortuitous when it came to Vinayak in the following year.

With India House closing down, Vinayak moved to Bipin Chandra Pal's house. But after the Dhingra episode, Pal suddenly shifted his priorities to side with the moderates in their denunciation of Dhingra. This made Vinayak's stay at his house untenable. He was chased from lodge to lodge, sometimes two in the course of a single day due to police pressure. On one such occasion where he had already changed two lodges and had just checked into the third and was beginning to lie down, the owner asked him to vacate since the detectives seemed to have posted themselves around the place. He was exhausted and was on the verge of physical collapse. At this point, a German lady accepted him as a boarder in a room 'over a small and extremely dirty Indian restaurant in Red Lion Passage'.<sup>154</sup> A police officer noted that this lady was not only a 'bit of an anarchist herself' but also 'German'.<sup>155</sup> They saw proof of her subversive orientation in the fact that on one instance she had warned Vinayak, who was holding a meeting with fellow Indians in his room, about detectives lurking around. Consequently, one of the Indians was sent outside to distract the agents and after a second warning knock, the meeting 'dispersed in some evident haste and trepidation'.<sup>156</sup>

Vinayak interestingly shared the room with a certain Sukh Sagar Dutt. It is not clear whether this Dutt was the same British informant or if they were different individuals—though the latter seems more likely.

Garnett describes how the windows of the room that Vinayak and Dutt shared looked across the filthy alleys of one of the dirtiest London slums. The room opposite theirs was occupied by a lady with four children and she kept ‘screaming and (was) frequently drunk’. But Vinayak seemed totally at peace and ‘was indifferent to her existence and indeed oblivious to his environment. He was wrapped in visions.’ And what were these visions? Garnett speculates:

India was a volcano, which had erupted violently during the Mutiny and which could be made to erupt again and that every act of terrorism and violence would beget further violence and further terrorism until Indians regained their manliness and their mother country her freedom. All the sufferings involved were a fitting sacrifice to her.

157

Vinayak knew that his days in London were now numbered.

Unfortunately for Vinayak, bad news did not seem to cease. In November 1909, the viceroy, Lord Minto, was on a tour of the princely states of Gujarat and was to visit Ahmedabad. The British feared that Abhinav Bharat members might cause disturbances and hence heightened the security in and around the viceroy’s travel route. Brahmagiri Bua of the Poona branch of Abhinav Bharat was indeed planning to throw bombs at the viceroy’s cavalcade and they were in regular touch with the Ganganath Bharatiya Vidyalaya in Baroda. Despite the tight security, the revolutionaries managed to hurl a bomb at the viceroy’s procession, although he managed to escape unhurt.

The accused, Mohanlal Pandya, was a close associate of Barin Ghose and Narayanrao Savarkar. Consequently, Vinayak’s seventeen-year-old brother was also arrested on suspicion of involvement in the crime. It was later, on the evidence of his high school headmaster, that Narayanrao was in Poona on the day of the explosion that he was released after a few days. His arrest shattered Yesu Vahini who was already suffering the consequences of Babarao’s transportation to the Andamans. She wrote a heart-wrenching letter to Vinayak, who was her best friend and confidant, conveying her utter despair and grief at these developments. The poet in

Vinayak burst forth. The year 1909 had been particularly harsh. Little did he know that the years following it would only be worse. He wrote a deeply moving poem to Yesu titled 'Santvana' (Consolation). The rough translation of the Marathi poem is as follows:

(1)

My loving salutations to thee, O my sister!  
Whose love hath so tenderly nursed me as to make me forget  
The early loss of my mother.  
Received your letter of blessing, have taken to heart what you hath written  
Thy letter gladdened my heart and made me feel truly blessed,  
Blessed indeed is this family of ours in as much as it is  
Thus privileged to serve Lord Ram and administer to his Will!

(2)

Many a flower blooms and withers away  
Who has kept their count or note  
But behold, the lotus flower that was plucked by Gajendra's trunk  
And offered at the feet of Sri Hari and thus withered away there  
Became immortal and holy; effecting *moksha*  
Thus is our Mother Bharat like the pious Gajendra seeking deliverance  
Let her come to our garden and offer our dark blue-black lotus flower  
And pluck it from the bough to offer it at the feet of Sri Rama.  
Blessed indeed is our family tree, definitely touched by the divine  
In as much as it is privileged to serve Sri Rama

(3)

Let then the rest of our flowers too be plucked thus  
And offered at the feet of Sri Rama  
Let this mortal body be put to good use  
Immortal is the family tree that has extinguished itself for the nation  
Its fragrance of human welfare spreads all around  
O Mother, weave a garland of all in bloom for the  
Festival of the Nine Nights  
Once the momentous Ninth Night passes  
And the ninth garland is woven and offered  
Kali the Terrible will reveal Herself  
And grant Victory to her votaries

(4)

Sister! Thou hast ever been the symbol of courage,

The source of my inspiration.  
Thou too art a consecrated and avowed votary to Ram's noble mission  
Thy consecration to this great and noble cause  
Calls upon thee to be great and noble thyself.  
Behold! On one side stand watching the past souls of sages and saints  
Of our race gone before and on the other side the  
Future generations yet unborn!  
May we be able to acquit ourselves today in a manner  
As to evoke universal approval from these godly spectators. 158

Physically and emotionally exhausted and broken, Vinayak left London for Brighton, a seaside town. On the evening of 10 December 1909, he was sitting by the Brighton beach with his friend Niranjana Pal, Bipin Chandra Pal's son. All around him, happy families, parents and their children were enjoying the lovely weather, the sea, surf and sand. Vinayak was overwhelmed with intense pathos and longing for his Motherland. Everything suddenly seemed to have been shattered. His professional and personal lives were in tatters. But more importantly he felt that he had been a colossal failure in the sacred mission—armed struggle to liberate his motherland—that he had set out upon. Dhingra's execution, the public ostracism and shaming that followed, and constantly being on the run were taking their toll on Vinayak.

Niranjana Pal described that poignant moment:

Presently he commenced to hum a song, he sang as he composed. It was a Marathi song, describing the pitiable serfdom of India. Forgetful of all else Savarkar went on singing . . . Presently, tears began to roll down his cheeks . . . His voice became choked. He sobbed . . . but he still sang. The song remained unfinished . . . he burst and began to weep like a child. 159

This catharsis manifested itself in the form of that immortal melody that has haunted innumerable people ever since—*Ne majasi ne parat matrubhoomila, sagara, prana, talamalalaa*. The classic poem and its translation are as follows:

*Ne majasi ne parata matrubhumila, sagara prana talamalalaa*

*Bhumatecha charana tala tujha doota, mee nitya pahila hota  
Maja vadalasi anya deshi chala jaaoo, srishtichi vividhata pahoo  
Tayi janani hrid viraha shankitahi jhaale, pari tuva vachan tija didhale  
Margagya swaye meeche prushti vahina, twarita ya parata aneena  
Vishwasalo ya tava vachani mee, jagadanubhavayoge banuni mee  
Tava adhika shakta uddharani mee, Yeyina tware, kathuni sodile tijala,  
Sagara prana talamalalaa (1)*

*Shuka panjara vaa harina shirava pashi, he phasagata jhali taishi  
Bhuviraha kasa satata sahu ya pudhati, dashadisha tamomaya hoti  
Gunasumane mi vechiyali ya bhave, ki tine sugandha ghyave  
Jari uddharani, vyaya na tichya ho sacha, ha vyartha bhara vidyecha  
Ti amra vriksha vatsalata re, navakusumayuta tya sulata re  
To bala gulabahi ata re, phulabaga mala, haaye parakha jhala  
Sagara prana talamalalaa (2)*

*Nabhi nakshatre bahuta eka pari pyara, majha bharatabhumi tala  
Prasada ithe bhavya pari majha bhari, aaichi jhopdi pyari  
Tijavina nako rajya maja priya sacha, vanavasa tichya jari vanicha  
Bhulavine vyartha he ata re, bahu jivalaga gamate chitta re  
Tuja saritpate ri sarita re, tvadvirahachi shapata ghalito tujala  
Sagara prana talamalalaa (3)*

*Ya phenamishe hasasi nirdaya kaisa, ka vachana bhangisi aisa?  
Tvat swamitva samprata ji miravite, bhiuni ka angla bhumite  
Manmatela abala mhanuni phasavisi, maja vivasanate deshi  
Tari angla bhumi bhayabheeta re, abala na majhi hi mata re  
Kathila he agastisa ata re, jo achamani ek kshani tuja pyala  
Sagara prana talamalalaa (4)*

Oh Ocean, take me back to my Motherland!  
My soul in so much torment be!  
Lapping worshipfully at my mother's feet  
So always I saw you  
Let us visit other Lands to see  
The abounding nature, said you.  
Seeing my Mother's heart full of qualms  
A sacred oath you did give to her,  
Knowing the way home, upon your back  
My speedy return you promised her.  
Fell for your promise did I!  
That worldly-wise n' able be I  
Her deliverance better serve do I



Upon returning, so saying I left her.  
Oh Ocean, my soul in so much torment be! (1)

Like a parrot in a cage, like a deer in a trap—  
Oh so duped am I  
Parting from my mother for ever—  
Besieged by darkness am I!  
Flowers of virtue gather did I  
That blessed by their fragrance she be.  
Bereft from service for her deliverance  
My learning a futile burden it be,  
The love of her mango trees, oh!  
The beauty of her blossoming vines, oh! Her tender budding rose, oh!  
Oh forever lost is her garden to me,  
Oh Ocean, my soul in so much torment be! (2)

Stars abound in the heavens above, but  
Only the star of Bharat-land love I  
Here are found plush palaces, but  
Only my mother's humble hut love I  
What care I for a kingdom without Her?  
Ever exile in her forests choose I.  
Deception is futile now, say I  
Let you not be spared, vow I  
Suffer the same pangs, cry I  
Of parting with the dearest of your rivers!  
Oh Ocean, my soul in so much torment be! (3)

Oh Ye of Foaming Surf, pitilessly you mock!  
Why go back on your word, oh!  
Why deceive my helpless mother,  
Oh why condemn me to exile so!  
Was it in fear of England  
Who flaunts her mastery over you so?  
Fearsome though England may be,  
O My Mother is not feeble so  
Tell all about Sage Agastya she will, lo  
Who in one gulp your waters drank!  
Oh Ocean, my soul in so much torment be! (4) <sup>160</sup>

The poem is one of the masterpieces of modern Marathi literature. Later, it was set to music by musician and composer Hridaynath Mangeshkar,

Vinayak's close associate, and rendered in the melodious voices of singers Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Meena Mangeshkar and Hridayanath Mangeshkar. The song tugs at one's heart strings. It fails to leave anyone who hears it unmoved.

The emotional trauma and strain that Vinayak suffered manifested itself as physical illness. Around December 1909, Vinayak went down with pneumonia and acute bronchitis. The condition worsened to the extent that he was advised to move to a sanatorium in Wales and was put under the care of an Indian doctor, C. Muthu. The cost of treatment was borne by Shyamji.

But even as he was beginning to convalesce, there was more stormy news from back home coming his way.



6

## Endgame London

Nashik, December 1909

It was planned as an evening of festive celebrations. On 21 December 1909, several eminent members of Nashik had congregated to bid farewell to the district collector, Arthur Mason Tippetts Jackson. The district collector, who had been in India since 1888, had managed to beguile several people in Nashik with fanciful tales that in his past life he was a learned Brahmin and hence felt connected to them all. He had even learnt Marathi and Sanskrit to endear himself to the natives. So much so that he was called ‘Pandit Jackson’ by many. <sup>1</sup>

Jackson was being promoted and transferred to Bombay as commissioner and hence a public felicitation was being organized at the Vijayanand Theatre in Nashik. The Kirloskar Theatre Group was staging a Marathi play, *Sharada*, on this occasion and speeches and Jackson’s felicitation was planned during the intermission. Jackson arrived at the stipulated time, accompanied by two ladies and an assistant collector, Mr Jolly. Excitement peaked among the welcome party that had gathered at the theatre’s door to lead him inside.

Even as Jackson was exchanging pleasantries with the gathering, a young man, barely eighteen, leapt from amid the welcome party, took out a

Browning pistol from his coat pocket and shot at Jackson. The bullet missed him, flying past his hand. Before Jackson and the others could comprehend what had transpired, the young man swiftly came forward and fired four bullets straight at Jackson's chest. Jackson fell to the ground and succumbed to his injuries. Police officer Todarmal grabbed the young assailant. Among the welcoming party of the city's dignitaries, one Khopkar snatched the pistol from his hand and another agitated gentleman, one Panashikar, hit the young man hard on his head with his stick, causing him to bleed. Inside the theatre, in the front gallery meant for important persons, where seat tickets cost 12 annas each, two other young men were seated much before Jackson arrived. They were on stand-by, just in case the young assailant failed in his attempts.<sup>2</sup> After they heard the shots, they made a quick escape in the ensuing commotion.

The young assailant was Anantrao Laxman Kanhere, and his two comrades in the crime seated inside the theatre were twenty-three-year-old Krishnaji Gopal Karve and twenty-one-year-old Vinayak Narayan Deshpande—all members of Abhinav Bharat.<sup>3</sup>

While several people in Nashik were charmed by Pandit Jackson, there were few who knew that this was a trick he employed to gain the people's confidence and elicit secrets from them. He was staunchly opposed to any movements that sought freedom. Stories abounded about how when one of his officers beat an Indian peasant to death for merely touching his golf ball, instead of having him convicted, Jackson whitewashed the case and got the officer transferred. Fake documents were manufactured to prove that the peasant had died of diarrhoea. On another occasion, young men returning from a fair chanting slogans of 'Vande Mataram' were rounded up for anti-national activity. A conscientious lawyer, Babasaheb Khare, who fought cases for the young revolutionaries put to trouble by Jackson, was hounded, barred from court practice, his property confiscated and he was imprisoned in Dharwar prison. The shock was too much for Khare to bear and he lost his mental balance. The last straw was Jackson's enthusiasm in getting Babarao Savarkar arrested and tried. The visual of him being handcuffed and paraded in the streets of Nashik at Jackson's

behest angered many young men. They were itching to take revenge. And Kanhere executed this plan on that fateful evening.

Born in 1891 in the Ayani Mete village of Khed district, Ratnagiri, Kanhere had two brothers and a sister. After completing his primary education in Nizamabad, he moved to Aurangabad for his secondary English studies. He had even written a novel, *Mitra Prem*, about the friendships he had developed during this time. Significant among them were Gangaram Rupchand, a Marwari businessman, and Gopal Govind Dharap, both members of the Aurangabad branch of Abhinav Bharat. Their association exposed him to revolutionary ideas, and he was stirred by the fire of liberating his country. He became a member and took the oath as well. Kanhere was enraged about the treatment meted out to Babarao Savarkar and expressed his determination to avenge this. Providentially, Ganesh Balwant Vaidya (Ganu, as he was affectionately called)—an acquirer and keeper of Abhinav Bharat arms in Nashik—visited Aurangabad around this time. Being in the Nizam's domain, acquiring arms was easier in Aurangabad. Ganu stayed at Gangaram's house where the latter showed him daggers, swords, guns and other kinds of weapons. They discussed plans related to Abhinav Bharat. Kanhere happened to eavesdrop on their conversation and at night woke Ganu up and conveyed his resolve to avenge Babarao's sentence. Ganu did not commit to anything and said he needed to consult his associates in Nashik. On his return, he spoke to his Abhinav Bharat associates and they decided to invite Kanhere over to Nashik for a preliminary discussion.<sup>4</sup>

In this meeting on 19 September 1909, Kanhere was acquainted with leading members of Abhinav Bharat in Nashik: Vinayak Narayan Deshpande, Wamanrao Narayan Joshi and also Shankar Ramachandra Soman who had a secret organization similar to Abhinav Bharat. Twenty-one-year-old Vinayak Deshpande was an assistant teacher at Panchavati School at Nashik and also ran a small handloom business. On the third floor of the building where the handloom operated, in a dark old room, Abhinav Bharat meetings were conducted. Deshpande had gathered explosives and stored them in a box here. At Deshpande's house in

Deolali, Ganu and Deshpande manufactured the explosive chemical picric acid from sulphuric acid, nitric acid and carbolic acid. These were all buried in the ground to safeguard them. A year younger than Deshpande, Joshi was his colleague at Panchavati School, while eighteen-year-old Soman was still a student at Nasik High School. Soman taught the members how to manufacture explosives from his chemistry manuals.

Kanhere was thoroughly questioned several times about why he felt this strong urge to murder Jackson, and after ascertaining his genuineness the group embraced him. He was taken to the District Office a few times by Waman so that he saw Jackson and had no doubts about his identity. He was thereafter given a pistol by Vinayak Deshpande, taken to a desolate place on the outskirts of Nashik and made to practise shooting at short and long ranges. Kanhere, who knew he would not live after committing this act, went to a local studio on 22 September dressed in his best attire. He wanted to get himself photographed so that his family could have something of him as a memory.

For some reason though the execution kept getting postponed. Kanhere had to return to Aurangabad as his family wanted him to stay with them. He took a small automatic Browning pistol along to practise shooting back home. His comrades in Nashik got him back based on a false telegram from his brother stating that he was ill in Nashik and wanted his support. At the Nashik Road Station, he was met by Deshpande, Soman, Waman Joshi and Ganu, in addition to a new young man, Krishnaji Gopal Karve who was the head of the Nashik branch of Abhinav Bharat. Twenty-three-year-old Karve was a BA (Hons) graduate and was studying law in Bombay. He knew the art of making bombs and had taught the same to Soman and Damodar Mahadev Chandratre. Around May–June 1909, he had procured seven Browning pistols, one revolver, and a country-made pistol from Gopalrao Patankar, the same man who had received the consignment of Browning pistols sent by Vinayak from London through the cook Chaturbhuj Jhaverbhai Amin Patidar in March 1909. Till then, Karve was not aware of the plot to murder Jackson, and he wanted to meet Kanhere. In the dark hours of the evening, the young men discussed their

plans. Kanhere's demands to have a helper in the task was scoffed at by the rest of the group and somehow the differences led to them departing. Also, Karve and the other members of the Nashik branch said they were not prepared yet to commit the murder.

It was towards the end of November 1909 when it became known that Jackson would soon be gone for good from Nashik that the group got reactivated. On 21 December, Deshpande went to Aurangabad and fetched Kanhere. Some other young men from Aurangabad such as Kashinath Hari Ankushkar and Dattatraya Panduranga Joshi (Dattoo) also came to Nashik around this time and stayed with Ganu.

Karve got two Browning pistols and was also given a packet of poison to consume after the murder or try shooting himself with the spare pistol. It was decided that Karve and Deshpande—both fully armed—would lurk around Vijayanand Theatre and in case Kanhere failed in his attempt, they would step up and fire at Jackson.

Kanhere was arrested on the spot after the act, and he made a statement before the magistrate admitting that he had murdered Jackson and that he had no accomplices. A paper was found in his possession that confirmed the apprehensions of the police that the murder was committed for political reasons. The same night, Ganu and his accomplice, Dandekar, tried to hurriedly conceal the explosives and chemicals they had in their possession at Deolali. But within the next three to four days, the police rounded up Karve, Deshpande, Soman, Waman Joshi, Ganu and Dattoo Joshi. Narayan Damodar Savarkar was arrested in the midnight of 23 December on suspicions of his possible association with the Nashik branch of Abhinav Bharat and he was tortured in prison. A sowkar (banker) of Yeola, Kashinath Daji Tonpe, was also arrested on charges of financing the conspirators. By the first week of January 1910 all of them had made their statements in front of Mr Palsikar, a first-class magistrate.<sup>5</sup> A search of Kanhere's residence in Aurangabad was conducted and torn pieces of letters with covers carrying the postal address of Nashik were found, ascertaining that the men were in regular contact. The letters when pieced together were couched in studiously obscure language and post facto it

could be deduced that they alluded to the murder of some important person.

The judgment in the case was delivered on 29 March 1910 by the chief justice of Bombay. Kanhere, Karve and Deshpande were to be hanged; Soman, Waman Joshi and Ganu were transported for life; and Dattoo Joshi was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. Narayan Savarkar was sentenced to six months of rigorous imprisonment. However, Ganu and Dattoo turned approvers and were pardoned.<sup>6</sup>

On 19 April 1910, Kanhere, Karve and Deshpande were sent to the gallows at 7 a.m. at Thane jail. They were both surprisingly confident and calm. The government did not even allow their families to collect their bodies. The police cremated their bodies at the Thane creek and threw the ashes into the sea themselves, depriving their families of this last symbolism.

The Jackson murder and the subsequent trial of Kanhere and others created a stir in the London press. 'It is impossible to describe the grief and indignation created by the crime,' wrote *The Times*.<sup>7</sup> The press linked the murder to the life sentence meted out to Babarao Savarkar and also added that he 'has a brother, who has made himself notorious in London'.

<sup>8</sup> Narrating the entire litany of revolutionary events in 1909, the *Telegraph* carried an extremely condescending and offensive article:

Obviously, the conspiracy against British officials is not to be trifled with, and will not be eradicated by the passing of resolutions, which may be less or more sincere, at meetings of the natives, against the perpetration of such outrages. We have ourselves largely to blame for these crimes. We have educated these Hindus in Western ideas before they were able to appropriate them, with the result as often happens amongst ourselves, in the case of the children of self-made men who come into the possession of wealth of which they do not know the value, and which they do not make, they frequently become intoxicated with their possessions which too often prove their ruin; wherein, had they had some share in the acquiring of this wealth, or had they been carefully taught how to use, but not abuse it, their patrimony might have been a blessing to themselves and to their friends. In like manner, Indian students dazzled by the wealth of London, and unbalanced by the arguments of English text books on Constitutional history, which they have been unable to digest, are some of them ready for any enterprise, no matter how hare-brained, provided it is undertaken in the sacred name of patriotism, of which they have no real or true conception; whereas if they



could only see the question from an unprejudiced standpoint, or look at it in a sober, disinterested manner, they would view it very differently . . . if instead of putting these Hindu students through a course of English constitutional history, they were required to make a special study of their own country, political and economic and compare its condition a century ago with its present state, they would see more cause for gratitude in our rule than they now appear to imagine . . . the only argument which these fanatics seem to respect is that of force, which apparently must be used with an ungloved hand before the evils referred to have been suppressed. Peaceful methods do not appeal to the Oriental mind as they do to ours.<sup>9</sup>

Commending the job done by the revolutionaries in London to arm their compatriots with Browning pistols, Lala Har Dayal wrote:

We know that the hero possessed Browning pistols. Now these pistols are not manufactured in India, but in Europe. How have they been imported by the revolutionaries? It is clear that this fact is a testimony to the efficiency of our organization and the secrecy of our activity. Besides, the imported arms are not the only weapons on which we have to rely. Daggers can be manufactured in India out of sharp nails to stab all vile agents of the British Government, English or Indian.<sup>10</sup>

In the months to come, the trial was to become the means for the British government to build a case against Vinayak and extradite him from London back to India.

Paris, 1910

Given the massive outrage and hostility in London against Indian students in general, and him in particular, and because of his precarious health, Vinayak decided to move to Paris. Shyamji and Madame Cama had been prevailing upon him for a long time to relocate to Paris. Finally, he decided to make the move some time around 5 January 1910. On his last day in London as a free man, he expressed a desire to Gyanchand Verma to ‘eat rice and gram (curry-*chawal*)’.<sup>11</sup> Seeing his weak condition, Verma went to the Nizamuddin restaurant and got these dishes made for him, which he ate heartily. Verma and others saw Vinayak off at Victoria Station.

Vinayak was received enthusiastically by Shyamji, Madame Cama and Sardar Singh Rana. He stayed at Madame Cama's house at Rue Montaigne.

Commenting on the political situation in India after the political assassinations, Shyamji wrote in the *Indian Sociologist* :

On the 21st of December last at about 5 PM we wrote a letter to a near relation of Mr Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, stating that we had learnt with great sorrow that on appeal the sentence of transportation for life passed in his case for attempting 'to wage war' against the Mleccha king <sup>12</sup> had been confirmed by the Bombay High Court, one of the two judges of which was an Indian traitor and whose order about the forfeiture of all his property was simply barbarous. As a token of our sympathy and commiseration with the members of his family and as a mark of our appreciation of the services rendered by this brave young man to our country, we respectfully enclosed a cheque for their kind acceptance. The next day, i.e., on December 22 we were surprised to see a telegram in an English newspaper to the effect that Mr A.M.T. Jackson, collector of Nasik, had been shot dead at a quarter to 10 o'clock on the previous evening by Anant Laxman Kanare [sic] who stated that he had resolved to avenge the sentence of transportation for life passed in June last on Ganesh Damodar Savarkar for sedition. It will thus be seen that allowing for the difference in the longitudes of Paris and Nasik the time of our writing to sympathize with the members of the family of Mr Savarkar synchronized almost to a minute with that of the assassination avenging the sentence of transportation passed on him. There is a sort of 'poetic justice' in all this, which will, we doubt not, strike the imagination of our readers. <sup>13</sup>

Shyamji also announced two additional scholarships in the names of Hemchandra Das and Ganesh Damodar Savarkar in honour of their immense contribution to the country. The same edition of the *Indian Sociologist* also noted with great disappointment the manner in which the Brahmin community, especially the Chitpawans, was being hounded by the British government. It quoted a *Times* article that called for 'an attack on the Chitpavan Brahmins of Bombay' <sup>14</sup> and rued how more than sixty members of the community were languishing in prisons after judgments by the Secret Tribunal.

Despite convalescing from illness, Vinayak was not sitting idle in Paris. He wrote articles for Virendranath Chattopadhyay's newsletter *Talwar* and created awareness among the Indian community in Paris, trying to enlist members for the Free India Society. During his research on the 1857 War

of Independence, Vinayak had come across the lesser-known fact related to the armed uprising of the Kukas in Punjab. He had delivered lectures on Guru Ram Singh, the leader of the Kuka movement that was eventually crushed by the British. His fascination for Sikh history and his collection of material related to Sikh literature and stories of the various gurus have been mentioned earlier. While he was recuperating in the sanatorium in Paris, Vinayak managed to complete writing an entire book titled *History of the Sikhs*. The book was dedicated to the memory of his son who had died a few years ago. Three copies of the manuscript were made. One was sent to India, which was unfortunately lost in transit or was seized by the police. Another was sent to India through an Indian artist who had agreed to smuggle it back. But during the journey when he realized that strict searches were being conducted on the passengers' baggage, he stealthily threw the manuscript into the sea to avoid getting caught. The third copy was possibly with Madame Cama.<sup>15</sup> Sadly, the manuscript and its copies were all lost, and the book never saw the light of day. Only references to the existence of such a manuscript exist in Vinayak's memoirs.

From Paris, Vinayak also wrote a stirring pamphlet addressed to the rulers of the Indian princely states, many of whom had quietly accepted British suzerainty to save their privileges. This was an appeal to their conscience to stir them to make a wise choice and stand up for their country. It was aptly titled 'Choose, O' Indian Princes'. Among other things, the appeal said:

But, if in spite of this clear warning, failing to realize the mighty forces that are working under the ground and which have already revolutionized the modern world of Indian thought, you try to ally yourself with the enemy and array yourself to stop the eruption of this fire-emitting volcano with your thumbs, then woe upon you O! Princes of India! When the mightiest of empires is trembling at the very birth pangs of this revolution, you, weak as you are, cannot hinder its onward march or smother its birth any more than you can change the gravitation or the rotundity of the earth . . . But everyone who might have actively betrayed the trust of the people, disowned his fathers and debased his blood by allying himself against the mother, he shall be crushed to dust and ashes and shall be looked upon as a harlot, a bastard, and a renegade . . . Choose what you will, and you will reap what you sow. Choose whether you should be the first of the nation's traitors or last of the patriots.<sup>16</sup>

Even as he was writing these fiery articles and pamphlets, Vinayak was aware of murmurs of criticism that had started growing against him, just as they had against Shyamji. Especially after Dhingra, there was talk about how Vinayak only lectured and instigated others, how he never led from the front. His flight to Paris might have also been construed as an attempt to seek permanent asylum, like his mentor Shyamji. At the same time, Vinayak was receiving news from India and his hometown of how his family members and other young men were being rounded up and tortured in the Jackson murder trial. There was no way, he thought, that he could sit idly in Paris and write articles.

The moment of epiphany came on a bright, sunny morning in Paris when he was taking a walk in the garden as per his doctor's advice.<sup>17</sup> Swans and ducks swam merrily in the ponds, water lilies had just bloomed, and the skies were a clear blue. The scene seemed straight out of a painting. Reclining on a bench there, Vinayak pulled out the newspaper and was horrified to read about death sentence awarded to Kanhere, Karve and Deshpande. He was overcome by emotion and cursed himself for enjoying walks in the park, while his compatriots were facing the worst tribulation. As someone who used to preach that one must put everything aside for the cause of freedom, he felt repulsed at his inaction. The time of reckoning and leading by example had come. He decided that he would head back to London, even if it was at the cost of his life and liberty.

There was another reason for Vinayak's decision. He believed that 'London would provide him scope for fighting on behalf of the accused in India' even though he did not know Karve, Kanhere and Deshpande. 'London,' he thought, 'was famous as having given asylum to many exiles and revolutionaries. Orsini, the Italian revolutionary who shot Napoleon III, Karl Marx . . . and many others had lived in London unmolested. London should be safe for him also.'<sup>18</sup>

He hurried back and told Shyamji, Madame Cama and Sardar Singh Rana about his decision and they tried their best to persuade him against it. They had a reason for doing so. The investigation of the arrested persons in the Jackson murder case was slowly leading back to Vinayak

and his activities in London. The government had already been wary of him and after Babarao's arrest they wanted to foist a case on Vinayak in order to extradite him. The leads that many witnesses gave were helping the government create a watertight case against Vinayak.

Lord George Sydenham Clarke, a former British army officer and the new governor of Bombay from October 1907, was determined to prosecute Vinayak whom he considered 'one of the most dangerous men that India has produced'.<sup>19</sup> Official correspondence mentions that: 'A case should be put up against Savarkar even though its [sic] not very strong. If he is convicted of being a member of a conspiracy the second conviction is by no means unprovable. If he is acquitted of course the whole petition drops.'<sup>20</sup> A lot of information had been gathered about him and his writings, but it was felt that these were not enough to nail him in a court of law. The official correspondence hence also drives home a point of caution, and also the need to build a case that did not allow any room for a second trial so that he would be convicted in the first attempt itself:

It should be clearly understood there is chance of acquittal on charge of abetment of murder, whereas in all probability sentence on conspiracy charge will be transportation for life, which would be probably maximum on conviction on other charges. If such a sentence now given, effect might actually be to induce clemency at a second trial. Political effect of second trial would be most unfortunate, as vindictiveness of Government would be alleged.<sup>21</sup>

Lord Montgomerie, a special magistrate at Nashik, was appointed to record evidence particularly to build a prima facie case against Vinayak and have him extradited. A complaint was filed against Vinayak in Montgomerie's court on 17 January 1910, and on 8 February 1910 a warrant was issued against him, charging him with five offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC):<sup>22</sup>

1. Waging of war or abetting the waging of war against the King in India. (*This offence is not quite equal to the offence of treason in England, the legal definition of war being any*

*covert act calculated to subvert the Government. The offence is punishable by death or transportation for life and the forfeiture of property .)* <sup>23</sup>

2. Conspiring, in contravention of Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code to deprive the King of the Sovereignty of British India or a part of it.
3. Procuring and distributing arms in London in 1908, thus abetting the murder of Mr A.M.T. Jackson, collector of Nasik, which occurred at a local theatre on 21st December 1909.
4. Procuring and distributing arms in London in 1908, and otherwise waging war against the King from London.
5. Delivering seditious speeches in India, at Nasik and Poona, January to May 1906; and in London, from 1908 to 1909.  
(*This was also included in the first offence.* )

The warrant was granted against Vinayak in his absence from London on the grounds that these offences came within the Fugitive Offenders Act (FOA) of 1881. The FOA presumed that the suspect in question had been guilty of a crime and had fled to evade arrest.

There were several legal loopholes in the charges. First, Vinayak was not a fugitive when he left India for Britain, nor had he been previously charged, evaded arrest or ever been imprisoned. He had come to Britain like any other Indian student in a legal manner to pursue his law studies and with a scholarship supporting him. But the British government realized that the only way Vinayak could be extradited was by producing charges of an unresolved and unrecorded ‘crime’ in India. To execute this, all that the government could come up with were Vinayak’s speeches (of a seditious nature) made in India nearly five years ago, before his departure for Britain. However, the Indian government could have charged Vinayak and arrest him on sedition charges even back then given that he had been under constant watch. Instead, they built a case against him for sedition in India by raking up a non-existent crime based on forced testimonies of several amnesty witnesses. The reason for the same was that sedition was

near obsolete in Britain, but given its prominence in India, if Vinayak got convicted for that in India the sentence could be the harshest. It was easier to secure jury convictions based on sedition in India and hence an extradition was paramount. As Janaki Bakhle puts it:

Sedition trials *per se* were no less politically explosive in India than in England, but the outcome could be guaranteed because the juries could be counted on to convict. The legal definition of sedition made no real separation between word and deed, intention and implementation, representation and reality. In India, sedition became the pre-emptive as well as the *ex post facto* legal mechanism that allowed the colonial state, in anticipation of a dangerous act, to proscribe all thought, writing or language that might produce it. At the same time, sedition also allowed for a post-event round-up and arrest of everyone even remotely connected with the actual act, on the grounds that their rhetoric had clearly been the cause of incitement of the natives to agitate against the government. At the moment of its demise in England, because of its association with illiberalism, sedition was reborn in India with colonial occupation as the midwife. <sup>24</sup>

Based on the five charges against Vinayak, a telegram was dispatched to London with the result that on 22 February 1910, the Bow Street magistrate granted a provisional warrant of arrest. With Wallinger's intervention, the British managed to secure some partial cooperation from the Paris police. Despite knowing all these facts, Vinayak decided to leave for London. His decision is variously described as 'rash' or 'honourable' depending on the perspective of the author. There have been other insinuations too, of him having fallen prey to a honeytrap, Lawrence Margaret, the British agencies had set up for him. The insinuation has no basis and there has been no reference or details available about the lady. These are as wild and contradictory to the other often repeated innuendos about Vinayak that 'he had been a consumer of opium for years. He was also, although few of his followers were aware of it, a homosexual.' <sup>25</sup> They seem to be made more from a pejorative view of maligning Vinayak, and using his personal life, which was his business and none other's, to score political brownie points against him and his actions. In any case, it might be fair to state that Vinayak miscalculated the liberalism of London

and also misunderstood his position as a domestic terrorist, not a foreigner. Shyamji warned him several times and also wrote about this:

We felt that he was no longer safe in England . . . after repeated appeals he was at last persuaded to come to Paris and we were delighted to know that our dear young friend was safely in our midst, free from the clutches of his relentless enemies. Alas! Our pleasure was short-lived. A few months ago, much against our earnest advice, he took it into his head to return to England. Amongst other things, we drew his attention to a special danger to which he was exposed. Inasmuch as two of his brothers had already been entrapped by the British Government, one transported for life and the other on the way to receive a like sentence, the probability was that the alien oppressors of our country would take good care to put him out of the way, fearing lest an active and capable young man of his temperament might wreck a righteous vengeance. <sup>26</sup>

### Victoria Station, London, 13 March 1910

Vinayak had promised to meet Shyamji and others one last time before leaving for London, but he unexpectedly left France on Sunday, 13 March 1910. He left behind a letter expressing sorrow at not being able to see them before leaving and thanked them profusely for their generosity.

Vinayak left Paris by train to Calais and crossed the English Channel. There he boarded another boat train from Newhaven Port for London. At 7 p.m., as the boat train steamed into Victoria Station, Vinayak knew that he was being shadowed. Interestingly, Miss Perinben Naoroji, Dadabhai Naoroji's granddaughter, who was in Paris and helping the revolutionaries in manufacturing bombs, was travelling with him. But the police did not notice or catch her. Just as Vinayak stepped out of the train a battery of detectives and police officials pounced on him. Chief Inspector John McCarthy and Inspector E. John Parker of Scotland Yard who had pursued the case triumphantly cried: 'Here he is . . . he is here!' Vinayak merely smiled and said, 'Yes, it's me . . . I am Savarkar.'

He was taken to the waiting room where the arrest warrant of the Bombay High Court demanding his extradition was read out to him. He smiled and replied, 'Yes, sir! Doubtless the case would prove very interesting!' <sup>27</sup> Thereafter, he was formally taken into the custody of the



Bow Street Police. Searching his trunk, the police discovered two copies of his book, *The Indian War of Independence of 1857*, seven copies of the pamphlet 'Choose O! Princes', one copy of *Mazzini*, and several newspaper articles. Though, lack of warm clothing and the English cold woke him a few times in the night that he spent at the police station, he slept well and without a care.

The next day, Vinayak was produced at Bow Street Police Court before the chief magistrate, Sir Albert de Rutzen. The court was crowded with spectators who had come to watch the high-profile proceedings. Although it was announced that the proceedings would be formal, 'there were many people in court, the greater portion of them being well-dressed young Indians'.<sup>28</sup> Vinayak's counsel, Reginald Vaughan of Gray's Inn, put forward an application for his client's bail. Vaughan addressed the magistrate: 'There is very considerable doubt whether there is any authority to send this man back to India. This, however, is a question, which your Worship will consider later. I ask in the meantime that this man shall be admitted to bail . . . The offence is of a political nature really; whether in law or not is another matter.'<sup>29</sup> V.V.S. Aiyar stood solidly behind Vinayak in these trying times and even engaged Vaughan. Vinayak was refused bail after the preliminary hearings. 'No bail at all?' exclaimed Vaughan to which the chief magistrate said, 'Not until I know more about the case.'<sup>30</sup>

On 18 March, H.B. Simpson, the undersecretary to the Secretary of State for India, sent an official correspondence regarding this:

I am directed by Secretary Mr W. [Winston] Churchill to acquaint you, for the information of the Secretary of State for India, that Vinayek Savarkar has been arrested in pursuance of a warrant issued under the Fugitive Offenders Act, 1881, on the information of the Metropolitan Police and having been brought before a Magistrate at Bow Street Police Court on the 14th instant was remanded for seven days on a charge of sedition and abetment of murder committed within the jurisdiction of the Indian government.<sup>31</sup>

Almost immediately a telegram was wired from the viceroy's office in Shimla to the India Office in London:

Government anxious to proceed against Savarkar. His brother Ganesh has been convicted under Section 121 I.P.C. We agree that this is desirable and propose to send to London an Indian Police Officer having intimate knowledge of Conspiracy Case here. We are advised that the best evidence against Savarkar will be obtained from Sikhs and therefore have selected Sikh Deputy Suptd. Dyal Singh Gyani. We propose that he should receive full pay of Rs 400 a month and present allowance—Rs 100 with travelling expenses and 10 shillings a day subsistence allowance in England. We request your sanction by telegram to deputation on these terms. <sup>32</sup>

Aiyar met Vinayak in prison on 15 March and on several occasions thereafter. He was his messenger and a window to the outside world. On the same day, he also wrote to Shyamji conveying the details of the arrest, initial hearings and his engagement of a counsel that could help them prove Vinayak's innocence 'beyond a shadow of doubt'. Aiyar said, almost prophetically, that the prospect of transportation for life to the Andaman jails looms large for Vinayak and they must do all that they can to prevent his extradition to India. He writes about meeting Vinayak in jail:

This morning I saw Savarkar and he was the same as ever except that we had to converse through the iron bars. But I feel it deeply—too deeply, that he should be interned in the English jail. A lion in the toil of his hunter! He said that Jail Superintendent, etc., treated him with due attention and care and that he had nothing to complain under the circumstances. I know you as well as Mrs Shyamaji would feel so much to find that but the day before yesterday he was with you safe and today! . . . there is no use crying over spilt milk. We must do our best to see that he is not sent to India. If once he is sent, we shall see no more of him and one of the dearest and most devoted sons of the Motherland would be rotting away in cells of a malarious island. It was pathetic when Savarkar said this morning, if he were to be taken to the Andamans, he would have the happiness of seeing his elder brother. I hope that melancholy sort of happiness will not be his, but that he will be released and will work out the salvation of his country according to his lights. <sup>33</sup>

Aiyar also wrote about collecting funds for Vinayak's defence and that nearly £200 might be needed for the legal process. Shyamji replied

promptly and expressed his deep consternation on the misery that had befallen Vinayak and one he had brought upon himself despite their advice. He also sent a cheque for £10 to aid Vinayak in his hour of crisis. On 20 March, Vinayak was sent to Brixton prison, situated at Jebb Avenue in London. Aiyar visited him regularly. Interestingly, Vinayak himself recounts in detail this encounter with Aiyar at Brixton prison from his memoir written in 1925 from Ratnagiri to condole Aiyar's passing away:

In 1910 . . . I stood as a prisoner, then only very recently pent up in Brixton—the formidable prison in London. The warder announces visits; anxiously I accompany the file of prisoners to the visiting yard. I stand behind the bars wondering who could have come to call on us and thus invite the unpleasant attentions of the London police. For to acknowledge our acquaintance from the visitors' box in front of the prison bars was a sure step to eventually getting behind them. The visitors are let in. They crowdedly pass past our window. Presently one dignified figure enters the box in front of us. It was V.V.S. Aiyar. His beard was closely waving on his breast. He was unkempt. He was no longer the neatly dressed fashionable gentleman. His whole figure was transformed with some act of dedication of life. 'O leader!' he feelingly accosted me. 'Why did you leave Paris at all?' I soothingly said, 'What is the use of discussing it here?' Rightly or not, I am here, pent up in prison—and the best way now is to see what is to be done next, how to face the present. While fully discussing the future plans, the bell rang and the warders came running and shouting unceremoniously, 'Time is up.' With a heavy heart we looked into each other's eyes. We knew it would perhaps be the last time we ever saw each other in this life. Tears rose. Suppressing them, we said: 'No! No! We are Hindus. We have read the Gita. We must not weep in the presence of these unsympathetic crowds.' We spoke in Hindi, curious crowds of Englishmen watched the young Indian rebel and his friend. We parted. I watched him till he disappeared and said to my mind, 'For, one of the two fates was certain to my lot, the gallows or the Andamans, and neither could hold any prospect before me of seeing my friends again. <sup>34</sup>

Virendranath Chattopadhyay made nearly fifteen visits to the prison even though he lived in Paris. Niranjana Pal too met Vinayak at Brixton and remonstrated with him for disregarding their objections about leaving Paris despite knowing what would befall him on reaching London. Vinayak coolly replied that 'his shoulders were broad enough to bear the consequences. He had the courage of his conviction.' <sup>35</sup> David Garnett, who had befriended many Indian revolutionaries in London and was

Vinayak's ardent admirer, visited Brixton too. He was grilled by Inspector Parker of Scotland Yard and only then allowed to meet Vinayak. Garnett describes his first meeting with Vinayak:

He was perfectly calm and at his ease. I discussed his defence and offered to collect money for it, and to do anything I could to help him. All he wanted at the moment were some clean collars, the size of his neck was only 13 ½—the size of a school boy . . . I went practically every week to Brixton Gaol to see Savarkar, taking with me some clean collars and handkerchiefs and I collected a few pounds for his legal defence. <sup>36</sup>

From the confines of jail where the gallows or the Andamans seemed certain, Vinayak penned a long and impassioned will and testament. This was written in the form of a letter to Yesu Vahini. Vinayak poignantly referred to the happy times they spent together in childhood and youth under the open skies and moonlit nights; how lovingly she had taken care of them as a mother would; the games they played together as children, and the stories they heard and were inspired by. His initiative to begin Abhinav Bharat was not a whimsical spur-of-the-moment decision. He, and his countless young comrades, had done so with the full knowledge that 'those who would have life must lose it' and hence it was better to lose it for one's motherland. He saw the silver lining in the dark clouds that hovered over them. In just a few years of its establishment, so much had happened to Abhinav Bharat and its members; his entire family was in prison. This was cause for cheer, according to Vinayak. It was their action that spurred and roused the country—it had inspired them to armed struggle; to 'cast off the beggar's bowl and put Her hand on the hilt of Her sword'. Now, his resolve would be put to test. All those innumerable speeches, lectures, writings, and oaths would have to pass the trial of fire. Were those empty words that fell flat in the wake of exacting times or would these hard times harden them further is what needed to be seen. Vinayak asserted that 'it was on thy altar that I sacrificed my health and my wealth. Neither the longing looks of a young wife vainly waiting for my return nor the peals of laughter of dear children, nor the helplessness

of a sister-in-law stranded and left to starve could hold me back at the call of Thy Trumpet!’ His two brothers had also sacrificed all they had and this was only because they believed the cause to be true and holy. Their family tree might terminate with them, but how would that matter when they had fulfilled their duties for their motherland? Vinayak instilled courage and faith in his Vahini, and as the wife and sister-in-law of daring patriots, she had the double duty to remain resolute despite the tough tidings. He conveyed his love to his wife and asked her to remain steadfast. <sup>37</sup>

The British government was awaiting the papers related to Vinayak’s case to arrive from India. The documents finally arrived in mid-April 1910. Some of Vinayak’s comrades at India House who were rounded up in London and India had turned government approvers. The twenty-five-year-old Maratha and engineer from Gwalior state, Harishchandra Krishnarao Koregaonkar, testified that he had gone to London in May 1906 to study engineering and was there for about three years. He had not known Vinayak earlier and came to know of him only in November 1906. He had visited India House during the meeting held in honour of Guru Gobind Singh’s birth anniversary and went to stay there for a month in April 1907. Gyanchand Verma and Madan Lal Dhingra were also residents at the time. Koregaonkar claimed to have left India House after the Curzon Wylie murder as he felt it was too dangerous to remain. He spoke about the discussions that Vinayak had with others on armed struggle as a means to attain independence. He recounted a talk held in early 1908 which was titled ‘Are we really disarmed?’ Vinayak gave a lecture in which he articulated that India was actually not disarmed and that there were plenty of arms in the native states that constituted nearly a third of the country. One needed to find innovative ways and means to tap into this cache and procure them for the freedom struggle movement.

Another meeting on ‘The future constitution of India’ was also headed and lectured by Vinayak. There were deliberations on whether free India would be a republic or a constitutional monarchy. Vinayak had suggested that there should be an Upper House where native princes were to be members, and a Lower House of elected members. This was quite akin to

the British Parliament. In his speech, Vinayak suggested that the native prince who offered the maximum assistance in the freedom struggle would be appointed monarch. All the native states would be forced to give constitutional guarantees to their subjects. The national language of liberated India would be Hindi.

Koregaonkar also spoke about a meeting on ‘The life of Mazzini’ in which Aiyar delivered a lecture, one on Shivaji during Shivaji Jayanthi and a Caxton Hall meeting in December 1908 in honour of Guru Gobind Singh. In the last meeting, Vinayak had made a fiery speech and held a flag that said ‘Deg, Teg, Fateh’, explaining the meaning of the three words—faith combined with the sword leads to victory, independence in this case. Koregaonkar also spoke about the May 1908 gathering to felicitate the martyrs of 1857 where Vinayak and Aiyar offered rich tributes to the memories of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, Maulvi Ahmed Shah, Kunwar Singh, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Nana Saheb and others. He himself had sung the opening song *Vande Mataram* at that meeting. The ‘O! Martyrs!’ pamphlet was distributed here. He admitted to donating £50–60 to the cause of the Free India Society, although he was not told in detail about its activity and agenda. Vinayak had spoken to him about his vision of smuggling arms into India after procuring them from Belgium, America, Switzerland and Egypt, to have military training and also learn how to manufacture arms and explosives. Govind Amin, Chaturbhuj Amin’s brother, had brought some Browning pistols and one of these was used by Dhingra in his practice sessions at Tottenham Court Shooting Range. The pamphlets were usually sent to Germany or New York from where they were sent to India to avoid suspicion. Koregaonkar testified that Vinayak’s society was widespread with branches in Egypt, Paris, Hamburg, New York, Switzerland, Vancouver and other places.

Koregaonkar and Dhingra were good friends; in fact, they had sailed to England in the same steamer. Even on the day of Curzon Wylie’s murder, Dhingra had visited Koregaonkar’s house at Russell Square. He did not in the least appear excited or unusual. By then, Koregaonkar had received a message from Vinayak and Aiyar that he too must accompany Dhingra to

shadow him and complete the task in case the latter failed. On that night when Curzon Wylie entered the room, it was Koregaonkar who alerted Dhingra about his victim's arrival. When Dhingra seemed to dither, Koregaonkar sternly urged him, 'Aa jao na, kya karte ho?' (Well, come on! What are you doing?)<sup>38</sup> Koregaonkar also revealed in his testimony that he had later learnt that Dhingra had armed himself with additional revolvers and weapons to shoot indiscriminately at Englishmen and women at the party, and also murder Sir William Lee Warner if he were present. After the murder, Koregaonkar met Dhingra in jail. Vinayak wanted Koregaonkar to carry a message to be handed over in Bombay, copies of his book *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* to Thatte, along with addresses of likely purchasers in Pondicherry.

Koregaonkar arrived in Bombay on 18 August 1909 by the S.S. *Austria* and thereafter proceeded to Gwalior. He was rounded up by the DCI in Bombay in December 1909. He identified various players at India House and also Vinayak's handwriting as he had translated half of the 1857 book from Marathi to English. He spoke of Vinayak leaving India House in the beginning of 1909 after differences with a man called Hyder Raiza.<sup>39</sup>

Next, it was Chanjeri Rama Rao's turn to testify against Vinayak. The thirty-five-year-old Deshastha Brahmin had moved to England in August 1909 to study sanitary science and was earlier the plague inspector in the Rangoon Municipality. He went to England to pass his examinations that were to be held on 3 and 4 December 1909. He met Vinayak through a friend at 11 Upper Addison Gardens. Thereafter, he attended a few meetings of the Free India Society and took the oath, which he claimed Vinayak had coerced him into since he had attended one of their meetings. He left England in the first week of January for Paris, where he stayed with Tirumala Acharya and Govind Amin, the India House chef's brother. He also carried Aiyar's letter for Tirumala Acharya. In Paris, he met Vinayak at Madame Cama's residence. When he demurred, Madame Cama and Vinayak asked him to carry ten copies of his book *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* and one revolver. The books were packed in a box with a false bottom. Rao was asked to collect these from Sardar Rana's

house before leaving for India. Govind Amin told him then that the box contained a pistol with fifty cartridges, which he had to hand over to Vinayak or Aiyar when they came to India.

He also testified that he went around Paris with Govind Amin, looking for a house where bombs could be manufactured. Vinayak had told him that he too must know the process of making bombs and that there were people expected from London to teach them this. He had also sold him a photograph of Dhingra for 1 shilling and urged him that every member of the Free India Society must have the image of this martyr with them. On 10 January 1910, when he was about to board his train, he claimed that Vinayak came running to the station and handed over the 'Bomb Manual' too to be carried 'next to my skin'. He had also carried a few pamphlets in his boots. One of them, titled 'Bande Mataram', was purportedly written by Vinayak. 'Terrorize the officials, English and Indian, and the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. The persistent execution of the policy that has been so gloriously inaugurated by Khoudiram Bose, Kanailal Dutt and other martyrs will soon cripple the British Government in India. This campaign of separate assassinations is the best conceivable method of paralyzing the bureaucracy and of arousing the people. The initial stage of the revolution is marked by the policy of separate assassinations.' The copy of *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* that Chanjeri Rama Rao carried had the publisher's circular that was 'so worded as to be fully intelligible only to those who knew more than the ordinary casual reader' and seemed to 'point to the existence of some widespread secret society of young men'.<sup>40</sup> As an illustration, a passage quoted was: 'Send an international postal order to any trustworthy young friend of yours residing in or going to England or France. We are known to all young men in both countries . . . Do not by any means send this money to any old friend.'<sup>41</sup>

Rao was arrested on his arrival in Bombay, his belongings searched, and the false bottom discovered. He was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment for offences under the Arms Act, and was undergoing the same while testifying against Vinayak.<sup>42</sup> Aiyar's biography mentions that



it was not Vinayak but Aiyar who had prevailed upon Chanjeri Rao to carry the pistol and books, and it was severe police torture that broke Rao and made him falsely testify in accordance with police guidelines. The British government wanted to somehow ‘establish that it was Savarkar who had sent the revolver that was used to shoot Jackson in Nasik. But they had no evidence. It was here that Rama Rao came in handy . . . for his atrocious lie and betrayal, Rama Rao got pardoned and got a job in the Indian Police Department.’<sup>43</sup> Whatever be the truth behind this aspersion, it was certain that the Indian government had sent some irrefutable evidence as part of their documentation to the London court that was trying Vinayak.

The trial with these documents recommenced on 23 April 1910. Sir Rufus Isaacs,<sup>44</sup> the then solicitor general, defended the Crown on the charges slapped on Vinayak, along with Mr Bodkin and Mr Rowlatt. Mr K.C. Powell and Mr J.M. Parikh appeared for Vinayak. Depositions of several people were recorded. James Adolphus Guider, the deputy inspector general of the Criminal Investigation Department in Nashik, was in charge of the investigation into this case right from the beginning. He testified that Vinayak and Babarao were guilty of establishing a secret society, whose main aim was the subversion of British government in India.<sup>45</sup> Guider mentioned that between 1 January 1906 and 28 May 1906 Vinayak made five speeches—four in Nashik and one in Poona. The common theme was an inflammatory call to cast off the foreign yoke through armed struggle by invoking heroes such as Shivaji, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Mazzini and others. Jaffar Ali, a Nashik police inspector, testified that Vinayak, in a speech at Nashik, had said: ‘Though we were made armless, still we require arms . . . When we have determined to overthrow the Government we want weapons . . . Let us fight with weapons. It means that we must preserve our religion.’<sup>46</sup> Referencing all the letters written by Vinayak to his brother that were seized from their house in Nashik, the prosecution stated that all of them began with the salutations: ‘May the Goddess of Independence be pleased’ [*Swatantrya*

*Lakshmi ki Jay* ]! This, they claimed, was a clear indication that Vinayak sought independence for India from British rule.

At the next hearing on 30 April 1910, much to Vinayak's surprise, depositions of his hitherto trusted associates—Chaturbhuj Amin and Koregaonkar—were recorded. In Vinayak's defence and of the speeches of the Mitra Mela, his counsel Powell said:

The depositions contain a reference to the Mitra Mela, which has been described as a secret society formed for the purpose of subverting the Government. But in truth it was founded for the purpose of celebrating the festivals of four gods, and the members advocate devotion to the religion of their own country. The speeches are quite Oriental in their character and English people would regard them as sheer nonsense. There is no more harm in them than there is in the election songs, which some school children are taught to sing, and no more importance should be attached to them than to the gathering of people who loudly sing 'Scots wha hae' [sic] and allude to 'Edward's chains and slavery'. Savarkar most strenuously denies the suggestion that he had anything to do with the dispatch to India of some pistols, one of which was sold to a youth or man [Kanhere] who used it in a nefarious way. <sup>47</sup>

The hearings continued on 7 May 1910 before de Rutzen, the Bow Street magistrate. But despite all the efforts of the revolutionaries and the counsel, Magistrate de Rutzen ruled on 12 May 1910 that Vinayak must be sent to India and stand trial there.

Meanwhile, several leaders tried to create a public opinion in Vinayak's favour. In a letter to the editor of the *London Daily News*, Bipin Chandra Pal wrote:

There is no justification to bring up speeches made in times of comparative peace and quiet and make them the subject of criminal prosecutions, after three, four, or five years, when owing to the altered state of things, they might reasonably be regarded as likely to create disorder. The delay makes it practically impossible for the accused to prove the inaccuracies of the police report of his speeches, unless he had published at the time, an authorized version of it himself. <sup>48</sup>

Vinayak's lawyers appealed against this decision at the High Court of Justice, King's Bench Division. Comprising three judges, the Bench

Division began its proceedings at Brixton prison. The justices on the bench were the Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Alverstone, Justice William Pickford and Justice Bernard John Seymour Coleridge. Quite interestingly, and perhaps ironically, Lord Alverstone too in his youth was part of a secret society—the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. Proceedings began on 25 May 1910 with the defence motioning for a writ of habeas corpus, to determine the legitimacy of Vinayak’s imprisonment. His lawyers argued that the speeches for which Vinayak had been imprisoned were poorly translated. They contained no seditious tenor and merely supported the swadeshi movement, which was no offence in the Indian penal provisions. If they had indeed been seditious, why had the Government of India not acted earlier or arrested him right there when he was in the country, they argued. Given the frivolous nature of the charges, they contended that Vinayak must be released forthwith. If the literature he wrote and disseminated whilst in England were construed as seditious, there was no case of extradition to India, and that Vinayak would have to face trial in England itself.

During the resumption of hearings on 2 June 1910, the counsel for the prosecution, Sir Rufus Isaacs, quoted copiously from Vinayak’s speeches in India. Vinayak’s allusions to ‘Shivaji Maharaj, that great patriot who delivered the land of Bharat from the yoke of foreigners’<sup>49</sup> was referred to. At this, Lord Alverstone wryly noted that mere discussion of independence could not be construed as sedition. Isaacs argued that Vinayak’s speeches were not merely discussions but a call to arms as he had once told his audiences in India before his departure to England: ‘Every one should, while sitting, talking, sleeping, nay, even when winking, remember “*Swadeshi Bhakti*” that is, devotion to one’s country . . . You are all slaves like myself . . . When we have determined to overthrow the Government we want weapons.’<sup>50</sup>

Isaacs invoked Chaturbhuj Amin’s testimony, the activities at India House, the import of Browning pistols and the ‘Bomb Manual’, and their delivery to India. All of this showed that while in England, Vinayak had been found guilty of certain acts, which, in law, constituted an offence in

India as well as in England. These were sufficient to legitimately extradite Vinayak as per Section 2 of the FOA. <sup>51</sup>

Waiting eagerly for Isaacs to quote this section of the Act, Powell immediately stood up with his objections. The Section 2 of the Act was valid only when the person in question was a fugitive in the eyes of the law. But Vinayak had not run away from India; he was in England as a legitimate student on scholarship. ‘Am I a fugitive if I leave my Chambers in Temple to go to my home, or to leave this Court to go to the Court of Appeal?’ asked Powell to peals of laughter among everyone in the courtroom. <sup>52</sup>

Isaacs did not fare well by quoting Section 2 of the Act as the judge was not convinced by the argument. He then turned to Section 33 of the same FOA. <sup>53</sup> This seemed to cover the offences that Vinayak had allegedly committed. The reason why a lawyer as shrewd and skilful as Isaacs did not invoke Section 33 in the first instance was that this was meant to be applied in conjunction with Section 10 of the FOA, while Section 2 remained independent. <sup>54</sup> Section 10 allowed the accused some freedom to avail any benefit of doubt that could arise due to frivolous charges made due to the lack of complete knowledge or distance from the country of offence and the general absence of facilities of communications. In such cases, the accused could be tried in the country where he was caught, and was also eligible for bail or complete discharge if the court decided so in its wisdom.

It was now Vinayak’s turn to convince the court that the Indian government had not issued the warrant in good faith, because it had taken them four years to realize the so-called seditious character of his speeches delivered back in India in 1906. Had he been tried then, he would have been entitled to a legal trial, including a jury, the right to which had now been suspended.

When the court resumed on 4 June 1910, Lord Chief Justice Alverstone ruled in favour of the prosecution’s case to extradite Vinayak under Section 33 of the FOA. He referred to the rulings of de Rutzen and the warrant of Montgomerie, the Nashik special magistrate, and that they had

arrived in favour of invoking the FOA. He expressed satisfaction that the evidence was sufficient enough ‘to raise a strong or probable presumption that the applicant [Vinayak] had committed the offence mentioned’.<sup>55</sup> Powell continued to argue that extradition to India meant Vinayak would face a panel of judges and not a jury. This would be ‘unjust’ and ‘oppressive’ to him. The court agreed. Seizing on this, Powell said that in such a scenario the case falls. This was because an invocation of the Act automatically also brought to his client the opportunity to avail of Section 10 of the same Act, which mentioned that in the event of an unjust or oppressive nature of trial, the scales tilt in the accused’s favour. Lord Alverstone dismissed the objections of the defence.

Justice Coleridge initially struck a dissenting note and did not agree with the ruling. He cynically scoffed that ‘Savarkar’s witnesses would appear neither in India nor England’.<sup>56</sup> This possibly implied that the witnesses were being threatened to testify against Vinayak, even as a government witness (he possibly meant Rama Rao) had been pardoned for turning traitor. But eventually Coleridge believed it best not to let his personal opinion weigh in on the matter in deference to the majority view of the other two justices.

Vinayak’s lawyers appealed against the decision yet again before the Court of Appeal. It comprised three judges—Lord Justice Vaughan Williams, Lord Justice Fletcher Moulton and Lord Justice Buckley. The proceedings began on 17 June 1910. Isaacs objected to the very right of appeal afforded to Vinayak, given that it was a criminal case.<sup>57</sup> The following day, Justice Vaughan Williams ruled in favour of the prosecution, though he agreed to hear Vinayak’s original motion. Accordingly, on 21 June 1910, Powell argued that Vinayak was first of all not a fugitive, and that extraditing him to India constituted both an unjust and an oppressive action as per the FOA itself, since he would then have to depose before a panel of judges and not a jury. Powell concluded his motion that ‘in the interests of justice the applicant should be tried in this country, where he would be able to call evidence in his defence which might not otherwise be available’.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the case built by Vinayak's lawyers, on the ambiguous and farcical use of the same Act that was being invoked to extradite him to India, Justice Vaughan Williams refused to take note. He decried: 'In my opinion the connexion [sic] of the charges with seditious acts in India and the fact that nearly all the witnesses to be called are in India is *prima facie* a sufficient ground for sending the prisoner to India to be tried.'<sup>59</sup> At the same time he also seemed to agree with Powell's argument that the case did merit a trial in London given that Vinayak had lived there long enough. But he did not want to displease the King's Bench Division.

Vinayak's supporters like Guy Aldred vehemently opposed the judgment, claiming that his return to India was both a legal as well as a moral outrage. Aldred argued in his article in the *Herald of Revolt* that as per Section 10 of the FOA, Vinayak should have been allowed to undergo trial in London itself. He argued that the witness who would 'be required to prove that he did not give the Browning pistols to the person who had stated this against him had less to fear from appearing in London than from appearing in India, where no fair trial could be secured'.<sup>60</sup> Making a passionate plea for Vinayak, Aldred wrote:

Even if Savarkar's witnesses would have appeared neither in England nor India, his return to India was unjust and oppressive, because in England he would have been entitled to give evidence on his own behalf, whereas in India under the Act of 1908, he was not. The Divisional and Appeal Judges held that it would 'be a very, very grave responsibility' to take upon themselves to assume that the negation of this right was unjust or oppressive. In other words, in order to secure Savarkar's return to India, the English judges practically denied that the law substantive involved the law adjective, or that there was a definite relation between law and the forms of procedure, and between these again and mode of evidence or testimony. We assert that the experience of mankind, the history of jurisprudence, and the claims of these judges on other occasions, give the lie to this monstrous cant . . . further objections raised by Savarkar, namely, that he would be tried by three judges instead of a jury as in England, and be able to appeal to no Court of Appeal. The ruling that held these differences of trial were not unjust and oppressive reduces our legal pretensions and traditions to a farce, and abolishes all the laws of evidence and well-established principles of jurisprudence.<sup>61</sup>

Back in India, a Special Tribunal was being formed to undertake the ‘Savarkar Trial’, which meant, as mentioned earlier, that there would be no jury and there could be no appeal against its findings. This was according to the provisions of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. Under this new statute some of the rights of the citizen are deliberately suspended.

Even as the trial was coming to an end in England, David Garnett met Vinayak one morning, around the end of June 1910, at Brixton prison. He waited until the warder walking up and down the corridor was out of earshot and asked Vinayak why he was not trying to think of a means of escape. He offered to help with a plan he had in mind. Vinayak replied that he had been thinking about it too, but had decided that there might be more opportunities and chances of success on his way back to India. But if Garnett had any plan he would be glad to work on it. Garnett asked him about his daily prison routine in detail. He was taken every week to Bow Street for formalities of a remand, always in a taxi and not in a Black Maria. He was accompanied by one or two detectives. His weekly trip to Bow Street had become a routine and that too within two or three minutes of the same time each week.

Garnett planned that Vinayak had to be rescued at the prison gates or within a few yards of it. A watcher was to note when the taxi that was to take him to Bow Street drove up. A car would then drive up to the prison with supposed visitors, who would overpower the detective(s) and Vinayak would jump into the car and drive away. There would not be much time for help to arrive from inside the prison, owing to the routine of the two gates. Of course, the rescuers would not seek to avoid arrest or to escape. Garnett arranged an Irish revolutionary named Harold to drive the car and another, Mrs Dryhurst to arrange members of the Sinn Fein movement <sup>62</sup> of Irish revolutionaries who were in London to rescue Vinayak. The rescuers were to be armed with bags of pepper. A woman’s disguise consisting of mooring hats and veils, usually worn by women motorists those days, was also kept in the car along with a cloak for the rescuers. Guy Aldred went to Paris and brought the rescuers who were glad to be imprisoned if it meant

releasing Vinayak. When Garnett went to Vinayak with this elaborate plan, he told him:

It does not matter whether one wins or is defeated, whether one succeeds or fails. Care nothing about the result so long as you fight. The only thing that matters is the spirit. You have done wonderfully and there was no reason why you should have done anything at all. Do not worry about me, I shall escape somehow. I have a plan worked out already, in case your plans failed. <sup>63</sup>

On the planned day, a taxi passed by with a detective and the rescuers managed to waylay it. But sadly for everyone, Vinayak was not inside it. He had already been taken to court for the final judgment where he was handed over in handcuffs to two detectives sent from India. Garnett, Aldred and several Irish and French revolutionaries' daring attempt to free their Indian comrade thus failed because someone had obviously leaked the plan to the police. It was now a matter of time before Vinayak was extradited to India.

In June 1906, Vinayak had arrived in England with a mission in mind. Four years later, in the very month of June, he was leaving that country. Despite the gloom that his followers and friends faced at the imminent sentence he was to receive back home, Vinayak himself was calm and composed. He seemed resigned and prepared for the inevitable, evident in the letter he wrote to Aiyar, addressing him as 'Rishi', or a sage, from Brixton prison on 21 June 1910, even poking fun at the latter's beard:

By this time, dear Rishi, I have got quite used to the food and mode of living here. It was good that I did not ask for special food from the beginning. Now to make me a full-fledged life transportee, only a change of clothes is wanting . . . I am in excellent health and have added two pounds to my weight (not by growing a four-pound weight beard!) . . . be writing to me the sort of ennobling letters which you have written so many times. One of them I got while just starting for the court to hear the foregone decision of them. It makes me forget all the distance between us and makes me feel as if my Rishi is with me, side by side, in a meeting or in the room nursing me or chatting with me on the exalted topic of the raising of the people, the rebirth of a race and Rao Saheb. <sup>64</sup>



On 29 June 1910, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Winston Churchill, issued orders under the FOA that Vinayak must be taken in custody to British India: ‘Now I, the Right Honourable Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill in virtue of the powers vested in me by the aforesaid Fugitive Offenders Act do hereby order that the said Vinayek Damodar Sawarkar be returned to the Empire of India.’<sup>65</sup>

Thereafter, Sir Edward Henry, chief commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, wrote to the French government informing the Sûreté, or civil police force, that the Peninsular and Oriental (P&O) liner S.S. *Morea* would be leaving London for India with ‘an important political prisoner’ on 1 July; that it would touch Marseilles in France on 7 or 8 July. The British knew that Paris was full of Indian revolutionaries like Shyamji, Madame Cama, Sardar Singh Rana, Virendranath Chattopadhyay and others, who might undoubtedly come to their associate’s rescue. Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, therefore, also sought French assistance in preventing any kind of trouble that could be caused by these revolutionaries in Marseilles. The French interior minister had warned his subordinates against any possible escape and in accordance with these instructions, a commissionaire of the French police was placed at the *Morea* commander’s disposal. On 9 July, Monsieur Hennion, the director of the Sûreté Générale in Paris, replied that the Préfet des Bouches du Rhone had been instructed that the prisoner’s escape must be prevented at all costs.

The British police were in charge of Vinayak during the vessel’s sojourn in French waters. French prime minister Aristide Briand complied. Guy Aldred wrote:

We do not need to ask what were the inducements offered to Briand. The man who betrayed the French workers for office would be quite willing to sell French sovereignty for the equivalent of office. The Minister who can send his old colleagues to prison for fidelity to their principles could be counted on as willing to send Savarkar to the dungeon for patriotism. It is more interesting to learn why the British Government employed him.<sup>66</sup>

Even as he prepared to depart for India, Vinayak wrote a poignant ode to all his friends and associates in England and beyond, those who had stood by him and worked with him over the last four years. ‘The Farewell’ poem went like this:

Whose heart to heart by silken ties is knit  
Of friendship sweet, that sweeter grows by far,  
Partaking of Godly Sacrament of Mother’s creed divine:  
Oh Friends! Farewell! As tender and fresh  
As the morning dew that wakes the fragrance  
Friends! Adieu! Adieu!

We part to play our God-appointed parts  
Now pent and nailed to burning rocks, now tossed  
On surging waves of fame; now seen, now lost  
Or humble or exalted—wherever posted by the Lord  
Of hosts, yet posted best, as if alone it was  
The mission of our life thus there to act.  
As in some oriental play sublime,  
All characters, the dead as well as living  
In epilogue they meet  
Thus actors we innumerable all once more shall meet  
On History’s copious stage before the great  
Applauding audience of Humanity  
That would with grateful cheer fill hill and dale  
Till then, Oh Loving Friends, Farewell! Farewell!

Wherever may my humble ashes lie,  
In the Andaman’s sad brook whose weeping course  
Add to its dreariness a tongue or sorted by Ganga’s  
Sacred crystal stream in which the stars  
Their midnight measures dance—  
They will be stirred with fire and glow  
When Victory’s trumpet blasts proclaiming  
‘Shree Ram’ has crowned his chosen people’s brow  
With laurels golden green! The evil spirit is cast  
Away and chased back to the deep from whence  
It first arose! And Lo! She lordly stands,  
Our Mother India, a beacon light Humanity to guide,  
Oh martyred saints and soldiers, do awake!  
The battle is won for which you fought and fell!  
Till then, oh Friends! Farewell! Farewell!

Watch sleeplessly the progress of our Mother  
And learn to count it, not by so much work

Done or tried, but by how much they suffered,  
What sacrifice our people could sustain!  
For work is chance but sacrifice a law;  
Foundation firm to rear a mighty dome  
Of Kingdoms new and great!  
But only great of their roots be in martyr's ashes laid.  
Thus work for Mother's glory till God's breath  
Be rendered back, the Godly mission done—  
A martyr's wreath or victor's crown be won! <sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, the British also issued an arrest warrant for Aiyar on the grounds that he had a role to play in the aborted attempt to rescue Vinayak. A high alert was sounded on all exit routes from London to Paris, and even Brazil, to look out for the 'South Indian Brahmin revolutionary'. But Aiyar was too smart for them. He first went underground and thoroughly frustrated the police attempts. He then looked for the least watched route which turned out to be the one to Holland. Disguising himself as a Punjabi Sikh gentleman, with his strong build and flowing beard, he thwarted the suspicions of a detective on board who was looking for a puny, timid south Indian Brahmin. In an effort to hoodwink Aiyar and confirm if the Sikh gentleman was indeed him, the detective cleverly handed Aiyar, who was reclining on a deckchair, a fake telegram addressed to 'Mr V.V.S. Aiyar'. Without batting an eyelid, Aiyar returned the telegram saying it was for a certain Mr Aiyar, not him. However, the suitcase lying beside Aiyar bore the initial 'VVS' on it. Catching the detective looking at the suitcase, Aiyar smiled and said, 'Yes, I am Vir Vikram Singh from the Punjab.' The embarrassed detective apologized and retreated. <sup>68</sup> Aiyar then reached Amsterdam, took a train to Paris, and met Shyamji and Madame Cama.

They had an important task to plan—a rendezvous and promise to keep in Marseilles.



7

## L’Affaire Savarkar

London, August 1910

The mood was sombre in the departmental inquiry chambers of the Metropolitan Police. Churchill was furious and had ordered a thorough investigation into the lapses. In the dock were two officials—Metropolitan Police officer Inspector Edward John Parker and the deputy superintendent of CID, Charles John Power. They were part of the escort that was supposed to bring Vinayak back to India. In a correspondence dated 27 May 1910, Sir Edward Henry, the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, had authorized Inspector Parker as the Scotland Yard officer who could give evidence back in India about Vinayak’s activities in London. Parker had been shadowing Vinayak as a detective for a long time. He was even present as a lay audience at the Caxton Hall meeting held on 29 December 1908 to commemorate Guru Gobind Singh’s birth anniversary. Even after Vinayak moved out of India House, Parker had kept a close watch on him. He was also one of the detectives who was present at Vinayak’s arrest at Victoria Station in March 1910 and had searched his trunk and belongings to discover the revolutionary books and pamphlets.

Earlier, on 10 April 1910, Deputy Superintendent C.J. Power had arrived from Bombay, bringing with him all the necessary papers related to

Vinayak's case, the depositions of witnesses in India in the Nashik trial, and had submitted these at the Bow Street Police Court. Power was a distinguished officer with an unblemished record of over sixteen years of service in the Bombay City and Mofussil Police, with nearly thirteen good service and reward entries. In 1904, he had been deputed to Manila with one of the other officers of the Bombay City Police to effect the extradition of Shapurji Kavasji Sanjana and escort him back to Bombay. He had performed this duty with rare tenacity, managing numerous difficulties that came his way in connection with extradition formalities in Manila. Hence, the Indian government decided that he would be the most appropriate officer to bring home the 'notorious' Vinayak to justice.

In London, Power reported himself to Inspector McCarthy at Scotland Yard and to the accountant general at the India Office. He had been authorized to take charge of the proceedings at court against Vinayak and also make suitable arrangements related to his passage back to India. In early June, Power had sent letters to several departments of the government regarding booking the P&O vessel *Marmora* initially. Given the manner in which the case proceeded with appeals in the divisional courts, the date was missed and thereafter the S.S. *Morea* was booked on 24 June 1910. Before leaving for London, Power had received strict instructions from his department head in India that his main responsibility was 'looking after the prisoner on the return voyage'.

In a letter dated 26 March 1910, J.A. Guider, the special assistant to the deputy inspector general of police and Power's superior, had written to him:

The three head constables will sail by the *Macedonia* next week and will go all the way by sea to London. The Inspector-General of Police desires that you should meet them on arrival and instruct them where lodgings have been arranged for them . . . You will remember the instructions I gave you about looking after the prisoner on the return. You will be careful *not* to leave the Nasik Head Constable *alone* at any time with the prisoner. There are reasons why this is undesirable. The Head Constable however is not to be informed of the prohibition, Nevertheless you are to see that it is strictly adhered to. Keep me posted in all your doings by your weekly diary dispatched every Friday. <sup>1</sup>

Power, thus, had a serious responsibility on his hands. His lapses on board the *Morea* were hence viewed sternly by the department. In a long-winded inquisition, Power and Parker narrated their tale of woes about all that had transpired on that fateful day when the *Morea* docked at Marseilles in France.

Marseilles, France, 8 July 1910

On 1 July 1910, the S.S. *Morea* sailed from Tilbury docks carrying Vinayak who was escorted by Power and Parker and two Indian head constables, Muhammad Siddik of the Poona police force and Amarsingh Sakharamsingh of the Nashik police force. A third officer, Usman Khan, who had been sent from India especially to guard Vinayak, died in England on 14 June 1910. Power hence assigned this duty to both Siddik and Amarsingh. They reached Marseilles on 7 July around noon.

In the week preceding their arrival at Marseilles, Power and Parker followed a strict daily schedule. Either of them had to be in constant attendance on Vinayak. They occupied an inner four-berth cabin without a porthole and at night this was secured by locking the door with a key that was especially obtained from the purser on the day of sailing. Either of the two officers kept the key. Parker and Vinayak occupied the lower berths while Power, the berth directly above Vinayak. Parker's berth was closest to the door and faced Vinayak directly. The light directly over Vinayak's head was kept burning all night. Vinayak was not handcuffed till they reached Marseilles. He wore a pair of drawers and a singlet.<sup>2</sup>

The officers were usually woken up by the cabin steward, Slavin, a little after 7 a.m. every day. That is when Power and Parker would begin to dress. If either or both of them wanted to take a bath, they would wait for the other's return to the cabin so that Vinayak was always under their watch. After they had finished, Vinayak was allowed to get up and dress. He usually performed his ablutions in the cabin. When he wished to use the lavatory, usually around 8 a.m., it was decided that the two officers would hand him over to the Indian head constables who were invariably

waiting outside the cabin at this time. They escorted him to the lavatory and were instructed never to allow him to shoot the bolt, but leave the door slightly ajar. Both of them were to stand close to the door, one to look over by standing on the urinal platform and to watch the porthole of the lavatory. While being taken to the lavatory, Vinayak usually changed into a dressing gown and wore a pair of slippers that he left at the lavatory door after use. This procedure was followed all through when the vessel was at sea.

Vinayak and the two English officers stayed in the cabin till breakfast, at which time they were led to the dining saloon with their prisoner sitting between them. After breakfast, the officers sometimes had a smoke. On a couple of occasions, they took Vinayak to the upper deck to let him have some exercise. He was never allowed to walk by himself or sit alone on the deck. During this time, the two Indian head constables were also on the deck keeping a close watch on Vinayak. He would frequently ask to be led back to the cabin where he spent several hours either reading or sleeping. At all times, Parker and Power, or one of them, stayed in the cabin with the door firmly fastened. Meals were had at the dining saloon again. The afternoons and evenings were spent in pretty much the same manner. Vinayak was never allowed to converse with any passenger on board. He usually retired to bed around 9 p.m. and it was only around 10 p.m. that the head constables were relieved from their duty.

Vinayak had a bath almost every morning during which time he was committed to the care of the head constables. In fact, on many occasions, he had to bathe in Muhammad Siddik's presence. One day, after he complained of chest pain, Power advised him not to bathe. The doctor on board examined him, found his right lung slightly infected, and prescribed a lotion for external use. Muhammad Siddik applied this on his chest at the time of going to bed.

When the vessel docked at Marseilles on 7 July, Power kept a close watch on Vinayak inside the locked cabin. Meanwhile, Parker stationed himself on the gangway to keep watch for any known Indian revolutionary who might have assembled there with the purpose of freeing their prized

prisoner. Power had strictly instructed the team to be cautious when the steamer was docked. Either he or Parker had to be with Vinayak all the time. They had lunch by 1 p.m. and thereafter were in the cabin till 4 p.m. The heat in the cabin was becoming intolerable owing to all the portholes being closed on account of coaling and hence the trio went up to the smoke room. At around 5 p.m., Vinayak was taken down for a wash and kept there till dinner at the dining saloon by 7 p.m. Post-dinner, he was given a little walking exercise for about an hour with all the four in attendance.

Unusually, Vinayak requested to be allowed to take a bath at around 9 to 9.30 p.m. Power handed him over to the head constables and instructed Muhammad Siddik to take him to an inner bathroom with no porthole. After the bath, Vinayak retired for the day by 11 p.m., as did the others.

On the morning of 8 July, Vinayak made an unusual request to go to the lavatory as early as 6.15 a.m. The officers had slept late and Power was still asleep. He heard the request but tossed over and went back to sleep. Parker, who was half awake, took it upon himself to lead Vinayak to the water closet and lavatory. Parker followed him in the narrow passage. The two head constables were standing near the lavatory door, on the other side, where they kept their kit boxes. They were still dressing up. A sleepy Parker put Vinayak into the water closet without paying any attention to the state of the porthole. He also did not wait to check if the constables had seen them coming and so were aware that their services were needed to keep a watch as always.

Amarsingh dressed and made his way to the cabin, assuming he had to take the prisoner on the usual morning routine. But Parker whistled to Amarsingh, casually pointing to the water closet and told him, 'He is here,' before sauntering back to the cabin. Amarsingh hurriedly ran back to the lavatory and was soon joined by Muhammad Siddik. By this time, which was less than a minute, Vinayak managed to bolt the lavatory door and make the best use of the confusion that prevailed. He discovered to his luck that the porthole in the water closet was open and Parker had not bothered to fasten or clamp it. This was the moment that he had been eagerly waiting for. Summoning all his courage, he made a dash at the



twelve-inch-diameter porthole, wriggled his lean frame out of it and made a giant dive into the sea, hoping, towards liberty and justice. He swam for about ten to twelve feet to get to the quay.

There was an opening of about three inches at the top and bottom of the water closet doors. Peeping under the doors, Amarsingh saw a pair of slippers and assumed that Vinayak was seated inside. However, to be doubly sure, he decided to stand on the urinal platform and peep through the top. To his horror he noticed that half of Vinayak's body was already out of the porthole. He screamed at him to stop the escape. Amarsingh tried to force the door open but it did not yield and two panes of glass broke in the door. By then, Vinayak had jumped out. The two constables raised an alarm and ran across the deck to secure Vinayak, who by then had managed to reach the quay and had begun to run. The constables chased him with loud shouts of 'Thief! Thief!' 'Catch him!' 'Catch him!' and were joined by some of the ship's crew. Vinayak had run for about 200 yards and was visibly exhausted. He kept shouting for a cab but realized that he had no money.

It was equally unfortunate that Aiyar, Madame Cama and Virendranath Chattopadhyay who were in the vicinity had reached the site late, only after Vinayak had been recaptured. Their delay was possibly caused due to a closed railway level crossing, or for having had a cup of tea, or perhaps both.<sup>3</sup> There is however very little corroborative evidence to suggest that any Indian revolutionaries were present on the site and multifold narratives abound of the episode.

Meanwhile, Brigadier Pesquié of the French Gendarmerie Maritime saw the confusion and joined the chase party. In no time, the head constables and the gendarme managed to seize Vinayak, who specifically told the Frenchman, 'Take me into your custody, assist me; take me before a Magistrate.' It was Vinayak's understanding that since he was now on the soil of sovereign France, if at all he could be tried, it would be through French laws and the British had no jurisdiction there. As a political prisoner, he was eligible for asylum in France. But sadly for him, the gendarme, Pesquié, barely understood any English. He handed him over to

the huffing and panting head constables who dragged Vinayak back to the *Morea* . His heroic attempt had been in vain.

A dripping wet and exhausted Vinayak was ushered into the cabin where Power was still resting and Parker was busy with his morning shave. They were horrified to hear all that had transpired while they remained blissfully unaware. Vinayak was verbally abused and immediately handcuffed. He was not allowed to leave the cabin except for an hour of exercise right in front of the cabin, in the passage. One of the head constables was made to enter the lavatory or water closet with Vinayak. Power and Parker had already ruined their distinguished careers by this act of omission on their parts and hence took every possible care to prevent a repeat.

In this moment of utter despair at having lost a great opportunity to free himself, Vinayak seemed least perturbed. He coolly sat in the cabin, warned the officers not to abuse him, and is said to have hummed a poem that he composed titled ‘Atma bal’ (Spiritual Strength). The poem begins with the lines:

*Anaadi mi, ananta mi, avadhya mi bhala  
Maaril ripu jagati asa, kavan janmala*

(With me the things begin, and they end with me as well  
I am in the midst of them all. A foe who can finish me off is yet to take birth.)

The translation of the rest of the poem goes this way:

Resolutely, as the Upholder of Dharma,  
Challenging very Death, into the battlefield charge I.  
A sword cannot slice me nor can fire burn me,  
Craven Death itself shall flee in fear of me, aye!  
And yet, O Foolish Foe!  
By fear of Death you dare to scare me!  
Pushed into the cage of a ferocious lion  
Reduce him to a cowering servility, I will!  
Flung into the blaze of a roaring inferno  
Reduce it to a gentle halo of brilliance, I will!

Bring on your mighty, skilled, armed Legion,  
Your weapons and missiles that deadly fire spill!  
Ha! Like Lord Shiva consuming the poison Halahal,  
Gulp down and digest all, I will! <sup>4</sup>

The S.S. *Morea* left the port of Marseilles after completing the repairs on 9 July. Reaching the port of Aden on 17 July, the British contingent and their political prisoner disembarked and boarded another ship, the *Salsette*. Here, Vinayak was confined to a cage-like cabin with a space of only 4 feet to sit, stand or walk. He was kept handcuffed day and night till the vessel reached Bombay on 22 July 1910. He was handed over to Mr Kennedy, inspector general of police, and to J.A. Guider, special assistant to the deputy inspector general of police. He was taken in a taxi to Victoria Terminus, put in a train to Nashik the same afternoon, and locked up in a jail on reaching Nashik.

In Nashik, Guider made several attempts to get Vinayak to write out a statement of the facts relating to his escape from custody at Marseilles. But he did not consent to write one or sign any that Guider offered to record. His reason was that he did not wish to deny that he had escaped but was ‘unwilling to say anything which might prejudice any of the police officers who accompanied him from England’.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the departmental inquisition found Power guilty of dereliction. He was demoted in service, incurred a loss of Rs 100 per month for a few years, and his career took a hit. The inquiry concluded with its resolution on 8 October 1910 signed by the undersecretary to the government, J.E.B. Hotson:

Marseilles was the only real danger point on the voyage, and it was Mr Power’s obvious duty to have drawn up a definite plan of action for the safe custody of his prisoner during the stay there, arranging that the prisoner should never be separated even for a moment from himself or Inspector Parker, and providing carefully for all the details, such as the closing of the portholes. The general instructions, which he claims to have issued were not adequate to meet these requirements, nor does it appear that he took adequate steps to secure that they were carried out. The prisoner’s request for a bath on the previous night should have warned Mr Power to be specially on the alert, and Government can only conclude that he neglected his duties with

almost inconceivable carelessness, and must be held directly responsible for permitting the prisoner to escape. The story of this unfortunate episode presents no mitigating features, but looking to Mr Power's excellent record in the past, His Excellency the Governor-in-Council considers that the punishment suggested by the Inspector-General of Police will be sufficiently severe. Mr Power should accordingly be reduced to the last place in the 2nd grade of Deputy Superintendents of Police with effect from 1st October 1910. <sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, the French press and particularly those oriented towards the socialists castigated Brigadier Pesquié's action as a national scandal. That a political prisoner who had landed on French soil was allowed to be taken away by British officials was an insult to French sovereignty, they argued. Almost the entire French Press—*L'Humanite* , *L'Eclair* , *Le Monde* , *Le Temps* and *Le Matin* —denounced Vinayak's recapture from France and a violation of his right to political asylum. Jean Longuet, socialist leader and grandson of Karl Marx, became Vinayak's vocal supporter. He wrote a blistering article in the socialist newsweekly that he edited, *L'Humanite* , on 12 July:

This abominable violation of the right of asylum was effected in absolute secrecy; had it not been for a telegram published yesterday (11 July) in the *Paris Daily Mail* , we should still have been in ignorance of the incident. But it is quite impossible that the matter can be allowed to rest there. In delivering up a political refugee the Marseilles authorities—admitting that they had acted on their own initiative—have committed an outrage of which account will most assuredly be demanded and in respect of which the sanction of the state itself is necessary. <sup>7</sup>

Madame Bhikaji Cama wrote protest letters to the French newspaper, *Le Temps* , which in its issue dated 19 July 1910 added:

It would seem, according to international law, that Savarkar ought to be brought back to France in order that the French authorities should have cognizance of this case firstly because the British Government did not warn the French Government that a political offender would be brought into the port of Marseilles, and secondly that (British) Government lost its rights over Savarkar by the fact of his having escaped on to French soil. <sup>8</sup>

The *Journal des Debates* dated 25 July 1910 argued that the British could not retain Vinayak under these circumstances:

Had he escaped from England and reached Calais or Boulogne no application for his extradition would have been entertained. Great Britain, therefore, cannot take advantage of the blunder committed by a French policeman, and Savarkar ought to be sent back to France and there restored to liberty. <sup>9</sup>

The French socialists looked to their counterparts in other countries to rally support. The case was soon blowing up into an international controversy. The Indian revolutionaries in France reached out to French socialist leader Monsieur Jean Jaurès for his support. The *Daily Press* rued that the entire episode would have gone unnoticed had it not been for ‘a vigilant compatriot’ of Vinayak’s who brought pressure on the French government and its political leadership that the very principle of the right of asylum that Great Britain lays so much stress on has been violated in this case. ‘There is bitterness in the taunt,’ noted the *Daily Press*, ‘and it was intended to strike home against the nation which played so conspicuous a part on the occasion of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.’ <sup>10</sup>

That Jaurès pressured the French government sufficiently is evident in the report that the *London Daily News* carried:

The arrest of the Indian revolutionary Savarkar at Marseilles, after his escape from the liner that was taking him to India under police surveillance, has been the subject of correspondence between the French Minister of Justice and the English Government. The Minister has informed M. Jaurès, the Socialist Leader that the French Government has begged the British Government to suspend judgment until it has been placed in possession of all the documents. The French Socialists, who have taken up the case, argue that the handing over of Savarkar to the English detectives by the sergeant of the gendarmes who had arrested him after he swam ashore was illegal. ‘*The Libertè*’ this evening states that the French Government has addressed to the British Foreign Office a Note asking that Savarkar should be set at liberty or else handed over to the French authorities. ‘Hitherto’, continues *The Libertè*, ‘the British Government appears to have taken the view that the arrest of Savarkar, effected by the French gendarmes in the port of Marseilles, might be illegal, but that the consequences of this illegality were no concern of theirs. In law however, Savarkar could not be arrested or pursued

on French territory. He was apprehended and handed over to the English detectives through an error on the part of the gendarmes with regard to his position as a political prisoner. It may be remarked that in analogous cases the British Government always demands that its territory should be respected; and we are justified in expecting that, making all reservations for Savarkar's personality and role, the Foreign Office will favourably receive the French Government's protests in principle. <sup>11</sup>

James Keir Hardie, Scottish socialist, politician and trade unionist and the founder of the Labour Party, too lent his support. At the Socialist Congress of 1910 in Copenhagen, he reminded those present of the British liberal traditions, which had often aided radical 'outcasts' in the past. He named Garibaldi, Mazzini, Lajos Kossuth and Karl Marx as examples. If one allowed the Savarkar case to go through as the British intended, Hardie believed it would create a bad precedent, which might undermine revolutionary work across Europe. He therefore proposed a resolution demanding Vinayak's restoration to France. This was carried unanimously. Interestingly, Jaurès, an ardent supporter of Vinayak's cause, who was also present at the Copenhagen Congress, did not participate in the voting of the resolution. He had 'gone for a walk in the fresh air' because of a bad 'headache'. <sup>12</sup>

The Indian revolutionaries were 'delighted with the excitement which the Savarkar affair . . . aroused in the press of France, England and other European countries'. They were, however, aware that this stemmed 'more from feelings of national pride than from any desire to help Savarkar that the French' took so much interest in the case. <sup>13</sup> Virendranath Chattopadhyay voiced his 'strong belief that they would have Savarkar back among them again' and the Indians in Paris had apparently 'already planned Savarkar's reception after his return'. <sup>14</sup>

On 18 October 1910, nearly 200 Indians in England participated in the Dussehra celebrations in London. There were tableaux of the Ramayana construed as being symbolic of Indian victory over the British. Quite suggestively, the tableaux had figures of 'white slave girls'. The French anthem *Marseillaise* was played and 'heartily applauded'. This too symbolically indicated the appreciation of French support for Vinayak's

repatriation. The British police present at the venue were further affronted when a proposal to play the British national anthem was ‘ruled out of order’. <sup>15</sup>

The British press, by and large, dismissed the event as a mere mishap, and also castigated its French counterparts for exceeding their brief. The *Evening Telegraph* stated that it was impossible to conceive of surrendering Vinayak to France as ‘such an act would have an extremely harmful effect in India and would be seized upon by the revolutionary leaders as an indication of the weakness of the British authorities’. <sup>16</sup>

Vinayak who had already faced an extradition trial and appeals in London, was now heading towards two more trials—one questioning his recapture in France as part of The Hague arbitration that created a diplomatic row between two sovereign nations, and back home in India for the ‘Nasik Conspiracy Case’.

Various departments in the governments of both England and France were activated after the ‘Savarkar episode’. On 18 July, the French minister for foreign affairs, Monsieur Stephen Jean-Marie Pichon, informed the British embassy in Paris that in view of the facts of Vinayak’s escape and recapture at Marseilles becoming public knowledge, there had been a huge political outcry and media coverage about the incident. Jean Jaurès had notified Prime Minister Briand that he intended to raise serious questions on this issue in the Chamber. The French government had momentarily managed to postpone the issue by citing lack of complete information on the case to avoid embarrassment. But it was imperative on the British government, given the sensitivity of this issue and the involvement of international laws, that the prisoner should not be brought to trial in India until the question that had arisen was suitably settled between the two governments. <sup>17</sup>

Five days later, on 23 July, French ambassador to Britain, Pierre Paul Cambon, sought Vinayak’s extradition back to France from where the British had captured him without the French government’s consent. This demand was in accordance with the Convention between Britain and France for Mutual Surrender of Fugitive Criminals, 14 August 1874.

Lord Viscount Morley, the British Secretary of State for India, was annoyed by these demands. On 26 July 1910, he informed the Foreign Office and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey, that the issue of the trial in India was not something that the executive could decide; it was entirely up to the judiciary to arbitrate on. Hence, it would be impossible for the India Office to give any formal assurance to France that Vinayak would not be tried till the matter was settled between the two countries. However, all he could say was that the Government of Bombay had been instructed to apply for a postponement of the trial in court and that it was now up to the wisdom of the lordships to decide the course of trial.<sup>18</sup> The trial in Nashik was postponed temporarily even though the governor of Bombay was of the view that ‘delay will be inconvenient legally, and gravely disadvantageous politically’.<sup>19</sup>

Morley also suggested that given the manner in which this matter was escalating, a meeting of the India Office, Home Office and Foreign Office with himself, Winston Churchill and Edward Grey would help in formulating a coordinated response to the repeated requests from France. Morley nominated Sir William Lee-Warner, member of the Council of India, and Sir Herbert Risley, secretary of the judicial and public department to represent the India Office in this vexed matter.<sup>20</sup>

Accordingly, the interdepartmental committee met on 29 July 1910. Louis Mallet of the Foreign Office contended that in the interests of maintaining friendly relations with France, the British could consider handing over Vinayak to them. The British government could then pursue the normal course of extradition of a fugitive criminal, namely, handing over a legal copy of arrest warrant and an application through their ambassador in France. Churchill opined that ‘nothing’ was of ‘greater importance’ than the fact that Britain should show herself as a nation that accepted the law of nations. ‘The petty annoyance,’ he added, ‘of a criminal escaping may have to be borne.’<sup>21</sup>

But the India Office was unrelenting. They stated that given the political importance of the case back in India and Vinayak’s alleged seditious involvement in spearheading a widespread conspiracy across the country,



there was no other option but to have him tried. They suggested that the French be informed that the accused was now in Nashik to face trial and the British government was powerless, having to merely wait for the proceedings to conclude. The executive had no power in the courts and it could be conveyed that the Indian court refused to surrender a criminal who had come under their jurisdiction. If Vinayak was acquitted by the Indian court, the question of extradition itself did not arise because he would be a free man. The spirit of the convention of 7 March 1815 was cited whereby European powers had agreed to extradite criminals of other governments. Several past precedents of similar nature were discussed and dissected.

The committee also read and reread the correspondence between the British government and the French Sûreté in which the latter had been informed about an 'important political prisoner' being on board the *Morea* while it docked at Marseilles. Sir Edward Grey, however, opined that the reports suggested that the two native head constables had played a much more important role in his recapture, and Parker and Power were shown in very poor light. Their report could hardly be construed as the complete truth, and someone could pass it off as hearsay, as they were themselves being investigated by the police department. Further, the testimonies of the Indian head constables that they caught Vinayak bolstered the French annoyance, conveyed by the French chargé d'affaires in London, Émile Daeschner who contended that the British government had ousted the French police from the proper discharge of its functions and interfered in its work. Could it be the case that the native constables were simply highlighting their own chivalry to magnify their share in the recapture of Vinayak and it was in reality the French gendarme who contributed to his capture? If such a narrative could be craftily constructed, it would give them the advantage. This new angle put the entire committee into a tizzy and they dispersed after agreeing to elicit the facts from India and also have the Law Office draft the case details well. <sup>22</sup>

As Sir Grey had feared, the French government was increasingly feeling the heat of the episode that had by now broken out in full public view. On

3 August, it sent a note to the British seeking both an apology and Vinayak's extradition to France. The apology was because of the reports that the action of the Indian head constables on French territory constituted a flagrant violation of French sovereignty. Who were they to run behind a fugitive who was seeking asylum in France or capture him? A baffled Foreign Office replied that it was after all a French policeman who handed Vinayak back to the *Morea*, personally delivering him to Power's custody. Assuming that the French policeman acted stupidly and in contravention of the known procedures of extradition, the onus was certainly not on the British government to set his mistake right. When French minister Pichon made his first representation on 18 July, he merely asked for a postponement of the trial till the matter was settled between the two countries, not for extradition. At that time, had a request for extradition been made, it might still have been possible to consider because Vinayak was still on high seas. But once he reached India, he automatically came under the control of the court there and the British government had no power over him till the court so ruled.

Attorney General Sir William S. Robson gave his considered opinion on the case:

1. That before Savarkar was taken by the British authorities into French territory, the assent of the French government was duly obtained to his being kept in custody there by those authorities;
2. That an agreement was thereupon arrived at between Great Britain and France, that the French authorities should assist the British authorities to prevent the escape of Savarkar from British custody;
3. That in the circumstances this agreement amounted to a stipulation that Savarkar should not be entitled to any rights of asylum on French soil; and
4. That in giving him up the French police properly acted in accordance with the instructions given to them under the above agreement.

He further nitpicked on the action of the Indian head constables in hot pursuit by stating that: ‘. . . there is no rule in International Law which prevents a foreigner in a foreign country from assisting a police officer in the performance of a lawful act of seizure.’ His submission was that the constables were merely assisting the French gendarme; they might have gone a bit overboard, but that could not be construed as a violation of France’s sovereignty. ‘The case therefore,’ Robson concluded, ‘is not of a criminal who has been handed over in violation of the conditions of an extradition treaty, but of an alien who has been excluded from French soil, which he had no right to enter’ in the very first place.<sup>23</sup> He did not think Sir Edward Grey would be justified in promising a surrender of the prisoner to France, nor could the executive interfere with the judiciary at this stage of the proceedings.

Meanwhile, the Government of Bombay was getting restless about the undue postponement of the case. The governor shot off a telegram to London on 5 August 1910 in which he seemed to contradict the narrative that the Foreign Office was constructing. It said:

The gendarme to whom Savarkar ran failed to understand what he said; and Savarkar (according to his own statement) was seized first by the constables in pursuit, who were immediately assisted by the gendarme . . . the statement of the other constable is that the pursuers were joined by the gendarme; and that the capture of Savarkar was affected on his stopping partly because hindered by dock employees and partly owing to exhaustion.<sup>24</sup>

The governor was lightly admonished in a return telegram dated 15 August from the Secretary of State for ruining the well-crafted narrative, stating that, ‘it is unnecessary to point out that the question of what happened at Marseilles is to be left for discussion by the two Governments concerned; and that as the publication of the version given in your telegram of the 5th would cause inconvenience, questions relating to these details should be kept out of the Indian courts’.<sup>25</sup>

Subsequent telegrams exchanged between the two conveniently bolster this new narrative and all the previous testimonies of police officials were

happily disregarded. Almost confirming Guy Aldred's accusation of French prime minister Briand's connivance with the British, the Government of France managed to secure a deposition of Brigadier Pesquié that he single-handedly captured Vinayak by his right hand and that the head constables had little role to play in it. The Secretary of State informed the governor of Bombay by 31 August that further postponement of the trial would not be necessary as they would inform the French government that the proceedings could not be stopped and if required, Vinayak could be restored to them after the Indian court had pronounced its judgment.

Accordingly, on 10 September, Vinayak was committed for trial before the special tribunal upon charges framed by the magistrate under Sections 121 and 121A of the IPC and also on a charge of abetment of murder under Sections 109 and 302. Coincidentally, on the same day as the trial commenced in Bombay, miles away in Copenhagen, the Socialist Conference of Europe that was holding its session in that city demanded Vinayak's immediate return to France.

With all the new 'evidences', by 24 September 1910, Sir Edward Grey's narrative was embellished with more details of what transpired at Marseilles. He noted that once the *Morea* docked on the noon of 7 July, a commissaire spécial of the port, Monsieur Leblé, came on board, showed Parker the letter exchanges between Sir E. Henry and Monsieur Hennion, and also saw Vinayak in the cabin. He then took Parker ashore and introduced him to the officer-in-charge of the police on the quay. There were four or five gendarmes in uniform. Addressing his officers, the commissaire spécial said: 'Let me introduce you to the English police officer who has an Indian prisoner on board. You must give him any assistance he may require and prevent any strange Indians from assembling on the quay or going on board.'<sup>26</sup>

Whether these were true or a careful post facto reconstruction of events to suit the British narrative is anybody's guess. None of the police officers on board the *Morea*—both British and Indian—had ever brought up this vital detail in the departmental inquiries, and one wonders how Sir Edward

Grey managed to unearth these ‘facts’ now. In his sworn testimony of 24 July 1910, Inspector Parker, when asked what happened on arrival at Marseilles, had said: ‘Between our arrival at Marseilles and lunch, I went ashore for five or ten minutes to be introduced to the shore police officials.’<sup>27</sup> This was as casual as it was made to appear and not as intricate and embellished as Sir Grey’s version. It is incredible that Parker, who gave the minutest of details of their travel in his testimony, would have omitted this important incident.

Interestingly, after the British government’s strategic decision, Parker zoomed in on the time they arrived at Marseilles, adding fanciful details to it. The governor of Bombay’s telegram dated 20 August 1910 shows how in less than a month Parker managed to remember so much more than what he had testified to in a departmental inquiry. He suddenly mentioned the details of the commissaire spécial of the port, who came on board and spoke to him in French, which he could understand only a little. He then showed him the letter exchanges. He even said that among the gendarmes who were introduced to him, Brigadier Pesquié too was most probably one of them, although he could not be ‘absolutely sure’.<sup>28</sup> It was a wonderful manipulation of concocted facts.

Sir Edward Grey also took care to note that after his escape, Vinayak was ‘arrested and conducted back to the “*Morea*” by a French gendarme. This officer never relaxed hold of Savarkar from the moment he arrested him till he was delivered on board the “*Morea*”.’<sup>29</sup> The testimonies of Amarsingh and Muhammad Siddik were thus craftily airbrushed. Speaking of their role, Sir Grey however mentions:

The action of the ship’s steward and two Indian constables who, on hearing of the escape of Savarkar, had landed and taken part in the pursuit seems, as a result of the fullest investigation to have wholly confined to assisting the French police officer to escort Savarkar back to the ‘*Morea*’ and it can hardly be contended that there was anything unlawful or irregular in this proceeding. It is a common occurrence in every country for independent individuals to assist police officers, if they think they need it, in the execution of their duties. In any circumstances the action of these persons on this occasion in no way affected the final issue and being, as it was, cooperation with

a French official willingly accepted by him at the time it cannot be regarded as derogatory to French authority either in fact or intention. <sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, as per this account the head constables had merely ‘heard of the escape’, and not seen it themselves, as they had testified solemnly in their depositions. Sir Grey argued that Ambassador Cambon’s demand to restore Vinayak to France on the grounds that he had acquired a right of residence and asylum on French soil was negated by their authorities at both Paris and Marseilles. Moreover, Vinayak was not a French citizen to lay claim to such a right which could be made by France only if it felt that its sovereign rights had been violated. But with this new reconstruction of events that possibility too had been effectively negated. He cited the case of one Lamirande in 1866. A French criminal, Lamirande, who was a cashier at the Poitiers branch of the Bank of France, had escaped to Canada, where his surrender in extradition was demanded by the Government of France. Before the legal proceedings of extradition could be completed, the French consul applied to the British Governor General for a warrant by the latter for the immediate dispatch of the prisoner to France. The Governor General, in complete ignorance of the legal proceedings that were under way for extradition, issued the warrant and the man was shipped off. Before the mistake was discovered, he was given to French custody on board the French ship, and it was too late to prevent his departure. This case, according to Sir Grey, presented striking similarities to the ‘Savarkar Case’. Concluding his argument, Grey mentioned that in case the French still did not agree, the British government was open to submitting the matter to arbitration in accordance with international law.

The French government was totally taken aback by this argument and was found fumbling for a response. Ambassador Cambon called the British Foreign Office in panic and conveyed that the likelihood of Minister Pichon being attacked violently in the French Chamber was considerable. They desperately wanted to get the trial in India postponed. Cambon explained his difficulties that the French Chamber saw no

distinction between the jurisdictions of the British government and the Indian government. But the British government was not going to budge, neither was it willing to give any assurances to their French counterparts.<sup>31</sup>

Clutching at straws, the diplomat at the French embassy in London, Émile Daeschner, wanted to know if an oral assurance that Vinayak would not be executed in India could be given confidentially. An amused Morley suggested that Sir Grey instead give a formal assurance that ‘whatever may be the result of the trial of Savarkar, no step involving “irreparable consequences” will be taken pending the settlement of the international question’.<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, by an exchange of notes dated 4 and 5 October 1910, Britain and France agreed to submit to arbitration ‘on the one hand the questions of fact and law raised’ by the Marseilles episode, and on the other hand ‘the demand of the Government of the Republic of France with a view to the restitution to them of Savarkar’.<sup>33</sup> On 25 October, an agreement was concluded between the two governments about the constitution of such an arbitration tribunal and the questions to be placed before it. The following articles were drawn up for the tribunal:

1. Should Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, in conformity with the rules of International Law, be restored or not be restored by His Britannic Majesty’s Government to the Government of the French Republic?
2. The Arbitral Tribunal shall be constituted of five arbitrators chosen from the members of the Permanent Court at The Hague. The two Contracting Parties shall settle the composition of the Tribunal. Each of them may choose as Arbitrator one of their nationals.
3. On 6 December 1910, each of the High Contracting Parties shall forward to the Bureau of the Permanent Court fifteen copies of its case, with duly certified copies of all documents, which it proposes to put in. The Bureau will undertake

- without delay to forward them to the Arbitrators and to each party: that is to say two copies for each Arbitrator and three copies for each Party. Two copies will remain in the archives of the Bureau. On the 17th January 1911, the High Contracting Parties will deposit in the same manner their Counter-Cases, with documents in support of them. These Counter-Cases may necessitate replies, which must be presented within a period of fifteen days after the delivery of the Counter-Cases. The periods fixed by the present Agreement for the delivery of the cases, Counter-Cases, and replies may be extended by mutual agreement between the High Contracting Parties.
4. The Tribunal shall meet at The Hague on the 14th of February 1911. Each Party shall be represented by an Agent, who shall serve as an intermediary between it and the Tribunal. The Arbitrary Tribunal may, if it thinks necessary, call upon one or other of the Agents to furnish it with oral or written explanations, to which the Agent of the other Party shall have the right to reply. It shall also have the right to order the attendance of witnesses.
  5. The Parties may employ French or English language. The members of the Tribunal may, of their own choice, make use of the French or English language. The decisions of the Tribunal shall be drawn up in the two languages.
  6. The Award of the Tribunal shall be given as soon as possible, and, in any case, within thirty days following the date of its meeting at The Hague or that of the delivery of the written explanations, which may have been furnished at its request. This period may, however, be prolonged at the request of the Tribunal if the two High Contracting Parties agree. <sup>34</sup>

The agreement was signed by Paul Cambon and Sir Edward Grey. It was decided that any other points in connection with the arbitration that might



arise and which were not provided for by the agreement would be determined by the provisions of the International Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes signed at The Hague on 18 October 1907. The Hague tribunal, formerly known as the Permanent Court of Arbitration, owed its existence to a Europe-based agreement, which later became international law codes.

The composition of the tribunal for the Savarkar case was agreed upon as follows:

1. Monsieur Beernaert, Minister of State at Brussels and a member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives who was to act as the President of the Tribunal.
2. From Britain, it was the Earl of Desart, KCB, formerly Solicitor to His Majesty's Treasury, late King's Proctor and Director of Public Prosecution.
3. From France, it was Monsieur Louis Renault, Legal Advisor to the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.
4. Monsieur le Jonkheer A.F. de Savornin Lohman, formerly Minister of the Interior at The Hague.
5. Monsieur Gram, formerly Minister of State in Norway.<sup>35</sup>

They were all members of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Eyre A. Crowe of the Foreign Office was to be the British agent. The best course of things would have been to allow this tribunal to settle the case between Britain and France and then continue the trial back in India. The tribunal was anyway mandated to settle the case by February–March 1911. The London press castigated the British government for the mess it had got itself into. As a sharply worded editorial in *The Times* noted:

It is of course deeply to be regretted that the fate of such a prisoner should in the event of his conviction in the Indian courts be dependent upon the decision of another tribunal on points of international law, which, however important in themselves, are

wholly irrelevant to his actual guilt. But, for this, we have unfortunately only to thank the ineptitude of our own officials responsible for sending Savarkar in a ship that touched at any foreign port whilst there were so many ships available that sailed direct from England to India; and secondly that of the officials actually in charge of Savarkar during the voyage on board the *Morea* through whose inconceivable negligence he was allowed so obvious a chance to escape. <sup>36</sup>

### The *Homeward Mail from India, China, and the East* lamented:

Every thinking person reading the account of the escape and recapture of Savarkar at Marseilles must be filled with a sense of humiliation. The administration of this country has again been brought into withering contempt. Savarkar was in custody on charge of waging war against the King and abetment of murder. His guilt or innocence will be determined by the Courts; it is perfectly immaterial to our point, which is that he was in custody on a very grave charge. Four police officers were deputed to bring him to Bombay for trial. How did they discharge their trust? . . . it was obvious, even to the meanest intellect, that if Savarkar meant to escape his one chance was at Marseilles. <sup>37</sup>

Many leaders, activists and legal experts also expressed their displeasure at the double standards of the British government for allowing the trial in India to continue even as the arbitration at The Hague was under way. For instance, the Committee of the International Arbitration and Peace Association, London, was quite annoyed with the continuance of the trial in India. They passed a resolution on 27 October 1910, which said:

This Committee, while expressing satisfaction at the reference to The Hague Court of the question of the legality of the arrest of Savarkar on French soil, protests against the continuance of the trial until the decision of The Hague Court has been given. In view of these circumstances the Committee urges that the tribunal shall be called together with the least possible delay. <sup>38</sup>

*L'Humanite* noted with alarm the news of the trial having commenced in India: 'What we wish to stigmatize is the gross indifference of these magistrates, who, without having the elementary courtesy to await the results of the negotiations actually in progress . . . proceed, despite everything, to try Savakar. If we can call such a procedure a trial.' <sup>39</sup>

But the British government could not care less for such dissent and was simply unwilling to put the Nasik Conspiracy Case trial on hold. All these suggestions to defer the trial were disregarded. On the other hand, it was mandated to expedite the hearings and wrap up the case by the end of 1910 or by January 1911. Vinayak was too dangerous for the British government to be left locked up in a jail, that too in India, awaiting trial. Even as these hectic international parleys were under way, Vinayak's fate hung in the balance in what was to be a sham of a trial, its outcome a foregone conclusion.

## Bombay, September 1910

The special tribunal—without a jury and with no right of appeal to the accused—began its work in September 1910 in Bombay. It consisted of Sir Basil Scott, the chief justice of Bombay High Court, Justice Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar<sup>40</sup> and Justice Heaton. The prosecution counsels were the advocates general of Bombay—Jardine, Weldon, Welinkar—and Nicolson was the public prosecutor. Defending Vinayak and his co-accused were Joseph Baptista, Govindarao Gadgil, Chitre, Sethna, Thacker and Ranegenekar. Vinayak was moved from Nashik prison to Yeravada in Poona and then to Dongri Jail in Bombay. There were three trials that Vinayak faced here.

In the first one, known as the Nasik Conspiracy Case, there were as many as thirty-eight other co-accused. There were nearly 278 depositions that the prosecution had lined up between January and April 1910. When the proceedings began on 15 September 1910, Vinayak was brought to court in a special van and with extra-special security, given his notoriety. It is said that the moment he entered the dock, he heard the sound of claps. When he looked at the vacant benches and galleries and wondered who were clapping, he realized it was all the other co-accused in the dock below him. It was here that Vinayak also saw his younger brother, Narayanrao, after a long time. The two siblings exchanged affectionate looks and non-verbally boosted each other's morale. The government had

managed to secure four approvers in the case—Kashinath Ankushkar, Dattatraya Joshi, W.R. Kulkarni and Chaturbhuj Amin.<sup>41</sup>

At the commencement of the proceedings, Vinayak's counsel, Baptista, raised the fundamental issue of the validity of the proceedings and the ongoing international row related to his arrest. He said:

Savarkar was prevented from holding any conversation while the P&O Liner *Morea*, on which he was being taken out to Bombay, was in French waters. Savarkar, on arrival at Marseilles, requested to be landed, claiming that he had been wrongfully arrested. This request was, of course, refused. Not only this, two French officers went on board the *Morea* but were not allowed to speak to Savarkar. He then determined to escape. Having gained the shore, he saw that two English detectives and three of the *Morea*'s officers were in pursuit. He ran about 300 yards but his pursuers gained on him. He then turned to a French gendarme for help asking to be taken at once to the commissary of Police. At this moment, the detectives arrived and one of them took Savarkar by the neck, the other by the arm. In this brutal fashion, he was taken on board, put in chains and kept in secrecy.<sup>42</sup>

The judges instantly overruled the objection. In its 28 September ruling it said that since the prosecution had a single, vast conspiracy to expose, it would be appropriate to try the pleaders in conjunction rather than separately. There were allegations of attempts to murder Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Justice Dinsha Davar, who had arbitrated against Tilak in the 1908 sedition case. Hence, the court ruled that the ambit of the trial seemed more expansive than what was initially sought to be examined.

On 1 October 1910, the court discussed the various provisions of the Extradition Act under which Vinayak was brought back to India. When repeatedly asked, Vinayak merely replied that he did not recognize the validity of the court that was trying him and hence would not wish to make any statements there. He clearly stated his judicial boycott:

I am quite innocent of the charges laid against me. I took part in the proceedings of the trial in England where in courts one can expect to get justice. There the authority does not rely upon brute force. The condition of Indian Courts of Law is quite the reverse. I am not amenable to the jurisdiction of an Indian Court of Law, I therefore, decline to give any statement or bring any evidence for my defence.<sup>43</sup>

The five charges that were pressed against Vinayak were: <sup>44</sup>

1. Waging and abetting the waging of war against the King (IPC, 121).
2. Conspiring to wage war against the King (IPC, 121).
3. Collecting arms with intent to wage war against the King (IPC, 122).
4. Sedition (IPC 122).
5. Abetment of murder (IPC 302 and 109).

As the trial proceeded, some of these charges were dropped, while others were expanded. For instance, the abetment to the murder charge was divided into two parts. The first charge was that Vinayak, while in London and elsewhere, engaged with certain specified persons and others not specified for the murder of officials of the Government of India. In pursuance of this conspiracy, he had sent out twenty Browning pistols from London to Bombay around February 1909. The consequence of this was that Anant Kanhere murdered Jackson in Nashik in December of the same year. The second charge was that Vinayak had conspired with the specified persons and others 'to overawe by means of criminal force and show of criminal force the Government of India' <sup>45</sup> and yet again did this by sending Browning pistols. Vinayak's speeches of 1906 and before in India were also put to trial for sedition. The various offences were clubbed under three cases titled 'Nasik Murder Case', 'Nasik Conspiracy Case' and 'Abetment of Murder and Sedition'. As part of the Nasik Murder case, Kanhere, Karve and Deshpande had already been executed on 19 April 1910 and the other accused were yet to be tried.

The Nasik Conspiracy Case had thirty-eight accused, including Vinayak, from Nashik, Bombay, Pen, Poona, <sup>46</sup> Yeola, Aurangabad, Hyderabad and other places in the Deccan. All except one were Brahmins, mainly Chitpawans. Twenty-seven of them were found guilty and given various sentences. <sup>47</sup> The trial went on for sixty-nine days with more than thirty witnesses brought to testify. <sup>48</sup> Three of the accused—Shankar Balwant

Vaidya, Vinayak Sadashiv Barve and Vinayak Kashinath Phulambrikar—were discharged earlier in the trial because they had turned approvers.<sup>49</sup>

According to J.A. Guider's deposition, it was the investigation into the Jackson murder that had led the police to unravel a widespread network and to the 'discovery of arms of various sorts' and also revealed 'the existence of secret societies for the overthrow of the British Government in different parts of India'.<sup>50</sup> The plot began to unravel with the investigation of Ganu Vaidya on 23 December 1909. Guider had merely found a piece of paper with Hemchandra Das's name on it during his raid on Babarao's house. As per British colonial criminal code and procedure this was sufficient evidence to implicate him. The links between the revolutionaries of Maharashtra and Bengal and their secret societies were a matter of great concern for the British government and the fact that these associations began to emerge in the raids unnerved them.

Raghunath Venkatesh Gosavi, a young member of Abhinav Bharat, also testified against Vinayak. He said that prior to 1906 the organization strove to achieve independence through lawful means, but after that, making war and collecting arms became its primary motive. He said that Abhinav Bharat had three categories of people: the revolutionaries (Vinayak, Babarao, Sakharam Dadaji Gorhe, Aabaa Darekar and Vishnu Mahadev Bhat), those who joined for physical training, wrestling and swordplay (Vishnu Mahadev Kelkar, Dhanappa, Purdeshi and Gadgil), and those who prepared others' minds through inflammatory speeches (Narayanrao Savarkar, Damodar Mahadev Chandratre and Bapu Joshi). A new recruit usually started in the third category and then graduated to the second class after being thoroughly tested. Finally, with the taking of the oath they were considered to be in the first category, i.e., revolutionaries.<sup>51</sup> He also mentioned that outsiders who visited Abhinav Bharat regularly included S.M. Paranjpe, Syed Haidar Raza and Aurobindo Ghose from Bengal.<sup>52</sup>

Other testimonies unravelled the physical training imparted to members, the process of initiation, the acquisition, supply and distribution of arms, manufacture of explosives, revolutionary literature and their

dissemination and other vital details. One Bapu Joshi revealed that after being arrested, Babarao had instructed Narayanrao in a cryptic manner that he had mistakenly kept a five-rupee note under the roof, and also some cough medicine outside the window. If they did not take these away the cats would eat them up. The allusion was to explosive literature and pamphlets that would fall into police hands. The police found this instruction suspicious and raided the house to find under the eaves a bundle of letters from Vinayak wrapped in a cloth bag and the ‘Bomb Manual’.<sup>53</sup>

One of the key witnesses in the trial was the twenty-five-year-old cook of India House—Chaturbhuj Jhaveribhai Amin Patidar<sup>54</sup> who was there for a year and a half since 1907. He was a ‘key witness’ because it was essential for the prosecution to establish, beyond circumstantial evidence, that the pistol used by Kanhere to kill Jackson was from among the lot sent by Vinayak from London. The crux of the case rested on this and this was where Chaturbhuj was to act as the important link for the prosecution. He gave crucial evidence about the meetings at India House presided over by Vinayak and the tenor and content of his speeches. On one evening, Vinayak had taken Chaturbhuj inside his room, fastened it from inside, and made him sit on a chair near a fireplace beside a photograph of Shivaji Maharaj and a lamp with its wick dipped in ghee. He poured some water in the hollow of Chaturbhuj’s right palm and chanted hymns in Sanskrit for about ten minutes, following which, Chaturbhuj took the Abhinav Bharat oath in Hindustani. Chaturbhuj testified that he had to do a lot of clerical work, such as sending pamphlet bundles in boxes with false bottoms and posting them to different people within and outside London. He also printed the ‘O! Martyrs!’ pamphlet in a room next to Vinayak’s at India House after 10 p.m., with Vinayak and Aiyar assisting and supervising. On another occasion, one of the India House boarders, Bhattacharya, had an altercation with Lee Warner and the revolutionaries apprehended a raid on their premises. Vinayak asked Chaturbhuj to destroy several bottles with the word ‘Acid’ written on it. He thereby gave credence to the fact that India House was an explosives laboratory of sorts.

In February 1909, when he was leaving for India, Chaturbhuj asked Vinayak for a loan of £5 to which the latter replied that he was willing to give it provided Chaturbhuj carried a parcel containing pistols back to India. A harried and petrified Chaturbhuj was reassured by Vinayak, who advised him to take an Italian liner where checking was not as stringent. Vinayak and Aiyar personally packed the parcels with false bottoms containing pistols and 149 cartridges. A letter addressed to Hari Anant Thatte, No. 320, Mint Road, Fort, Bombay, was also given to him. On the other side of the envelope was the name and address of Vishnu Mahadev Bhat, 3rd Floor, Madhavashram, Girgaum, Bombay. Thatte was supposed to be the first point of delivery and if he was not available, the package had to be left with Bhat. En route to India, he had stopped at Paris and met Sardar Singh Rana. Chaturbhuj managed to successfully smuggle the pistols to Bombay, via Genoa, without being detected by customs. Being unable to find Thatte, he went to Bhat's house as advised by Vinayak. He was asked to come back in the evening, when he was introduced to Gopal Krishna Patankar to whom the parcel was handed over in Bhat's presence. Patankar had managed to shift the pistols to a convenient place near Bombay and he selected Vithoba Marathe of Abhinav Bharat in Pen as the depository. Babarao Savarkar did not want the pistols brought to Nashik given the surveillance there. But Chaturbhuj said that defying Babarao's wishes, the pistols managed to enter Nashik, through Karve, who got them from Patankar 'naturally, as they used to talk on national subjects'. <sup>55</sup>

At this point, there was quite a debate because of Edward Parker's (of Scotland Yard) conflicting testimony. He had stayed back in India to testify. <sup>56</sup> He admitted during cross-examination that he kept a close watch on the members of India House and knew that the Browning pistols were bought in Paris by someone other than Vinayak. Baptista cross-examined him on this matter and wanted to prove that Chaturbhuj had possibly bought the pistols in Paris at the insistence of someone else or on his own and that Vinayak was not party to it. The judges however disregarded this completely. Parker's testimony clearly stated that based on investigations conducted by the Metropolitan Police in London, it was not possible to



establish with certainty that it was Vinayak who had ordered the purchase of the pistols. On the one hand, the tribunal accepted Chaturbhuj's testimony that Vinayak had dispatched twenty Browning pistols, but on the other, it refused to accept the same man's testimony that Babarao did not want those same pistols in Nashik. The reason for sending the pistols to India, the tribunal decreed, was 'for only one purpose, a purpose which, the literature disseminated by Vinayak Savarkar shows, was in his opinion, calculated to conduce to the attainment of the ultimate object of the conspirators—the overthrow of the British Government in India'.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, Chaturbhuj claimed that after delivering the parcel he returned to Bombay from his native place Virsad a month and a half later. He was then met by Bhat, Thatte and Narayanrao Savarkar. They wanted him to return to London and pass on a message to Vinayak not to return to India lest he be arrested. But Chaturbhuj refused. He was then asked to help them shop for acid at Crawford Market in Bombay. By end December 1909, Chaturbhuj was arrested at his house. It was he who identified Patankar to the police when he saw him at Victoria Terminus.

Baptista cornered Chaturbhuj about the completely contradictory testimonies he had given on 31 December 1909 and 7 January 1910. To these he merely replied that at the time he did not remember the details so minutely, and on careful introspection he managed to revive his memory. Baptista questioned him about why he could not have procured the weapons in Paris itself when it was seemingly such a tough task to smuggle them from London to Paris and then Genoa to Bombay. When he knew he was meeting Madame Cama or Sardar Singh Rana in Paris, would it not have been simpler to get the pistols from them directly? Chaturbhuj had no answer. Several other witnesses opposed Chaturbhuj's testimonies as being fabricated and exaggerated, but the tribunal summarily dismissed all of them and ruled that 'since all the established facts point to Vinayak as the source from which the pistols came we accept the story of Chaturbhuj as substantially true'.<sup>58</sup>

Gopal Krishna Patankar refused to give any testimony because in his opinion 'the case against Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is brought by the

prosecution with a vindictive attitude’ and his ‘conscience does not tell’ him to take an oath or say anything against ‘his countryman’.<sup>59</sup>

Balwant Ramachandra Barve, Vinayak’s childhood friend, who had earlier testified to being a member of the secret society, upset the prosecution case considerably. He said that the police had extracted his earlier testimony under coercion and torture:

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My object in describing V.D. Savarkar as a leader was that he was an excellent poet, an excellent writer, and an excellent speaker. As I know him from boyhood, when we were students, I used to notice these good qualifications of his and as I have heard several lectures by him on *swadeshi* at Nasik. Among the young people of our age, as he was very smart, I naturally looked upon him as one of the principal leaders . . . It is absolutely false, My Lords, that the Mitra Mela was a political secret society. It was merely a religious *mela* for singing songs at Ganapati festivals. There was nobody in either a political or secret association called by the name *Abhinav Bharat*. A body called *Abhinav Bharat* has been created out of the imagination, from the fact that there is a series of books called *Abhinava Bharat Mala* and attempting to make it synonymous with *Mitra Mela* , to suit the purpose of the police theory that there is a large Brahmanical conspiracy to subvert the British Government in the Deccan.<sup>60</sup>

A similar volte-face by Sakharam Raghunath Kashikar on 1 December 1910 put the prosecution in a bind. There were clear indications of police intimidation to extract testimonies from many of the accused.<sup>61</sup> In his testimony, Narayanrao Savarkar stated:

I have joined no secret society. I do not know anything of that kind. All my education was given in Nasik—Marathi as well as English. In the year 1906 I was prosecuted in the ‘*Vande Mataram* case’ with my eldest brother Ganesh but was acquitted afterwards. After the completion of my study in Nasik, I joined the Baroda College in 1908. During the whole of that year, except the vacation, I was at Baroda. In the beginning of 1909 my eldest brother Ganesh was arrested and so I was compelled to leave the College, as there was nobody except myself to attend to my brother’s food, clothing, and defence. When my brother was in lock up, I used to provide him with food etc. As regards the bundle I never saw it, nor did I know what its contents were .

. . . During the whole of 1909 I was busily engaged in connection with the defence of my brother. After his conviction in Nasik in June, I came to Bombay in July to prefer an appeal on his behalf. I was in Bombay till the decision of the appeal. It is not true that I saw Chaturbhuj in the months of April and May or in any other month I had never seen him. After the decision of the appeal I was considering about my future course when on the 8th of December 1909, I was arrested by the police on suspicion of throwing a bomb at Ahmedabad. I was taken to Ahmedabad, Bombay, Baroda, and Poona and was eventually released on the 18th of December. I had no time even to breathe when on the 23rd of December I was arrested on suspicion about the murder of Mr Jackson . . . my house was searched and nothing was found. <sup>62</sup>

Despite these dissonant testimonies to their narrative, the prosecution's case rested heavily on the various secret and political activities of the erstwhile Mitra Mela and Abhinav Bharat, the literature—books and pamphlets written by Vinayak—found with several members, the details of the oaths, speeches and activities of Abhinav Bharat. The judgment of the case also referred to how successfully they had managed to keep all their activities unknown and secret from the police till the murder of Jackson on 21 December 1909. They managed to establish that these various branches in different cities and towns might not have been formally organized, but they acted in cohort. For instance, the judgment cites that when Babarao was arrested, the paper about explosives that was sent to Patankar by Vithoba Marathe was immediately destroyed; the materials for the manufacture of picric acid were concealed in Nashik after the Jackson murder by Ganu and Deshpande. All of this pointed to a close nexus between members of an association that was formed for seditious purposes. <sup>63</sup>

On 23 December 1910, after marathon testimonies and witness depositions, the court delivered its verdict. The outcome was a foregone conclusion, yet tension gripped the courtroom. Knowing well what the verdict would be, Vinayak penned a message, which he titled 'Pahila Hapta' ('First Instalment'). This was to be the first instalment of the repayment of his debt to his motherland:

Pleased be thou, Mother! To acknowledge this little service of thy children.

Boundless is our indebtedness to thee: Thou chose us to bless and suckle at thy  
breast!  
Behold! We enter the flames of this consecrated Fire today.  
The First Instalment of that debt of Love we pay.  
And totally a new birth, there and then will we immolate ourselves  
And over and over again till the hungry God of Sacrifice  
Be full and crown thee with glory!  
With Shri Krishna for thy redoubtable Charioteer,  
And Shri Rama to lead,  
And thirty crores of soldiers to fight under thy banner,  
Thy army stops not, though we fall!  
But pressing on shall utterly rout the forces of Evil  
And thy right hand, Oh! Mother! Shall plant the golden banner of Righteousness  
On the triumphant tops of the Himalayas! <sup>64</sup>

Expectedly, the harshest judgment among all the accused of the Nasik Conspiracy Case was given to Vinayak:

We find the accused guilty of the abetment of waging war by instigation by the circulation of printed matter inciting to war, the providing of arms and the distribution of instructions for the manufacture of explosives. He is therefore guilty of an offence punishable under Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code. We also find him guilty of conspiring with others of the accused to overawe by criminal force or show of criminal force the Government of India and the Local Government and is therefore guilty of an offence punishable under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code . . .  
Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the sentence of the Court upon you is transportation for life <sup>65</sup> and forfeiture of all your property. <sup>66</sup>

A pall of gloom fell over the court. Babarao had already been transported for life to the Andamans. It was now Vinayak's turn to join him.

Narayanrao was given a sentence of six months' rigorous imprisonment.

But this was not all. The trial regarding the charge of abetment to murder was still pending. This charge was on Vinayak alone. On 23 January 1911, the same special tribunal continued the hearings. While delivering the judgment for this case, the tribunal noted right at the beginning that as per the previous case it had already been well established that Vinayak had sent twenty Browning pistols to India and it 'was incidentally proved that one of the pistols was used in the murder of Mr

Jackson at Nasik'.<sup>67</sup> The tribunal referenced the work done by Babarao and Vinayak right from the time of the Mitra Mela to Abhinav Bharat, where lives of patriots were eulogized, inflammatory speeches delivered and publications prepared—all of which had the sole objective of inciting a rebellion. It was ruled that Vinayak's speeches of 1906 in Poona in February and in Nashik on 22 April clearly alluded to his motive behind going to England. The entire gamut of Vinayak's activities in London at India House was also referenced.

A photograph titled 'Rashtrapurush' (Patriots)—sourced from one of the Abhinav Bharat's members, Kashikar—consisted of a collage of revolutionaries such as Khudiram Bose, Prafulla Chaki and the Chapekar brothers. The tribunal ruled that Dhingra's friendship with Vinayak was also proof of his association and inspiration to revolutionary elements. That Vinayak did not know Anant Kanhere or Karve was inconsequential to the case as it were his activities and writings that spurred this very thought among the young men. Despite the fact that the pamphlet 'Bande Mataram', allegedly written by Vinayak and calling for terrorizing the British and shedding blood, arrived in India with Chanjeri Rama Rao on 28 January 1910 (a full one month after Jackson's murder), it was construed as evidence of Vinayak's hand in the murder.

Based on all these 'evidences' the tribunal finally ruled on 30 January 1911 that it found Vinayak guilty of abetment to murder and he was liable to be punished for the same with another transportation for life.<sup>68</sup> On the pronouncement of a double transportation for life, amounting to fifty years of incarceration in the Andaman jails, Vinayak stood up and said: 'I am prepared to face ungrudgingly the extreme penalty of your laws, in the belief that it is through the sufferings and sacrifice alone that our beloved Motherland can march on to an assured, if not a speedy, triumph.'<sup>69</sup>

The judges were left dumbstruck at the equanimity with which a convict had faced the severest punishment of two life transportations, while anyone else might have broken down and grovelled.

The Hague, February 1911

The last act in this farcical play was enacted at The Hague immediately after Vinayak's multiple convictions in India. The Quote of Arbitration met, as stipulated, on 14 February 1911. The arbitrators asked the agents of the respective countries to make brief summaries of the arguments contained in the documents that they had submitted to the tribunal. The British agent, Eyre Crowe, mentioned that 'this request naturally came upon me as a complete surprise, and I had some hesitation whether I should not raise an objection, as it appeared to me that this procedure was not contemplated by the provisions of the compromise'.<sup>70</sup> However, since it was France's turn to make its arguments first, he got some time to rummage through the voluminous documentation and come up with a summary of Britain's case.

In the second meeting on 16 February 1911, the French agent, Monsieur André Weiss, made a powerful representation of France's case. He was the assistant legal adviser of the department of foreign affairs and a professor of law at the University of Paris. Crowe found 'nothing new was brought forward' and that the tribunal gave him a patient hearing. The following day Crowe made his submissions.

Jean Longuet, who was also an attorney in the Court of Appeal in Paris, represented Vinayak at Madame Bhikaji Cama's instance. Vinayak had given him signed power of attorney to represent him at The Hague. This had been signed on 3 and 4 November 1910 in Bombay in the presence of a notary and his lawyer as one of the witnesses. Longuet wrote a detailed letter to the members of the tribunal stating Vinayak's case passionately. He argued that if the British government knew all along that Vinayak was a criminal and also knew through their surveillance network that in January 1910 he had moved to Paris, why did it not make an extradition request to the Republic of France? They did not, Longuet concluded, because they knew 'full well it would have no chance of it being granted by the French Government'.<sup>71</sup>

To investigate the matter, Jean Longuet and his team had visited the site at Marseilles on 13, 14 and 15 January 1911. They met Brigadier Pesquié and interviewed him, as also Charles Baron, a civil engineer, and Mr

Reaux, general secretary of the Sailors' Union of Marseilles. They informed Jean that it was only on the evening of the ship docking at Marseilles that the British consul in Marseilles had requested Commissioner Leblé to monitor the ship. This was also in consonance with a thorough investigation of the events at Marseilles that journalist Gabriel M. Bellin had conducted, blowing the lid off the British theory about Leblé coming on board once the *Morea* reached Marseilles. In his article titled '*L'Odyssee d'un Revolutionnaire Hindou*' (The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Hindu), dated 17 July 1910, in the French newspaper *Petit Provincial*, he writes:

An arrest made recently in our port—hushed up to avoid any surrounding publicity, that thereby it may pass unmarked—will be the negation of French character and any defense of individual liberty if not brought to light . . . First the *Daily Mail* and then the *Humanite* has reported this unprecedented event that will resound in the Gallery of the House where it will be carried by citizens Cadenat and Jaurès; our investigation confirms the unfortunate facts of this event . . . In this case, the maritime police saw a man getting away and assumed he was a sailor or a native taxi driver, especially after hearing the yells of 'Stop thief!' dogging the heels of the fugitive. Not for a moment after they had caught Savarkar, accompanied by the British police, did they think they had committed an illegality. On the contrary, confident that they had followed instructions promptly and were within their right in the performance of their duty, they handed over the student. However, (Vinayak) Damodar Savarkar, being pursued for political offenses, was on French soil and should have first been taken to a French magistrate, better informed about the thorny issues of international law than mere police. It was not thought of, it seems, and there arose from the Hindu Colony in Paris an uproar regarding this incident; immediately they went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, after having submitted the matter to Mr Pichon, asked citizens Jaurès and Cadenat to intercede. <sup>72</sup>

From eyewitness accounts and the interview with Pesquié, Jean Longuet reconstructed the events after Vinayak's escape from the porthole. Pesquié was along the quays as instructed by his superiors to guard the *Morea* when he saw a man wearing a simple bath suit run up to him asking: 'You French Policeman?' When he answered in the affirmative, the fugitive did not run away. By then, three individuals came there raising a huge alarm and several people screaming: 'Thief, Thief, Catch him, catch him!' The

three men—the two Indian head constables and Slavin, the cabin steward of the ship—seized the fugitive. Given the commotion and the screams of ‘thief’, Pesquié assumed that the man was a petty thief who had possibly committed some crime on the ship and was running away. He, therefore, took the man by the left hand; the two head constables grabbed him, one by the right hand and another by his neck and dragged him back to the *Morea*. Pesquié affirmed that he had no clue about the man’s identity nor had he ever seen the political prisoner on the ship. Jean Longuet further argued in his letter—quoting the 13 November 1910 issue of the *Journal of Law*—whether Pesquié was a person of authority or someone who could understand, at such a volatile moment, the implications of the right of asylum. He merely acted on impulse and in good faith, of catching a petty thief who was running away. Making a passionate case for Vinayak’s return to France, Jean Longuet concluded the letter exposing Britain’s doublespeak of claiming to have been a safe refuge for revolutionaries of other countries in the past, but doing quite the opposite with a revolutionary who challenged their power:

As for violent means, if their employment were sufficient to qualify as murderers or those who advocate anarchist means, England would never have boasted of being in the last century, the ‘mother of exiles’, the haven of Mazzini, Kossuth, Karl Marx, Garibaldi, refugees from the Commune or the Russian Revolution, as well as French monarchists and dethroned sovereigns after the revolutions of 1830, 1848, and 1870.

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After listening to all sides, on 24 February 1911, the tribunal delivered its award. It noted the letter correspondences between the Metropolitan Police and the French Sûreté about an important political prisoner being carried in the *Morea* that was to dock at Marseilles as well as the subsequent letters by the French police to provide assistance. It noted the testimony of the gendarme, Brigadier Pesquié, who said that ‘he saw the fugitive, who was almost naked, get out of a porthole of the steamer, throw himself into the sea and swim to the quay . . . at the same moment some persons from the ship, who were shouting and gesticulating rushed over the bridge



leading to the shore, in order to pursue him . . . number of people on the quay commenced to shout'.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the evidence furnished by Jean Longuet, the role of the gendarme as the singular authority of arrest and not the native constables was upheld. In view of these testimonies and documents, the tribunal found no case of fraud or force to obtain possession of a man seeking refuge in foreign territory, and that all the actors had played their part 'in good faith and had no thought of doing anything unlawful'.<sup>75</sup>

Interestingly, the tribunal admitted that 'an irregularity was committed by the arrest of Savarkar and by his being handed over to the British Police', but hastened to add there was no rule of international law that the country which had obtained custody of such a fugitive needed to hand him over. In view of this, the tribunal decided that 'the Government of His Britannic Majesty is not required to restore the said Vinayak Damodar Savarkar to the Government of the French Republic'.

There was widespread condemnation of the judgment even from the London press. *The Daily News* criticized the award for narrowing the limits of the right of asylum. *The Morning Post* decried it as something that had 'reduced the right to asylum and the international law to farce'.<sup>76</sup> Germany was miffed at its not being included in the tribunal. Many countries also took positions in accordance with the prevailing climate in Europe that was standing at the threshold of a major global conflagration, the First World War. *The Berlin Post*, a mouthpiece of the Free Conservative Society and a major influencer in German politics, expressed its displeasure in an aggressive editorial dated 25 February 1911:

We have never thought much of The Hague Court of Arbitration—that is, of its impartiality and objective love of justice. The representatives of the various nationalities vote, in point of fact, in accordance with the interests, the political views, and the grounds of expediency, of their several countries—always excepting our idealist Germans. It is not necessary to suppose that these men act in the fact of their better judgment and conscience. To some extent foreign countries have a different, and certainly, a much more practical sense of values, in striking balance, as between the interests of their own country and the conception of pure justice as it prevails in general with us. National prejudices and prepossessions determine their judgment

from the outset. Nevertheless, we should hardly have thought it possible that a court of arbitration in the Savarkar Case would accord an exhibition of such touching naiveté, such an exhibition of ‘pure folly’. It has passed over the real issue of the Savarkar Case in complete silence—namely, the fact that a political offender, who in a foreign harbor has escaped from the ship, which was transporting him and been recaptured by a French policeman with the support of an Englishman in pursuit and that not in the water, though there already he was, on foreign territory, but after he had reached dry land, was forthwith without even an appearance of formal proceedings, handed back to the English ship. That is a gross breach of the international law, and a proof how far the subservience to England (*Die Englische Gefolgshaft*) has brought proud France. The verdict of the court is as if no such breach of extra-territoriality had ever occurred. <sup>77</sup>

*La Society Nouvelle* of Belgium, in its March 1912 editorial, denounced the award stating that ‘England’s infamous Empire rests on blood, ferocious repression and officially acknowledged systematic tyranny’. <sup>78</sup>

The Hague award was a huge disappointment for the Indian revolutionaries in Paris who had pinned their hopes on a possible extradition. Several articles and editorials appeared in Madame Cama’s *Bande Mataram*. She wrote that ‘the demoralized people [in Paris] have collapsed’. <sup>79</sup> Penning his thoughts of remorse on this occasion, Shyamji stated:

This decision of the International Tribunal at the Hague has shattered all faith in the maintenance of the rights of political refugees as ordinarily understood, and it is sad to observe that the nations hitherto most conspicuous for their love of liberty are slow to recognize these rights when they are beset by political consideration. *L’Humanite* was after all justified in finding that the submission of *L’Affaire Savarkar* to arbitration in the first instance was a tactical error on the part of France, and a friend who was a member of the British Parliament, assures us that the way in which France submitted her case, ensured its failure, all the strongest grounds having been omitted. There only now remains for us to offer an expression of our heartfelt sympathy and commiseration with our dear young friend and associate, Mr Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in the hard fate, which has befallen him, and which has snatched him from us at the very moment when . . . we were all so confident of speedily seeing him once more in our midst. We also desire to tender our sincere condolence to the members of his family, who have had the agony of seeing three brothers one after another doomed to incarceration, two of them having been sentenced to transportation for life. <sup>80</sup>

In England, Guy Aldred, who had led a relentless campaign and formed a ‘Savarkar Release Committee’ since the time Vinayak was arrested in March 1910, criticized the award. He also created a ‘Savarkar Release Tour’, which would include the whole of England, Scotland and Wales to drum up support for his release.<sup>81</sup> In a pamphlet titled ‘The White Terror in India’, Aldred thundered:

The British working class can strike in sympathy with the wrongs in India. They can secure the release of Savarkar and other illegally detained victims of British Despotism—by rebellion . . . you have the love of freedom, that groans at the illegal detention of Savarkar . . . Demand the release of Savarkar and he shall go free.

In the same paper, he claimed that the only crimes of Savarkar were ‘youthful trust in the honour of the British Government, great literary ability and great determination to educate his fellow-countrymen up to a clear recognition of how they can emancipate themselves from the menace of the white terrorism in India’.<sup>82</sup>

*Der Wanderer*, a German fortnightly published in Zurich, supported Aldred editorially and carried his point of view. Aldred singularly blamed French prime minister Briand for ‘voluntarily betraying the sovereignty of France’.<sup>83</sup> Significantly, three days after the Hague award, Briand had to resign as prime minister. While many, including Aldred, claimed that the reason for him doing so was the ignominy of the ‘Savarkar case’, there were bigger triggers such as increasing political tensions in the European continent and Germany’s rising militarism. In a scathing commentary, Aldred said:

The Hague Award was given in February 1911. It annulled the right of political asylum and exposed Briand’s intrigue. Three days later he resigned rather than face questions in the Chamber of Deputies. But the precedent, which, his action has created, established the right of Russian agents acting in collusion with the English police and Government to kidnap any Russian refugee and transport him to Siberia without the knowledge or consent of the British people or even the British Parliament. No rule of International Law could be invoked for his restoration.<sup>84</sup>

Vinayak's case was a huge jolt to the Indian revolutionary movement that was gathering steam across Europe. It established Britain as a dangerous place for any revolutionary activity. So, the Indians in Paris began sending literature that was considered seditious to the French enclave of Pondicherry. From there, they would be smuggled into British India. This process had begun since August 1909, but gathered momentum after Vinayak's case ended in the manner that it did at both The Hague and in India. This new route was pioneered by Aiyar who moved to Pondicherry after Vinayak's extradition. Upon reaching there, he began to receive Vinayak's books, pamphlets and weapons from Madame Cama. These were then distributed across British India.

However, the entire Savarkar affair broke the cohesiveness of the revolutionary organizations with the weakest links in the organizations succumbing to become informants and approvers. Ascertaining the true identity, intent and orientation of their group mates and new recruits took up a lot of time, effort and resources—all of which could have been more gainfully spent on political work. The seeds of distrust had been sown and undercurrents of suspicion against one another loomed. The case also agitated public discourse and exposed the inner contradictions between cherished notions of national sovereignty and the willingness of government officials to cooperate across national borders when the need arose.

## Bombay, March 1911

With this the curtains came down on a series of trials against Vinayak spanning across continents, and which lasted for more than a year. After the trials, the police kept shifting him to various prisons in Bombay—Dongri, Byculla and Thane.<sup>85</sup>

It was at Dongri prison that news of The Hague award was given to Vinayak. A policeman told him with a smirk on his face: 'You are now sentenced to fifty years transportation.' The word 'fifty' kept ringing in Vinayak's ear. This was to be counted as the first day in that long journey

of half a century. Till the decision of The Hague was made known, Vinayak was not treated as a prisoner in either food or clothing. After this, he had to change into his prisoner clothes that the British superintendent had brought for him. A chill of horror reverberated through Vinayak while changing into those clothes—after all, this was how he was now going to dress for the rest of his life.

To compound his misery, a sepoy brought in an iron badge that had to be worn around the neck. On it was carved the number '1960'. It was the year of his release from prison. Wearing this on his neck would be the constant reminder about what life lay ahead and for how long. The superintendent who noticed Vinayak's change of expression laughed and said: 'Don't fear, His Majesty's benign government will release you in 1960 for sure.' Vinayak retorted: 'Death is kinder, it may release me earlier!' Both of them laughed.

From the second day, there was a regular regimen. His mornings began with a walk in the open square downstairs. Dongri was in the heart of Bombay and during his walk Vinayak could see tenements in the vicinity. Often people crowded on their terraces to look at him. He acknowledged their looks of reverence with gratitude. During the walk, he often recited the entire *Yoga Sutra*s of the great sage Patanjali in his mind. The 196 verses of the *Yoga Sutra*s have the unique ancient wisdom of controlling one's mind, of sadhana and meditative practices, and of attaining a state free from consciousness of discursive thoughts. This was just what Vinayak needed at this stage in his life. In his cell, Vinayak was given the task of 'picking oakum'. Coiled ropes were cut into pieces and these had to be broken, spun into thread. A deluge of thoughts would crowd his mind as he went about this monotonous task. He often mocked himself about the barrister he was to become and what he had come to. Meditating strongly on the verses of the *Yoga Sutra*s, Vinayak would order his mind to behave itself. Looking at the mundane task at hand, he would often philosophize that it was perhaps destiny's way of teaching him the meaning of life. After all, wasn't life all about strands woven around five elements, which,

on being unknotted would lead to inevitable death and reduce us all to ashes?

Even in those darkest moments, Vinayak decided to find solace in writing. He had always wanted to compose an epic. Perhaps, this was his opportunity to do so. He decided to write one on the life of the valorous Guru Gobind Singh, his eternal inspiration and a prince among martyrs. Lost in thought, Vinayak was oblivious to the fact that picking oakum cut and blistered his hands. After the evening meal, when the door was shut on him, he practised meditation as laid down in the *Sutra* s, before retiring for the day at 9 p.m. Two pigeons that had made a home in his cell were a source of entertainment and diversion. Speaking about this monotony that awaited him day after day, Vinayak writes:

This solitary life, with its fixed routine from minute to minute, wherein I tried my hardest to control the mind by the power of thought and dispassion, sometimes became so intolerable, that I felt, on occasions, that my grief and anxiety were sitting on my chest like a nightmare with their grip in my throat that had almost strangled me. In such moments I could hardly breathe for relief; I felt then that I could even bear this, if I were, sure that my cause would prosper through my sufferings. But then . . . ? Instantly I recovered from this dark despair, and I was myself over again. The poise came back to my mind, as if nothing had happened during the interval. <sup>86</sup>

Even in his state of confinement news from the outside world made its way to Vinayak. He once saw a cutting of *Kesari* in a prison corner. It had reference to Sir Henry Cotton, one of the founding fathers of the INC and the president of its Bombay session of 1904. At a public gathering of Indians in London he had perchance seen a portrait of Vinayak and sighed that it was a pity that a man so young and talented, and who had a bright future ahead of him, had been reduced to such a pitiable condition. He had hoped that The Hague award might work in his favour and help extradite him to France.

All hell had broken loose thereafter, with severe condemnations, protests and calls for withdrawal of his knighthood. The Congress quickly disassociated itself from the statements of one of its own founders. Sir

William Wedderburn, the president of the Congress session that year, and Surendranath Banerjea had given statements to the press that they and other Congressmen did not endorse Sir Cotton's sympathy for a man like Vinayak Savarkar. Ironically, Tilak's *Kesari* too distanced itself by saying that these were Cotton's personal opinions.<sup>87</sup> European newspapers were hailing Vinayak as a brave martyr, while Indian newspapers were scared to take a supportive stand. On his final conviction, the *Times of India* carried an article that said: 'The rascal has at last met with his fate.'<sup>88</sup>

One day, during his imprisonment at Dongri jail, Vinayak had a visitor. Wondering who it could be, he stepped outside to the visitor's gallery. His heart sank when across the prison bars he saw his young wife, Yamuna, and her brother, trembling with fear and battling their tears. They did not even dare to touch his hands from across the bars. This could possibly be their last meeting. Yet, the parting note had to be conveyed in the presence of a stern, unsympathetic British superintendent who kept watch. Trying to make light of the situation, Vinayak told his wife: 'Only the clothes have changed, I am still the same! Moreover these clothes are good protection during the cold weather.' Yamuna burst into tears. Consoling his wife, Vinayak said: 'Even sparrows and kites enjoy domestic bliss, procreation, building houses . . . We have broken our cooking utensils so that in times to come fortune will probably smile on thousands of our countrymen.'<sup>89</sup>

Their conversation had barely finished while it was announced that their time was up. While leaving, Vinayak's brother-in-law whispered the mantra dedicated to Lord Krishna: '*Krishnaya Vasudevaya Haraye Paramatmane, Pranatah Kleshanashaya Govindaya Namoh*' (My salutations to Lord Krishna, the son of Vasudeva, who removes the sufferings of all who surrender to Him). He asked Vinayak to recite this without fail every day. They left without looking back.

All the agony and sorrow that Vinayak had been trying to hold back, broke their dams. Almost at the same time he looked up to see the ruckus created by the young ones of the pigeon family that had made its home in his cell. The mother bird had been mistakenly hit and killed by a bullet from the jailor while she had gone out to get food for the little ones. They

were now desperately hungry and wailed in sorrow at the absence of their protective mother. The poignancy of the occasion was too much to bear for a sensitive poet like Vinayak. He burst out crying in intense pain. A warder, who was passing by stomped in, poked him with his stick and ordered him not to waste time and get back to picking oakum.

A month seemed to have passed this way. One day, the superintendent walked in and asked him to pack up. Vinayak thought that the time to depart for the Andamans had finally come. But he was just ushered into a prison van, its shutters were downed and he could see nothing in the pitch-blackness that engulfed him in broad daylight. All he could sense was the rough and tumble of the carriage, which suddenly halted. When he was pulled out, the sudden light blinded him. Squinting, Vinayak saw that he stood in front of another prison gate in Bombay, Byculla jail.

The cell here was lonelier and gloomier than the one in Dongri. There were some noises and sights of the outside world there, but here even those were gone. It seemed like he had been pushed further into solitariness. There were no books to read, not a word heard, not a soul that moved, no articles of daily use—Byculla presented a dreary picture. At Dongri, Vinayak had been served bread with milk. Here the milk was stopped, and he had to eat dry pieces of stale bread. He petitioned the jailer that he be served milk along with the bread. The request was immediately shot down. He then asked for books such as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, books by W.T. Stead, and the Russian general Prince Kuropatkin—at least one if possible.<sup>90</sup> He was sent an English copy of the Bible that evening. The life and sufferings of Jesus Christ seemed like the most opportune story for Vinayak at the time. He managed to mentally finish more verses of his epic on Guru Gobind Singh, and also a poem titled 'Saptarshi' that he had begun at Dongri.

Vinayak had also submitted an application requesting that the two sentences of transportation for life, running up to twenty-five years each, may run concurrently. In support of his plea, he had quoted relevant sections of the IPC. A life sentence meant the active period in a man's life. While in England this amounted to not more than fourteen years, in British



India it meant twenty-five years. Such being the case, being given a double sentence of fifty years, which he may not even live through, was against the code and hence a concurrent award of the sentence was the most logical and fair thing to do.

The government rejected this on 4 April 1911 and it was decreed that it amounted to consecutive sentences, totalling fifty years. It noted that ‘the question of remitting the second sentence of transportation for life would be considered in due course of the expiry of the first sentence of transportation for life’.<sup>91</sup>

This was mockingly conveyed to him by the British superintendent who said that the government had decided to run their first life sentence for twenty-five years and the subsequent one for another twenty-five years. True to his patented wittiness and equanimity, Vinayak remarked: ‘Good! At least, the consolation that for this purpose the British Government has subscribed to the Hindu doctrine of rebirth, and had disowned the Christian doctrine of resurrection.’ The superintendent was stumped for a suitable response.

Quite soon, he was once again whisked away to another location, this time to the Thane prison. The place bustled with excitement to see a bar-at-law, a dangerous terrorist who had been condemned to life transportation to the Andamans. But no inmates were allowed to make any contact with Vinayak. Here, he was guarded by the ‘worst known warders’ of the place—they were all Muslims, ‘and the wickedest of them’ in the bargain.<sup>92</sup>

His meal here consisted of hard-baked jowar bread served with half-cooked vegetables that were too sour to taste. He would often break the bread, put it into his mouth and, being unable to bite or taste it, merely swallow it down with water. By dusk the doors were shut and there was all-engulfing darkness. One night, Vinayak heard a soft tap on his door. A warder, whom he considered the wickedest of them all, walked in and told him that he was aware of Vinayak’s valour and was his admirer. He had brought a message to him from another inmate. Even as Vinayak wondered who this inmate could be, the warder pulled out a slate from behind his

back. It contained a message from his younger brother, Narayanrao. Unknown to Vinayak, he too was lodged in the same jail. The warder told him not to breathe a word about this to anyone, as that would mean he would be executed.

Vinayak experienced another surge of emotions thinking about his beloved younger brother who had been orphaned in childhood and whom his parents had left behind in the care of the two elder brothers. Neither of them seemed to have done their duty well, he lamented. In the flickering light of a lantern, Vinayak tried to read what was written on the slate. The message was that Vinayak must gather courage and not give up hope; that he must not worry for him. There was not a word of sorrow, repentance or defeatism. Instead, it conveyed a spirit of quiet confidence reassuring his elder brother that come what way, he would not budge an inch from the solemn oath he had taken.

However, Vinayak had doubts about the message; it could be a crafty ploy to fix him. Still he decided that he would send a reply without any names or specific plans of action. Among other things Vinayak wrote: ‘Do not think of me, and do not shed tears of sorrow that you have failed in your life. Some fuel has to burn in a steam engine, so that the steam may rise up from it and the engine begin to move. Are we not that fuel that the fire may burn and the flames rise up and spread far and wide? To burn thus is in itself a great act!’<sup>93</sup> Within two days of this, he learnt that Narayanrao had been shifted elsewhere.

The chief warder poked fun at Vinayak all the time, taunting him, ‘Oh! Here comes the Tiger!’ He ogled at him while he bathed and praised his toned body and passed snide remarks about how such a handsome man needed to serenade with a fair English maiden and not rot in prison. Dancing with lewd and awkward steps, he often gesticulated at Vinayak and passed jibes at him all day saying it was only his corpse that would leave the prison.<sup>94</sup>

The Delhi Durbar of Emperor George V was scheduled for the end of the year. Rumours were rife that several political prisoners, including possibly Vinayak, might get a royal pardon and be released as a gesture of

supreme goodwill on the part of the ‘benevolent monarch’. However, nothing happened to that effect. Instead, Vinayak’s trunks, books, garments and other belongings were put out for public auction. This was because the trial had sentenced him with forfeiture of all property. The monies so recovered were to go to the government treasury. His property—worth Rs 27,000 and that of his father-in-law’s worth Rs 6725—was confiscated. Even the cooking pots and utensils from his house were seized. <sup>95</sup>

One morning, the havildar asked him to also surrender his pair of spectacles and a miniature copy of the Bhagavadgita that he kept with him. It was a moment of some poignancy that left even several hard-hearted warders of the jail teary-eyed. But eventually the government took ‘great mercy’ and ensured that the anna-worth of the Gita and the spectacles were duly returned to Vinayak but he was to use them as government property!

One day, at the Thane prison, Vinayak learnt that a large group of convicts was arriving. In prison parlance they were known as ‘chalans’. Given the monotony of prison life where even a crow flying over their heads caused a stir of excitement among the prisoners, this was an occasion for much enthusiasm and eagerness. Finally, by noon, a gang of the most notorious criminals across the country arrived amid the sounds of clanging chains and shackles. The stories of the horrors of their crimes sent shivers down many spines. Vinayak realized that he would soon have to share space with these very men in the Andamans. <sup>96</sup>

On 25 June 1911, a sea of anxious faces assembled outside Thane prison. It was the day when India’s brave son was to be deported to Madras and from there to the Andamans. Vinayak was led to a committee that was to examine him for his physical and mental health and if he were fit enough to go to the Andamans. A kind officer told him that if he did not wish to go, he would try his best to use his influence to keep him in Bombay itself. After thanking him profusely for his kindness, Vinayak politely refused. He was suffering from high fever yet he was weighed, declared fit to be transported and handed over his earthly belongings—utensils and bedding. He was put up in a tiny cell adjoining the one with

all the ‘chalans’. Through the walls he could hear their wails and boisterous laughter. Many of them lived in the moment, made merry like there was no tomorrow and were often thoroughly intoxicated. At that moment, intense grief lashed Vinayak’s mind. A barrister from London, all set to sail to the most dreaded jail of the subcontinent, with a motley bunch of the country’s most infamous criminals—the irony of the situation did not escape Vinayak’s sharp mind.

He thought about his elder brother, Babarao, who too might have travelled to the Andamans with similar ‘chalans’. His emotions were further roused when an older warder told him that Babarao had been lodged in exactly the same cell that he now was in before his departure to Cellular Jail.

Wearing just a vest, a rough rug over it and a small headscarf, with a small pot and iron platter in one hand, and a blanket and mattress tucked under his armpit, Vinayak was a symbol of dignity and grace. He was handcuffed, chained by the legs and roped to an officer. Given their experience with him in London and Marseilles, the police took no chances. He was whisked away into a closely guarded van that took him straight to his compartment in a Madras-bound train. The officer stayed with him all day and kept guard even when Vinayak had to visit the lavatory. The heat of southern India’s summer was unbearable. As they neared Madras, a British officer told Vinayak to pin his hopes on the royal pardon at the Delhi Durbar. He answered: ‘Thank you for your good wishes. My wounds are too raw . . . nothing can heal them. It would be a folly to bank on such meaningless hopes.’

Around the time Vinayak landed in Madras, the collector of Tirunelveli district, Robert William d’Escourt Ashe, had been murdered by a young revolutionary Vanchinathan. Vinayak realized that it could have been the handiwork of none other than his closest associate, V.V.S. Aiyar. There were stories about Aiyar having taken refuge in the French colony of Pondicherry and establishing a strong branch of Abhinav Bharat there. Vinayak was questioned by the police about this murder, and needless to say, he feigned ignorance.

In June 1906, his family and friends had given him a hero's departure as he boarded the ship to London. Five years later, on 27 June 1911, he was boarding another steamer—ironically named the S.S. *Maharaja*—but this time as a dangerous convict headed to the frightful Cellular Jail in the Andaman Islands. As the ship set sail from the shores of Madras, sitting in a dark, claustrophobic cage amid filth and squalor, Vinayak wondered if he would ever see his beloved motherland and family members again. Vinayak writes about this heart-wrenching moment:

Climbing into that steamer to be transported for life was like putting a live man in his own coffin. Hundreds and thousands must have gone to the Andaman Islands during these years, and not ten in a thousand had returned alive to India! Young men of 18, as soon as they put their step on that steamer, became old and the shadow of death was visible on their faces. When a man is put upon the bier, his relatives conclude that he had left the world forever, and, overcome with bereavement, watch the corpse with vacant eyes. Even so, the spectators watched us as we climbed into that steamer and felt that we were dead to the Motherland we were leaving behind. The people, watching the scene, fixed their eyes upon me with the same feeling in their hearts. I was dead to the outside world—that feeling was writ large on their faces. Really, I was being put on my funeral bier. The only difference was that I felt what was happening to me while my corpse would have felt nothing. Thousands looking at me in this plight were simply indifferent and altogether cold. They were looking at me, as they would have seen any corpse passing along the road. 'Poor man, he is dead and gone!' says the passer-by and forgets him the next moment. It was a pain to me to see them gaping at me—my own fellow-countrymen that they were . . . If but a single one out of these my compatriots was to tell me, 'Go, my brother, go, I and others like me swear that we shall make India free and fulfill your vow', I would have felt my funeral bier as soft as a bed strewn with flowers. <sup>97</sup>



8

## Sazaa-e-Kalapani

Port Blair, July 1911

On entering the cabin in the lowest deck of the S.S. *Maharaja* , Vinayak found that he had to share space with some fifty other members, the most unkempt and unwashed masses of the country, who had spread their beddings on every available inch of the floor. In front of him was a cask from which a terrible stench choked the air. Later, when he saw a fellow passenger easing himself right there in front of him, Vinayak realized that this was used as a chamber pot and commode by these unfortunate passengers. It needed steely resolve of the mind to overcome this level of ill-treatment, and Vinayak consoled himself with various philosophical stories. There was not even enough space to stretch oneself, as the passengers were huddled together like cattle. Some of the European travellers on the steamer were very reverential towards Vinayak, having heard stories about him. In his honour and with the permission of the captain, a few of them sponsored a meal for the entire lot of prisoners in the basement. It consisted of rice, fish and pickles. After two days of fasting, with just boiled peas and dried grams to munch on, the prisoners exulted at this feast. They thanked Vinayak because of whose presence they had enjoyed it. <sup>1</sup>

After nearly ten days of travel in this squalor, the *Maharaja* docked at Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. The Andamans consist of nearly 184 islands and sixty-five islets. The length between the extremities is about 355 kilometres. There are five groups of islands from north to south—North Andamans (81 kilometres long), Middle Andamans (71 kilometres long), South Andamans (84 kilometres long), Baratang that runs parallel to the east of South Andamans (28 kilometres long) and finally Rutland (19 kilometres long).<sup>2</sup> The Rutland portion was full of dense and dark forests. Given its marshy vegetation and swamps, the Andamans were a hotbed of malaria. Flies hummed and spread over in thick swarms. The islands also had abundance of leeches and serpents—the former being more fatal and even causing paralysis in humans who got suckered on. The original aboriginal tribes who inhabited these islands belonged to the Negrito race, although there has been much controversy about the origins of the Andamanese. They possibly were migrants from coastal Burma as well, given the proximity of these islands. The tribes were named variously as Chariar, Kora, Toba, Yere, Kede, Juwai, Kol, Bojigyab, Balawa, Bea, Onge and Jarawa. Some were cannibals too.

The popular notion that Port Blair was the first and only penal settlement established by the British to transport criminals is erroneous. The first British Indian penal settlement was at Benkoelen in Sumatra, Indonesia, from where 1787 convicts were transported to the settlement known as Fort Marlborough. Convicts accused of murder, thuggee, frauds, forgeries and so on were transported to these distant places to ‘reclaim them from their bad habits’.<sup>3</sup> The real reason though was possibly to procure recruitment of free labour in large numbers. By the time this settlement closed in the 1820s, nearly 800–900 convicts from the Bengal and Madras Presidencies were involved in hard labour, building roads and clearing jungles. In 1825, Marlborough Fort was shut and the island of Penang was chosen. Settlements were established in Malacca, Tenasserim and Singapore as well. Nearly 1100–1200 convicts from India were kept in Singapore by the 1830s.

From 1789, the Andamans had served as the settlement for convicts for the British East India Company. Lieutenant Archibald Blair, after whom the port is named, surveyed the islands and recommended the establishment of the penal settlement here. But in barely seven years, in 1796, it was abandoned on account of unhealthy climate and high mortality rates. However, after the 1857 War of Independence, the settlement came alive again as several of the ‘mutineers’ were transported to the Andamans. The first batch of nearly 733 freedom fighters began to arrive at Chatham Island of the Andamans on 10 March 1858.<sup>4</sup> Among the important leaders who were transported here were Alama Fazli Haq Khairabadi and Maulana Liaqat Ali. They died in confinement. From the 1860s, the administrative set-up of the settlement began to slowly take shape, with regulations around land cultivation, taxation policies, currency usage, and military and police force. The first jail and gallows were constructed in Viper Island in the Andamans during 1864–67. More than eighty freedom fighters were hanged on a single day by the first superintendent of the settlement, Dr James Pattison Walker, who had been a military doctor and warder at the Agra prison.<sup>5</sup> The officers of the settlement lived in Ross Island, which was the headquarters for over eighty years. In popular parlance, the settlement was known as ‘Kalapani’ or Black Waters. This not only alluded to its seclusion from the mainland, but also the loss of caste due to overseas journey, leading to social exclusion.<sup>6</sup>

By the early twentieth century, there were close to 12,000 Indian convicts from different regions, religions and castes housed in the Andaman penal settlement.<sup>7</sup> These included over 3000 freedom fighters of the 1857 War, rebels of the Wahabi movement, followers of Wasudev Balwant Phadke and members of the Manipur royal family after the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891. Each of these groups was located in different settlements spread across the islands. Women convicts too were shifted here since the 1860s. A Wahabi convict, Sher Ali, who had been transported to the Andamans, made a heroic leap at the viceroy, Lord Mayo, when he visited the settlement in 1872, and stabbed him to death.



In 1874, a remission system was put in place in the penal administration, whereby if the conduct of a convict transported for life was good, he would be released in twenty to twenty-five years.

Three years before Vinayak's arrival, the persons convicted in the Alipore Bomb Case of 1908 were to be transported to the Andamans. But many of them were not transported for life (known as non-lifers) and the deportation to the Andamans of such convicts had been suspended from 1906. But by the end of 1910, some of them were especially sought to be shifted to the Andamans so that they could stay away from the mainland and not be able to influence other revolutionaries. The political prisoners included Vinayak's brother Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, Waman Rao Joshi; from the Alipore Bomb Case (or Maniktala Conspiracy) there were Ullaskar Dutt, Barin Ghose, Upendra Nath Banerjee, Indu Bhushan Roy, Hemchandra Das, Bibhuti Bhushan Sarkar, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Sudhir Kumar Sarkar, Abinash Chandra Bhattacharji and Birendra Chandra Sen; and from the United Provinces there were Ram Hari, Nand Gopal and Hotilal Varma associated with the *Swaraj* newspaper, and Ram Charan Pal with *Yugantar*. There were also Sachindranath Sanyal, Pulin Das, Nani Gopal and others, totalling up to nearly 100 political prisoners.

It was into this mysterious and enigmatic world of pain and torture that Vinayak was ushered in the wee hours of the morning. His arrival in the settlement has been recorded as on 30 June 1911.<sup>8</sup> He was rudely awakened by a sepoy, who was unduly harsh because he was in the presence of his superior, probably hoping that being rude to Vinayak would earn him an early promotion. Bound in heavy chains and handcuffed, it was a chore to drag himself barefoot in the blistering heat of Port Blair. The accompanying warder kept ordering him to quicken his pace. After a tortuous, uphill walk they finally stood at the gates of the dreaded Cellular Jail. The jail's gate began to grate on its hinges as it was opened and as Vinayak writes: 'I went in, and it was shut behind me. I felt that I had entered the very jaws of death.'<sup>9</sup>

The radial, seven-winged monstrous jail with a high watchtower at the intersection sent shivers down the spine of many brave hearts. The seven

wings, with three storeys each and having a series of cells totalling up to 698, radiated outwards like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. A large bell hung on the tower to raise alarm. Each cell measured 13'6" by 7'6". There was a small ventilator at a height of 9'8" from the ground. The solitary cells were so arranged as to prevent any communication among prisoners. It was named 'Cellular Jail' because there were only cells and no barracks. In the seven-winged radial structure of the jail the front of a cell in each wing opened to the back of a cell in another wing. On the recommendations of Charles James Lyall and A.S. Lethbridge who intended it as a massive settlement to mete out the harshest of punishments and enhance its penal character, the construction of Cellular Jail began in October 1896. It was completed a decade later, in 1906, at an estimated cost of Rs 517,352.

As he entered this hell, Vinayak's eyes caught sight of a festoon of manacles and handcuffs of every shape and size adorning the walls. Heavy shackles for the feet, iron bands for the legs, and other instruments of torture were displayed like proud war trophies. Two sergeants led him there so that this could be Vinayak's introduction to the gory details, before he met its more gruesome inhabitant—the jailor, David Barrie. It was customary for Barrie to give all the political prisoners a 'welcome speech' on their arrival. Notorious for his eccentricities and his exceptionally ingenious ways of torture, Barrie's name made convicts tremble with fear. In his memoir, the revolutionary Upendra Nath Banerjee refers to him as a 5'3" man with a scowling, bulldog's appearance who resembled Mr Legree in the famous book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. On Banerjee's entry, Barrie had told him that this was the place where he tamed the fiercest lions.<sup>10</sup> Barrie entered the room where Vinayak was sternly observing all the fetters and torture tools and gruffly ordered the sergeant to leave the man, as he was not a ferocious tiger. Then pointing to his big stick, he asked Vinayak if he was the one who tried to escape at Marseilles and why he had even contemplated such an act, given the additional trouble it had landed him in.

Being an Irishman who claimed to have participated in revolutionary activities of his compatriots in his youth, Barrie tried to win Vinayak's

confidence with his sympathetic talk. But his nationality did not matter to Vinayak. He coolly replied: 'But I would not have hated you for being an Englishman. I have spent the best years of my life in England, and I am an admirer of the virtues that characterize an Englishman.'<sup>11</sup> Trying to shift the conversation, Barrie said it was a poignant moment for him that someone as young, educated, accomplished and scholarly as Vinayak was standing in front of him as a mere convict. But as a jailer it was his duty to warn him that if he ever thought of breaking the rules or tried to escape, there would be none worse than him. Moreover, the place was inhabited by cannibals, he told Vinayak, who might catch him and make a meal of his succulent young flesh and chew his bones like cucumbers. 'You are a lawyer,' he told Vinayak, 'and I am a layman, and I have but little education. But you are a prisoner, and I am the gaoler of this prison. So, don't reject my advice as useless. Murders are murders, and they will never bring Independence.'

'Of course, I know it,' retorted Vinayak, 'but may I ask you, why don't you convey this to the Sinfeiners in Ireland? Besides, who told you that I had favoured murders?'<sup>12</sup>

Barrie was stumped.

Under Barrie were four classes of men known as warders, petty officers, *tindals* and jamadars. After his customary 'welcome address', Barrie ordered a jamadar to take him away to the top floor of barrack number seven and lock him up.

On the way to the barrack was a reservoir of water. The jamadar asked Vinayak to have a quick bath. He had not bathed for four or five days and was covered with sweat and grime. He however had no garment to change into. The jamadar gave him a tiny piece of cloth that was no bigger than a suspender. To bathe in such a naked condition in front of another was repulsive for Vinayak. But he had no other option. He convinced himself thinking of nudists who loved to sunbathe in the nude for health purposes. Was Saint Ramdas too not dressed in a small piece of cloth? Moreover, he could not remain without a bath for fifty long years. This practice of taking a bath in near absolute nudity in front of others was to become a

daily practice for Vinayak, as it was for all the other prisoners. Barin Ghose notes pithily about this in his biography: ‘Here [in Jail] there was no such thing as gentleman, not even perhaps such a thing as man; here were only convicts.’ With literary flourish he states that on every such occasion, while taking off his clothes for a bath, he prayed to the Goddess Earth to open and take him into her bosom, just as she took her daughter Sita. He continues:

But the Mother did not open her bosom and we proceeded in that state to take our bath. And here whatever modesty was still left to us, we had to renounce absolutely. The *langoti* we were given to put on while bathing could not in the least defend any modesty. Thus, when we had to change our clothes we were in as helpless a condition as Draupadi in the assembly of the Kauravas. We could only submit to our fate. There was no help. We hung our heads low and somehow finished the bathing affair. <sup>13</sup>

All along, the jamadar, a Muslim, watched with delight at Vinayak’s embarrassment. To compound his misery, Vinayak was told to stand up and have a bath. He was to bend down, dip his pot in the water reservoir and only when ordered to rub his body or take another potful of water was he to do so. And he had to complete the bath with just three pots of water. As he poured the first pot of water, Vinayak felt a burning sensation all over his body. When he took a palmful to gargle he spat it out in disgust as it was putrid and salty sea water. The jamadar had a hearty laugh at this discomfiture and exclaimed: ‘What did you expect in an island? Sweet water? Now complete your bath soon!’ Vinayak’s body had become sticky and his hair stiffened due to the saltwater and he felt he had been better off without a bath. He consoled himself thinking that in London and Paris he enjoyed a Turkish bath, and now it was time to experience the ‘Andamanish version’. He was given his prison wear—a half-pant, kurta and a white cap, along with the badge carrying his convict number, 32778, and date of release. He made his way to his cell on the top floor. The entire row had been emptied as Vinayak was to stay there in solitary confinement. To add to his misery, his cell strategically faced the gallows.

Every so often, the only sight was of howling and screaming men being led to their deaths.

The first thing that one noticed in the jail was the distinction made between the Hindu and non-Hindu prisoners with regard to their religious traditions. On entry into the cell, the first act that was committed for a Hindu prisoner was that his sacred thread was cut off. However, Muslim prisoners were allowed to sport their beards, as were Sikhs with regard to their hair. It was Barrie's idea of creating discord between the Hindus and Muslims and hence he placed the Hindu prisoners under the most bigoted of Muslim warders and jamadars. Most of them were fanatical Pathans, Sindhis and Baluchis from Sindh and the North-West Frontier Province. It gave these men a special thrill to brutalize a Hindu kafir. In fact, they belittled their co-religionists from other parts of India such as Madras, Bengal, or Bombay with jibes of being 'half-*kafir* s'. These jibes compelled the Muslim warders from the other regions to prove their worth and surpass the Pathans in their brutalities.<sup>14</sup> Other than using the worst invectives and filthiest language to humiliate them, the Pathans casually slapped prisoners at will. More so when they detected even the slightest hint of disobedience or failure to do the allotted work. Barin Ghose mentions in his biography:

There was an apprehension that Hindu guards might sympathize and fraternize with us. Therefore all the masters of our fate, the Petty Officers and warders, were chosen from among the Mahomedans, either Hindusthani, Punjabi or Pathan. A Pathan is what we know ordinarily as a Kabuli fruit-seller. But in Port Blair they form the Myrmidons of king Yama [the God of Death]. Ask them to capture a man, they will bring his head. Lazy and slothful and corrupt themselves, they are violently overzealous in extracting work from other people.<sup>15</sup> . . . 'Ramlal sits a little crosswise in the file, give him two blows on the neck', 'Mustapha did not get up immediately he was told to, so pull off his moustache', 'Bakaulla is late in coming from the latrine, apply the baton and unloose the skin of his posterior'—such were the beautiful proceedings by which they maintained discipline in the prison.<sup>16</sup>

Barrie brought along a small group of Europeans and Vinayak was shown to them, locked up in his cell, as a prized catch. He and the guests engaged

Vinayak in polemics around the 1857 War of Independence and tried to solicit his views. Thereafter, Vinayak was not given any work for two days. When he requested for books, he was told that they would be given to him after a couple of months, after supervising his conduct. He then decided to continue composing the verses of his epic that he began at Dongri in Bombay, and since he was never given pen and paper to write, he stored them in the recesses of his memory.

On the fourth or fifth day of his arrival, while he was sleeping, a stone suddenly hit the iron bars of the cell. As he stepped forward another stone with something wrapped around was thrown by a Hindu warder who signalled to Vinayak to read the secret missive. His Pathan superior was woken from his siesta by the noise and came hurtling towards the warder. A thorough check was done of Vinayak too who had hidden the piece of paper in his mouth. After the Pathan had left, he opened the letter and read it. It was a warning to him too look out for himself and not trust anyone. Many Bengali political prisoners who were lodged there had turned government spies and that he ought to always be on his guard. Not being able to bear the extremes of tortures at Cellular Jail many had chosen the easier way out of helping the government to lead a slightly more comfortable life in prison. Many turned wilful government approvers too in several conspiracy cases. While it was easy to judge such people, Vinayak contended, one had to undergo the miseries they did to understand what drove the toughest of men to this state of despair. This was also Barrie's clever way of pitting one political prisoner against another and eliciting written confessions and testimonies under extreme duress.

For the convicts there was little knowledge of what being a 'political prisoner' meant. Even Barrie used to vaguely order his subordinates: 'Go, fetch that *Bomb-Gola wala* No. 7' when he wanted Vinayak summoned. Vinayak educated several of his fellow inmates that not everyone there threw bombs. Of course, some of them did use pistols and bombs, but many used more dangerous things—the pen—and had not even seen a bomb in their lives. He asked them to use the term '*Raj Qaidi*' in the vernacular so that they understood it better. After hearing this distinction

if any of the prisoners called Vinayak or any political prisoner ‘Babu’, Barrie would be incensed. According to him, everyone there was merely a ‘D’ category prisoner—‘D’ standing for dangerous. Even the clothes they wore had the letter ‘D’ inscribed on them. But despite his objection to the appellations, Barrie and almost everyone there started calling Vinayak ‘Bada Babu No. 7’ since his early days in the jail.

The most agonizing experience of prison life in Cellular Jail was the absence of lavatories—what some might imagine as the barest minimum that a human being could be provided. Vinayak writes about this most heart-wrenchingly in his memoir that he penned after his release from prison:

Who can describe the suffering—these agonies of mind and body? I may give you an instance, however to point the moral. Of all the hardships of personal life in the Cellular Jail of the Andamans—gruelling work, scanty food and clothing, occasional thrashing and others—none was so annoying and disgusting as its provision for urinals and lavatories. The prisoners had to control the demands of nature, of hours together, for want of these arrangements in the cell itself. Morning, noon, and evening—these were the only hours when prisoners were let off for this purpose and at stated time only. It was an outrage to ask the Jamadar for this convenience at any other moment than the stipulated hour. The prisoners were locked in their cells at six or seven o’clock in the evening and the lock was opened only after six the next morning. A sort of clay pot was given to them to use it for that purpose during the night . . . during twelve hours of the night, the warders insisted that the prisoner shall have no occasion to ease himself. The pot was so diminutive in size that one could not discharge into it even once during the night. As for nature’s call, one had to go down on his knees to the Jamadar to let him out. The Warder may or may not take the call seriously. He may be reluctant himself or he may fear the Officer. The prisoner had, therefore to check it till the morning. If the Warder relaxed and carried the matter to the Jamadar, the Jamadar would severely rate the convict for the call at such an odd hour. He would severely reprimand the warder also for having heard the prisoner. <sup>17</sup>

The matter would become worse if a prisoner happened to suffer from ailments such as diarrhoea that was common with almost all the prisoners. Vinayak writes:

He [the Jamadar] would or would not report to the doctor as his fancy or memory may guide him. The doctor’s report on the ailment was never made, or made only in one

case out of a hundred. That report had to go to Mr Barrie and Mr Barrie would take action upon it at his own sweet will. Imagine the prisoner's condition during the night and during the process of red-tape, particularly when the call was not normal but an abnormal and sudden ailment. In the morning, Mr Barrie would sit in judgment upon it, rebuke sternly the warder and the Jamadar for their lapse of duty . . . the prisoner was also cross-examined by Mr Barrie. And if the former said that he could not help the call of nature, Mr Barrie turned round upon him fiercely with . . . 'Why the devil did you have it?' And if the wretched creature had the courage to say, 'I got it because I got it', the Jamadar would give a slap in his face and scold him for giving such an insolent answer. <sup>18</sup>

Many prisoners were forced to defecate on the floors of their cells at night when it became impossible to control themselves. Given the size of the cell, it was a scene from hell to have one's excreta floating around the tiny cell and having to sleep in the same location and wait for daybreak. The sweeper threw tantrums when the prisoner pleaded with him to clean the mess in his room. He agreed to do it only if he were offered tobacco. If the prisoner refused, the sweeper would report the matter to the jamadar who would ruthlessly kick and abuse the prisoner for committing nuisance in the cell. A punishment of 'standing in the stocks' was meted out by Barrie. This was executed between six and ten in the morning and twelve to five in the afternoon, during which the prisoner had to stand with chains fastened on his hand and tied to the roof above him. During this period, he was forbidden from answering nature's call completely. This was Barrie's way of teaching errant convicts the art of self-control! This innovative method was implemented particularly frequently with all political prisoners, including Vinayak. They were all put in solitary confinement cells and hence answering the call of nature was forbidden except at the stipulated times.

Barin Ghose too narrates the abominable experience of the most basic of human needs of answering nature's call, which became so arduous and humiliating in Barrie's kingdom:

The latrine-going ceremony was also conducted in the same style. You had to sit in couples in a row facing the latrine and then, as the order sounded, to enter it in



batches of 8 or 10. In the meanwhile you had to practise self-control <sup>19</sup> . . . we might talk in the latrine, so a guard waited on us even there. <sup>20</sup>

Apart from the near-absolute nudity in which they bathed, the ‘bathing ritual’ that was followed was disgusting in its own manner. Barin Ghose describes the embarrassment that they were put to every time they bathed in groups in the presence of a tyrannical Pathan Jamadar, Khoyedad:

With the ringing of the bell, the prisoners had to stand up as soon as the order *khara ho jao* was given and lay by their clothes for search. With the order *utha leo* they took up the clothes; and they sat down when ordered *baith jao* . But the system-loving Khoyedad improved upon that business with a thousand intricacies. The first order was *khara ho jao* (stand up), the next was *sidhe ek line se khara ho jao* (stand up in a straight line), then *kapra utaro* (remove clothes), then *haath mein rakho* (hold in your hands), then *kadam uthao* (hold one leg up) and finally *rakh deo* (place on the ground). At the first order we stood up. At the second, we approached each other and formed a line. At the third, we took off our *kurtas* and caps. At the fourth we held out our hands. At the fifth we stood on one leg, as if about to dance. And at the sixth we put the other leg forward and placed the clothes on the ground. If the whole thing was gone through in perfect order then the khan sahib beamed with delight—his whole forest of whiskers radiant with the glow of his row of crooked teeth—and cried out in joy, ‘Bravo! Heroes!’ We too, on our side, out of the dire necessity of self-protection, parted our lips and grinned smilingly in thankfulness, hoping by that to secure his favour. <sup>21</sup>

The exquisite meal that they were served after their bath was *ganji* or *kanji* — half-boiled rice churned in water to form a gooey porridge. They were given just one *dabbu* of this. A *dabbu* was a form of a primitive spoon, made of half a coconut shell with a cane-handle fixed to it. The *ganji* had no salt and hence was entirely tasteless. Each prisoner was allowed precisely one dram [roughly 3.54 gram] of salt per day, and this was to be used either with the *ganji* or with the dal and semi-cooked vegetables. Hence, most prisoners preferred to optimize their daily ration and make do with the saltless *ganji*. Sometimes kerosene oil was found mixed with the *ganji*.

A big pot was used in the prison kitchen to cook the *ganji*. It was filled to the brim with rice and water and stirred with huge ladles. The work

usually began very early in the morning. There was insufficient lighting in the kitchen. The half-sleepy cook, who had to work under a faint lantern, mistakenly put kerosene oil into the pot several times. Consequently, even the rotis were either burnt or half-baked. They were mostly hard as bricks. But none of the prisoners could ever complain or bring this up to Barrie or any of the authorities. As punishment for complaining, they would have to go without food for days, and eating the abominable concoction seemed a better option than going entirely hungry.

The prison had a huge kitchen for 800 people. The cooks were dirty and stricken with diseases. Their sweat and spittle falling into the food as they cooked was something the prisoners saw but could do little about. They had to eat something to survive after all.

Barin Ghose gives details of the daily ration per meal that was: ‘Rice—6 oz. [ounces], flour for *roti* —5 oz., salt—1 dram, oil  $\frac{3}{4}$  dram, and vegetable—8 oz. No distinction is made here between prisoner and prisoner. A ravenous giant like *Koilas* and a grasshopper like me were both given the same quantity of food.’ <sup>22</sup>

Vinayak narrates how the Pathan jamadars and warders who came from the same region of the Punjab, Sindh and North West Frontier Province consumed all the wheat that was allotted to the jail kitchens. This was the staple diet for many prisoners who came from the same area. They were thus deprived of their food and forced to eat boiled rice that they were not used to. If anyone refused or demanded anything else, their life was made miserable. False allegations would be levelled, trial for fake charges conducted and finally brutal punishment would be meted out. Since most of the prisoners were Hindu, the Pathans took extra pleasure in depriving them of their food. <sup>23</sup> Even a rice-eating Bengali like Barin found the food unbearable.

The Rangoon rice and the thick and tough *rotis*, one could somehow suffer; but it would be the rarest thing to find a single *Bhadralog* boy even in these days of famine who would not shed tears over the wonderful preparation of *kachu* and unskinned green plantain and all sorts of roots and stalks and leaves boiled together with sand and gravel and excretions of mice. <sup>24</sup>

Every morning a batch of prisoners were sent to the jungle accompanied by guards to bring back vegetables and various kinds of foliage. The leaves and vegetables would be cut and sent to the kitchen where nothing was boiled carefully. As a result, often there were centipedes and small snakes too that would be a part of the preparation. When prisoners noticed these tiny pieces of semi-cooked flesh and complained to Barrie, he would mock them saying: 'Oh! But isn't it so delicious. Just eat it or go hungry!' The prisoners would have no option but to quietly pick out these pieces from the curry as there was nothing else to accompany the rancid-smelling, half-cooked rice or burnt rotis. Eating such unhealthy food would automatically trigger stomach ailments and diarrhoea and that would lead to another chain of miseries. When they complained, Barrie would peg the blame on a Hindu cook or Hindu petty officer and punish him severely. To prevent this, the prisoners quietly ate what they got without raising a complaint.

Mirza Khan, Barrie's right-hand man, was the worst offender when it came to inflicting brutalities. He strutted around the prison like Barrie's alter ego. In fact, people addressed him as 'Chhota Barrie' (Barrie junior). He just had to wink at a warder and about ten to twelve rotis assigned to several people would be snatched away and brought to him. He ate these with great relish right in their presence. He minutely inspected the quantity of food being served to the prisoners as they queued up each day. A little extra serving, and the warder would be smacked and the food taken back. Vinayak writes about one such occasion:

Every week a prisoner used to get half-a-coconut [shell] full of curds. This was a gala day for the petty officers and the jamadars, for they filled their pots with the curds and drank it off on the spot. Hardly a particle of it was allowed to be served to the prisoners before them. They seldom touched a drop of it. Once a Hindu prisoner, instead of parting it to the warder, poured it straight upon the rice. When the news was conveyed to the Jamadar, he straightaway rushed into the line where prisoners were dining, picked up the empty coconut-shell and pointing it out to him said, 'O! you scoundrel, why did you have this leaking shell?' It was an offence to use such a shell in the prison-ethics of the Andamans. The Baluchi Jamadar instantly caught hold of his tuft of hair, and kept on kicking him all the time. The hair had almost been wrenched when he exclaimed, '*Kafir, kafir* with the tuft of hair', and abused him in

the bargain. The prisoner raised a hue and cry and Mirza Khan came on the scene. He noticed that the quarrel was between one of his own and the Hindu prisoner opposite to him. He carried him to the jailor to frame a charge against him. I was watching it all from my own place. I beckoned to the prisoner to call me in as a witness. And I was sent for. I put before the trying Officers the facts of the case as I had seen them. Mirza Khan, thereupon, began to shout at me. He said, 'Sir, this *Bada Babu* is ever found to complain against Mussulman warders and he tells lies against them.' I told the jailor, 'Granted that I always give false evidence, I shall add one more to it now. Go and search instantly the shed in which the Baluchi Officer has hidden his pot of stolen curds. Come along and I will show it to you myself.' The jailor was obliged to accompany me. He got up and followed me to the shed and he found the pot well-concealed behind a heap of coconut shells. I further deposed that the Baluchi Jamadar had pulled the prisoner's tuft of hair, had called him *kafir*, and had kicked him recklessly and for no misdemeanour whatever. On hearing this, the Superintendent became red with anger, called the Jamadar in front of him, and, in order to teach a severe lesson to the rest of them, pulled off his belt and dismissed him from the job.

25

The prisoners also had to stand in a stipulated queue for their meals. They had to sit in the same order after they had collected their food from the serving counter. It did not matter whether it was blazing heat or pouring rain—the queue had to be maintained. On occasions when a few prisoners broke the line to merely protect themselves from the sun or rain by moving under a shade, they were severely reprimanded and punished. Drenched in rain, shivering in their wet clothes and with the raindrops falling on their food, they had to eat what they got. To top it all, they were given very little time to complete what was on their plates. The petty officer would scream: 'Time is up' after which their plates would be snatched away and the remaining food thrown into the dustbin.

Various instruments of torture were employed. Prisoners were handcuffed and made to stand from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and then again from 12 noon to 5 p.m. Many eased themselves in this position and were punished for it. They were tied up in link fetters, made of a chain and ankle rings. The length of the chain was about 2 feet and it weighed 3 pounds. The bars were stiff and unbending, riveted to the prisoner's feet and hung up to his waist. As the bars were stiff, the prisoner could not bend his legs throughout the period of punishment, which could extend for

months. Crossbar fetters were made of a single bar for the purpose of keeping the legs apart. It also had ankle rings. The length of the bar was 16 inches and the total weight about 2.5 pounds. The prisoner could not bring his feet or legs close to each other. He had to walk, sit, work and sleep with feet and legs stretched out. This punishment could continue at a stretch for weeks. Canes, bayonets, shackles, thick ropes and leather whips were also regularly used.

Before Vinayak's arrival, all political prisoners were put together in one floor and guarded by Pathan warders. They were given the task of picking oakum, which was both strenuous and monotonous. Pounding the coir and extracting fibres out of it, preparing ropes from the extracted fibres, grinding dry coconut and mustard in the machine to extract oil, to make bulbs for hookahs from the shells—these formed the bulk of the prisoners' duty. Dressed in their loincloths or langotis, prisoners sat on the job from early in the morning. Each was given the dry husk of about twenty coconuts, which had to be first placed on a wooden plank and beaten with a hammer in order to soften it. The outer skin was then removed, dipped in water and moistened and again pounded with a hammer. Due to constant pounding, all the husk inside would fall off and the fibres remained. These had to be collected and dried in the sun. Each prisoner was expected to supply a daily roll of fibres weighing a seer (close to 0.93 kilogram or 2 pounds). Those awarded light labour were exempted from the hard work of pounding and left to draw out ropes from these dried fibres. The daily turnout expected from every prisoner was 3 pounds of ropes. But the fact that these jobs were done in the silent company of fellow sufferers made it slightly more tolerable.

Elaborating his experience in this task, Barin Ghose writes:

We have never done rope making or coir pounding in our life. Even perhaps our ancestors to the fourteenth generation had never heard the names of such things. And yet we did the thing. On the first day all of us were given rope making. A bundle of coir was thrown in front of each of the closed cells with the command, '*Rassi batto*' that is to say, prepare ropes like a dear good boy. We opened our bundles, handled them a little, and finally sat down in despair. To make the ropes out of that? Was it

possible? There were the four warders there. They came as private tutors to teach us the dreaded work. Now let me repeat the lesson to my readers. First twist the fibres into wicks by rubbing them upon the ground with the palm of both the hands. When in this way there is a huge pile of wicks, put it on one side. Then take out two wicks. Hold one end of both wicks firmly on the ground together with your toe and then press the other ends between your palms. Use your fingers skillfully and twist the two together, till they make a small rope. Then repeat the process by joining other two bits of wick to the two ends and twist again. And so on. As the rope becomes longer and longer, you throw it behind you and hold the last joint under the toe and join again another wick and twist. This is called rope making [or picking oakum].<sup>26</sup>

Another job that was assigned to them was slightly less taxing as it was done in the shade and not the scorching midday sun. It involved carrying mud balls, the size of a football, from the mud-grinding mills. Then a heap or mound had to be made beside the *mistry* who cut out the bricks in the moulds. ‘Working in mud the whole day, we looked the very picture of a dirty lot of swine,’ notes Ullaskar Dutt in his memoirs, ‘squeaking and wallowing in filth and mire, ever so happy in their unenviable field of sport’.<sup>27</sup>

A high-ranking officer who had come from Calcutta on inspection had seen this and all hell had broken loose. How could political prisoners be bundled together and given such ‘light work’? he had thundered. Consequently, all political prisoners were split up and distributed across various rows and spokes of the radial jail. If they spoke or communicated through non-verbal gestures they were whipped and beaten severely. Picking oakum was substituted with something else that was designed to crush their spirits—the grinding oil mill or *kolhu*.

This was the hardest work and caused the death of some and drove others to insanity. The process of working the oil-grinding mill at Cellular Jail was similar to bullocks being yoked to the handle of a mill and moving round it continuously. The only difference was that the political prisoner substituted the bullocks. If they were unwilling or unable to move around fast enough or sustain their stamina, they were forcibly dragged, round and round, tied to the handle. All of this was done in the open, blazing sun, making matters worse for the hapless man. The prisoner had

to work until a specific quantity—30 pounds of coconut oil or 10 pounds of mustard oil—was extracted. The ‘picking oakum’ task was assigned to Vinayak for nearly a month after his arrival at Cellular Jail. After this, he was told that his hands were hardened enough and that he was now going to be ‘promoted’ to the kolhu. He was put to this task for months on end. Vinayak writes about the hardship:

Hardly out of bed, we were ordered to wear a strap of cloth, were shut up in our cells and made to turn the wheel of the oil-mill. Coconut pieces were put in the empty and hollow space to be crushed by the wheel passing over them, and its turning became heavier as the space was fuller. Twenty turns of the wheel were enough to drain away the strength of the strongest coolie and the worst, brawny *badmash*. No dacoit past twenty was put on that work. But the poor political prisoner was fit to do it at any age. And the doctor in charge ever certified that he could do it! It was the medical science of the Andamans that had upheld the doctor! So the poor creature had to go half the round of the wheel by pushing the handle with his hands, and the other half was completed by hanging on to it with all his might. So much physical strength had to be expended on crushing the coconut pieces for oil. Youths of twenty or more, who in their lives had not done any physical labour, were put upon that labour. They were all educated young men of delicate constitution. From six to ten in the morning they were yoked to the wheel, which they turned round and round till their breath had become heavy. Some of them had fainted many times during the process. They had to sit down for sheer exhaustion and helplessness. Ordinarily all work had to be stopped between ten and twelve. But this ‘*Kolu*’ as the oil-mill labour was called, had to continue throughout. The door was opened only when meal was announced. The man came in, and served the meal in the pan and went away and the door was shut. If after washing his hands one were to wipe away the perspiration on his body, the Jamadar—the worst of gangsters in the whole lot would go at him with loud abuse. There was no water for washing hands. Drinking water was to be had only by propitiating the Jamadar. While you were at *Kolu*, you felt very thirsty. The waterman gave no water except for a consideration, which was to palm off to him some tobacco in exchange. If one spoke to the Jamadar his retort was, ‘A prisoner is given only two cups of water and you have already consumed three. Whence can I bring you more water? From your father?’ We have put down the retort of the Jamadar in the decent language possible! If water could not be had for wash and drink, what can be said of water for bathing?

Many political prisoners voluntarily offered to help Vinayak when he was enduring the kolhu. Despite the strict orders from the authorities, they sometimes washed his clothes or cleaned his drinking pot and dinner plate.

Without their knowledge, Vinayak would wash their clothes or help them, which they protested about. They considered him their leader and did not approve of him serving them in any way. The warmth and camaraderie that these gentle souls displayed even in such trying circumstances moved Vinayak immensely. They would surreptitiously communicate with people living in the cell below them by putting their sleeping planks straight up, beneath the window, perch atop it and talk. If a jamadar or warder were spotted walking past, they would throw themselves down from this height of twelve feet. They also rang the bars of their cell with their dining plates to initiate conversation; it was their uniquely coded 'telephone system'.

Eminent Marathi writer and humourist Purushottam Lakshman Deshpande spoke about the sufferings that Vinayak endured during his speech at Cellular Jail on the occasion of Vinayak's birth centenary in 1983:

You have probably read what punishments he suffered in Andaman, from his book *My Transportation for Life*. However I am certain that, in this book, he has not described even 10 per cent of what he actually suffered, because he did not want pity or sympathy from us, neither did he want people to react and merely say, 'My God, what horrors Savarkar suffered.' He wanted youngsters to react and say, 'I too am prepared to suffer like Savarkar for our nation.' <sup>28</sup>

Dinner was served to the convicts before five in the evening. Even while they were trying to gulp down the unpalatable food, a jamadar would pace the corridor, showering abuses and reminding them that if they did not finish their daily quota they would be in for trouble. They held their fist 'upon our nose and explained with vehement emphasis that our nose would be flattened out with blows, if we did not work properly'. <sup>29</sup> The punishment also involved the jamadar's kicks and fisticuffs, in addition to a bludgeoning received from his stick. The very thought of this made many of them drop their food and get back to their labour. Out of a hundred, it was only one with a truly strong body who could manage to extract the mandated daily quota of coconut oil. For most people, it took at least two days. The day ended with horror for most people, as they



anxiously watched the weighing machine. Invariably, their output would fall short of the quota and they would end with a battering from a jamadar. Most people returned to their cells with tears in their eyes and groaning in pain. 'I see their weeping faces,' writes Vinayak, 'vividly even to this day.'

30

Often, Barrie would be there at the weighing scene at the end of the day and would order the prisoner that he needed to continue the kolhu through the night till he finished his daily quota. He brought his chair and sat in front of them, taking great pleasure in seeing them almost fall off as they continued to work the mill. Work usually carried on for some unfortunate souls, including Vinayak, till 8 or 9 p.m. on such occasions, even as the rest of the jail went quiet. Slipping in and out of his sleep and snores, as he sat inspecting them, Barrie would hurl abuses and occasionally call the jamadar to cane errant prisoners.

Barrie often came to Vinayak and admonished him that he should be ashamed of himself for extracting so little oil while others managed much more. To this, Vinayak would angrily retort:

Yes, you are right; I must be ashamed of it. But when? If I had been inured to hard physical labour like him from my early childhood . . . let him compose a sonnet in an hour. I will do it for you in half an hour. You will not, on that account, be justified in crying shame upon that prisoner; you cannot say that he had shirked the work. He can well retort, 'No body taught me the art of poetry in my childhood. Hence you cannot expect me to do it now.' You employ in your office unlettered peasants, robbers and dacoits for writing work. If they do not speak fine English like you, surely enough, you do not blame them. And they are not ashamed of that drawback. Equally I need not be ashamed if I cannot turn out as much work from the oil-mill as my next-door prisoner does. Those really are to be ashamed of it who yoke intellectuals like us to the oil-mill, and employ hodmen [sic] to do the work of a desk. They fail both ways, for they do not get the best out of either. <sup>31</sup>

Many young men who were unaccustomed to this level of physical toil fell ill and preferred death to this work. If they complained of ill health, they were often accused of feigning, locked up in their cells and never taken to the hospital even when they burned with high fever. Many political prisoners had to continue with the kolhu even through their high fever or

diarrhoea. The doctor too was petrified of Barrie and seldom reported the truth about a prisoner's condition. Serious illnesses of prisoners were concealed, despite the doctor knowing about them. To avoid the back-breaking work, many prisoners went to the extent of infecting themselves with other ailments and diseases. As Vinayak notes:

‘Give me medicine for fever and diarrhoea!’ When any prisoner asked this favour of another in a suppressed voice and with a dejected mind, it did not imply that he demanded mixture to drive out these maladies, but to induce them into him. A man, it was reported, gets high fever if he swallows the paste of *Kanheri* roots; another told me that the easiest way to get loose continuous motions, with blood in them, was to drink the paste of red berries called *Gunja*. If a thread soaked in some liquid—I forgot which—were sewn into a wound, another said, the wound remained raw and open for six months on end. This was the talk of the prison. And if I questioned the authenticity of these reports, they told me that the medicines were tried and found effective for these purposes. Prisoners, put on the oil-mill or sent out to cut down the jungles or detailed to pick oakum and weave the threads into a coil of rope, were so much done up with the work and felt such a terror for it, that they preferred anything else to going on with it. Hence, they would resort to these dangerous shrubs, roots and berries or would make a wound to their feet, with the scythe they carried, to fall ill and come back into the hospital. They would sow a thread into that wound to keep it from healing. They would prick their throats with a needle and to convince the physician in charge that the blood had come out with their spit and from their chest. Any of these tricks they employed for purposes of escape from the toil under which they were being ground down in their prison-life. Others feigned madness, and, to prove that they were really mad, would besmear their faces with urine and excreta, and, occasionally ate them also. <sup>32</sup>

Babarao who was lodged at the same jail and subjected to the kolhu suffered from severe ‘hemisrania continua’—a medical condition marked by chronic and persistent headaches accompanied by sensitivity to light. To add to his woes, the prison food gave him repeated bouts of acute diarrhoea that again went largely untreated. He had griping pain in his stomach and intestines all day. Often, he would end up soiling his entire cell and earn the jamadar's wrath. Sitting and sleeping amid that squalor further aggravated his health condition. Despite this, Barrie made him work in the hot sun for months together, denying him any medical care. After submitting the diurnal quota of oil at the end of the day, he would

totter to his cell and throw himself full length on the wooden plank that served as a bed, groaning all night with pain.

For instance, the condition of the Bengali revolutionary Abinash Chandra Bhattacharji steadily deteriorated. Within hours of beginning the daily chores, by 10 a.m. itself, he would be exhausted and unable to stand. Indu Bhushan Roy was the strongest among them and assisted Abinash when he fell to the ground with exhaustion. Ironically, it was Indu who was among those whose will power was to break in the future due to the excessive tortures meted out to the prisoners.

It was only a matter of time before the pain and suffering of the political convicts boiled over and this it did in the revolt of Nand Gopal, a tall and handsome Punjabi, and the editor of the *Swaraj* newspaper of Allahabad.<sup>33</sup> This occurred a couple of months after Vinayak's arrival. At the very outset, when Nand Gopal was taken to the oil mill and forced to accelerate his speed, he stopped and looked the petty officer sternly in his eye and said, 'Sorry! It will not suit me to turn the mill so quickly and all that!' As a result, by 10 a.m. not even a third of his work had been completed. By that time, most political prisoners would quickly rush down from their cells, swallow their insipid meals and hurry back to the oil mill. Nand Gopal decided to have a leisurely meal. When the warder warned him to get back, he decided to humour him with a long lecture on health and hygiene. He told him it was disastrous for his health to swallow food that way and it needed to be chewed and ground well in order to digest it. It was also a good exercise for the teeth, he added. He was after all a 'guest of the benign government' for ten long years and if his health deteriorated it would bring unwanted disrepute to the Crown. Hence, he was taking additional care.

The petty officer was flummoxed and promptly reported the matter to Barrie, who came over and abused him, warning him of severe horsewhips. Nand Gopal smiled and repeated his lesson on medical science. He also quoted the jail manual rules that stated that the time between 10 a.m. and 12 noon was allotted for meals and rest and that he did not wish to breach such a benevolent rule. Barrie went red with rage. But being unused to

such insolence he merely fumed and left the place. Nand Gopal finished his meal and while the petty officer thought he would resume his work, he coolly went back to his cell for a little nap. Any abuse or reprimands made no impact on him, as he stretched and feigned deep sleep. He got up at 12 noon, turned the mill for another hour or so, and when he saw that he had extracted half the day's quota, he tied up the rest of the coconuts in the sack and quietly sat down. When asked who would do the rest of the work, he nonchalantly replied: 'Whoever likes, let him do it. I am not a bullock certainly that I should turn the mill the whole day. The ration I get per day is not worth even one *anna* and a half, then how should I grind 30 lbs. of oil?' <sup>34</sup> The shocked superintendent saw that there was no hope of getting the quota from Nand Gopal. He was shut in his cell till further orders.

This went on for nearly a month. Worried that the virus of resistance and revolt might spread among the batch of men who were prone to being rebellious, Barrie summoned Nand Gopal to his chamber to strike a compromise. He was told that if he did the work for four full days without dereliction, he would be released from the oil mill for good. Nand Gopal agreed and he was duly released from the tiring work.

But his freedom was short-lived. A few days later, he was put to a bigger mill and when he refused, the consequences were fetters and confinement. A general order was passed that everybody was to grind oil for three full days. The political prisoners realized that if they complied, it would mean that only their corpses would leave Port Blair. Hence, the authorities were met with a mass refusal to obey the order—the first strike that took place in the jail.

But Barrie was not to be deterred by such measures. He took this insolence as a personal insult against his authority. Summoning the prisoners to the courtyard, he berated them:

Listen, ye prisoners! In the Universe there is one God, and He lives in the Heavens above. But in Port Blair there are two: one, the God of Heaven, and another, the God of Earth. Indeed, the God of Earth in Port Blair is myself. The God of Heaven will reward you when you go above. But this God of Port Blair will reward you here and

now. So, ye prisoners behave well. You may complain to any superior against me, my word shall prevail; I hold my own. Mind ye well. <sup>35</sup>

The punishments became more intense and their food was limited to just tasteless ganji. Ullaskar Dutt, Nand Gopal and Hotilal were made to live on just one pound of ganji, each, twice a day served to them continuously for more than a fortnight without a break, even though the jail rules stipulated that this needed to be served only four times a week. None of these punishments were noted in the prisoners' 'jail-tickets' so as to not leave any record of the atrocities meted out.

Following the strike, some of the prisoners were dispatched for other jobs outside the prison, apparently on lighter work. Barin was sent to work as a labourer under a mason, Ullaskar went to make bricks, a few were sent to the forest department to hew wood, and others to work at the embankment. A few unfortunate prisoners were condemned to be yoked to carriages to carry the jail officials around Port Blair. Many initially thought that being away from the hellish jail conditions would be a whiff of fresh air, but it turned out to be worse. They had to battle rain, storm, heat and poisonous leeches that came out in the monsoons only too often. A good part of their rations were also pilfered by the jail authorities while they were away during the day.

Barrie tried to indulge Vinayak after the strike broke out. He knew that the revolutionaries respected Vinayak. Hence, having him on his side made sense. With his usual tactic of pitting one against another, creating dissensions and gathering intelligence about some of the political prisoners, Barrie tried being cordial and friendly with Vinayak. Regarding the other political prisoners, Barrie would tell him: 'Mr Savarkar, a man like you ought not to mix with such people. They are a despicable lot. You are a well-bred gentleman. These wretches will go back to their homes after running their term of eight or ten years in this prison, and the world will forget them. That is not so with you. You have to pass here full fifty years of your precious life; and you are no mere political prisoner. You will lose much if you associate with them, go on strike with them, or

sympathize with them. Even talking with them is fraught with danger to your future. Whatever you intend to do, do it on your own. You take care of yourself never forgetting your ticket. Do you understand me?' <sup>36</sup> He often did this in the presence of the other prisoners to humiliate them further.

But this seemed to have had the opposite impact on Vinayak. Also, his repeated reference to the fifty-year term of imprisonment was intended to scare Vinayak. But this constant allusion made him more callous about it. 'It was,' Vinayak recounted, 'like the artillery man for whom the constant sound of the whizzing cannon-ball had ceased to frighten and unnerve.' <sup>37</sup>

Despite several attempts by Barrie, Vinayak never budged, nor did he let down any fellow prisoner or stop his interactions with the others. This enraged Barrie all the more. After Barrie's angry exit, Vinayak would often console the dejected prisoners who heard this diatribe and expletives that were generously hurled at them by the jailer. 'Do not feel small,' he advised them, 'do not be dispirited by what Mr Barrie said of you in my presence. What he says of you today, he will say of me the day after. Thereby he does not insult you and me: he only insults and degrades himself. We are helpless today, the world holds us in disgrace today, but a day is sure to come when it will honour you, perhaps raise statues to you in this very place where they revile you, and thousands will visit this place to offer their tributes to you as martyrs to the cause.' <sup>38</sup>

Defying the rules, Vinayak stealthily began meeting several of the political prisoners, boosting their morale, and asking them to bear these atrocities with resilience. Many of them began to look up to him with reverence and as their mentor and confidant.

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Right from the time he was convicted to transportation for life in the Andamans, Vinayak was keen to meet his brother who had been here since 1909. Upon reaching the Cellular Jail, he tried making inquiries with a few sympathetic warders and petty officers about Babarao's whereabouts. He

was informed that Barrie had issued peremptory orders from his superiors not to tell him whether his brother was lodged there or not. The structure of the jail and the segregation also ensured that nobody could fathom who else was locked up there. Finally, a warder managed to facilitate a meeting of sorts. He arranged this in the evening when everyone came together for the daily roll-call. Even during this time everyone was not called at the same time, but in batches and in serial order. The order of these batches was left to the warder's discretion. So, the kind warder managed to send Vinayak's batch inside at the same time that Babarao was presenting his roll-call for the day.

As Vinayak hurried inside with expectation and anxiety, he saw Babarao just as he was finishing his duty and coming out. Their eyes met. They had last met when Vinayak was leaving for London in 1906 and there had been pride and contentment in his eyes about his younger brother's bright future. To see him in this abject condition, as a fellow prisoner, shattered Babarao completely. The expression and the way his lips parted seemed to be asking why he was here and how he was doing. The warder quickly segregated them, lest swayed by emotions they began speaking to each other, leading to complications with the jail authorities. Seeing his elder brother, who was a father figure to him, in this pitiable condition, broke Vinayak's heart. The emotional surge seemed to temporarily weaken his resolve to face the terrible conditions of his present with equanimity.

With the help of the warder or otherwise, the brothers managed to exchange notes on scraps of paper. In his note, Babarao lamented that what made his incarceration bearable was the hope that his beloved Tatyia would carry on Abhinav Bharat's work and labour for the motherland. He was shocked to see him there as well; he wondered how he got there, especially because he had last heard that he was in Paris. Babarao had no details about Vinayak's conviction since correspondences with family were extremely infrequent. He had received vague hints from Wamanrao Joshi, who had also been sent to the Andamans. But he had hoped against hope that these were merely rumours and that Vinayak was safe. But seeing him

that evening dashed those hopes. Who would look after Abhinav Bharat now, and their dear younger brother Bal? he wondered.

Vinayak had no idea what to write as a reply to a letter like this. Trying to gather himself and also motivate his shattered elder brother, he wrote:

Baba, success and failure are but coincidences. It is not our fault if we failed in our first battle. In fact, we are fortunate to have stood our ground in the face of failure. It is a matter of pride for us that we are bravely enduring those sufferings, which we exhorted others to undergo. It is now our life mission to languish in this prison and if need be, accept the abuses of those for whom we suffer. Remaining free and achieving fame whilst fighting is no doubt considered glorious. But it is equally glorious to die unknown and suffer abuse. Not just fighting and becoming famous but dying unknown and unsung is also essential for final victory. As far as the loss to our cause is concerned, I can only say that our absence shall not bring our War of Independence to a halt. This army of countless warriors, Whose charioteers are the proud Sri Krishna and Sri Ram, shall not halt in our absence! <sup>39</sup>

From the eleventh day of his arrival in prison, i.e., 15 July 1911, Vinayak was condemned to complete solitary confinement for a period of six months. If picking oakum and the oil mill were exacting for the body, not speaking to anyone or having any kind of human contact or interaction for this long took a toll on his mind. He notes poignantly:

To speak to none, to discuss with none, and to keep on looking at my naked body so shabby, so dust-covered, so sweated by the work on the oil-mill, a work that I had to do for the best part of the day. The body used to be full of perspiration, the dust thrown up by the turning wheel of the mill as it crushed and ground down the pieces of dry coconut fruit for oil, with other dust mixed up in it, had clung to it all over—this was the experience from which the mind revolted with disgust. It went on like this from hour to hour, from day to day, and, who knows, it might continue from month to month, and lengthen out into years. I began to hate myself. <sup>40</sup>

To make matters worse, on 14 August 1911, a day before Vinayak was harnessed to the oil mill he received a letter from Bombay University. It was from the secretary of the education department stating that under Section 18 of the Indian Universities Act, the BA degree conferred on him was set to be cancelled. The senate of Bombay University in their meeting



on 1 July 1911 had come to this conclusion in the wake of his conviction and sentence in the Nasik Conspiracy Case. Interestingly, Justice Chandavarkar, who was among the three-judge bench that sentenced Vinayak, was also the vice chancellor of Bombay University at that time and he ratified this decision. An education that Vinayak had obtained after such hardships and had managed to pass with exemplary performance was ruthlessly stripped off him.<sup>41</sup> This added immensely to his mental agony.

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By the end of 1911, the British government was busy organizing the Delhi Durbar. The festivities were to be held between 7 and 16 December 1911 and the actual coronation on 12 December. Earlier that year, on 22 June, George V had taken over as the emperor. The Delhi Durbar was being held to proclaim him and his wife, Queen Mary, as the new emperor and empress of India. All the princes of the native states, thousands of landed gentry and persons of eminence were to gather to pay their obeisance to their new masters. The impending coronation durbar had given rise to rumours that many political prisoners would be pardoned. Vinayak, however, was extremely sceptical about the possibility of any concession from the government as it had barely been a couple of months since his arrival.

The official protocol demanded that all political prisoners submit clemency petitions to the government seeking their release and pardon as part of the Delhi Durbar goodwill gesture. Accordingly, everyone, including Vinayak, submitted their petitions to the jail authorities. Vinayak's petition was received on 30 August 1911. Although no copy of this petition is extant, there remains only a reference to this in his 'Jail History Ticket'.<sup>42</sup> While most of the other prisoners did not receive any response, Vinayak's petition was answered in less than a week. On 3 September 1911, he received a terse reply from the government which said: 'Petition Rejected'.<sup>43</sup> It came as no surprise to him.

The other prisoners hung on to their hopes till the official announcement was made. The Bengali revolutionaries believed in the anecdotes floating around about how their contemporary, Barin Ghose's brother, Aurobindo Ghose, saw Lord Krishna in the jail where he was lodged after being tried in the Alipore Bomb Case. He was released later, after which he renounced politics and revolution and took to spiritual pursuits in the French colony of Pondicherry. Based on his vision of Lord Krishna and the message he received thereby, Aurobindo had prophesied that the Lord, speaking through him, was saying: 'Go, you young men, go! You are sentenced today, but I assure you that you will come back free within three years from now.'<sup>44</sup> Clutching on to this vague proverbial straw, the sinking men at Cellular Jail fervently believed that Aurobindo's prophecy would come true and at the worst, they had just three more years to pass in this misery. The Delhi Durbar seemed to them like this dream was indeed coming true. They had begun building castles in the air about when they would leave, which train they would take back to their homes, inviting fellow prisoners to their homes too.

The evening before the announcement was to be made, Mirza Khan came running to announce that 'Bada Babu has been released'. Vinayak was shocked because he had already received the official reply. His fellow prisoners exulted for him, shook his hands and congratulated him on his release. Vinayak was circumspect and refused to believe this till it was officially announced. The next morning, all the political prisoners had gathered in large numbers near the prison's main gate where the announcement was to be made. It seemed to them a mere formality before the gates would open and they would be set free. Barrie walked in with a list in his hand and said that those whose names he read out would have a remission of one month in a year of their sentence.

No one was granted complete pardon or release. Though the excitement abated, a month's remission still seemed good enough when compared to their hell. Many names were read out; Babarao's among them too. This meant that he would have twenty-five months reduced from his total sentence. However, Vinayak's name did not feature in the list. It was

obvious that the government considered him dangerous enough to not let him out of the clutches of Cellular Jail even for a brief while. Barrie walked up to Vinayak sympathetically; the one with the longest sentence had not received even a day's pardon. Vinayak recounts that this was the darkest day of despair, fear and melancholy for the inmates. But he was keen to know if the country had received some concessions on this momentous day, even if he had failed to procure any. He was delighted to know that the government had withdrawn the proposal to partition Bengal, something he had agitated against as a student in Poona. It had also been announced at the Durbar that the capital of British India was being shifted from Calcutta to Delhi.

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Many prisoners were let out of the jail for outside work after they had completed six months of stay. In Vinayak's case, while his solitary confinement of six months ended on 15 January 1912, he was not let out of prison even after he had adhered to all prison norms. He candidly admits in his memoir that he wanted to shorten the time of his sentence and so maintained good conduct.<sup>45</sup> He believed it was not prudent to rub the jail officials the wrong way and get on the wrong side of law while in prison, where the balance of power was skewed against him. Other prisoners were free to mix among themselves a little more than before; they could even talk to each other. But this concession too was kept away from Vinayak. He was allowed to leave his cell, but only to sit in the gallery or opposite his cell door, all by himself. When the others were let out of the prison, Vinayak was to present himself at the courtyard for his kolhu work.

On one such hot afternoon while pulling the grinding mill, Vinayak began panting for breath and felt faint. His stomach was cramped and excruciating pain wracked his body. He fell to the ground and his eyes closed. For a couple of minutes, a sense of nothingness engulfed him. This near-death experience opened his mind to the idea that leaving the body was a far better proposition than making it endure so much pain and

suffering. He had contemplated suicide once before, when he had been recaptured in Marseilles and put into a cramped furnace of a cabin at Aden. That night the drive to finish his life and its sufferings once and for all was intense. He kept looking at the barred window from which several frustrated prisoners had hung themselves to their deaths. In the intense tussle in his mind, between his desire for death and the voice of reason, the latter prevailed. He decided that if he were to die, he should do so after killing an enemy of the country and not in this cowardly fashion.

Working at the oil mill occasionally led him to interactions with other political prisoners. They would communicate stealthily without catching the attention of the inspecting officers. Vinayak realized that many of these young revolutionaries, although brave at heart and undaunted in spirit, lacked the awareness of politics, history, economics or international affairs. While this did not take away from their courage or their patriotic spirit, Vinayak felt that as someone who had spent considerable time studying these subjects, it was his duty to educate and enlighten them so that they became more focused and strategic in their approach and struggle for freedom once they were released. Many had begun to lose hope and so Vinayak played a good counsellor and motivated them with stories from history and mythology. They began to communicate a few words among themselves through commonly agreed sign language. As he recounts:

They talked freely, they imagined boldly; they revelled in happy dreams of the future; and they recovered the balance of their minds and the poise of their souls. Their courage to fire and to endure was deepened; its blunted edge had recovered its sharpness; and, when they dispersed, they went away, each to his cell, taking leave of one another, like happy and loving brothers. It was there that I enrolled them and other prisoners of the settlement as members of my 'Abhinava Bharat'. It was here that they took their solemn oath to be true to the cause and serve it ever with their lives. <sup>46</sup>

The lack of books proved to be a major obstacle. Prisoners were given a book to read only on Sundays. The warder carried them in a net bag like vegetables and threw them into each room. These were collected back

from them the same evening. No exchange of books between prisoners was allowed. As per rules, prisoners got an opportunity to read from their collection between four and six in the evening. But the daily chore would leave them too exhausted to contemplate reading. Being of poor educational background himself, Barrie detested anyone who was found reading or writing, and they would be thrown for the kolhu work.

Slowly, with the connivance of some warders, Vinayak managed to hold small classes for fellow political prisoners on history, the lives of revolutionaries, global politics and so on. Following a few more strikes in the prison, after that of Nand Gopal, some concession was granted and gatherings among them were allowed. Vinayak's classes became more open and regular. The political prisoners were always keen on knowing about latest developments in India, but they were not given newspapers to read. However, they occasionally figured out a way to smuggle in copies of newspapers such as the *Local Mail* or *London Times*. Some of the revolutionaries who went out of the jail to work would get opportunities to meet Indians settled in the colony. They were sympathetic to the cause of the revolutionaries and surreptitiously slipped in either information or newspapers. The new batch of 'chalans' who came in every few months also brought with them the latest information about the mainland.

Since slate or paper was never given, Vinayak used thorns to write on the white walls of the cell. He advised his 'students' too to do the same and summarize their discussions and learning of the day's lesson on their walls. This gave the prisoners some intellectual break from the monotony of physical toil and their wretched lives. In fact, Vinayak would inscribe several of his poems on the walls, and just to spite and frustrate him, Barrie would order the walls to be whitewashed. But little did he know that Vinayak had an elephantine memory and would memorize the verses. In Vinayak's own words:

As soon as I was locked up inside the room and the door was shut, I would begin to write on the wall with that pencil [made of the thorns] in columns, which I drew upon it. All the walls of the 7th *chawl* were thus scrawled over and each constituted for me a book by itself. For example, the cell in which I was confined to weave the stranded

cord was written with a full outline of Spencer's 'First Principles'. My poem 'Kamala' was composed and copied in full on the walls of this seventh division. In another cell I wrote all the definitions of political economy as I had learnt from Mill's Work on the subject. My object was that when I was changed from that room to another, a political prisoner, brought in there, may learn those definitions as he was learning that subject from me. With a little management such a student could succeed being put up in this lock-up. He could then learn them off in a month before his turn came for transference elsewhere. As I was being changed from division to division I saw to it that every division and every cell in that division had its writings on the walls from my improvised pen. And the political prisoners who had turned students took the fullest advantage of these written tablets—their books of study. <sup>47</sup>

In addition to the lack of literature or paper to write, the prisoners were allowed to write only one yearly letter to their families. It was supposed to be an open letter that was first read and censored by the jailor, next by a British officer and dispatched only after their approvals. They were warned that these letters could not contain a single word against jail authorities. Occasionally, a magistrate would call on the prisoners to find out how they were doing. But even here any word or discussion, any petition regarding the ill-treatment meted out to them was impossible to articulate. The people or political leaders in India had absolutely no idea what was going on within the dreaded walls of the Cellular Jail.

The first letter that Vinayak was allowed to write to his younger brother Narayanrao was eighteen months after his arrival. In this letter, dated 15 December 1912, he laments that given the time it has taken for him to put pen to paper, he might as well unlearn the art of writing itself altogether. The family had received a letter from Babarao in July 1912. Vinayak was delighted to know that Narayanrao had been released from prison after the Nasik Conspiracy Case trial and had joined a medical course in dentistry in Calcutta. He lived at 98, Premchand Boral Street, Bow Bazar. <sup>48</sup> Jokingly, Vinayak mentioned that he hoped his brother would not lose his heart to a Bengali girl, adding that he favoured inter-provincial marriages. It was much better to have a Bengali wife as compared to 'marrying the European girls at this stage of our national life'. <sup>49</sup> Since no adverse report could be given about jail life, Vinayak painted a pleasant picture, saying

that he never had any serious illness since the time of coming there and was in sound physical and mental health. The regimen he narrated also sounds idyllic when one compares it to his memoir, as well as those of his fellow prisoners. But even in this condition, his eagerness to know more about what was happening in India and the world comes through:

In your answer please inform me how our dear Motherland is getting on. Is the Congress united? Does it pass the resolution for the release of the political prisoners from year to year as it did at Allahabad in 1910? Any remarkable Swadeshi enterprise like the iron works of Tata or Steam Navigation Company or New Mills? How is the Republic of China? Does it not sound like *Utopia realized? A Romance of History* . Don't suppose that China's work is a day's. No, from 1850 they have been strenuously at it though the world knows not where the Sun is making its way—till it is risen: and Persia, Portugal, and Egypt? And are the Indians in South Africa successful in getting their demands? Please do mention if any important law has been passed by the new councils, e.g., the Education Bill of the Hon. Mr Gokhale. When the great Tilak is due to be released? <sup>50</sup>

He adds further, about his compatriot revolutionaries possibly:

I cannot name, for obvious reasons, others with whose memory my heart is now overwhelmingly full. Tell them all that I remember each and all of them. How can I forget them? No, a man in a prison cannot forget. The mind, shut up from the new impressions can only feed on the old ones, and so in a prison so far from forgetting old acquaintances that one vividly remembers and begins to love even those who were before forgotten: My sweet friends, in a prison one weeps and weeps and vainly waits for someone to come to wipe the tears—to speak a word of affection, and love . . . To all those please give my affection and love who you know were my sweet friends and comrades and dearer than life to me, and to those who even when some were not ashamed to disown the ties of blood, are still standing by you, and remember me my deepest obligations are due. <sup>51</sup>

While Vinayak managed to overcome his suicidal tendencies by finding a mission for himself, not everyone was as strong-willed. Indu Bhushan Roy was one such prisoner. He was a young man convicted in the Maniktala Bomb Case and sentenced by the sessions judge of Alipore on 6 May 1909 to ten years' rigorous imprisonment in the Andamans. He arrived at the Cellular Jail in December 1909. Indu had found the kolhu work

excruciating and was looking forward to being let off from the prison to work outside. Unfortunately, it turned out to be more fatiguing and humiliating than what he faced inside. On many occasions when he suffered from high fever and dysentery while working outside, he was not taken to a doctor and instead made to walk back to his cell in the evening. When he refused to go outside to work, Barrie was furious. He was ordered to immediately get to the kolhu.

Vinayak saw hopelessness writ large on young Indu's face. In the few words they exchanged, Indu told him that life seemed meaningless to him. Vinayak tried to assuage him by saying ten years would pass soon; his sentence of fifty years was longer and he was bearing it with grace. Despite all his attempts to cheer Indu up, the latter continued to remain dejected. Dead tired with exhaustion, with drops of sweat dripping from all over him, and the chaff of the coconut sticking to him, he staggered back, crouching, to his cell one evening.

The next morning, on 29 April 1912, while all the prisoners came down for the kolhu work, Indu was nowhere to be found. Just then, a warder came rushing down the stairs screaming that Indu was found dangling from the top window. Indu had torn his clothes to make a noose of it. When the warder went to check his cell, he found his body with its neck broken, his tongue lolling out and feet dangling. A pall of gloom and desperation fell upon the prison. Such incidents were becoming far too regular.

Indu had tied a piece of paper around his neck—a suicide note, allegedly blaming the tortures in the jail as a cause for him ending his life. Barrie had cleverly destroyed this paper and sent a report to an inquiry commission probing his death that Indu had died of insanity and due to bitter personal quarrels with fellow prisoners. The jail officers were tutored to inform the commission that they had seen him cheerful and there was absolutely no inkling that he was contemplating ending his life.

<sup>52</sup> Vinayak and several other prisoners testified that Indu was not insane and it was the miserable prison conditions that had led him to take this extreme step. They requested that an independent evidence be called forth



to prove their deposition—one whom Barrie could not intimidate. This turned out to be the editor of *Swaraj*, Nand Gopal, who had been sentenced for sedition and transported as a political prisoner. He proved to the officers of the inquiry commission that Indu had been a victim of the tortures he suffered at prison. Barrie tried to peddle a fake note left behind by Indu where he allegedly blamed his fellow political prisoners and his fights with them as the only reason for his suicide. That evening, Vinayak spoke to Barrie, laying the blame squarely on him:

I know the conversation Indu had with me only two or three days previous to this happening. I know what he had said to other prisoners in the same trying circumstances. He had told me, and them, that he had no desire to live for ten years in such hard conditions. He had said so several times and yet you dare say that he committed suicide in a fit of insanity? Granting that it was so, the question remains how at all a man strong and young like him could suddenly go mad. He was an arch-conspirator; he had faced treachery, imprisonment, transportation for life, hardships of prison-life and at last death by hanging with calmness and indifference and with a smile on his face. He had never shown temper in hot discussion with his friends, and had not given even the slightest indication of an unbalanced mind. Political prisoners are accustomed to such discussions and to sharp difference of opinion among themselves, and yet none of them has shown such a sign of weakness. Why then should these affect the mind of Indu Bhushan? Indu Bhushan was a man of strong mind. What had made his mind so weak now? What was the cause of it? It could be no other than the harsh treatment that he received in this prison. He was treated here harshly; therefore, he chose to work outside; there also he had to pass through the same kind of torture and humiliation. He returned here sick and woe-begone. You put him in his cell and straightaway ordered him to work on the oil-mill. All this had contributed to his weakness. He openly said that he was tired of his life and would put an end to it. That is why he hanged himself. It was no case of suicide through insanity as you put it. If he has really written what you say, then there must be some reason for his insanity. <sup>53</sup>

Barrie despised Vinayak for his fearless honesty. At the same time, he knew that Indu's suicide had the potential to adversely affect his career. He, therefore, dropped the idea of the fake note, but imposed strict regulations on the flow of information to and from the prison

Despite the strictures imposed on prisoners, Hotilal Varma, who had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment, managed to get some paper

and wrote a long article on the pathetic conditions in which they lived. He had the courage to sign the article with his name and also the details of the cell in which he was lodged. It was necessary that the outside world learn about the atrocities meted out to them. Except for two or three of his trusted friends, no one knew anything about what he was planning to do. Hotilal's article was smuggled out of jail and reached India, specifically Surendranath Banerjea, the editor of *Bengalee*. Banerjea was aghast on reading the horrifying details outlined in the article. He published it in its entirety, creating quite a stir. For this 'offence', the *Bengalee*'s press was confiscated by the government. The *Tribune* of Lahore and *Amrita Bazar Patrika* also carried the details.

The condition of the Cellular Jail inmates also found its echo in Madame Cama's *Bande Mataram* :

In jail there are various kinds of work to do, the most difficult being the oil-mill, whether by hand or by foot. The latter means that four men are tied to the mill and have to go round and round a centre post just as bullocks do. They have to press out 30 lb. of oil during the day . . . in the oil-mill work by hand you have to turn a handle round and round during the whole day, and thus press out about 30 lb. of oil . . . chopping cocoanut bark is another species of work . . . Ropemaking is the lightest work one gets in jail . . . the regulation about punishment for short work is handcuffs for seven days for the first offence; for the second offence a week's handcuffs and four days' *ganji*. For the next offence the punishment was fetters for a month or two, then cross-bar for ten days and for further repetition of the offence—fetters for six months or so and solitary confinement . . . the work outside jail is still more dreadful. Among such work may be mentioned felling large trees and piling them up in a large heap; running about with heavy lumps of clay and handing them to workmen; laying 1200 bricks in the day or hoeing a plot of tea-land 40 yards by 4 yards in area; and all this one has to do in all sorts of weather . . . the Indian Jail Code, it should be noted, recognizes no class of prisoners as first-class misdemeanants . . . Indu Bhushan Roy, one of the political prisoners in the Alipore Case, undergoing his sentence of transportation in the penal settlement in the Andaman Islands has committed suicide.

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The panic the article created is obvious in the letters exchanged among various officials. In a letter dated 7 May 1912, M.S.D. Butler feared that since the *Tribune* was regularly read by the India Office critics in England, it was imperative to ascertain the facts immediately and have a response

ready. He contended that 'it is scarcely likely that the political prisoners are harnessed to an oil mill or are made to act as bricklayers' assistants'.

<sup>55</sup> In reply, H. Wheeler agreed and also feared that given the gross violations of basic human rights and dignity of the prisoners, as alleged in the article, 'it is very likely to attract attention in the House of Commons'.

<sup>56</sup> Sir Reginald H. Craddock, the home member of the Government of India was dismissive about the fuss that was being created. He believed that while there was no harm in knowing the facts as they might be, the revolutionaries could 'hardly expect to escape hard labour in the Andamans subject to their medical fitness for the same'. After all, they were the ones who believed in anarchy, and those 'whose objects are murder can scarcely be suffering for their opinions, any more than any other criminal'. <sup>57</sup> He merely wanted to know what forms of labour they had been employed in. In reply, the chief commissioner of the Andamans made light of the prisoners' miseries. He even downplayed the most strenuous oil-mill labour, saying: 'The statement in the article that the convicts are tied to the large mills is false. They are not confined in any way but merely walk round and round the mill pushing the bar, which is attached to the central post.' <sup>58</sup> It was concluded that there was no reason to infer that the political prisoners were 'being treated in any manner that could give rise to reasonable complaint'. He ended with:

I have no doubt that according to the *Bengalee's* communicant the only labour for the 'seditionists' should be clerical work; this, however, it is obvious, could not be allowed. It is probable that none of these prisoners had ever done any manual labour or any other than clerical or scholastic work, and perhaps petty trading, prior to their arrival in the Andamans. <sup>59</sup>

Barrie was wild with rage at these details being leaked out. He thundered at all the prisoners and issued a fiat that henceforth no prisoner be allowed to come within ten feet of another. Dining together too was to be severely restricted and scrutinized. He was all the more furious because the article's author had been kept anonymous. The Indian press that published the

article had intelligently used their discretion to not name the author though he had signed it, realizing it would jeopardize his future there.

The *Mahratta* , dated 28 July 1912, probed deeper into Indu's suicide. It is evident from the amount of detail in the article that regular information was being smuggled out from the jail to the Indian mainland and the press.

Why did Indu Bhusan commit suicide? If he was tired of prison life, one would expect that he would have committed suicide long ago; for he had already been in the Andamans for over three years. Was there nothing in anything that had happened recently in connection with him to account for his taking this fatal step? Was it not rather the act of a desperate man to whom life had become insupportable in the condition in which he found himself? Is it or is it not the case, that on the afternoon of the 28th April, only a few hours preceding his suicide, Indu Bhusan desired to see the Jailor and was taken to his office, and there did he not in the most entreating terms request the Jailor to change his work, as he was engaged in making white flax out of 'rambash' plant? Did he not say to the Jailor—or at any rate addressed words to that effect—'See, my hands have become so blistered by the juice of the "rambash" that I cannot move my fingers freely and it is so painful that I cannot get a wink of sleep the whole night. I cannot take my food to my mouth. The touch of "dal" causes me so much pain that tears come to my eyes and my food is left untouched. I will die of pain and starvation. Kindly change my work or allow me to go to hospital for a few days to get my palms healed.' Saying this, he stretched his hands to the full, but met with a rebuff from the Jailor. We will not reproduce the language, which the Jailor is reported to have used. Is it not the case that Indu Bhusan pleaded again, begging to be allowed to report himself personally and show his hands to the Medical Superintendent? But the Jailor shouted: 'You must carry out my orders.' Then after thinking for a couple of minutes, he again said, 'All right, I will change your work.' And ordered the warder in charge to engage Indu in 'Kolu' oil mill from next morning. Indu got so frightened that he told the Jailor that he would simply die if he had to work in the *Kolu* mill with those hands of his. The Jailor was obdurate and our information is that Indu was dismissed amid a shower of abusive language. This was the last straw on the camel's back and before many hours Indu was found hanging in his cell . . . the political prisoners, we learn, are scattered over the entire settlement. In case they fall ill they are not taken to the nearest hospital within whose jurisdiction they live and where in the ordinary course they should be taken. They have to be taken to the Hospital of the Jail District where Captain Barker is the Medical Superintendent and also District Officer. <sup>60</sup>

Unknown to the prisoners, the government had set up a departmental inquiry into Indu Bhushan Roy's suicide and the general prison conditions in the wake of all the news articles. The chief commissioner sent a report

to the government refuting all charges of cruel treatment. Concocting the entire sequence of events, he noted:

On the early morning of the 29th of April, Indu Bhushan Roy committed suicide in his cell by tearing his coat into 3 strips, tying the pieces together and hanging himself from the bars of the cell ventilator; and inquest was at once held by my orders by the Deputy Superintendent at which it was clearly proved that the deceased Indu Bhushan Roy had developed the hallucination that two others of the seditionist prisoners, Nonigopal Mukherjee and Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, intended to murder him under the impression that he had informed against them to Government and that it was on this account that he killed himself; that this was the true cause of the deceased's suicide is further corroborated by the fact that the deceased hanged himself on the very morning of the day on which his punishment of separate confinement expired when in the ordinary course he would have been relegated to associated confinement again. The punishment of 3 months separate confinement was the only punishment Indu Bhushan Roy had received during the 2 years and 4 months he had been in the Settlement . . . Roy is the man who wrote the letter, which was published in the Calcutta papers. <sup>61</sup>

It was a bunch of well-manufactured lies to hush up the case and whitewash Barrie's misconduct. As expected, 'the official version in this case, which fully exonerated the authorities was accepted and no further step was taken in the matter'. <sup>62</sup>

But there was more to come. Ullaskar Dutt had been sentenced to imprisonment in the Andamans as a conspirator in the Maniktala Bomb Case. After thirteen years of hard labour, he was released. He wrote a detailed account of his experiences during this long and traumatic period. After a harrowing stint at the oil mill for over six months, he had been transferred outside as a labourer at a factory of bricks where he had to work in the full blaze of the sun. A junior medical officer had reported that Ullaskar was unfit for working in the sun, but this was disregarded by the European officer.

The work however involved an entitlement to milk, but the tindal at the jail would end up snatching away the hard-earned milk each time it was offered to him. When he protested mildly, Ullaskar was transferred to a labour that did not have the milk incentive. He had to 'climb up a steep

ascent, draw two buckets of water out of a well, tie them at both ends of a pole, and carry the buckets with the pole' on his shoulders to the bungalow of an officer. This had to be done continuously for the entire day. After several days, Ullaskar was exhausted and refused to do this work. Charges of disobedience and shirking duty were framed against him. The magistrate tried to persuade him but he had made up his mind against it. Ullaskar writes:

We, political prisoners, who do what we will to conform to the rules of the prison and the settlement, were shown no consideration by the jail authorities. Why should we then bend down to their wishes? The more we toiled, the more they made us toil. Let them do their worst to our bodies, let us at least keep the soul free. They may rule over my body, but I am master of my soul. I shall not, of myself, enslave my soul to them. <sup>63</sup>

And so Ullaskar was sent back to the prison under Barrie's command. On his return, Barrie roared, 'If you go against the discipline, I will thrash you with my cane. I will give you thirty stripes of it, each of which will go deep into your flesh.' To this, Ullaskar replied defiantly, 'You may cut my body into pieces. I am no longer going to work here, for I think that to work according to your orders is a crime against my conscience.' An infuriated Barrie ordered that chains be put on his hands and he be suspended by them in his own cell continuously for a week. Ullaskar started hallucinating. He had images of Vinayak being ordered into a duel with Barrie and how the former had managed to beat the latter black and blue in a spirited fight. Ullaskar had gone insane. Vinayak notes about the episode:

Heart-rending cries, one after another, had filled the whole atmosphere. I saw some of them dragging a man from block No. 5. There were ten of them trying to lift him up and carrying him to the hospital. The cry was coming from him. He cried, he fell on the ground; they were all in an uproar! I saw this from a distance when the warder came running to me and whispered that, 'Ullaskar had gone insane.' Yes! Burning in the hot sun with fever of 107 degrees; manacled and tied up, what else could happen to him than the loss of his brain? The brain and the body, which had been both outraged by excessive pressure upon them, had suddenly gone to pieces. Already he

was so weakened in mind that he would easily pass into delirium. He saw hallucinations and visions. The brain was out of gear and the body was out of joint. The latter had repeated fits and convulsions, and ten persons could not control it. <sup>64</sup>

The entire prison reverberated with the heart-wrenching cries of Ullaskar beseeching his mother. ‘Amma, Amma,’ he would call out. The jail authorities decided to administer shock to him to ascertain if he had really gone insane or was faking it. In Ullaskar’s own words:

Even in this semi-conscious state of mind and under severe pain of the body, I could clearly feel that the medical Superintendent had played his electric battery upon me, the shocks of which it was impossible for me to withstand. The electric current went through my whole body like the force of lightening. Every nerve, fibre and muscle in it seemed to be torn by it. The demon seemed to possess it. And I uttered words such as had never passed my lips before. I roared as I had never done before, and suddenly I relapsed into unconsciousness. I was in this state of unconsciousness for three continuous days and nights. And my friends told me about it when I awoke from it. <sup>65</sup>

After eight or ten days when he recovered his senses, Ullaskar began hearing the voices of his relatives calling out to him piteously. He was overcome with guilt that he was responsible for their sorrow and had brought disgrace to the family. Overwhelmed with grief, he tore his garment and made a rope out of it and like Indu Bhushan Roy tried to hang himself from the rear window. Fortuitously, the watch and ward man detected this on time. Noticing his condition deteriorate by the day, the jail authorities shifted him to a mental hospital. He continued to have fits and convulsions and occasionally regained his senses. After a few weeks he was shifted to an asylum in Madras where he was admitted for nearly twelve years.

Vinayak confronted Barrie after this unfortunate incident. For nearly eight months after the incident, Barrie kept maintaining that Ullaskar was just faking madness just to shirk work. He even mockingly asked Vinayak if he would be the next to go insane, to which Vinayak retorted, ‘After you, surely!’ <sup>66</sup> Vinayak told him firmly that as political prisoners they needed

to be treated with some amount of dignity, or at the least, as human beings. If he continued this way, it would not be long before more strikes rocked the jail. In his own words:

You had said about Indu Bhushan, you remember, that he had hanged himself because he was mad and not because he had suffered from excessive hard labour in this jail? And, then, I had asked you what was the cause of his madness. Why, then, Ullas had gone mad? Can you give me the reason for it? Dare you say, now, that it was anything else than the sufferings in this prison-life? Here they have no hope, no future to look to and no relief in their present state. Day and night they are ground down with labour, day and night they suffer insult and humiliation from you and your creatures. How can they bear it? What wonder that they are off their brains? It is unbearable suffering that brings on insanity and it is insanity that ends in suicide. Ullas and his life are standing testimonials to this fact and you cannot deny it. You manacled him, you kept him hanging for eight days in his cell; he went into fits and loud wailing. That took him to the hospital and that brought him to the stage of madness and he attempted suicide . . . Do treat us fairly henceforth, treat us as political prisoners, or at least, as ordinary prisoners. Do end this suffering. Else we shall have no other way out of it but strike. Not that we shall always win against you; entrenched as you are behind power and authority, the fight is bound to go against us. But we shall have done our best to expose injustice and defend our honour. And that is a great satisfaction. <sup>67</sup>

Barrie however was obdurate. He continued to maintain that Ullaskar was feigning madness, just to shirk his duties.

The Jail History Ticket was a document that maintained a catalogue of the punishments given to a prisoner. They did not include the regular tasks, such as working on the oil-mill or picking oakum, assigned to anyone. Even the punishments meted out were vastly underrated and reported, lest it catch the government's attention. A perusal of Vinayak's Jail History Ticket of this time shows that he was an active participant in the non-cooperation that was going on in the prison. <sup>68</sup> On 19 September 1912, he was found in possession of a letter addressed to another. He makes a mention of this in his memoir too, although the date of that incident is unknown. He refers to a letter in Modi script that he had written to other prisoners on how to go about organizing the strike in the prison. This was confiscated in a search conducted in Vinayak's cell. As punishment, he was



handcuffed in standing position for a week. A similar incident happened on 23 November 1912 when a letter was confiscated from his cell. Following this he was put in solitary confinement for a month. In keeping with the non-cooperation in the prison, Vinayak went on a hunger strike from 30 December 1912 to 2 January 1913 and refused all food and water. All these details ascertain his active involvement in mobilizing fellow prisoners to raise their voice against the cruelty meted out to them. Barrie detested him for this as he was considered the brain behind the disturbances.

Meanwhile, the political prisoners decided to petition the jail authorities and Vinayak was selected as one of the two representatives. While prisoners who had passed six months of sentence were allowed to work outside the prison, Vinayak and Babarao were never let off even though they had served more than a year. On being asked they were told that the government forbade this. The petition that Vinayak wrote mentioned this. The petition demanded that those who were accused of political crimes must be recognized as political prisoners and not as common convicts accused of thefts and other crimes. As political prisoners they were entitled to certain concessions and facilities. They demanded that they be given proper food, that they be released from inhuman labour and be allowed to interact with each other. On the contrary, the petition argued, political prisoners did not receive even the ordinary facilities given to other convicts, like sending and receiving letters, occasional meeting with relatives and friends, facility to read and write, or being promoted as petty officers. They were not recognized as ordinary prisoners entitled to these concessions and at the same time got no facilities as prisoners belonging to a special class. If they claimed any rights as political prisoners, they were put off with the excuse that ordinary prisoners would resent the partiality shown to them and hence the prison officers would not be a party to such a decision. Summing up, the petition stated that they were subjected, as political prisoners, to all the disabilities of prison life in India and the Andamans, without the compensating facilities afforded to ordinary prisoners in the jails of India, as well as at the Cellular Jail. It

ended with a solemn warning that they would no longer tolerate such treatment of political prisoners in the jail. 'No relief, no concession, then no work'—that was the final resolution on the matter. Barrie totally disregarded the petition and the political prisoners decided to embark on the second strike. They stoutly refused to do any work, or least, even stand up when Barrie sauntered in.

From 7 September, the prisoners began a series of hunger strikes and work strikes, started by Ladha Ram, former editor of *Swaraj*. The next resistance came in the form of a political prisoner, Nani Gopal, a young Bengali lad from Chinsura, aged sixteen or seventeen. He had thrown a bomb at the motorcade of a British officer. Nani had been given the work of the oil mill and after a while he resisted it. He was forced to wear clothes made of gunny bags, which was extremely uncomfortable in the humid weather. Consequently, he gave up wearing clothes altogether. The petty officers would pin him down to the ground, forcibly put those clothes on him, sewing them up on his body. But invariably he would end up tearing them off at night. To prevent this, he would be chained and his hands and legs tied. He refused to answer any question posed to him or even turn up for a bath. He would literally be lifted, led to the water reservoir and his body rubbed so hard with dry coconut shreds that his skin would bleed. Nani Gopal went about stark naked and this caused more friction with the authorities. He demanded to be ranked as a political prisoner.

Barrie decided to cane Nani to teach him a lesson. Vinayak warned him that any such move on his part would have a disastrous impact on other political prisoners and that he should brace himself for the consequences. Moreover, Lord Morley had ruled that such harsh treatment was strictly forbidden for political prisoners. Disregarding this, the caning was ordered and Nani was thrashed within an inch of his life. He bore it resolutely till the time the jailer who was executing it thought that Nani might die and stopped it. He was moved to a district prison in Viper Island for a few days so that he could be away from the malefic influence of the political

prisoners who were poisoning his mind. But the jail authorities were mistaken.

On his return, Nani began a hunger strike. The authorities tried to force-feed him and also poured milk into a pipe thrust into his nose. Barrie feared that his death, close on the heels of Indu's suicide and Ullaskar's insanity, would create a flutter. But Nani was obdurate and refused to eat anything. Vinayak tried his best to convince him not to end his life this way but Nani's hunger strike carried on for several days and he began to lose weight alarmingly.

Around the same time, there were rumours that the prisoners who were sent outside for work had begun manufacturing bombs in a clandestine factory. Gramophone pins and few pieces of iron—useful components in bomb manufacture—had been discovered near the place where convicts went out to work. Barin Ghose and Upendranath Banerjee, however, have dismissed this in their memoirs as the mischief and fabrication of a fellow prisoner, Lalmohan Saha. In his memoir, Vinayak mentions that one morning there were mass arrests within the Cellular Jail and 'the cause of all this noise and fury was that the officers had information of a bomb factory started in the island by political prisoners working in the settlement'. He then adds, rather enigmatically, that 'it was not altogether without foundation. But the search and arrests afforded no clue to it.'<sup>69</sup> This seems to suggest that he did seem to have knowledge or some role in this, although one cannot be sure. He was nonetheless worried about its impact on his sentence. He writes:

It gave me great anxiety about the future in store for me. I had already suffered enough in one conspiracy case, and I feared what this case would bring to me. We had already been on transportation for life; my life-sentence was fifty years. The Gods that did me that ill-turn may involve me in this and deal even worse with me. I never more thought of being sent out in the settlement. The manufacturing of bombs and the chartering of boats had made that out of question. The officers behaved insolently towards me and told me openly that I should no more think of it. They had final orders from the Government of India that I was not to be released from this jail till I had run my full sentence of fifty years or till I was dead before that time.<sup>70</sup>

The Government of India did not proceed to investigate or frame charges against any of the prisoners due to insufficient evidence. But it was annoyed with the negligence of the local authorities in Port Blair.

There were also stories about political prisoners chartering boats to help others escape from the jail. Information about the condition of the jail, the suicides and strikes of prisoners and, importantly, the manufacturing of bombs caught the attention of the press in mainland India. Questions began to be raised in the Imperial Legislative Council about the ferment in the Andamans. The government could no longer afford to turn a blind eye. Finally, in October 1913, home member of the Government of India, Sir Reginald H. Craddock, decided to visit the Cellular Jail and interview some of the political prisoners to ascertain their grievances. Eventually, the non-cooperation activities did not seem to be entirely in vain.



## The Jail Chronicles

### Cellular Jail, October 1913

Sir Reginald Craddock was born into a family with strong links to the British Raj. His father, Major William Craddock, had been attached to the first Gurkha Rifles (also called the Malaun Regiment and also as the King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles) as a surgeon. An Oxford graduate, Reginald Craddock had risen up the ranks and become a home member of the Government of India. Later, he also served as the governor of Burma. In October 1913, Craddock was headed for an important task to the Andaman Islands. For the longest time, the Government of India had treated the islands and the Cellular Jail as being too distant to cause any trouble. But increasing reports of upheavals and unrests, following the massive publicity of the ill-treatment of prisoners and the looming danger of bombs being manufactured there and shipped to the mainland, had the government on its toes. Craddock was authorized to conduct a thorough inquiry into the affairs at Port Blair, meet as many political prisoners as possible and submit a report to the government. Interestingly, even though Craddock's visit to the Cellular Jail had been kept a secret from the political prisoners by the jail authorities they were besieged by questions about his visit. This astounded the authorities. It only went to prove that

despite the most stringent vigilance the prisoners could not be kept isolated from one another and the outside world. A few prisoners were called out to meet Craddock. These included Vinayak, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Barin Ghose, Nand Gopal and Sudhir Kumar Sarkar. Craddock also walked past the cells and spoke to Birendra Sen (of the Sylhet group of revolutionaries), Upendra Nath Banerjee, Hotilal Varma and Pulin Behari (leader of the Dacca group).

Vinayak gives an account of his interview with Craddock. The latter began by sympathizing with this young, talented barrister's condition, someone who once had a glorious future ahead of him. In reply, Vinayak told him that getting out of prison was entirely in Craddock's hands. If what he had been hearing about the reforms that were being introduced in India were indeed true, all his friends, including him, who were dubbed revolutionaries would turn to the path of peace. Here, Vinayak was referring to the Morley–Minto reforms of 1909 in administration and the education bills introduced by Gopalkrishna Gokhale. Since 1910, Gokhale had been trying to introduce a bill for compulsory primary education in India. After a lot of dithering, the government had finally agreed. The move received further impetus following the donation of Rs 50 lakh from Emperor George V during the Delhi Durbar. Accordingly, the government too had adopted Gokhale's recommendations and passed the resolution on education policy on 21 February 1913. In his first letter written from Port Blair on 15 December 1912 to Narayanrao, it is clear that Vinayak was aware of these developments even while being confined at the Cellular Jail.

Craddock disagreed about Vinayak's assertion that revolutionaries might eschew the path of violence given the government's constructive and conciliatory tone of reforms. He asserted that several of Vinayak's followers still swore by him and planned secret societies and revolutionary activities in India, Europe and even America. When asked if he would write a letter espousing these thoughts, Vinayak agreed on the condition that it would have to be an independent letter from him, not through the government. This was vetoed by Craddock.

Craddock then proceeded to question him on his grievances. Vinayak gave a detailed account of the atrocities that he and others faced in jail. The chief commissioner of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, M.W. Douglas, who was present at the meeting interjected to say how this could be construed as a complaint. For a political prisoner and a murderer, one who had conspired to overthrow the government, this was the logical consequence. Had Russia been ruling India they would have been packed off to Siberia or even been shot in the back, he exclaimed. It was his good fortune that the British were ruling India and he had got away with such lenience. Vinayak coolly replied:

I am sure, however, that Russia would not have disarmed India. Today Russia enrolls inhabitants in Siberia as well as foreigners in its army, and appoints them to responsible military posts. And it would have appointed Indians to the same posts, and if it had treated us as you do, we would have beaten them, as we beat and conquered the Mogal Emperors of India. <sup>1</sup>

Craddock went on to say that the Hindu rajas of yore would have had a rebel trampled under the foot of an elephant. Vinayak implored him to not delve into history because the way England brutally treated its rebels was well documented. Holding a mirror to Craddock, he added:

I know also that in England they dragged a prisoner along the street for felony and hanged him. But these are things of the past by which none should swear today. You don't hang a thief today in England. The fact is that the benefits of civilization, wherever they may originate, are shared by all alike. Formerly a traitor was trampled under the foot of an elephant, but the victor punished a king by sending him to the block. Charles I and the English rebellion are instances in point. On both the sides the rule now is to follow civilized methods and, as you seemed to agree with us, we appeal to you to treat and judge us accordingly. If you say that you will treat us barbarously, we shall face the situation as best as we can. <sup>2</sup>

Vinayak was thereafter given the option to submit a formal petition stating his case. The same option of petitioning the government was offered to Barin Ghose, Nand Gopal, Hrishikesh Kanjilal and Sudhir Kumar Sarkar. They submitted their petitions accordingly.

This process of petitioning the government was a legitimate tool available to political prisoners in British India, similar to defending oneself in court through the agency of a lawyer. And Vinayak was a compulsive petitioner. He sent more than ten petitions on various issues during his jail stay in the Andamans and prior to reaching there—like the ones at Byculla jail seeking provisions for milk and books. As a barrister, Vinayak knew the law and also wished to utilize all the provisions available to him under it, to free himself from imprisonment or to alleviate his condition in prison. It is but natural for a man incarcerated for life to explore every available legitimate option to first and foremost release himself. He often expressed this opinion—that a revolutionary’s primary duty was to free himself from the clutches of the British in order to return to the freedom struggle.

In his petition dated 14 November 1913, Vinayak makes several points related to the legal aspects of his case.<sup>3</sup> He states that when he came to the Cellular Jail in 1911, he was the only one classified as ‘D’ (dangerous) prisoner. He was put in solitary confinement for six months and given the hardest of tasks. Despite his good conduct during this time, he was not sent out of the jail like the other convicts even after the lapse of eighteen months. When he petitioned for a promotion, he was told that he was a special-class prisoner and hence it could not be done. When any of them asked for better food or any special treatment they were told that as ‘ordinary convicts’ they could avail no such benefits. He sought to know why on the one hand they were termed special class and denied privilege of promotion, while at the same time they were not considered special class and therefore denied good food or concessions. How could this work both ways? he wondered. Had he been a political prisoner lodged in an Indian jail, he would have earned remission, could send more letters to his family and also get several opportunities to meet them. Had he been considered a transportee<sup>4</sup> alone, as per the usual norms, in about a couple of years he would have been released or could look forward to leave ticket.<sup>5</sup> But he was denied the privileges of both an Indian jail as well as the



regulations of the convict colony, having to thereby live with the disadvantages of both sides.

He requested the government to ‘put an end to this anomalous situation . . . by either sending me to Indian jails or by treating me as a transportee just like any other prisoner. I am not asking for any preferential treatment, though I believe as a political prisoner even that could have been expected in any civilized administration in the independent nations of the world’. It was almost an indirect mockery of British India being uncivilized. Vinayak sought to be sent to an Indian jail where he stood a chance of earning a remission, visits from family members once in four months, more letters, and a moral, if not legal, right to be released in fourteen years. If he could not be released to an Indian jail, as a convict of Port Blair, he had to be allowed out of the Cellular Jail like the others, and also get ticket leaves, which would enable his family to visit him, and other such normal concessions.

It is important to understand the distinction between the types of prisoners and the benefits they received as per the law of the time. This is explained in detail in Nand Gopal’s petition dated 15 November 1913. Nand Gopal had pioneered the resistance against the kolhu work and had also submitted a petition which was his legitimate right. He explains that there are two categories of prisoners—one who are kept in Indian jails and another that are sent to Port Blair. Lifers and term convicts who are considered unfit for transportation were still being kept in Indian jails. Being stationed in Indian jails, even as a lifer, gave a prisoner several benefits:

. . . one can see his parents, friends and other relatives twice in a year. He can write at least two letters in a year. He is allowed more when he is promoted to C.N.W. and convict warder and overseer. He can receive as many letters as many are sent to him with the permission of the Superintendent, which is almost always given. He can keep with him as many books, as many are sent to him. He is not made to do work under sun and rain as prisoners of this place are bound to do. He is not subjected to half the hard tasks which the prisoners are doing at Port Blair. <sup>6</sup>

Nand Gopal elucidates that the greatest grievance they had was the absence of remission that was usually allowed to political prisoners in Indian jails. He specifically cites the 'Mark-System remission' that enabled a prisoner transported for life to be released within fourteen years. He stood a chance of an earlier release within two or three years if he received extraordinary remissions, such as a coronation remission. This was given to almost all political prisoners in Indian jails. He writes that Port Blair's penal policy was to keep every convict in solitary confinement and lodged within the Cellular Jail for a maximum of six months. After this, he was let outside to work and given ticket leaves. This facility had been taken away from political prisoners who had lost the status of an ordinary convict.

Barin Ghose, Nand Gopal, Kanjilal and Sarkar had also sent similar requests to be transferred to Indian jails and its associated benefits, or a grant of privileges legitimately available to convicts of Port Blair in their petitions.

In his petition, Vinayak draws the government's attention to the fact that unlike a term convict, he had fifty long years staring at him and it was tough for him to draw the 'moral energy enough to pass them in close confinement, when even those concessions which the vilest of convicts can claim to smoothen their lives are denied'.<sup>7</sup> He points to what he discussed with Craddock about the government's constitutional path of reforms and education which had not been the case prior to 1909, when they had taken the armed path. He states:

Therefore if the Government in their manifold benevolence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English Government . . . As long as we are in jails there cannot be real happiness and joy and gratitude to the Government, who knows how to forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge. Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?

While writers like A.G. Noorani consider this as a sign of Vinayak's 'cowardice' and that he had become a pawn in the hands of the British, biographers like Dhananjay Keer point out that this was a tactical move, quite like Shivaji writing pliant letters to Aurangzeb to secure his release and cannot be taken literally.<sup>8</sup> Both sides might be hugely exaggerated in their censure or eulogy of a historical character, who needs to be judged by the yardsticks of his time and the context in which he operated. Most often, those inimical to Vinayak quote these petitions partially and almost never in a historical and situational context, framing an argument around them to suit a contemporary political narrative which is plainly historically disingenuous.

The Biblical reference to the 'prodigal son' could well be viewed as Vinayak's attempt to appeal to the religious sentiments of his incarcerators. While the sentences of his 'mercy petition' quoted above, when read in isolation, might convey the image of a vacillating man out to become the government's tool in lieu of his release, the logical arguments he posits prior to getting there are not indicative of the same disposition. The questions one needs to ask are manifold for an objective assessment of a controversial and much-maligned historical figure such as Vinayak. Did future events in his long and distinguished political career validate the allegation of his willingness to acquiesce to the British? Even if the dominant narrative seeks to make a case that it did, by way of his opposition to some of the measures of the popular Indian mass movement led by Gandhi, an assessment has seldom been made about whether this opposition to the Congress world view was favourable for the country or harmed the cause of freedom. Without going too far into the future, the events that played out in Cellular Jail itself, and almost immediately after the submission of this 'pliant' petition, bore no semblance to capitulation or a willingness to cooperate with the government.

Did the British trust his alleged loyalty or even buy his so-called willingness to yield or were they forever suspicious of the dangers he posed to them? If he had indeed become their pawn, why did the British treat him with suspicion and as one of India's most dangerous men for

nearly a decade and a half thereafter? These are the questions by which this narrative will evaluate Vinayak and here the scales of history do tilt considerably in his favour. The 1913 petition that has been a hotly debated issue till date opens multiple possibilities for objective historical assessment. Did the tortures of Cellular Jail break his spirit? Of course they did, as they naturally would of anyone in those circumstances, and more so as a young man who was in his late twenties. And Vinayak himself has mentioned in his memoir the many times when his spirit succumbed and he contemplated suicide. But did this breakdown lead him to become a British stooge? The answer to that would be an assertive no. Historical evidences, rather than his hagiographers, would bail him out on this important and vexing question.

In Craddock's report that he wrote on board the S.S. *Maharaja* during his return voyage to India from the Andamans, he details the interviews he had with all the prisoners. He dismisses the articles in the *Bengalee*, which, according to him, represented the political prisoners 'as mistaken patriots, brutally treated as ordinary criminals and goaded by that treatment into suicide and madness. All this, of course, was absolute nonsense. Under the late superintendent Colonel Browning, the treatment meted out to them was, if anything, rather weak.'<sup>9</sup> Craddock clearly mentions that from his conversation with Vinayak it was evident to him that 'he cannot be said to express any regret or repentance' for whatever he did. But he had changed his views nonetheless and had mentioned that 'the hopeless condition of Indians in 1906–1907 was his excuse for entering upon a conspiracy'. But when the Government of India had begun to show a conciliatory approach in the way of reforms in councils, education and so forth, 'the case for a revolutionary action had disappeared. Mercy to him would, he said, have a calming effect upon those who still conspire against British rule, and he was willing to send an open letter to the native press explaining his change of views'. Craddock mentions that he was pressed to give him some assurance or promise, which he obviously could not.

Craddock opined that it was ‘quite impossible to give him any liberty here, and I think he would escape from any Indian jail. So important a leader is he that the European section of the Indian anarchists would plot for his escape which would before long be organized. If he were allowed outside the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, his escape would be certain. His friends could easily charter a steamer to lie off one of the islands and a little money distributed locally would do the rest.’ That even for a man like Vinayak it would not be possible to keep him on indefinite hard labour. ‘In his case,’ noted Craddock, ‘the punitive requirements would have been satisfied after a few years’ hard labour and the remainder of his term would not be of the nature of a punishment for his crime but of mere incarceration, because he would be dangerous to the community outside.’ He concluded his observations regarding Vinayak quite prophetically by mentioning that ‘the degree to which he was dangerous or not, depended quite as much upon circumstances outside as upon his own conduct in prison, and that no one could say what those circumstances would be 10, 15, or 20 years hence’.<sup>10</sup>

Vinayak’s jail history<sup>11</sup> immediately after Craddock’s departure indicates that in less than a month, on 16 December 1913, he once again undertook a strike from work and was punished with a month’s solitary confinement without any work or books. He was thereafter assigned the task of rope making. A few months later, on 8 June 1914, he once again refused to work. As a result, he was punished with seven days of standing handcuffed. Within a day of the punishment being completed, on 16 June 1914, he went back on his strike. For this insolence, he was put in chains for four months. This did not temper him, and he continued his strike even on 18 June 1914. The authorities put him on ten days’ crossbar fetters. After Craddock’s departure, the increase in the number of punishment entries on his ticket certainly does not indicate the temperament of a man who was willing to cooperate with the British or become their stooge.

The treatment meted out to Vinayak was also discussed in the British Parliament.<sup>12</sup> On 23 June 1914, member of Parliament, Josiah C. Wedgewood, asked the government in the House of Commons why they

were not entertaining the petitions for better treatment of the man while those committed on exactly similar offences in Ireland were allowed to go absolutely scot-free. In reply, the government through C. Roberts stated that there were no grounds to think that Vinayak had committed any offences violating prison discipline leading to temporary imposition of chains. This was only an exceptional punishment and not a norm. The Secretary of State contended that there was no reason to exercise special clemency towards a man convicted by the high court for abetment of the murder of Jackson.

In his memoir, Vinayak mentions that he had little hope of anything coming from the meeting with Craddock.

By then Nani Gopal's indefinite fast had lasted for a month and a half and he had been reduced to skin and bones. Despite his fast he was kept standing for a week in chains and fetters. This was when Vinayak and the others undertook the series of work strikes to add momentum to the non-cooperation in the jail. At this time, he was also expecting a letter from India, but this was kept away from him. Vinayak later learnt that this was because it contained some 'objectionable matter'. Vinayak intensified his strike at being refused the one letter he received from home. The so-called objectionable content in the letter were the comments of James Keir Hardie, the Scottish socialist, politician, trade-unionist and the founder of the Labour Party. In the House of Commons, he had criticized the government for Vinayak's imprisonment in the Andamans. The gist of his criticism was that while in Ireland the government had taken no steps against those who threatened open rebellion or raised armies, it was grossly unjust that a man like Savarkar was sentenced to fifty years of transportation for distributing pistols. He had suggested that as political prisoners, they should be granted all privileges of first-class convicts as was the norm in England. If this was barred, they should be categorized as ordinary prisoners along with its benefits. Barrie kept this letter from Vinayak so that the support from Britain would not lead him to intensify the strike.

Meanwhile, Nani Gopal's condition was becoming precarious; he had to be saved at any cost. Vinayak decided to take the lead. He mentions that he had always been against the suicidal policy of hunger strikes because it was ruinous to both the individual and the cause. While most of the strikers were convinced, Nani was a tough nut to crack. Finally, Vinayak sent word that he too had begun a fast unto death and would not break his fast until Nani gave up his stubbornness. Vinayak was taken to Nani's cell and he whispered in his ear, 'Do not die like this. If you must die, die fighting like a hero. Kill your enemy and then leave this world.' From thereon, all political prisoners followed Vinayak's dictum and had their meals twice a day and ate plenty of coconuts. His mantra to them was, 'Take as much food from them, grow fat, and don't do any work!' <sup>13</sup>

Following the unrest, the government sent a notification about the changes they had proposed at Cellular Jail. All prisoners sentenced to a term short of life transportation were to be sent back to Indian jails, where remission of their sentence would be considered. Prisoners on life transportation would be retained at Cellular Jail for fourteen years, after which, if there was proof of good conduct, they would be put on light labour. During these fourteen years, the prisoner would be given decent food and clean clothes. After completion of five years of incarceration, those transported for life could cook their own food and would be given a monthly pocket allowance of twelve annas to a rupee each. There was a wave of relief and jubilation among the harried souls. The years of struggle had finally borne fruit.

Gradually, some of the political prisoners on shorter terms began to leave the prison. They promised that upon reaching India they would ensure wide publicity of the jail's conditions and the suffering their compatriots were enduring in prison. Very few term convicts and those transported for life, including the Savarkar brothers, remained. Vinayak continued his efforts at educating convicts in the ideals of social service and national duty. Those trained by Vinayak, who were released or sent to Indian jails, started similar groups to carry the flame of knowledge that they had gained under him. They got locals, traders and others to subscribe

to an education fund they created and helped the general public acquaint itself with the country's political situation. At Cellular Jail, Vinayak campaigned and secured the provision of slates, pencils and books for prisoners.

Despite Barrie's opposition and threats to burn the books, Vinayak managed to obtain the superintendent's concurrence and started a library which stocked books in English, Punjabi, Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit. Prisoners themselves contributed a part of the allowance they had begun to receive towards the purchase of the books. The books included those on constitutional history, politics, economics and the science of governance that Vinayak recommended. Magazines like *Modern Review* and the *Indian Review* also found their way here after much consideration of the chief commissioner. With a collection of more than 2000 books, the Cellular Jail library soon became the model for all Indian jails. Some of the prized possessions included the Bengali biographies of social reformers and intellectuals such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the works of poet Rabindranath Tagore, Sanskrit editions of the Mahabharata, Ramayana and the Yoga Vasistha. Books on religion and philosophy, the lives and teachings of saints like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda had pride of place on its shelves. The works of several Marathi poets from saint Dnyaneshwar to Moropant were part of the collection. The English books made for an eclectic collection—Herbert Spencer's volumes on synthetic philosophy, including his *First Principles* and *Sociology and Ethics* ; all the works of John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, Aldous Huxley, William Tyndale and Ernst Haeckel; the writings of Thomas Carlyle and R.W. Emerson; works of historians like Thomas Babington Macaulay and Edward Gibbon; and poets like William Shakespeare, John Milton and Alexander Pope. It had John Abbott's *Life of Napoleon* , the biographies of Bismarck, Garibaldi and Mazzini, with the latter's complete works; novels from Charles Dickens to Leo Tolstoy; and the works of Peter Kropotkin. The library also had English writings of Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha; works of the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke; and of the German philosopher



Friedrich Nietzsche. Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics* and Bluntschli's *Theory of the State* as well as Rousseau's *Social Contract*. From a decrepit hell of torture under the unlettered Barrie, the jail had suddenly transformed into a temple of knowledge. Except for the liberal superintendent, everyone in the jail, from Barrie downwards, viewed the library with deep suspicion.

Thus, gradually, by 1914–15 winds of change began to blow through the morbid jail. They were allowed to cook their own food and got clean and well-cooked food to eat. Some of them were called upon to work in the printing press, the library, and for drawing maps. Each of them also earned about Rs 10 a month from such work, which was a huge blessing for those who had seen no money for so long.

While these brought little benefits to Vinayak, he was happy to see his friends leading a better life now. Soon Wamanrao Joshi and Babarao were transferred to the kitchen for cooking duties. Vinayak remained in the same solitary cell—block number 7—and did the same work. Barrie was clear that he was the 'father of unrest in the Andamans' and hence need not be shown any mercy.

Vinayak was content with getting some time to read in the library. There was not a single book that he left unread. He finished the ten principal Upanishads, the Yoga Vasistha, Vedanta, the Bhagavadgita, the Bible and the works of Sanskrit poet and playwright Kalidasa. He made others read books and also make summaries of them. Gradually, they began to have Sunday meetings, which were book discussions on whatever they had read. Vinayak conducted classes for the prisoners and taught them various subjects. Many revolutionaries who had no theoretical or intellectual background benefited from these sessions. They were termed by Vinayak as graduates of his 'Nalanda Vihar'—reminiscent of that ancient seat of learning, Nalanda University.

One of Vinayak's favourite books was *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. He wanted to study the Quran as well and began with the English, and later the Bengali version. Not satisfied by it, he asked a Muslim friend to help him with the original. After washing his hands and

feet, Vinayak would sit reverentially to read the scripture, page by page, verse by verse, with his companion, who read the suras (verses) and translated them into Hindi.

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Meanwhile, by mid-1914, unrest was brewing in Europe. What began as a conflict between Austria–Hungary and Serbia, leading to the assassination of the Austrian archduke, Franz Ferdinand, at Sarajevo, soon mushroomed into a conflict that gripped all Europe and the world in four years of strategic stalemate and unprecedented butchery. The conflagration pitted the Central Powers (Germany, Austria–Hungary and Turkey) against the Allies (France, Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan and later the United States of America in 1917) into one of the greatest watersheds of twentieth-century geopolitical history. It led to the fall of four imperial dynasties (Germany, Russia, Austria–Hungary and Turkey) and brought in its wake the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, destabilizing all Europe. It also sowed the seeds for a larger and more catastrophic conflict on the world stage.

With Britain's entry into the First World War, all her colonies, including India, had no option but to be dragged into this conflict. Around 5 August 1914, the British War Council ratified the involvement of the British Indian Army and Indian soldiers into this conflict. The Indian Army had already been employed in several wars in China, Egypt, Sudan, Perak (in Malaysia) and Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia). However, Indians were not employed in conflicts involving 'white enemies', such as the Boer Wars,<sup>14</sup> largely due to a racial strategy. It was rather unthinkable that the 'black Indian' should be seen hacking a 'white European' of any nationality, as that would embolden him to do similar things with his colonial masters back home. The horrors of 1857 had simply not left the British Indian government it seemed. Yet, as the conflict increased with every passing day, the dire necessity for soldiers made Britain disregard this policy of racial hierarchy in the army.

By the winter of 1914, Indian troops were at the western front and fought at the first Battle of Ypres. They were deployed as reinforcements in the battlefields of Europe and fought in most theatres of the war, including Gallipoli and North and East Africa and Mesopotamia. An estimated total of 1,215,318 soldiers were sent abroad to all the war zones—Mesopotamia, Egypt, France, East Africa, Gallipoli, Salonica, Aden and the Persian Gulf. Nearly 1.5 million volunteered to fight. About 47,746 were classed as killed or missing, with about 65,000 wounded. More than 101,439 casualties of Indian soldiers were reported. In addition, £3.5 million was paid by India as ‘war gratuities’ of British officers and men of the normal garrisons of India. A further sum of £13.1 million was paid from Indian revenues for the war. In cash and kind an estimate of £146.2 million was India’s gigantic contribution to Britain in this effort—something that is valued at £50 billion, or even higher, today! <sup>15</sup>

The princely states and the Indian political bourgeoisie lapped this up as an opportunity driven by different motives. For the Indian princes who were virtually under British thralldom, it was yet another opportunity to ingratiate themselves to their colonial masters. Apart from ‘The Imperial Service Troops’ organized by the princely states and put in the service of Viceroy Lord Hardinge, assistance in kind also came in large quantities as did generous grants of money from the maharajas of Mysore, Jodhpur, Gwalior and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Food, clothes, ambulances, horses, labourers and motorcars were donated. The outpouring of Indian support overwhelmed even the British. It was largely believed by many that the moment Britain got into trouble, the whole of India would burst into a blaze of rebellion, more so given the efforts of the Germans to stir and support the anti-British unrest in India.

However, an irksome communal issue got intertwined with the war efforts with the Ottoman Empire of Turkey joining its forces with Germany against the British by end October 1914. The sultans of the Ottoman Empire claimed the highest position in Islam, that of the caliphate—an Islamic kingdom under the caliph, or Khalifah, the politico-religious successor of Prophet Muhammad himself and a leader of the

entire ummah, or global Muslim community. Caliphates such as the Rashidun, the Umayyad and the Abbasid had existed in medieval times. The Ottoman Empire claimed its stake as the fourth caliphate in 1517 and took control over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Such an exalted religious and political figure was naturally held in great reverence by Muslims of South Asia too. The British feared that the large contingent of Muslim soldiers in the army would not support them in this war against their Khalifah. The fear of desertion by the troops, or even jihad, if forced to fight against their Turkish 'brethren' constantly plagued the British. To assuage these fears, several Muslim leaders and princes had to publicly seek complete loyalty from the Muslim subjects and soldiers towards the British war efforts.

Along with the princely states, the nationalists of the time too pledged their support for Britain's war efforts. These were driven by their calculation that unstinted support during a time of crisis might motivate Britain to speedily grant more concessions to their demands after the War. Annie Besant and Tilak, who dominated the national political scene, threw their might behind this popular sentiment. The Indian National Congress openly supported Britain during this crucial period. When war broke out, Gandhi was in England, where he began organizing a medical corps similar to the force he had led in aid of the British during the Boer War. In a circular dated 22 September 1914, he called for recruitment to his Field Ambulance Training Corps.<sup>16</sup> Several Indians served in hospitals in Southampton and Brighton, and Gandhi himself, aided by his wife Kasturba, took nursing classes. But he soon fell ill with pleurisy and returned to India by January 1915.

Gandhi offered unconditional support to the British efforts right from the beginning. He strongly believed that it was not a good time to embarrass Britain or take advantage of her troubled situation to further the Indian liberation cause. 'England's need,' he had said, 'should not be turned into our opportunity and that it was more becoming and far-sighted not to press our demands while the war lasted.'<sup>17</sup> On his return to India, he helped expand the recruitment bases for the British Indian Army from

places like Gujarat that did not have the so-called traditional martial races. The apostle of non-violence was marching from village to village in 1918 in the most interior of villages of his home province, addressing mass gatherings in recruitment centres, enlisting people for the War.

Meanwhile, far away from all the action, in Cellular Jail, Vinayak was keeping a close watch on the developments despite the inadequate information available to most prisoners. Interestingly, being a keen student of international politics, Vinayak had in fact prophesied in 1910 about the outbreak of a war in Europe between Britain and Germany within the next six years. His views had been published in an article written for the first edition of the *Talwar*. Virendranath Chattopadhyay's wife, Agnes Medley, mentioned Vinayak's prophecy in a speech she delivered to Chinese students in 1927. Lala Lajpat Rai published her speech, which also traced the Indian revolutionary movement. Vinayak had translated the speech into Marathi and that too was published in *Dainik Maratha*.<sup>18</sup> In 1910, Vinayak had rationalized that such a global war would be a golden opportunity for Indians to train themselves militarily and also have their demands met from a weakened Britain. He was disappointed that when war broke out they 'were prisoners in the Andamans, and as such helpless to make any use of it as we had planned it to do in the long past'.<sup>19</sup>

Even as he was trying to strategize how the events could be utilized to India's advantage came the news of Turkey's entry into the war. Vinayak was aware of the dangers that came in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's participation in the war and the communal polarization that it would bring with it. He therefore decided to change the strategy of wanting to upset Britain's applecart, to one where large-scale recruitment to the army was made to help 'stave off the invasion of India from the North by the forces of Afghanistan and Turkey'.<sup>20</sup> Vinayak writes:

When I learnt that Turkey had gone over to Germany in that war, I had to change the plans I had made to take advantage of that war for the freedom of India. The siding of Turkey with Germany, as against England, roused all my suspicions about Pan-Islamism and I scented in that move a future danger to India. I discovered that Turkey in this war had made it possible for Germany to stretch her long arm to India and

create a critical situation in India itself. This was, indeed, a circumstance favourable to my designs. For then England was bound to grant India all the rights that she would demand, or India herself could wrest them as the result of the exhaustion of England and Germany both, battered as they would be in this terrible combat between two mighty foes, not unlike the fight of two powerful elephants joined in life-and-death struggle with each other. Broken, battered, bleeding and exhausted they will lie on the field with victory to neither, and with full advantage to others who knew to profit by the situation. But I also feared that in this grim struggle between two mighty powers, the Muslims in India might find their devil's opportunity to invite the Muslim hordes from the North to ravage India and to conquer it, instigated in that effort by the machinations in Russia. Thinking calmly over all these near and remote consequences of the war, I settled my own line of action, and, as the beginning of it, I resolved to send a long letter on the subject to the Government of India. <sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, in his petition submitted to the chief commissioner of Andaman Islands in October 1914, Vinayak 'rejoiced to see the volunteering' efforts and hence offered to 'volunteer to do any service in the present War, that the Indian government think fit to demand'. In the same petition, he also requested a general release of 'all those prisoners who had been convicted for committing political offences in India'. This was being done in many countries, and also in Ireland. He believed that such a step by the Indian government during a time as crucial as this would help secure the loyalty and love of many Indians, several of whom had taken up the armed route like himself. Subtly hinting at the racial hierarchy that was prevalent in letting Indians fight Europeans, Vinayak stated that 'a thing which one has a right to protect is a thing in which one feels a sense of ownership; and fighting side by side with the other citizens of the Empire, the rising generation of India is sure to feel a sense of equality and therefore of a sincere loyalty to the same'. He concluded his petition by assuaging government fears on such a proposal from his end: 'If the Government suspect that my real intention in writing all this is only to secure my release, then I beg to submit let me not be released at all, with my exception let all the rest be released, let the volunteer movement go on—and I will rejoice in that as if myself was allowed to play an active part.' <sup>22</sup>

Quite expectedly, the government in their response dated 1 December 1914 rejected his proposals.<sup>23</sup> Vinayak, however, continued to contribute articles and poems to a magazine in Port Blair (that eventually never saw the light of day) that was planning to raise funds for the war.

Meanwhile, on the night of 22 September 1914, the German cruise ship, SMS *Emden*, under the command of Karl Friedrich Max von Müller, silently entered the dark waters of the Bay of Bengal. The 3600-tonne *Emden* was on a mission to sink commercial ships. The port of Madras was unguarded, as the British had not expected the war to spill over to Indian shores. Armed with twenty-two guns, the ship dropped anchor barely 2500 metres from the harbour. A volley of shots from the German cruise ship struck the tankers of the Burma Oil Company. In no time, two giant tankers—packed with 5000 tonnes of kerosene oil—went up in flames in the night sky. Next, several buildings were hit—notably, the Madras High Court, the Port Trust, the Boat House of the Madras Sailing Club and the facade of the new National Bank of India. In an attack that lasted for over thirty minutes, with about 130 shells fired from the *Emden*, a merchant ship on the harbour was struck, five sailors died and thirteen were injured. By the time retaliation could be mobilized, the *Emden* had sailed away, unharmed by the nine shells fired at it.

There was panic all over Port Blair as intelligence seemed to suggest a similar attack on its shores soon. Never were the islands so militarily unprepared for an onslaught. Within a few days, British warships were sailing on the seas around the Andamans. French submarines and Russian Dreadnoughts touched down at Port Blair. Wireless messages from the islands to Calcutta asking for replenishments of money, arms and rations were intercepted by the *Emden* that even looted a money-laden ship on its way back to the Andamans. For months there could be no replenishments from Calcutta, Rangoon or Madras. The Cellular Jail authorities feared that in the event of such an attack by the German-aided Indian revolutionaries, all hell would break loose and many of the convicts would turn against them.

The naval officers on board the British and Allied warships occasionally visited the Cellular Jail too. The captain of a Russian submarine, on his visit to the jail, had a long talk with Vinayak and told him that Europe still remembered that he was a prisoner in the Andamans. The rumour was that the *Emden* was still hovering around the place to level its attack on the Andamans. Port Blair was not of extreme importance, so why then, Vinayak wondered, was it on the radar of attack.

He later received a message that Abhinav Bharat and other revolutionary societies in Europe had contacted the Kaiser of Germany and arranged for a submarine to sail to Port Blair, bombard the jail and release the political prisoners, particularly Vinayak. This is further substantiated in a British government note dated 9 January 1918, which mentioned that ‘he [Vinayak] was one of those Andaman prisoners specially named as to be freed and used in the German plot for an attack on Bengal in December 1915’.<sup>24</sup> The revolutionaries had thereafter planned to rush into Burma and create a violent armed revolution in India, through Burma and Bengal. The Sedition Committee Report of 1918<sup>25</sup> also validated these efforts of the revolutionaries.

Indian revolutionaries such as Lala Har Dayal, Taraknath Das, Mahomed Barkatullah, Chandra Kanta Chakrabarti, Heramba Lal Gupta, Virendranath Chattopadhyay, Dr Moreshwar Govindarao Prabhakar, Dr Abdul Hafiz, Dr Chempakaraman Pillai, Bhupendra Nath Dutt, M.P. Tirumala Acharya, and Jodh Singh Mahajan, among several others, came together to form the Indian National Party in Zurich. They had attached themselves to the German general staff, had their headquarters at 28, Weilandstrasse, Charlottenburg, and had planned a major strike on India.<sup>26</sup> These revolutionaries had actually established quasi-embassies of ‘Independent India’ in Germany, and Heramba Lal Gupta was the Indian representative there.

All the revolutionaries were either already in Germany or America when war broke out. Only two individuals—Kunwar Mahendra Pratap Singh and Harish Chandra—moved from India to join their efforts. Kunwar Pratap was born in a princely family of Mursan in the United



Provinces. He was twenty-eight when the war broke out. Leaving India on the pretext of recovering from ill health and for studying the troubled circumstances of the war, Kunwar Pratap made his way to Europe on 12 December 1914. His secretary, Harish Chandra, joined him a week later. In Europe, he met Har Dayal and Virendranath Chattopadhyay; the latter had formed the 'Berlin Committee' (*Deutscher Verein der Freunde Indiens*) or Indian Independence Party to galvanize the Indian liberation efforts. They took Pratap to meet the Kaiser who decorated him with the 'Order of the Red Eagle'.

Pratap was married into the royal family of Jind and given his influence over the border states of Jind, Patiala and Nabha, the Germans and the revolutionaries knew that this could well be a frontier for invasion into British India. He also established connections with Lenin in Russia. A year later, on 1 December 1915, Kunwar Pratap established the first Provisional Government of India at Kabul as a government-in-exile of Free Hindustan with himself as the president. Barkatullah was named the prime minister and Maulvi Abaidullah Sindhi, the home minister. They declared a united jihad against the British. Kunwar Pratap was the figurehead, rallying behind whom Chattopadhyay carried out all the planning and operations.

It is worthwhile to pause and mention the keen interest the Germans took in Indian affairs right from 1907 onward. Of course, on the one hand, this was largely due to the activities of the Indian revolutionaries across Europe. But alongside, German support for anti-British nationalists had become a standard response against Britain by the time of the outbreak of the war. They supported Irish nationalists in an effort to create a revolt that would draw Irishmen from the British ranks, causing Britain to send her vast troops to Ireland instead of the Western Front. Cooperation with Sir Roger Casement in Germany to recruit from Irish Prisoners of War (POWs), attempts to deliver German guns to Irish rebels in Ireland and the German involvement in the Easter Rising of 1916, were all efforts driven by this very intention.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Germany supported the Boer Revolt in South Africa. German supplies to Boer ensured that the British would not invade German South-

west Africa until the second year of the war. Colonel Manie Maritz controlled the Anglo-Afrikaner forces in north-west South Africa and ignored orders to invade German territory. He also aided German units who were probing British positions along the border by not reporting German incursions across the Orange river. Germany supported the production of anti-British literature, committing of political assassinations in Britain and her allies, and attempted to endanger lines of communication through the Suez Canal.<sup>28</sup> The Indian revolutionaries in Europe and America assisted them in these efforts.

Germany's support to the Muslim resistance against Britain had similar ends, with them supporting Egyptian nationalists and the Turkish sultan's call for a jihad against Britain. German operatives in the Middle East even claimed that Kaiser Wilhelm II, the German emperor (who was the leader of a mainly Lutheran–Catholic empire) had become a Muslim and was therefore the rightful ally against Britain. However, the British were more effective than the Germans in whipping up Arab nationalism by harnessing Arab hatred for the Ottoman Turks, as the events surrounding 'Lawrence of Arabia' showed.<sup>29</sup> While Britain and her allies used Czech, Polish, Arab, Serb and other nationalists against the Central Powers, Germany used Indian, Egyptian, Boer and other revolutionaries against Britain.

It was in these transnational wars of competitive imperialism that the Indian revolutionaries operated, trying to exploit these inherent fault lines to India's advantage. On the eve of the First World War, in July 1914, the Kaiser Wilhelm II wrote: 'Our consuls in Turkey and India . . . must inflame the whole Mohammedan world to wild revolt . . . for if we are to be bled to death, at least England shall lose India.'<sup>30</sup> He was echoing his own statements of 1908 where he had said: 'The British should be aware that war with Germany would mean the loss of India and thus the loss of their world position.'<sup>31</sup> The Germans had always envied India's important position in the grand imperial vision of the British Empire. They keenly watched the activities of the Indian revolutionaries and supported them when they were persecuted by the British government.

Germans repeatedly orchestrated major attempts to ship weapons to India via the American Ghadr network. The Ghadr movement that aimed to create disaffection among Sikhs in America and get them to return to India to raise an insurrection in the Punjab had little to do with Germany initially. However, with time, Har Dayal's Ghadr Party and the Germans worked closely. Germany made attempts to attack India by sea using the nearest sea base of the Dutch East Indies and by land via Siam (Thailand), Persia and Afghanistan. The German consul in Shanghai was in charge of operations in the Far East and their active agencies were in Siam and Batavia (Java).

In April 1914, the ship *Komagata Maru* sailed with German arms and 376 men from San Francisco but was seized by British authorities once it reached Calcutta. A similar attempt was made the following month with the *Tosa Maru*, but it failed. SMS *Emden* was defeated and sunk at the Battle of Cocos in November 1914 by the light cruiser of the Royal Australian Navy HMAS *Sydney*. The crew was arrested and brought to Singapore. After this, the Singapore Naval Mutiny broke out in January 1915. This too was successfully suppressed by the French, British, Russian and Japanese warships.

In November 1914, Ghadr revolutionaries Satyendra Sen and Vishnu Ganesh Pingley arrived in the Bay of Bengal from America via SS *Salamis* and with German aid they were to instigate armed rebellion on the eastern front in Bengal and Burma. These are just a few examples of the numerous efforts that the revolutionaries had embarked upon in various parts of India with the help of the Central Powers.

In January 1915, dual attempts to attack British India were made with two ships, *Annie Larson* and SS *Maverick*. The motive was to ship 'eleven carloads' of arms at a cost of \$140,000 from the coast of Mexico. The *Maverick* finally entered Indian waters by September after months of being lost at sea. It was to attack the Sundarbans. From here, revolutionaries in India such as Rash Behari Bose and Jatindranath Mukherjee (famously known as Bagha Jatin) were to assist the unrest in the United Provinces, the Punjab and Bengal. Jatin belonged to the

Jugantar revolutionary group of Bengal. They armed themselves with fifty Mauser pistols and 46,000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>32</sup> Jatin sent one of his close associates, Narendranath Bhattacharya (later famous as M.N. Roy), to Batavia on the instructions of Virendranath Chattopadhyay to finalize the deal with the German consul on financial and arms assistance. However, the British got wind of the plan and in a bloody ambush at Balasore in Orissa where Jatin was stationed, liquidated him in September 1915. The SS *Maverick* was captured by the Dutch authorities. The five Indians on board were arrested and sentenced to death.<sup>33</sup>

Following these failures, two more attempts were made: In June 1915, the Holland–American steamship, *Djember*, carrying 7300 rifles was captured by the British, and the similarly well-stocked *Henry S.* was captured the following month en route to Manila.<sup>34</sup> Undeterred, Rash Behari Bose coordinated a third armed ship to attack the Andamans in December 1915. This attack was to free all the political prisoners in the Andamans and lead them to Burma, while two other warships were to follow suit to carry out strikes. The ship was, however, sunk in the Andamans by the British heavy cruiser HMS *Cornwall*.<sup>35</sup>

On the land front, the ‘Siam Project’ and the ‘Batavia Plan’ that the Ghadr Party in San Francisco and the Germans executed in collaboration was among the most crucial plans in this troubled period.<sup>36</sup> The details of these emerged through two people later arrested by the British. They were a European employed by the German secret service and held in Singapore by end July 1915 (mysteriously referred to as ‘X’) and a Punjabi arrested in Bangkok by end August 1915 (christened ‘Z’). Their idea was to organize 10,000 men on the Burma–Siam frontier and overrun Burma and then the whole of India. A German officer, George Paul Boehm, who was to train these armed men was arrested in Singapore by the British on 27 September 1915. One of the plans that ‘X’ revealed was that the Germans wanted to take over the Andaman Islands. An agent was to visit the islands as a merchant, land arms that were supplied by German sources, destroy the wireless systems, contact the revolutionaries at the Cellular Jail, free them and flee to Siam and then Rangoon. From ‘X’ was recovered the list

of political prisoners that this group wished to free—on top of the list were the Savarkar brothers and members of the Maniktala Case. The list, he said, was written out for him by one Dr Haidar in Berlin, though the handwriting seemed to match that of revolutionary Bhupendra Nath Dutt. ‘X’ had a complete set of photographs of the jail and information on the number of officials, troops, police and warders across the Andaman settlements. This could not have been possible but for communication from someone from within the Cellular Jail who had passed on vital information to the revolutionaries abroad. The suspicion of the authorities naturally fell on Vinayak. Strict surveillance was placed on Vinayak and his movements within the jail, and the entire complex became an armed fortress. Vinayak writes about these turbulent times:

That our compatriots in India should so remember us, so cherish our memory, when we lay as prisoners in the Andamans and dead to the world without, filled our hearts with gratitude to them. And even in that dark dungeon of a prison-house, in the conditions of utter despair and horrid physical and mental torture, this living memory about us gave us hope and courage, which I feel it my duty to record in these pages. Every day we were in fear that a fresh charge of sedition and high treason might be trumped up against us as the result of a systematic campaign of misrepresentation going on against us during these days of war . . . But even in this daily suspense and anxiety, we felt gratified that the war had made the Indian question an issue of international importance. This world-earthquake was sure to fructify our hopes about India; that the desert of India would smile again like paradise—thoughts like these elated us; but a reaction also came that the war may end in turning the whole world into a desert with India included in it. <sup>37</sup>

For many reasons the efforts of the revolutionaries and the Germans failed in achieving its objectives. The attitude of friendly neutrality adopted by the Government of Siam, the vigilance demonstrated by the Government of Burma, and the alacrity of the military police at Maymyo were some of the main causes for the failures of the combined plots of the Ghadr Party and the Germans. While not lacking in courage, many of them were badly organized and coordinated. In both Siam and Batavia, they suffered from handicaps related to communication and control. The Sedition Committee Report states this tersely: ‘Our examination of the German arms schemes

suggests that the revolutionaries concerned were far too sanguine and that the Germans with whom they got in touch were very ignorant of the movement of which they attempted to take advantage.’<sup>38</sup>

With repeated failure, German interest in India slowly began to wane. Most of the revolutionaries were tried and sentenced to life transportation to Mandalay or given term convictions. Despite these reverses, the political prisoners of Cellular Jail were full of high hopes about the impending escape that they could undertake. However, yet another attempt to liberate Vinayak and also cause a cataclysmic change in Indian polity failed to fructify.

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In the dark confines of Port Blair’s Cellular Jail, we see a gradual metamorphosis of Vinayak from a young, brash radical revolutionary to a more sober and strategic planner, whose focus was shifting towards an organization of Hindu society. One of the important causes for this was his experience at jail. Right from his early days here, and much before the creation of the library, Vinayak noticed that the Muslim warders and jamadars forbade Hindu prisoners from reading their scriptures. They would look at the pictures in some of the books, including the Ramayana of Tulsidas, and comment that it was utterly indecent and deemed it their religious duty to disperse the gathering that read such books. After petitioning higher officials, the Hindu prisoners managed to get permission to keep their religious books. Hindus received few or no religious holidays, but the same provision was readily made for Muslim prisoners.<sup>39</sup>

But the matter, Vinayak realized, went beyond just this partial treatment. Several Hindu prisoners who were deported to the Andamans were being converted to Islam and began assuming Muslim names. As the ‘chalans’ began to reach the jail, simple and young Hindu prisoners would be segregated and subjected to extreme physical torture and labour by Muslim jamadars. With inducements of sweets and tobacco and less

labour, the young lads would not mind switching faiths if that meant a more comfortable prison life. Immediately, they would be taken over to the other side, and made to dine with Muslim prisoners.<sup>40</sup> The jail had distinct kitchens for Hindus and Muslims, and separate cooks as well. They were made to eat separately too. All it took to ‘convert’ someone was to make the prisoner eat with fellow Muslims, where they ‘were served Mahomedan food’<sup>41</sup> (possibly meaning beef). That would ensure their complete ban from their Hindu brethren who would thereafter refuse to accept them. They would be quickly given Muslim names and that would complete the so-called conversion process. It involved no recital of the Quran, offering of the namaz, or the usual practice of circumcision that accompanied conversions. These prisoners would register their names as Muslims and, with time, it would stick. Gradually, they would pick up the religious rituals of Islam and become full-fledged Muslims. The fact that there was no return, accompanied by fierce opposition and ostracism from his original community, left the neo-convert with no option but to carry on with the faith he had been induced into. The jamadar had very little to do; the Hindus themselves ensured with their obdurate and narrow-minded attitude that the convert stayed on in his new religion.<sup>42</sup>

After the 1857 War of Independence, the British decided not to interfere too much in the religious affairs of Indians. While Christian missionaries converted convicts in other jails, Vinayak notes that in the Andamans they came, offered a prayer, but never made overt attempts at conversion. But here the thralldom of the Pathan jamadars and the incentive of less torture, if they complied, forced many Hindus towards conversion. ‘Every week or fortnight,’ notes Vinayak, ‘I had seen one Hindu prisoner at dinner sitting in the rank of his Mahomedan fellows. It was impossible for me to witness the scene. But I was only a prisoner here; what could I do to save them? I tried hard to infuriate the Hindu prisoners against this act of sacrilege. But one and all of them I found so callous. Each one of them used to say, “What is it to me?” and “What do I care?”’<sup>43</sup> Even the political prisoners who were already suffering found it futile to raise their voice against conversion, and that too spearheaded by their oppressive jamadars.

They were unwilling to support Vinayak in any opposition to such practices. They argued that Hinduism was better off without such people who were willing to pawn away their faiths due to fear of coercion and torture. Vinayak rationalized:

The individual whom you try to convert may be a wicked man, a sinner or a drunkard. But after deep thought you have learnt the social law that if you make him a Christian or a Mahomedan, by means fair or foul, and if you change his name, you are really adding to their strength. In course of time children come into his family and it grows. The children become Muslims and Christians by name, birth and association. And they turn out better than their parents and add in number to the well-to-do, educated, well-behaved number of Muslim citizens. And, in that proportion, the Hindu society loses its good members . . . <sup>44</sup> Inspired by this conviction, I taught the Hindu prisoners of our jail, and chiefly its political prisoners, to rescue the worst of Hindu prisoners from the grip of Islam, to save them from the coercion and blandishments of their Pathan jamadars. <sup>45</sup>

As early as 1913, within a year and a half of his arrival in the Andamans, Vinayak registered an official complaint against this coercive conversion. He stressed that he had no issue if an individual converted out of free will or change of heart. But the practice in the jail was clearly neither. Vinayak was harassed and attempts were made on his life too by the Pathans, including poisoning his food, and it was Babarao's alertness that averted the disaster. <sup>46</sup> In one instance, with the connivance of a jail warden, a small bottle of poison was smuggled into the cell to be mixed with Vinayak's food and served to him. But a sudden check by the superintendent petrified the smuggler and he did away with the bottle. Thus, rather fortuitously, Vinayak's life was saved on many occasions.

Several prisoners who had turned informants for the jail authorities actively aided these attempts to attack Vinayak and Babarao. One of the chief informants among the convicts was a man popularly called Aindowala Babu or the 'bespectacled gentleman'. He often made wild allegations against the Savarkars, including accusing Babarao of plotting a prison guard's murder. He had sickles and other weapons planted in Babarao's cell and then raised an alarm with Barrie that Babarao had gathered



weapons to have him killed. However, his machinations failed each time due to Babarao's watchfulness. He intercepted and read notes written in code language which were circulated by Ainewala Babu to avert any catastrophe befalling him or Vinayak. For supporting the anti-conversion drive, Babarao was once hit grievously on the head when he had just stepped out of his bath and suffered heavy bleeding.

The superintendent who arbitrated the conversion complaints candidly asked Vinayak why he could not reconvert them to Hinduism. Vinayak replied that Hinduism did not believe in the concept of conversion and hence it was not possible. But his thoughts immediately went to the efforts of Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–83) and the Arya Samaj.

Swami Dayanand had striven to revitalize Hinduism and return its religious practices back to its Vedic origins. He emphasized on the monotheistic and non-idolatrous aspects of Vedic Hinduism. He had also employed the tool of *shuddhi* (literally meaning 'purification') or the reconversion of former Hindus back into the fold. This practice had gained momentum only after his passing away.<sup>47</sup> Shuddhi ceremonies were held in various parts of Punjab and northern India. After Swami Dayanand, shuddhi gained momentum in the 1920s under Swami Shraddhanand of the Arya Samaj. Vinayak decided to utilize the same practice of shuddhi for the many converts. They were asked to bathe, put on new clothes, made to eat leaves of the sacred tulsi plant, hear and recite verses from the Bhagavadgita, and then read a chapter from the Ramayana of Tulsidas. This completed the simple reconversion process that ended with a distribution of sweets. They could get back their original Hindu names and, after a lot of convincing from Vinayak and others, to dining with their co-religionists.

But the opposition from the Hindu warders and the prisoners to Vinayak's 'blasphemous' act was fierce. They ridiculed him often as '*Bhangi* Babu' or someone who had lost his caste and become 'untouchable'. But none of this deterred Vinayak. He reasoned with them on the superfluous nature of their beliefs of 'pollution' based on the food one ate and how easy it had hence become for others to poach on their

fold, with something as meagre as tobacco or food. Slowly, the practice gained steam not only within the prison, but also among the convicts who went out for work or were released to Indian jails. The seeds of social reform, love for one's religion and protecting it against such avaricious attempts had thus been sown. In Vinayak's own words:

If the agitation in the Andamans . . . had only awakened the conscience of the Hindus to the possibility that a Mussalman can also be converted to Hinduism, I would have achieved a great deal. For up to that time the question that was always put to us was, 'A Hindu can become a Mussalman, no doubt; but how can a Mussalman be admitted into Hinduism?' Hundreds of Hindus had asked me that question and sincerely believed that there was no answer for it. But none put such a conundrum before us any longer. For the *Shuddhi* movement had shown that it could be done, and we had done it. The food touched or prepared by the Muslims could be eaten by the Hindu without tarring his stomach and making him lose his caste and religion. Hinduism was not so anaemic as that; and the Hindus in the Andamans had realized the fact, as they had not done it before. This was a great achievement of the *Shuddhi* movement in that part of the world. For there are in the so-called wise and liberty-loving Hindus of India bigoted champions of Hinduism who, seriously enough, still seek to confound us by the same conundrum. This awakening in the Andamans was not confined to the few but had spread all over the place and the roots of the new feeling had gone deep down into the soil of the Andamans. <sup>48</sup>

Vinayak advocated the cause for a larger Hindu *sangathan*, or unity, movement while in jail. He imagined a pan-India coalition of Indic faiths of all castes—Sikhs, Sanatanis (orthodox Hindus), Arya Samajis, Jains and Buddhists. While in England, he had arrived at this definition of what it meant to be 'Hindu'; it was not limited narrowly to those practising the religion that came to be known as Hinduism. But he did not get an opportunity to flesh out the contours of this idea. It was the conversion episodes at Cellular Jail that gave him an impetus to develop this thought. It also awakened in him the need to create unity among a community ridden with numerous factions, which had time and again proved to be its nemesis. A 'Hindu,' postulated Vinayak, was 'a man who recognizes our country as the land of his birth and religion.' Such a definition, he believed, was a way 'to prevent further divisions in our society, and to

consolidate the Hindus as one community of the people of India'.<sup>49</sup> He writes:

The salvation of man lies in dying in his own religion . . . We will no longer let any Hindu boy or girl, man or woman, however fallen they may be, pass into another religion, and we shall not fail to re-convert those whom you may have duped into embracing your faith . . . It is the duty of every Hindu to persuade a Hindu to remain a Hindu. It is a principle to be followed as vital to his community and culture for the preservation and progress of both.<sup>50</sup>

Vinayak's sangathan movement providentially got a boost in 1915 with the arrival of a large batch of deportees convicted in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case. The case represented the attempt by Sikh expatriates (who were part of the Ghadr Party) and Punjabis who led an armed rebellion against the British. One of them, Bhai Parmanand, had sailed to British Guiana as an Arya Samaj reformist. After a year, he set sail to the US, where for two years he attended pharmaceutical courses at Berkeley.<sup>51</sup> Here he became closely associated with Lala Har Dayal who had begun the Ghadr movement. He was to come back to India with about 5000 Ghadr volunteers and instigate rebellion in Peshawar and other parts of the North-West Frontier Province. But he was arrested and sentenced to death in 1915.

Viceroy Lord Hardinge commuted this to transportation for life and Bhai Parmanand was deported to the Andamans, along with seventy others who were convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. The arrival of these Sikhs prisoners gladdened Vinayak, who had always wanted to integrate the community into the freedom movement. Many of these revolutionaries expressed their deep reverence for Vinayak and had read his works. They told him how his literature was inspiring thousands of young men across continents to take up armed struggle. Vinayak was surprised to hear from some of them that the atrocities he faced at Cellular Jail were publicized in newspapers even in America. This had inspired some of them and made them feel guilty about not contributing to the struggle while one of them was suffering, yoked as a beast to an oil mill. This warmed Vinayak's

heart. His toil had inspired others to take up the path of revolution. He writes:

For whenever I turned the *kolu* in the solitude of my room and was done up by the exertion, I always used to console myself by the thought that I would bear it all, if the knowledge of it to the world outside were only to pour oil into the flames of discontent that I knew were spreading all over the country. But I was in despair about it. For how was the story of my hardships to reach the ears of those who were so far away from me? . . . But when my Sikh friend told me the story, I said to myself, 'Yes, I must bear it all, for it is never lost, it produces its effects in due time.' That is the only way that one can put fat in the fire and make it burn. An agitation succeeds finally on the strength of tenacity and patience of its sufferers. Here was the proof of it. Every drop of oil that fell into the vat below, as I turned the wheel that ground down and crushed the dried coconut-kernels in the rut and the well, was a spark that had kept blazing the sacred fire of discontent already aflame all over the country. Here was a clear evidence of that influence. <sup>52</sup>

The Punjabi and Sikh convicts were hardly the kind who would put up with Barrie's atrocities. Many a time, Barrie would even get slapped for showering obscene invectives. This would be followed by a fierce caning of the prisoners. Upheavals like these became commonplace.

Vinayak makes a veiled reference to the support that Bhai Parmanand gave to the shuddhi movement that he had embarked upon in prison. Being a staunch Arya Samaji himself, Parmanand understood the shuddhi philosophy. Much later, after his release from prison, like Vinayak, he too strove for the eradication of caste and a unification of Hindu society through the formation of the Jat Pat Todak (association to break the caste system) in 1922. Vinayak therefore declared that the shuddhi movement was a success and that it 'contributed greatly to the fusion of the people, and to minimise, if not altogether abolish, the distinctions among them, as Hindus, of province, caste and custom, and to their consolidation in these parts as one society'. <sup>53</sup>

Between 1915 and 1916, Vinayak's health deteriorated. The years of trials, jail sentences, emotional turbulence, physical hardships and unhealthy prison conditions took their toll eventually. His digestion was severely affected, and he suffered from perennial dysentery and fever. The

unpalatable prison food worsened the condition. As was the norm, he was hardly attended to medically and was made to work despite his failing health. When Babarao was permitted to cook his food in 1914, he would smuggle some out for his younger brother in coconut shells.

However, on 28 October 1916, Vinayak was ‘promoted’ to a second-class prisoner. This did not mean much, as he elaborated in a letter to Narayanrao:

You asked me in your last letter what facilities I had won by my promotion to class 2 in this prison. In the Andamans, a prisoner was usually put in class 2 after a term of five years and in class 1 after a period of ten years, when ticket was given to him to make an independent home for himself in the colony. Was I free to go out of prison? No. Was I free to do independent literary work? No. Was I free to talk with my brother or stay with him? No. Was I free from the daily routine of hard labour? No. Did they make me a warder; did they stop putting me in the lock up? No. Did they treat me better? No. Did they show me any respect? No. Did they give me freedom to write more than one letter home? No. Did they allow me to receive any parcel from home? No. All these concessions are made at the end of five years, to other prisoners in the jail. But to me, who is running my eighth year in this prison, none of these facilities are granted. What then is the meaning of the phrase that I am now in Class 2, you will ask me. To which my answer would be: I am in class 2 because I am in class 2.

Nothing more and nothing else. No better and no worse. <sup>54</sup>

In the same letter, Vinayak wondered why the Indian National Congress had adopted a steely silence when it came to political prisoners when the newspapers were calling for their release. Sitting in their own ‘spacious, airy and well-appointed pandal’ the Congress was fighting shy and was unwilling to even ‘pass a resolution of sympathy . . . they had not a tear to shed’. While their ‘hearts melted with pity’ and they passed a resolution to release prisoners interned in the war, who were anyway going to be released when the war ended, why was it that political prisoners never featured in the Congress’s scheme of things, he wondered. Postulating the reason for the laconic response from the Congress, Vinayak writes:

The members of the Indian National Congress were sticklers for prestige and tradition and were afraid of the rulers. And there was the rub. To talk about the interned is not so dangerous; but they would not utter a word about us who were revolutionaries. For

that would bring them into ill odour with the rulers, and injure their prestige with the Europeans. It is the duty of the Congress to be the spokesman of the people and not merely the mouthpiece of a few tall poppies among its members. That when so many newspapers and Conferences in the country had demanded the release of revolutionary political prisoners like us, the leaders of the Congress should speak not a word about them does not become [of] an institution or a body that calls itself national. The world expects the Indian National Congress to pass a resolution demanding the release of its own leaders; the world expects that it shall exert for its country and bring about the release of its political prisoners, as similar bodies in Ireland, South Africa and Austria had worked for their countrymen. That the Indian National Congress should do nothing of the kind is not creditable to her. We must compel the Congress to be bold and aggressive. If the elder leaders tremble in their shoes at this prospect, let them absent themselves from the Congress at the time she passes a resolution in our favour. Because a few men are cowards, the whole nation should not be allowed to bear the stigma of this guilty silence. <sup>55</sup>

During this time, one of the political prisoners, Bhan Singh, a Sikh convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, had a bitter argument with Barrie and his men. An enraged Barrie ordered his battering to the extent that the man vomited blood. Hearing his cries, the other revolutionaries from Punjab came to his cell to save him. They decided that they would go on a strike. Vinayak could not participate in the strike due to his ill health but he told them that he would guide them through the process and also help in presenting a memorandum on their behalf. More than a hundred prisoners joined this unprecedented strike. By then Vinayak had to be moved to the prison hospital. Here, he met Bhan Singh. The pounding he had been given had caused him irrevocable damage and he was vomiting blood ever so often. Finally, he succumbed to his injuries and died at the prison hospital. This sent shock waves through the prison. A sixty-year-old Sardar Sohan Singh and a young man from the Punjab, Prithvi Singh 'Azad', went on an indefinite hunger strike. They demanded that their statements about the real cause of Bhan Singh's death be recorded. Prithvi Singh carried on his fast for six long months, and even gave up clothes, like Nani Gopal had done. He was reduced to skin and bones. Vinayak, who was principally opposed to fasts unto death, had to convince him against such a suicidal measure and finally he gave up the fast. Many of

the prisoners began contracting tuberculosis that was rampant. To fast in such a circumstance was suicidal according to Vinayak. Prithvi Singh mentions about Vinayak's influence on him in jail:

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, whom I considered as my guru, wrote a long and stirring letter to me where he told me: 'You are losing control over your heart and mind, you have become so weak that there is no hope of survival. What is the use of losing your life like this? So leave this hunger strike.' I could not gather courage or words to reply to his letter. At this time a mosquito kept troubling me. I tried to squash it with my hands. But I was so weak that I could not even kill a mosquito. The message in Savarkar's letter then made sense to me about my uselessness. I could not even squash a mosquito due to my weakness, how then do I assume I can drive the British away? I took a small pencil and wrote back to him that I will only die in a natural way, and in no other way can I be killed. Thus ended my fast that lasted for 5 months and 5 days. <sup>56</sup>

The strikes eventually brought the authorities' attention to the unrest going on in jail. Though Barrie was not held to account for his inhuman treatment of Bhan Singh, he was severely reprimanded, and a departmental inquiry was instituted against him. He had been disgraced thoroughly and the government began to view him with suspicion given the repeated upheavals in the Andamans.

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The First World War was now entering its final stages. The Allied Powers emerged victorious. Monarchies collapsed, national borders were redrawn and Germany was parcelled among the victors. During the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the Big Four—Britain, France, Italy and the US—imposed their terms in a series of treaties. The War sowed the seeds of future conflict that was to erupt in a few decades on a larger scale.

Even as the War was coming to an end, the British government was contemplating reforms in the government and administration in India. Edwin Samuel Montagu, who became the Secretary of State for India in June 1917, put before the British cabinet a proposal for the gradual development of free institutions in India with a view to ultimately

introducing self-government. Lord Curzon, the controversial former Indian viceroy who attempted the Partition of Bengal and who was now a parliamentarian in the House of Lords, put a dissenting note to the effect that instead of too much emphasis on self-government, the need of the hour was to focus on increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration that would eventually lead to self-government. Towards the end of 1917, Montagu travelled to India to meet Lord Chelmsford, then viceroy of India, to ascertain his views on the proposed reforms of limited self-government. Montagu solicited views from different sections of Indians, including prominent political prisoners such as Vinayak, on the matter of reforms.

Accordingly, on 5 October 1917, Vinayak sent his petition to Montagu outlining his thoughts on the subject. He refers to his 1914 petition when Lord Hardinge had stated that it was 'impossible' to grant him any mercy. But things had substantially changed during the long years of the First World War. He stated that a new spirit had manifested itself in man, new visions and hopes were roused in nations and these had been articulated by their heads of state. In such a scenario, Vinayak hypothesized that neither India nor the British Empire could have remained unaffected by this great democratic upheaval in the world which meant that the old order of race domination was slowly giving way to one of cooperation and commonwealth. His justification for the marked change in circumstances were:

The nucleus of an Empire-Cabinet; the presence in it of the ministers of the colonies and two representatives though nominated, of India; the permission to be enrolled as volunteers to the Indian youth; the throwing open of Commissions in the army; the great speech of the Premier in which he declared that the supreme test of the British Statesmanship would depend on the extent to which it succeeds in making the millions of Indians feel—not a sense of dependence, but that of “real partnership”; and to crown it all the most important, definite, and determined declaration by the present Secretary of State, not only as to the goal but even as to its immediate, though partial, realization in Indian administration. <sup>57</sup>



He rationalized that if this was the stated position of various organs of the government, it could not be achieved by durbars, royal manifestos, elephant processions and fireworks but in the release of political prisoners lodged in various jails across India. 'Confidence,' he said, 'can only be evoked by showing confidence.'<sup>58</sup> Citing examples from other countries, Vinayak mentioned that in Canada revolts and rebellions had been the order of the day. But it took a visionary statesman like Lord Durham<sup>59</sup> to show confidence and the grandsons of the revolutionaries were now leaders who were fighting in Flanders on the British side. The British had shown similar confidence with the Boers whom they conquered in war. Can India be suspected of being less worthy of confidence, whereas her fault, as history shows, was that she was too generous and confiding? In the petition, he strongly advocated the grant of home rule to India and her people as an important step in this direction.

Vinayak argued that if India was allowed to become an autonomous partner in this commonwealth and if in the immediate future Indians secured a majority in the viceroy's council, they could embark upon the much-needed social work, purging and cleansing of society. He explained that it was not a fanatical or anarchic opposition to the Empire that had led him and others on the path of militant revolution. 'When there was no Constitution,' he postulated, 'it seemed a mockery to talk of constitutional movements. But now if a Constitution exists, and Home Rule is decidedly such, then so much political, social, economic, and educational work is to be done and could be constitutionally done that the Government may securely rest satisfied that none of the political prisoners would choose to face untold suffering by resorting to underground methods for sheer amusement.' Hence, the release of political prisoners would not only evoke confidence in Indians about the British government's sincerity in instituting a change in the administration of India, but also help the government with more patriotic hands that would work to effect this change. 'How can there be peace and mutual confidence,' he questioned, 'in the land in which thousands of families are literally torn to pieces and every second home has either a brother or a son or a husband or a lover or

a friend snatched away from its bosom and kept pining in the prison? It is against human nature for blood is thicker than water.’

Once again invoking international precedents to present his case, like a good barrister, Vinayak mentioned that political prisoners were being released all across the world. One had seen this in Russia, France, Ireland, Transvaal and Austria where amnesty was becoming the general principle. This had caught momentum after the War broke out. The suffragists in Britain, who had been convicted of individual acts of arson and riot, had also been immediately released with the outbreak of the War. How then could one rationalize that a move, which was beneficial across the world, would prove disastrous only in India?

He believed that as long as those who were revered by thousands of people in the country were kept imprisoned, opposition to the authority that bound their liberty would continue. Whereas if some of these heroes were to participate in the process of governance, it would set a role model for many who looked up to them as icons, and thereby deter future uprisings.

Importantly, Vinayak concluded the petition with the following plea:

If the Government thinks that it is only to effect my own release that I pen this; or if my name constitutes the chief obstacle in the granting of such an amnesty; then let the Government omit my name in their amnesty and release all the rest; that would give me as great a satisfaction as my own release would do. If the Government does ever take this view of the question then the amnesty should be so complete as to include those also who are exiles from India and who as long as they are proclaimed strangers in their own land are likely to be bitterly antagonistic to that Government in India but many of whom would, if allowed to come back, work for the Motherland on the open and constitutional lines, when this new and real constitution is introduced there. <sup>60</sup>

Expectedly, Vinayak’s petition was rejected by the government.

But the reforms suggested by Montagu gathered steam. After all the deliberations, he drew up a report with Bhupendra Nath Bose, Lord Richard Hely-Hutchinson, sixth Earl of Donoughmore, William Duke and Charles Roberts. <sup>61</sup> The Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, as they were called, eventually culminated in the Government of India Act, 1919.

A bicameral legislature was set up with two houses—the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. The Legislative Assembly was to have 145 members of whom 103 were elected and the rest were nominated. Of these 103, fifty-one were elected from general constituencies, thirty-two by communal/separate constituencies (thirty by Muslims, two by Sikhs), and twenty by special constituencies such as landholders, Anglo-Indians, etc. The Council of State had sixty members—thirty-three elected and twenty-seven nominated by the Governor General. The life of the Central Legislative Assembly was for three years and the Council of State for five years. The franchise was extended, central and provincial legislative councils were given more authority, but the viceroy still remained accountable only to London. <sup>62</sup>

At the provincial level, significant changes were made whereby a Provincial Legislative Council was created with a majority of elected members. All the major provinces such as Bengal, Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Punjab, Bihar, Central Provinces and Assam were to be ruled by a governor. Under a system called dyarchy, the rights of central and provincial governments were strictly demarcated. The central or reserved list had rights over defence, foreign affairs, telegraphs, railways, postal, foreign trade and so on, while the provincial or transferred list dealt with issues of health, education, sanitation, irrigation, jail, police, justice, public works, excise, religious and charitable endowments, etc. <sup>63</sup>

The reaction to the Government of India Act from Indians was on expected lines. The moderates, though not fully satisfied, advocated ungrudging cooperation within the contours of the new reforms to help them succeed. A strong section was inclined to reject it altogether. Tilak, who by then dominated the Congress after the death of Gokhale in 1915, stuck to a middle path of ‘Responsive Cooperation’ that would depend on how the government acted on each of its promises.

In its thirty-fourth session held at Amritsar in end December 1919, the INC, under President Chittaranjan Das, moved a resolution that stated that the ‘Reform Act is inadequate, unsatisfactory, and disappointing’. It urged parliament to take early steps towards establishing a fully responsible

government in accordance with the principle of self-government. Das favoured a rejection of the reforms. It was in this session that Gandhi managed to make a significant impact on the Congress. Gandhi's stand was explained in his article for *Young India* : 'The Reforms Act . . . is an earnest of the intention of the British people to do justice to India and it ought to remove suspicion on that score . . . Our duty therefore is not to subject the Reforms to carping criticism but to settle down quietly to work so as to make them a success.' <sup>64</sup>

The Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms thus divided many Congress leaders and amid apprehensions of yet another ideological split, Chittaranjan Das arrived at a compromise. The resolution was reworded to state that: 'The Congress trusts, that so far as may be possible they will work the reforms so as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government.' <sup>65</sup> It also stated that the Congress was 'not opposed to obstruction, plain, downright obstruction, when that helps to obtain our political goal'. The stand was akin to what Tilak advocated—one of 'Responsive Cooperation'. Gandhi too added: '. . . that does not mean that we may sit with folded hands and may still expect to get what we want. Under the British Constitution no one gets anything without a hard fight for it . . . We must lay to heart the advice of the President of the Congress that we shall gain nothing without agitation.' <sup>66</sup>

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Back in Port Blair, Vinayak's health deteriorated further. In a letter to Narayanrao, Vinayak wrote:

Last year, March I weighed 119—this year I weigh 98! They take the weight with which we come here as the normal one . . . but even when I came here I was 111 lbs. Chronic dysentery due to disregard of the medical treatment in the beginning has reduced me to a skeleton. Eight years I bore the burden well. Innumerable and unknown hardships taxed my metal and an atmosphere of frowns and threats and sighs, of demoralizing and disheartening stench tried to stifle the noble breath of Life—but God gave me strength to stand and stand firm and face it all for these eight years or so. But now I feel the flesh has received wounds that are hard to heal and is

day-by-day pining away. Recently the Medical Superintendent has been paying a little special attention to my weakness and though I am still on ‘Duty’, i.e., work and not in the Hospital, yet I get hospital diet that is better cooked, and eat only rice and am allowed milk and bread at present. It is better a bit and hope it may improve. But what is likely is that this constant debility may end in some fatal malady or that inevitable friend so well-known in jails, specially in Andamans—the Pthisis. Only one thing and one thing alone can assure me of my recovering and that is a change . . . a change for the better to a better climate in some Indian jail. <sup>67</sup>

Babarao’s condition was no better. By August 1918, his weight had dropped to 106 pounds and the diarrhoea continued unabated. To make matters worse, his gall bladder began giving him trouble. He literally had to crawl to the hospital as it was difficult to even stand up. Spasms of cough threatened to snuff his life out. The doctors diagnosed his ailment as tuberculosis. Despite all this and a fever of 100–102 degrees, he was not shifted to the hospital but made to labour.

As his condition worsened, Vinayak was shifted to the prison hospital. Gripping stomach pain and high fever crippled him. He found it impossible to digest anything. Things got worse when he was struck down by malaria too. His nerves too began to slowly give way. Reading—his favourite pastime—had to be temporarily abandoned as it caused immense strain. Yet, lying down with his eyes shut all day only seemed to make time stretch interminably, monotonously. On what seemed to him like a deathbed, he burst into a poem, ‘On the Death-Bed’ (*Maranonmukh Shayyavar*). The opening verses are as follows:

Come, Death! If really thou hast started already to come—welcome!  
These flowers may tremble to fade away,  
These juicy grapes to wither,  
But why should I fear Thee?  
I have but these wines of tears that fill my cup to offer Thee  
And which I thought over-drinking cannot exhaust;  
Come if that be acceptable to Thee! <sup>68</sup>

Vinayak needed almost a year of hospital care to mend his health. On his return to prison, Vinayak was once again beset with immense sadness

about the condition in which he was wallowing. Self-defeatist thoughts crowded his mind and once again he contemplated ending his life. But once again, he dissuaded himself with cold rationality. He writes:

Sometimes I felt every day that the body could not hold out any longer because one ailment after another was attacking it. This garment of the flesh seemed to be completely tattered and torn so that the soul could no longer wear it. At another time I felt a distinct improvement in my health. But how long am I to linger thus? So a year and a half had rolled on. Dysentery, blood in stools, fever and something else followed in succession and I bore it all. So I resolved to put an end to my life. For, I was in no doubt that this prison and myself were never to part company and so long as this continued my health would never improve. We all struggle for happiness and none could weep for all time and continue suffering to the end of the chapter. I wanted to know how many days I suffered and how many days I was without suffering. So I made a month's chart and marked on it days when wearing a body was a joy and when it was intense pain. I marked this on the wall, the day of suffering from one ailment or another, and the day free from any ailment. This went on for two months and then I made a reckoning. I found out that of sixty days, fifteen days were relatively better, and the rest were all worse. So I concluded that things were not after all so dark, and I must put off the thought of suicide. <sup>69</sup>

The last two days of May 1919, 30 and 31, brought some cheer to Vinayak. After eight long years, he was finally permitted an interview with his family members. While others were allowed to meet their family once in five years and also stay with them for a few days, no such concessions were ever granted to Vinayak. Finally, on receiving government permission, Vinayak's wife, Yamuna Bai, and brother, Narayanrao, started for Calcutta from Bombay and then reached Port Blair.

Needless to say, it was a tearful reunion. Vinayak was pleasantly surprised to see another young lady accompanying his brother and wife. This was Shanta, Narayanrao's wife. After qualifying in allopathy, homeopathy and dentistry in 1916, Narayanrao had started a clinic in Girgaum, Bombay. Around the same time, he had married Haridini (whose name after marriage was Shanta). <sup>70</sup> They talked with joyful abandon despite a warder who knew Marathi lurking around and keeping watch. The meetings on both days went on for a little over an hour. Vinayak's eyes yearned to see his beloved sister-in-law and confidante, Yesu Vahini. But

Narayanrao told him that their sister-in-law had passed away. She had pined for Babarao's and Vinayak's return. In 1915, both Yamuna and she had written to Viceroy Hardinge, in letters dated 28 July and 11 October respectively, to seek the release of their husbands. This was rejected by the government.

After Narayanrao's marriage, Yesu Vahini stayed with him briefly. But by the second half of 1918, due to failing health, she moved to Nashik and stayed with her maternal uncle, Wamanrao Dandekar. Knowing that her end was nearing, she beseeched the government for one final sight of her husband. Unfortunately, this too was rejected. But her spirit was undaunted. Four days before her death, when a family friend, Godumai Khare, came to meet her and saw her hands bereft of bangles and questioned her about the same, she nonchalantly replied: 'Godumai, my bangles would not fit my hands because of my swelling and hence I removed them. Someone gave me new bangles, but since they are foreign made, I refused to wear them.' <sup>71</sup>

One of the convicts in the Nasik Conspiracy Case and a member of Abhinav Bharat, Sakharampant Gore, died while in prison. This had a deleterious effect on his wife, Janakibai Gore, who was an active member of the Atmanishtha Yuvati Sangh that Yesu Vahini had started. She slipped into depression and lost all interest in life. While Janaki was shunned and neglected by the entire town, Yesu Vahini, despite her own limited means and financial constraints, brought Janaki home and tended for her affectionately. Janaki did not live for too long thereafter. Her death jolted Yesu Vahini. The fear of dying with the same unfulfilled wish of seeing her loved ones haunted her.

Her apprehensions sadly came true. Towards the end, she became delirious and started having visions of Babarao and Vinayak returning home and calling out to her sisters-in-law to keep the arati ready for their welcome. Her wish unfulfilled, Yesu Vahini died on 5 February 1919. <sup>72</sup> In a cruel irony of fate, three days after her death, the family was granted permission to visit the Andamans. She had sacrificed her entire life and

happiness for Babarao's and Vinayak's cause. Both Vinayak and Babarao were devastated by the news.

In a letter to Narayanrao, dated 21 September 1919, Vinayak pours out his angst about Yesu Vahini's death:

Half the joy of any release fades into apathy at the thought of my going back to a home where she is not likely to come to welcome me! My earliest friend, my sister, my mother and my comrade—all in one, all at once, she really died as dies a *suttee* ! Did she not immolate her silent soul and even at the altar of our Motherland? Ah! As truly as martyr dies for his land or religion, do these Indian girls of today die panting, withering, watching for the return of their lovers who are not destined to meet them; suffering in silence, serving though unknown, paying though unacknowledged—do these Hindu girls pine away and die for their Motherland, for their religion. <sup>73</sup>

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The Government of India continued with its policy of reforms along with repression. A committee was appointed in December 1917 to investigate the nature and extent of the revolutionary movement in India. It was also mandated to examine the difficulties that arose in the handling of such conspiracy cases. Justice S.A.T. Rowlatt, of the King's Bench Division of His Majesty's High Court of Justice, served as the chairman of this committee. The committee had full access to information in the government's possession. This was termed the Rowlatt Sedition Committee.

The committee made an exhaustive report on the history and evolution of revolutionary activities in different parts of India and outside. Vinayak's role in this was also detailed. It recommended a new legislation to replace the Defence of India Act, 1915. It sought to bring about strict laws to curtail the liberty of people in a drastic manner. Two bills were prepared on the basis of these recommendations—the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. I of 1919 and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. II of 1919. The latter was passed into law, and named the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919. It called for a speedy trial of offences by a special court consisting of three high court judges.



The right to appeal was also stripped off the accused. Provincial governments were empowered to search at will anyone's house that came under their radar of suspicion and round up the individual indefinitely without even an arrest warrant. The act intended to quell the publication, distribution and sale of prohibited works.<sup>74</sup>

These sweeping emergency powers, through the Rowlatt Act, bestowed on the government were strenuously opposed by Indians of all shades of political thought. But the bill was passed and entered the statute books on 21 March 1919. This brought unprecedented limelight on Gandhi who had till then remained in the background with movements in Champaran advocating the plight of indigo cultivators and the mill workers of Ahmedabad. A small group was formed, consisting of Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel and Sarojini Naidu, to offer satyagraha, or peaceful resistance, to these new acts. This came to be known also as the Rowlatt Satyagraha. On 24 February 1919, they pledged that 'in the event of these Bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee to be hereafter appointed, may think fit . . . we will follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property'.<sup>75</sup> A Satyagraha Sabha with Gandhi as president called for a strike on 6 April 1919. Gandhi's leadership was put to intense test during this first major pan-India campaign that he was embarking upon.

Disturbances had broken out all over the country, with riots and arson causing loss of lives and property. Disturbed by this, Gandhi called off the satyagraha on 18 April even before it could gather full steam. But large-scale ferment continued in the Punjab. This forced the government to bar Gandhi from entering the province. The government also imposed martial law with Brigadier General Reginald Dyer in command by 11 April 1919, though it was not formally declared before 15 April. Unaware of the law being imposed, approximately 6000–10,000 unarmed people had gathered on 13 April 1919 for a public meeting at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. Soon after the meeting began, Dyer reached the spot without any warning to the attendees. He passed, with his infantry, through a narrow lane into Jallianwala Bagh and at once deployed them to the right and left of the

entrance in the Bagh's square. The armoured cars remained outside the square and never came into action as the lane was too narrow for them to enter. The gates of the Bagh were shut and his troops stationed themselves on a raised ground. Without any warning, Dyer ordered indiscriminate firing on the mass of humanity that had gathered there. More than 1500 rounds were shot. Men, women, children and old people were caught in this firing and martyred. As per government records, nearly 379 were killed and more than 1200 wounded (the actual numbers were much more).

Dyer was anything but remorseful of this savagery and in fact boasted of his achievements and what he termed as a merciful act. He admitted that he could have dispersed them without firing but that would have been derogatory to his dignity as a defender of law and order. It was to maintain his self-respect, he claimed, that he decided to fire, leaving behind a trail of corpses. This brutality sent shock waves across India, more so at a time when the government was discussing administrative reforms and limited self-government. Ironically, Dyer was feted as a hero by the British. A fund created in his support by the *Morning Post* in London and another in Mussoorie in India collected a purse of £20,000. <sup>76</sup>

Viceroy Lord Chelmsford's response to this genocide was indicative of the government's attitude:

I have heard that Dyer administered Martial Law in Amritsar very reasonably and in no sense tyrannously. In these circumstances you will understand why it is that both the Commander-in-Chief and I feel very strongly that an error of judgment, transitory in its consequences, should not bring down upon him a penalty which would be out of all proportion to the offence and which must be balanced against the very notable services which he rendered at an extremely critical time. <sup>77</sup>

The massacre shook the nation and for the first time Gandhi's trust in the British was eroded. He demanded a thorough inquiry into the carnage. The Hunter Commission was set up to investigate the matter. However, Gandhi did not wish to derail the process of reforms and cooperation with the government. On 21 July 1919, he issued a statement in which he said that on account of indications of goodwill on the part of the government and

advice from many friends, he would not resume non-cooperation, as it was not his purpose to embarrass the government. Instead, he urged the satyagrahis to work for constructive programmes such as the use of indigenous goods and Hindu–Muslim unity. <sup>78</sup>

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At Cellular Jail, following the barrage of charges against him, Barrie was just a shadow of his former formidable self. Seated grumpily in his chair at office, with a long cigar in his mouth, puffing out curls of smoke, his health too had taken a beating. He suffered from intense lower-back pain. He had been in Port Blair for three decades and was nearing retirement. Vinayak mentions in his memoirs that despite the tough demeanour that Barrie presented, he was a different man at home with his family and friends. His wife and seventeen-year-old daughter, who had completed her matriculation from Rangoon and was preparing for a teacher's diploma, had special regard for Vinayak. They would call on him in prison and talk to him briefly. They occasionally sent him fruits from their family garden.

It was now time for the demigod of Port Blair to return to his home in Ireland. So petrified was he by the rumour that on his setting foot on Indian shores, some revolutionary would throw a bomb at him for his excesses that he planned a separate route back home. He even asked Vinayak about the bomb scare from his fellow revolutionaries, to which the latter replied: 'I don't think so. They don't waste their bombs in killing crows and sparrows. I don't think there is such a fool among terrorists there who would waste his powder on these poor birds when he can kill a tiger with it.' <sup>79</sup>

Bearing the albatross of the curses, wails and agony of thousands of prisoners whose lives he had ruined, Barrie made his way out. His condition was so bad that he had to be lifted out by two people to the steamer leaving from Port Blair. But Barrie never made it home. He breathed his last on the steamer. Thus ended the tyranny of one of the cruellest jailors the islands had ever seen.

Shortly after Barrie's departure, his fanatical lieutenant, Mirza Khan, too decided to retire. He too was afflicted by severe pain in his limbs and he attributed this to black magic done on him by Vinayak. He kept beseeching mercy from Vinayak for his sins and that he should cure him of his pain. His attempt to convince him that he had done no such thing and that he did not even believe in black magic of any sort fell on deaf ears. Eventually, Mirza Khan left Cellular Jail a broken man.

After a few temporary appointments, Mr Diggins, Barrie's brother-in-law and an Irishman too, was appointed jailor. Despite being a strict disciplinarian, he was a level-headed theosophist and a man of culture and learning. He never allowed himself to forget that the convicts were human beings after all.

Even as the jail administration was passing through this phase of transition, there was news of an Indian Jails Committee (1919–20) being formed by the Government of India to visit Cellular Jail and also ascertain the future of the penal settlement. On receiving a petition from the political prisoners, the Committee at once granted two privileges—writing a letter once in three months and keeping one's sacred thread and other symbols of religion. For over an hour and a half, the committee met Vinayak, who gave a detailed account of the experiences that he and several other political prisoners had faced right from the beginning. He also submitted the same in a written statement to the Committee. He believed that the administration's purpose should be to improve the prisoner and not merely punish him. The punishment must be a deterrent rather than vengeance. Caning and hanging should be the rarest of punishments, not a norm. He postulated that prisoners, up to the age of twenty-two, should not be regarded as beyond redemption, whatever be the nature of their offence in the eyes of the law. The aim of punishment should be to reclaim them as future citizens. All discipline should be directed to that purpose. They should be trained vocationally, so that they might have some useful occupation to fall back upon when they were released. By way of recreation, every prison should be provided with

amenities like cinema and music, which would make them both human and responsible citizens.

Of course, the prison ought never to be, Vinayak argued, a place for an easy way of life. The prisoners needed to be segregated from the world not for ease, indolence and enjoyment, but for inculcating severe self-discipline so that they realized that the kind of life that they had led was not desirable or worthwhile for them to continue. If they wanted freedom, they must deserve it; and the sooner they learn the lesson, the better it would be for them. Prisons are penitentiaries and not places of inquisition and torture. Prisoners who were exceptionally cruel in their propensities and whose acts constituted grave antisocial behaviour must be compelled to settle in the Andamans and work towards the development of both the settlement and the islands as a whole. A constructive work of this nature would play an important role in their reformation. Vinayak was not in favour of closing down the prison colony of Andamans for this reason. From the current savagery and slavery that were the norms in prison, a more reformatory line could make the process vastly successful.

The committee in its report expressed grave dissatisfaction about the state of affairs at Cellular Jail. They regretted that ‘absolutely no attempt whatever to provide any kind of reformatory influence on the convicts had ever been made’.<sup>80</sup> In particular, they pointed to the lack of education, absence of religious teaching, prohibition from installing places of worship or community religious observances. ‘The moral atmosphere,’ of the jail, they noted, ‘has been thoroughly unhealthy.’<sup>81</sup>

Thus, one of Vinayak’s most significant contributions during his incarceration at Cellular Jail was to attempt a change in the conditions there despite the resistance of the authorities. He had managed to organize the library, instil the habit of reading and discussions and striven to make it a model even for Indian jails when it came to prisoner reform. The same was also postulated to the government as part of executing a well-structured policy of prison reforms.

By the end of the momentous year 1919, Emperor George V ratified the Government of India Act (Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms) through a royal

proclamation. Clause 6 of the proclamation stated that the emperor desired that as far as possible, traces of bitterness between his government in India and the people must be obliterated. He hoped that those who had broken the law in the past, respect it in the future. At the same time, he hoped that it would become possible for those tasked with the maintenance of peace and order to curb any excesses. Given the dawn of a new era, he earnestly wished to see greater cooperation between the governing and the governed towards a common goal. He stated:

I therefore direct my Viceroy to exercise, in my name and on my behalf, my Royal clemency to political offenders, in the fullest measure, which in his judgment is compatible with the public safety. I desire him to extend it, on this condition, to persons who, for offences against the State or under any special or emergency legislation, are suffering imprisonment or restrictions upon their liberty. I trust that this leniency will be justified by the future conduct of those whom it benefits, and that all my subjects will so demean themselves as to render it unnecessary to enforce the laws for such offences hereafter. <sup>82</sup>

In accordance with the general amnesty granted by the emperor, most of the political prisoners, including Barin Ghose, Trailokya Chakravarti, Hemchandra Das and Parmanand, were released from Cellular Jail. The prisoners had to sign a pledge that they would abstain from politics and revolutionary activity for a certain stipulated number of years. If they were found guilty of treason again, they would be sent back to the Andamans to serve the remainder of their life sentence. There was a great deal of discussion and difference of opinion on signing such a clause. But Vinayak prevailed upon them to sign it and secure a release first before planning any future course of action. All, except around thirty political prisoners, were repatriated to Indian jails or permanently released. Unfortunately, Babarao and Vinayak were excluded from this amnesty under the pretext that its clauses did not cover their case.

Consequently, Vinayak submitted a petition to the Government of India on 20 March 1920. <sup>83</sup> He invoked the emperor's royal proclamation that, given the eagerness for political progress, they had decided to provide

amnesty to all political prisoners, and that the offences booked against him and Babarao were under the same category. It was not an individual grudge that they had but a political cause for which they adopted the revolutionary path. He argued that the proclamation did not make any distinction of the nature of offence or a section of the law, beyond the motive. Hence, it became necessary to underscore that their motive was political and not a personal enmity against anyone in the government. He was unable to fathom why the same yardstick that the government had applied to release Barin, Hemchandra Das, Sachindranath Sanyal and others who were charged with exactly similar offences was not applicable to them. Their behaviour in prison had been no better or worse than the rest, and hence there was little case to single them out for this disadvantage. He drew attention to his earlier petitions of 1914 and 1918 where to protect the country from the 'fanatic hordes of Asia threatening to invade via the North West' <sup>84</sup> he had offered himself as a volunteer in the War.

With the wide range of administrative reforms put in place, he had already expressed his willingness to join a constitutional line of political activity, for he hated 'no race or creed or people simply because they are not Indians'. He was willing to pledge, like the other political persons, to abstain from political activity for a period of time. This had become necessary too for them because their health was in tatters due to the long period of incarceration. The brothers were okay to have their movements confined to a district too if that was what the government pleased. Given the wide support that the demand for their release had elicited from different cross sections of society and prominent leaders, it would defeat the very purpose of the proclamation, i.e., to remove bitterness between the ruler and the ruled, by not granting their release. On similar grounds, Vinayak requested the release, even if conditionally, of all the remaining political prisoners who had been languishing in jail for long. The release would grant him a new birth, after his bright career had been regrettably extinguished and this would make him grateful to the government and

politically useful in future. 'For often,' he concluded, 'magnanimity wins even where might fails.'

What seems remarkable is that while in prison Vinayak, through his petitions, declared his support for 'constitutionalism', 'non-violence' and 'reforms'. But in his memoirs, *My Transportation for Life*, that was written a few years after his release, he expressed completely different political notions. In these writings, he revealed his disapproval of the non-violent mode of struggle that was being propagated by Gandhi. Even as he dismissed the Mahatma's approach based on non-violence, he appealed to the colonial regime for amnesty release or remission of sentence based upon his conviction that 'violence' was a thing of the past and 'constitutionalism' was the only political ideology left to pursue. In his memoir, he favours Tilak's approach of 'responsive cooperation' that the latter had advocated in the wake of the reforms. The petitions, however, have no mention of this approach or his belief in them. These seemingly contradicting stands lead one to believe that the petitions were a mere tactical ruse to secure a release and thereafter plan a future strategy. Nothing substantial could be achieved by being holed up in jail.

The chief commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands submitted the petition and jail tickets of both Babarao and Vinayak to the Government of India (Home Department). As per the records in the jail tickets, during their first five years at Cellular Jail, their conduct was hardly that of model prisoners. This was the peak period of the numerous strikes at jail in which the brothers took the lead on several occasions. Babarao's conduct in jail until 1914 had been recorded as being 'bad and he was frequently punished, chiefly for refusal to work and for possession of forbidden articles'. From 1914 through 1919, Babarao's 'conduct has been very good'—except for a non-disclosed minor offence for which he received a warning in November 1917.<sup>85</sup> Vinayak's jail ticket was similar: 'Punished eight times during 1912, 1913, and 1914 for refusing to work and possession of forbidden articles.' For the five-year period after 1914, Vinayak's behaviour was 'very good'.<sup>86</sup> This was when reforms had been ushered in after Craddock's visit and the library programme had begun. As



for their ‘present attitude’, the letter mentioned that the brothers had now become model prisoners. Babarao was noted for his ‘submission to authority but he never shown [sic] any disposition to help in the work of the jail the way that the three Bengalis have done’. The chief commissioner stated that he was unable to ascertain Babarao’s (Ganesh Savarkar) personal opinions and whether he had renounced his former political views as he was not very communicative. Vinayak’s ‘present attitude’ was similar to that of his brother: ‘He is always suave and polite. Like his brother, he has never shown any disposition to actively assist Government. It is impossible to say what his real political views are at the present time.’

In response, on 29 May 1919, Sir J.H. DuBoulay, Secretary to Government of India, noted that their case could be considered for remission with one of the sentences of transportation commuted, provided this had the Bombay government’s concurrence.<sup>87</sup> Babarao’s case too fell under the same consideration and the Government of India would have no qualms suspending the rest of his sentence, provided the Bombay government agreed.<sup>88</sup>

But the Government of Bombay was adamant in its refusal to consider the approval of remission for the Savarkar brothers. In a telegram sent on behalf of the Government of Bombay to the superintendent of Port Blair, Morrison stated: ‘Bombay Government does not recommend any remission of the sentences passed against Ganesh Damodar Savarkar and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.’<sup>89</sup> Two internal notes in the file conveyed the reasons for their refusal. In the first note, Morrison remarked that he did not know Babarao, ‘. . . so I can’t say whether he is likely to have been sufficiently broken by his punishment . . . But I do know Vinayak and I should doubt whether he will be moved to revise his opinion of Government by any extension of clemency’.<sup>90</sup> In a second note sent on 31 May 1919, Morrison stated that the Deccan was quiet now and with an imminent return of Tilak from England, where he had filed a libel case against *Times of London* reporter, Valentine Chirol, releasing the Savarkars could be potential trouble. The Government of Bombay agreed with the

Government of India, Home Department's earlier recommendation that dangerous convicts must be excluded from the amnesty scheme and given that they fall clearly under this category 'the Savarkar brothers be excluded from the Royal Clemency'.<sup>91</sup>

It was clear that even by 1920, after serving close to ten years in Cellular Jail, the Government of India and of Bombay considered Vinayak extremely dangerous to public safety, law and order to be released. In a communication between the secretaries of the Government of India and of Bombay—H. McPherson and J. Crerar respectively, the former writes:

There is probably no doubt that he [G.D. Savarkar] was one of the young men who first started the seditious movement of the *melas* in the Deccan which eventually merged into an anarchical movement with its headquarters at Nasik; but the real father of the movement was his brother Vinayak. The latter possessed the qualities of leadership and courage, which his brother lacked though he would not allow anybody to dispute his authority as supposed leader of the movement in the absence of Vinayak. Plans were laid by the superior brain of Vinayak while Ganesh helped him in preaching hatred of Government by the dissemination of seditious literature, and by corrupting the minds of young students.<sup>92</sup>

In another communiqué from McPherson, it seemed that the government was mulling options for clemency only to Babarao as Vinayak was 'really the dangerous man, the objection to whose release lies, no doubt, not so much in the seriousness of his offence as in his temperament'. It observed that if Babarao was released and Vinayak withheld in custody, the latter would be a hostage for the government. This fear would force Babarao to adhere to the law and not indulge in any seditious activity, lest it jeopardize his younger brother's release.<sup>93</sup>

A young revolutionary, Sachindranath Sanyal, had founded the Patna branch of the Anushilan Samiti in 1913 and was extensively involved in the Ghadr plans as well. He had been sentenced to life and imprisoned at Cellular Jail. He was released after a brief period and he returned to his revolutionary ways. However, in a conversation with one B.C. Chatterjee, he wondered that while he had given an exactly similar assurance, as Vinayak had done, of cooperation with the government in the wake of the

Reforms Act, he had been released but not Vinayak. He hypothesized that after the arrests of Vinayak, Babarao and other members of Abhinav Bharat, the revolutionary movement in Maharashtra had practically fizzled out and peace established. The government was wary that releasing Vinayak at such a time might set Maharashtra ablaze yet again. To preclude any such possibilities, they indulged in excuses and legalese to prevent his discharge from prison. <sup>94</sup>

Around this time, the Bombay National Union and some of its leaders organized and signed mass petitions for the release of Indian political prisoners, especially the Savarkar brothers, lodged in the Andamans. No less than 75,000 people signed this. Writing about this to his brother Narayanrao in a letter dated 6 July 1920, Vinayak states:

That must have put an immense though unacknowledged pressure on the Government. At any rate it elevated the moral status of the political prisoners and therefore of the cause for which they fought and fell. Now indeed our release, if at all it comes, is worth having; as the people have expressed their desire to have us back. We cannot sufficiently thank our countrymen for sympathy and solicitude for us all . . . . For although we two have been declared to fall outside the scope of the Amnesty and are still rotting in the cells, yet the sight of hundreds of our political comrades and co-sufferers' release makes us feel relieved and repaid for all the agitation that we have been carrying on for the last eight years or so through strikes, letters, petitions, the press, and the platform, here and elsewhere. <sup>95</sup>

Despite all these efforts, it was to be a long route to liberation for Vinayak—the struggle seemed to have just begun.



10

## Political Potboiler

Bombay, January 1920

From his clinic in Girgaum, Bombay, Narayanrao decided to do the unthinkable. He picked up his pen and wrote a letter to a man who was ideologically opposed to his brother, but nonetheless was fast emerging as a major political voice in the country—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. In the first of six letters, dated 18 January 1920, he wrote to Gandhi, Narayanrao sought the latter's help and advice in securing the release of his elder brothers in the wake of the royal proclamation.

Yesterday [17 January] I was informed by the Government of India that the Savarkar brothers were not included in those that are to be released . . . It is now clear that the Indian Government have decided not to release them. Please let me hear from you as to how to proceed in such circumstances. They have already undergone a rigorous sentence for more than ten years in the Andamans and their health is utterly shattered. Their weight has come down from 118 lbs. to 95–100. Though they are given a hospital diet at present, their health does not show any sign of improvement. At least a change to some Indian jail of better climate is the most essential for them. I have received a letter from one of them very recently (one month back) in which all this is mentioned. I hope that you will let me know what you mean to do in this matter. <sup>1</sup>

One week later, on 25 January 1920, Gandhi replied and quite expectedly told him that he could do very little by way of assistance.

Dear Dr Savarkar, I have your letter. It is difficult to advise you. I suggest, however, your framing a brief petition setting forth facts of the case bringing out in clear relief the fact that the offence committed by your brother was purely political. I suggest this in order that it would be possible to concentrate public attention on the case. Meanwhile as I have said to you in an earlier letter I am moving in the matter in my own way.<sup>2</sup>

However, several months later, on 26 May 1920, Gandhi wrote an article in *Young India* titled 'Savarkar Brothers' and built a case for their release by the government.

Thanks to the action of the Government of India and the Provincial Governments, many of those who were undergoing imprisonment at the time have received the benefit of the Royal clemency. But there are some notable 'political offenders' who have not yet been discharged. Among these I count Savarkar brothers. They are political offenders in the same sense as men, for instance, who have been discharged in the Punjab. And yet these two brothers have not received their liberty although five months have gone by after the publication of the Proclamation . . . It is clear . . . that all the offences charged against Mr Savarkar (senior) were of a public nature. He had done no violence. He was married, had two daughters who died, and his wife died about eighteen months ago . . . the other brother . . . is better known for his career in London . . . He was charged also in 1911 with abetment of murder. No act of violence was proved against him either.

Both these brothers have declared their political opinions and both have stated that they do not entertain any revolutionary ideas and that if they were set free they would like to work under the Reforms Act, for they consider that the reforms enable one to work thereunder so as to achieve political responsibility for India. They both state unequivocally that they do not desire independence from the British connection. On the contrary, they feel that India's destiny can be best worked out in association with the British. Nobody has questioned their honour or their honesty, and in my opinion the published expression of their views ought to be taken at its face value . . .

Now the only reason for still further restricting the liberty of the two brothers can only be 'danger to public safety,' for, the viceroy has been charged by His Majesty to exercise Royal clemency to political offenders in the fullest manner which in his judgment is compatible with public safety. I hold therefore that unless there is absolute proof that the discharge of the two brothers who have already suffered long enough terms of imprisonment, who have lost considerably in body-weight and who have declared their political opinions, can be proved to be a danger to the State, the

Viceroy is bound to give them their liberty. The obligation to discharge them, on the one condition of public safety being fulfilled, is in Viceroy's political capacity just as imperative as it was for the Judges in their judicial capacity to impose on the two brothers the minimum penalty allowed by law. If they are to be kept under detention any longer, a full statement justifying it is due to the public . . .

This case is no better and no worse than that of Bhai Parmanand who, thanks to the Punjab Government, has after a long term of imprisonment received his discharge. Nor need his case be distinguished from that of Savarkar brothers in the sense that Bhai Parmanand pleaded absolute innocence . . . The public are entitled to know the precise grounds upon which the liberty of the brothers is being restrained in spite of the Royal Proclamation which to them is as good as a royal charter having the force of law.<sup>3</sup>

Narayanrao was relentless in his efforts to secure the release of his brothers. Apart from the petitions that they were sending to the government from the Andamans, he sent one in 1918. Yesu Vahini and Yamuna had each sent one in 1915. All of them had been rejected. Undaunted by this, Narayanrao kept trying to mobilize public support as well as that of prominent citizens and members of the legislative councils to raise this issue at multiple forums.

On 12 July 1920, Vinayak and the chief commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands received the Government of India's reply to Savarkar's 20 March 1920 petition: 'His Excellency the Viceroy is not prepared at present to extend to them the benefit of the amnesty.'<sup>4</sup> A pall of gloom fell upon the Savarkar household. Vinayak had been diffident about this, as revealed in the letters he wrote to Narayanrao. In the letters of 1918, 1919 and 1920 he repeatedly stressed a desire to move from the revolutionary to the constitutional path that the government had facilitated through its reforms. Given that all the letters were thoroughly scanned by the jail authorities for any objectionable content before they were posted, one is unsure if he truly spoke his mind or was self-censoring the content with an eye on his release. In his final letter to Narayanrao dated 6 July 1920, and a week before his petition was quashed, Vinayak had concluded with a somber note: 'Please do not hope much from this petition [20 March 1920] so far as our release is concerned. We never pitched our

hopes too high and if not released we shall not be very much disappointed. We are quite prepared to face it either way.’<sup>5</sup>

A dejected Narayanrao visited his brothers for a second time in November 1920. Reduced to bones, Vinayak was hardly recognizable. In a sullen voice, he told his brother: ‘Bal! Be prepared to hear the worst of us any day in the future. I don’t think we can pull on for a long time now. Do not forget, however, that even the unexpected sometimes happens. Who knows we may survive from this. But the chances are very remote for that. Take it that this is our last meeting together on this side of the world!’<sup>6</sup>

Through the efforts of Narayanrao, however, the issue of the Savarkar brothers’ release was brought up often in the legislatures. On 15 February 1921, legislator Mohammad Faiyaz Khan raised a question in the Bombay Legislative Assembly on the basis of the report on the tortures suffered by the brothers, published in the *Leader* of Allahabad on 2 December 1920. The report had stated that the Savarkar brothers were undergoing hard labour for the last eleven to twelve years now. Ganesh Damodar Savarkar was suffering from a constant fever and had lost a lot of weight. Though he was diagnosed with tuberculosis, there was no treatment and he was kept confined in his cell. Faiyaz Khan wished to know from the government if this was happening with its consent and what action they intended to take to stop the brutality and if they could get to meet their families.

In the reply on behalf of the Government of India, S.P. O’Donnell mentioned that the labour they were put to could hardly be construed as rigorous. They were allowed to sleep peacefully in their cells and work in the open daily. They were allowed to exercise in the corridor or in the yard during non-working hours. The elder brother, Ganesh, was under medical observation and it was noted that his temperature rose to 99 degrees every evening. But for this, he seemed fine. His body parameters too were perfect—the government recorded that he currently weighed 110 lbs as against 113 lbs on admission ten years ago. His illness could not be termed as tuberculosis; he only had a slight cough which was suggestive of congestion. However, as a precautionary measure, he was allowed to spend

time on the veranda attached to the cells. Vinayak had done no labour harder than rope making and since 1915 both of them had only been given short periods of separate confinement. Vinayak's weight on admission was 111 lbs. and was now 106 lbs. Hence, everything seemed to be fine with him. A special order was issued for Vinayak on 1 April 1919: 'To continue as a hospital patient for purposes of diet and treatment, but will live in end cell (i.e., a special cell with its own piece of veranda) in top corridor.'

O'Donnell added that since both brothers had been in the settlement for merely ten years, they could not be classified as self-supporters or allowed to bring their families there so long as they were not released from jail. The government at any rate considered it a dangerous proposition to release them, though their petitions to this effect were under consideration.<sup>7</sup> Many of the details that were read out contradicted the jail ticket history of the brothers maintained by the jail authorities.

In the Legislative Assembly, another legislator, Vithalbhai Patel, moved a resolution on 24 February 1920 recommending amnesty to the Savarkar brothers and other political prisoners. G.S. Khaparde and other members too had drawn the government's attention to the matter. A year later, legislator Rangaswamy Ayyangar moved another resolution in the Council on 26 March 1921 regarding the signature campaign of over 50,000 people seeking amnesty for the Savarkar brothers. The resolution sought a recommendation from the House to the Governor General in Legislative Council to release the brothers. Providing a spirited defence, Ayyangar quoted from Vinayak's petitions and letters where he claimed a change of his political thought and abstinence from violence in the wake of the reforms. Ayyangar said, 'We can charge Savarkar with anything, but he is not the man who is a liar who will tell anything against his convictions even to buy life. Such is the present mentality of the man for whom I am pleading for the grant of amnesty.' He drew from Vinayak's letter dated 8 February 1920: 'As circumstances change, do also change the ways and means of men. So let none—neither our friends nor our critics—disbelieve us when we declare that we pledge our word to make the new constitutional and constructive epoch a success, by all means in our power



and to the best of our ability.’ Ayyangar argued that people directly connected with conspiracies and murders had been granted amnesty; those transported for life with forfeiture of property were now entrusted with ministerial portfolios. Yet the Savarkars continued to rot in the dungeons of Andaman. A spirited discussion followed on this issue in the Council with several members participating in the debate.

One Council member, C.N. Seddon, provided an opposing view to Ayyangar’s and read extracts of the judgment in their respective trials to prove how dangerous the two brothers were. He felt that the Council must leave this decision to the Government of India and more so to the Government of Bombay to do what it feels would be consistent with public safety. Sir William Vincent presented his case that a distinction needed to be made between the brothers and their role. He was in favour of no leniency shown to Vinayak given the grievous nature of his abetting the murder of a man, Jackson, who was loved by all. But he was willing to consult the Bombay government regarding Babarao. Since his conviction was sedition—which was a political crime—different from murder that Vinayak had been charged with, differential parameters could be applied. Another Council member, Colonel Sir Umar Hayat Khan, strongly opposed Ayyangar’s resolution. He hypothesized that if all murderers were to be released, they may as well do away with jails. He likened their release to the adding of petrol to the fire that was already raging across the country. Council member Nawab Sir Bahram Khan too opposed the resolution and opined that the decision must be left to the local government to pursue.

At this point, Ayyangar offered to give guarantees and furnish securities on Savarkar’s behalf to secure the amnesty. He referred to the ‘forget and forgive’ policy stated in the royal proclamation. Sir William Vincent intervened and said that the policy did not mean they empty jails and let every criminal out. Given the overwhelming opposition to the resolution, it was rejected in the Council and the ball was back in the Government of Bombay’s court to arbitrate on the matter.<sup>8</sup>

Later that year, the Governor General mentioned that the Government of Bombay was unwilling to accept the Savarkar brothers in the Bombay jails on the grounds that their incarceration there could aggravate the situation. It was similar to the attitude of the Government of Punjab that did not want the Ghadr conspirators to be lodged in Punjab jails, in view of the prevalent feeling among Sikhs. There was a possibility of asking the local governments whether they would object to the transfer of their political prisoners to other provinces in India. For example, a confinement of the Savarkar brothers in jails of the Madras Presidency or the United Provinces without causing any embarrassment to Bombay. Whether these provinces would be willing to accept them was another matter; they would probably strongly object, but it was worth ascertaining if such a transfer would be acceptable to both governments involved.<sup>9</sup>

Sir William Vincent was of the view that all political prisoners should be transferred to British Indian jails from the Andamans. Given the worsening health of the Savarkar brothers, he opined that pressure must be put on the Government of Bombay to accede to the wishes and take back their prisoners from the Andamans. He saw no reason for the objections since Bombay had many equally, if not more, dangerous political prisoners. Prolonged incarceration of the Savarkars in the Andamans was increasingly exposing the Government of India 'to severe criticism of a justifiable character'.<sup>10</sup> There was unanimous agreement among all members to this suggestion.

## Cellular Jail, July 1920

Far removed from the hectic parleys that were going on regarding his release, on 4 November 1920, Vinayak was promoted to the position of a foreman in charge of manufacturing oil. After a brief probation he was confirmed as a permanent foreman. He drew a handsome monthly salary of Re 1 for this work! The coconut gardens and the oil from them were the main source of revenue in the Andamans. Cellular Jail had three big reservoirs full of oil ground out of the mills by prisoners. Big casks were

filled with oil and exported to Calcutta and Rangoon and in return several thousand rupees accrued to the government treasury.

In addition to the shuddhi, sangathan and literacy movements that he spearheaded in jail, another issue close to Vinayak's heart was the propagation of Hindi. Right from 1906, while in England, he had begun work to make Hindi the national language of India. In a linguistically diverse country such as India the exalting of a single language was bound to create tensions and differences. But it was also an important tool for national unity, Vinayak argued. Making Hindi the national language of the independent republic of India and Devanagari the script in which it was to be written, was something that all members of Abhinav Bharat pledged. It was long after 1906, and an initial rejection of the idea, that several other national leaders like Tilak and Gandhi espoused the cause of Hindi as the national language. Their acceptance followed agitations on the matter by the Nagar Pracharini Sabha of Benares and the Arya Samaj. In fact, the propaganda in favour of Hindi as India's national language and encouraging patriotic writings in it was pioneered by Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

Right from his early days in the Andamans, Vinayak encouraged people to speak in Hindi. Its status was one of confusion to many. Was it a language at all or merely a mixture of several dialects? Did it have a grammar? Did it have any sound literature to its credit? There were many such misgivings. Prisoners from Bengal and Madras Presidencies felt that their languages—Bengali and Tamil—had such an ancient history and rich literature that they deserved to be the national language, rather than this concocted language of sorts. Vinayak's argument was that while one could love their mother tongue and keep its antiquity intact, there was a need for a cultural integrator given India's diversity. Such an integrator would bind all Indians together in a common thread of national identity and unity. Given that a vast section of Indians spoke or understood Hindi, promoting it as the lingua franca and the national language would help foster people-to-people integration and thereby of the nation.

In the classes that Vinayak conducted at jail, he would insist that every prisoner learn the languages of provinces other than his own. He prescribed an order of study for all prisoners which was first their mother tongue, followed by Hindi, and lastly, the language of any province other than their own. The Andamans offered a rare opportunity to them for such a study as well. He taught the Bengali prisoners Hindi and Marathi; to prisoners from Maharashtra, Hindi and Bengali; and to the Punjabi, Hindi as well as their script, Gurumukhi. The Gujaratis were the last to come to Cellular Jail, but Vinayak managed to teach them the Hindi alphabet and equipped them to read and write. Being personally unaware of the south Indian languages, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, and since none of the prisoners were competent enough to teach them, provisions could not be made for classes in these languages. Vinayak was ‘conscious of this defect in our common programme of teaching languages’.<sup>11</sup> For ten years, Vinayak stuck to this task of propagating Hindi and had the full cooperation of his colleagues.

Till then, government records were maintained in Urdu, and even Hindi was written in the Persian script. Vinayak strongly advocated the implementation of the Devanagari script as it was the one in which the oldest language of the subcontinent, Sanskrit, was written. During his interactions with local merchants in his capacity as the foreman of oil collections, Vinayak passed this zeal on to them too. Through his influence, a girls’ school that was started in the Andamans began a compulsory teaching of Hindi in the Devanagari script. There were many books in Hindi procured for the library and these were circulated among the prisoners and also among the locals, through a travelling library. Making them all conversant with Hindi, and not slip into Urdu which they were used to, was a challenge and Vinayak managed to circumvent that to a large extent.

Vinayak was opposed to the imposition of Urdu in most schools across India, including the Andamans. Otherwise, he was proficient in Urdu; recently, three patriotic Urdu ghazals were discovered in the Andamans, in his own handwriting. They dated back to 1921 when he exhorted the youth

to fight the British. One of these ghazals, ‘*Yahi Paaoge*’, also managed to reach the revolutionaries of the Kakori Conspiracy through Sachindranath Sanyal. The revolutionaries would sing this often as an inspirational ode.

<sup>12</sup> In one of the ghazals, he notes:

Our brave warrior is the slayer of Ravan, Lord Ram  
Our proud charioteer is the god of Karma yog, Lord Krishna  
O Bharat! What army can stop thy chariot?  
Why this delay, awake brothers, we are our own saviours! <sup>13</sup>

Similar sentiments are expressed in his Urdu ghazal, ‘*Pehla Hafta*’, written before his imprisonment in the Andamans—showing that the long incarceration did little to dampen his patriotic spirit.

On 1 August 1920, came news of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak’s death. It was a deep personal loss for Vinayak who considered Tilak his political guru. The grief spilled over even in the Andamans where prisoners refused dinner that evening in honour of the departed hero.

Continuing with his work of reforming the lives of people in the prison and the Andamans, Vinayak then pushed for inter-caste dining. Though he met with stout opposition from orthodox Hindus, Vinayak was able to prevail upon them the need to break the barriers of caste that had crippled Hindu society and disunited it. Dining together on festivals such as Diwali and Dussehra was the first step in shaking the foundations of this well-entrenched social evil. They were to lay the ground for the massive work that Vinayak was to later do in Ratnagiri.

Using his comparative freedom and authority as a foreman, he strove harder for the spread of education among prisoners. To this effect, he urged the authorities and convinced them to start the first primary school on the jail campus for juvenile convicts. An educated political prisoner was appointed as the teacher and Vinayak created the syllabus and teaching methodology. In the true spirit of jail reforms, he propagated to these young convicts the idea of becoming better and patriotic citizens. The scriptures and Hindi too formed part of the curriculum. A similar

school was started by him in the oil depot for other prisoners who were unlettered. The same year, in 1920, for the first time, the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh was celebrated in the jail. Vinayak spoke about the guru and his immense contributions. It was an occasion to create a sense of unity with the Sikh prisoners. Vinayak's toil and efforts resulted, with time, in the achievement of nearly 80 per cent average literacy among the prisoners. <sup>14</sup> Ten years ago, while he had seen prisoners in the same jail whiling away their free time playing dice, gambling or quarrelling with one another, now most of them spent it productively in teaching, learning, spiritual pursuits and reading books. Writing about this, Vinayak states:

Hundreds of prisoners in the jail showered their gratitude upon me. All of them knew one thing very well, and it was that during ten years of my association with them, I had carried on incessant agitation in the Cellular Jail and outside for giving them an organized existence. I had carried on agitation in the press, through petitions, through civil resistance, through questions asked in the Imperial Legislature at Delhi, through protests, correspondence and personal letters, to draw the pointed attention of India and its Central Government to their condition in the Andamans. And it was my persistence at it that had made the matter a live issue before the Jail Commission. To those who would felicitate me I said, 'At last the Andamans as a prison-colony is no more, the Cellular Jail is dismantled. This change is not the result of any single-handed endeavour. It is the reward of ten years of continuous and all-sided agitation, to the success of which all of you, and especially the political convicts, have made a tremendous contribution by your trials and tribulations throughout this period. And if it has succeeded even partially, the credit is yours.' I told them so and offered my sincerest felicitations to them in return. I added how fine it would have been for Mr Barrie to be alive that day. Mr Barrie used to taunt me that all my efforts were to go for naught and add that I was dashing my head against a stone-wall, that [sic] was not the wall that would break, but that my head would break. I could have told him that day as follows: 'Mr Barrie, my head had received many bruises by my dashing it continuously against your prison-walls. No doubt about it. But behold! The wall of your prison has now been cracked and will soon crumble down. And I am here alive with all the bruises I have received in the fight.' <sup>15</sup>

When the proposal of shutting down Cellular Jail was conveyed to them, Vinayak was quite displeased. He wanted the prison colony to continue as a model for the rest of India, from where the most hardened criminals too could be sent back as better human beings. He wanted the government to

continue it as a free colony of prisoners where those on life sentence could also be allowed to marry and have a family. He, in fact, preferred to stay back in the Andaman settlements even if he were to be released.

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### ‘The Aafat Called Khilafat’

Back in mainland India, a new movement was brewing. It is important to understand this issue because it sets the context in which Vinayak penned his magnum opus on Hindutva and his belief in the need for Hindu society to organize itself politically. The concept of Hindutva continues to be a contentious one in Indian politics even today.

The pan-Islamic feelings that the First World War created in the minds of several Indian Muslims, with the Ottoman Empire joining the Central forces against the Allied forces has been mentioned earlier. Their natural sympathy was with the Khalifa, the sultan of Turkey, who was also their religious head. But this conflicted with their loyalty as British Indian subjects. Realizing this, the British government assured Turkey of sympathetic treatment at the end of the War. Assurances to this effect were given by the British prime minister, Lloyd George, and the president of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson. This instilled some hope among Indian Muslims.

However, these were dashed after the conclusion of the War and the terms of Armistice. Turkey was partitioned—Thrace was presented to Greece and the Asiatic portions of the Turkish Empire passed under the control of Britain and France in the guise of ‘mandates’. The sultan was reduced to a figurehead under the control of a high commission appointed by the Allied powers who ruled the nation in his name. This hugely agitated Muslims in India who felt let down and a storm broke out. An Indian Muslim delegation under Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar (1878–1931) travelled to England in 1919 to convince the Turkish nationalist, Mustafa Kemal, not to depose the sultan of Turkey. By 1920–21, he

formed a broad coalition with Muslim nationalists such as his brother, Shaukat Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari and others.

Gandhi, who had launched the Non-cooperation movement in 1919 which came to an abrupt halt after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, decided to support them through his tool of satyagraha. This led to the birth of the Khilafat agitation in 1920. Gandhi wrote to the viceroy pleading for a just settlement of the Khilafat problem, going to the extent of placing it on the same level of political importance as home rule in India. He wrote in conclusion: 'In the most scrupulous regard for the rights of those (Mohammedan) States and for the Muslim sentiment as to their places of worship, and your just and timely treatment of India's claim to Home Rule lies the safety of the Empire.'<sup>16</sup> Unsurprisingly, when the All-India Khilafat Conference met in Delhi on 23 November 1919, Gandhi was unanimously elected as its president. It urged the Muslims not to join the public war celebrations if the British failed to solve the Turkey problem. Gandhi urged the conference to consider the feasibility of non-cooperation as a means to compel the British government to redress the Khilafat wrong. The tenets of this included renunciation of honorary posts, titles, memberships of councils, giving up posts under the government, police and military forces and a refusal to pay taxes.<sup>17</sup>

As nationalist leader Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar mentions: 'The movement was started by the Mahomedans. It was taken up by Mr. Gandhi with a tenacity and faith which must have surprised many Mahomedans themselves.'<sup>18</sup> Ambedkar and several others opined that the movement was unsupportable because of the basic fact that the Turks, in whose interest the agitation was being carried out in distant India, 'themselves favoured a republic and it was quite unjustifiable to compel the Turks to keep Turkey as a monarchy when they wanted to convert it into a republic'.<sup>19</sup> But Gandhi was determined. As he noted in *Young India* dated 2 June 1920:



If I were not interested in the Indian Mahomedans, I would not interest myself in the welfare of the Turks any more than I am in that of the Austrians or the Poles. But I am bound as an Indian to share the sufferings and trials of fellow-Indians . . . the extent to which Hindus should join hands with the Mahomedans . . . is . . . expedient to suffer for my Mahomedan brother to the utmost in a just cause and I should, therefore, travel, the whole road so long as the means employed by him are as honourable as his end.

Ambedkar explains that the popularly held view that it was the Congress that initiated the Non-cooperation movement is erroneous. He opines that ‘the non-cooperation had its origin in the Khilafat agitation and not in the Congress movement for Swaraj: that it was started by the Khilafatists to help Turkey and adopted by the Congress only to help the Khilafatists: that Swaraj (Self-Rule) was not its primary object, but its primary object was Khilafat and that Swaraj was added as a secondary object to induce the Hindus to join it’.<sup>20</sup>

In a timeline that Ambedkar provides, he mentions that it was on 10 March 1920 that the Khilafat Committee met in Calcutta and ratified the concept of non-cooperation in its manifesto with Gandhi in attendance. The All India Congress Committee (AICC) that met in the interim on 30 May 1920 in Benares did not endorse Gandhi’s non-cooperation but merely expressed indignation on the terms of the Turkey agreement, urging the British to revise it. Other important items such as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the repeal of the Rowlatt Act and bringing General Dyer and others to justice were the main demands of the resolution. Meanwhile, on 22 June 1920, the Khilafat Committee wrote to the viceroy that they would launch non-cooperation agitation by 1 August if their demands were not met. By 1 August, with no official word from the viceroy, the Khilafat Committee launched the Non-cooperation movement. Gandhi wrote to the viceroy about it and also the return of the medallions he had received for his loyalty to the British troops in the Boer War and the Zulu revolt. In his letter, he wrote: ‘I venture to return these medals, in pursuance of the scheme of Non-cooperation inaugurated today in connection with Khilafat movement.’<sup>21</sup> No Hindu leader other than

Gandhi participated in it and the Congress's official role in it was uncertain.

It was thereafter that Gandhi persuaded the Congress to join hands with the Khilafat and this was adopted in the Congress session in Calcutta on 4 September 1920. In his speech with which he moved the resolution at the session, Gandhi stated:

The Mussulmans of India cannot remain as honourable men and followers of the faith of their Prophet, if they do not vindicate its honour at any cost. The Punjab has been cruelly and barbarously treated . . . and it is in order to remove these two wrongs . . . that I have ventured to place before this country a scheme of non-cooperation. <sup>22</sup>

He, however, did not make it clear why this should be a priority only for the Indian Muslim community when their co-religionists from various parts of the Muslim world were themselves unperturbed by the dissolution of the caliphate. When Turkey itself favoured such a move, and when none of this made anyone in the Muslim world less honourable or disrespectful of their faith or the Prophet, why was such an assumption being made on behalf of only the Indian Muslims. If Punjab was a 'wrong' committed by the British (which it was), how was it that a resolution passed in the same city of Amritsar in 1919, barely months after the carnage, vouched for cooperation with the government reforms? The attainment of swaraj was added as a minor adjunct to the Khilafat movement. Ironically, Gandhi had overturned a resolution that he himself had insisted upon in the November 1919 Amritsar session of the Congress favouring cooperation with the British, loyalty to them and ensuring that the Reforms Act of 1919 worked successfully. Other than surrendering titles and giving up posts, withdrawal of children from government schools, boycott of foreign goods, withdrawal from British courts and other such measures were adopted.

The widely held narrative is that the Jallianwala Bagh massacre led to the birth of the Non-cooperation movement. But as the facts present themselves above, in the Amritsar Congress held in 1919, barely five

months after the genocide, Gandhi himself advocated complete cooperation with the British in the wake of the reforms initiated in the royal proclamation and the Government of India Act, 1919. The government had remained studiously silent on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre for eight months and it took them a long time to even constitute an inquiry commission. Their reluctance was there for all to see by the time the Congress met in Amritsar in November 1919. Despite the somersault between the two Congress resolutions, prevailed upon by the same person and with no new facts emerging other than the Khilafat, it denotes the huge sway that Gandhi had begun to influence in the workings of the Congress and in such a short span of time.

Interestingly, it was Gandhi who advocated his favourite mantra of non-cooperation to the Khilafat Committee, got it ratified there, and then prevailed upon the Congress to support the Khilafat and thereby the philosophy of non-cooperation too. It was a political master stroke and a daring attempt by Gandhi. For decades the Congress had tried in vain to enlist the support of Muslims. But with the Congress standing up for their cause, several Muslims and their leaders trooped to it, even though temporarily. It also enhanced the stature of Gandhi as a national leader and catapulted the Congress to a body that went beyond resolutions and conferences, to grass-roots mass movements. Of course, one could quibble on whether making the Khilafat movement a matter of such importance was of any relevance to the cause of Indian freedom. As historian R.C. Majumdar notes:

As to regarding the Khilafat as a matter of life and death to the Muslims, events were soon to prove that it was a rhetoric or hyperbole and can hardly be regarded as a serious fact; for in less than five years the Muslims of Turkey usurped the rights of the Caliph to a far greater degree than the British ever did, and not a leaf stirred in the whole Muslim world outside India. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to believe that the Muslims of India were the only true followers of the Prophet or the most genuine champions of the cause of Islam, it is difficult to understand or explain the weight they attached to the Khilafat question, save on the theory that it was a phase of that Pan-Islamic movement to which the Indian Muslims looked forward as the only

guarantee against the influence of a Hindu majority with whom faith had linked them in India.<sup>23</sup>

Whether Gandhi latched on to the Khilafat to launch his political career as the leader of mass agitations in India or put the theory of non-cooperation into practice, it did energize the sagging morale of the Congress. But his critics, like R.C. Majumdar, point out that by endorsing such extraterritorial allegiance and ‘by his own admission that the Khilafat question was a vital one for Indian Muslims, Gandhi himself admitted in a way that they formed a separate nation; they were *in* India, but not *of* India’.<sup>24</sup> The mixing up of an issue far away from India and relegating the matter of Indian freedom to the background did not appeal to many Indians, especially Hindus.

Bipin Chandra Pal opined that this emergent pan-Islamism that was catching up in India too was ‘the common enemy of Indian nationalism in its truest and broadest sense’.<sup>25</sup> Annie Besant too talks about how ‘the Khilafat was not sufficiently attractive to the Hindus’.<sup>26</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai was more candid in his assessment of the Khilafat movement:

I have no intention of offending anybody’s susceptibilities, but if the existing conditions are properly analyzed, it will be seen that sectarianism and narrow-minded bigotry have been very much strengthened within the last three years. The Khilafat movement has particularly strengthened it among the Mohammedans, and it has not been without its influence and reaction on the Hindus and Sikhs . . . it was unfortunate that the Khilafat movement in India should have taken its stand on a religious, rather than political basis . . . it was still more unfortunate that Mahatma Gandhi and leaders of the Khilafat movement should have brought religion into such a prominence in connection with a movement which was really, and fundamentally, more political than religious.<sup>27</sup>

After his travels in the Muslim countries of Central Asia and Egypt and his interactions with the local Muslims, Lajpat Rai sounded a warning bugle when he said: ‘Indian Muslims are more pan-Islamic and exclusive than the Muslims of any other country of the globe, and that fact alone

makes the creation of a united India more difficult than would otherwise be.’<sup>28</sup>

A few sceptic Hindus proposed that in the true spirit of Hindu–Muslim unity, a quid pro quo could be established—that Hindus render their wholehearted support to a cause of Muslim faith, in return for the latter eschewing cow slaughter that was a matter of faith for a vast majority of Hindus and which had caused communal tensions in the past. Gandhi debunked this idea with his hypothesis that ‘the test of friendship is assistance in adversity, and that too, unconditional assistance . . . if the Mahomedans feel themselves bound in honour to spare the Hindu’s feelings and to stop cow killing, they may do so, no matter whether the Hindus cooperate with them or not’.<sup>29</sup>

Others who opposed the Khilafat movement argued that the mobilized Muslims might invite the Afghans to invade India, in which case the country might be subjugated to Muslim Raj from British Raj.<sup>30</sup> Chittaranjan Das wrote to Lala Lajpat Rai that he did not fear the seven crore Muslims of India, but ‘the seven crores of Hindustan, plus the armed hordes of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Turkey will be irresistible’<sup>31</sup> and posed a grave national threat to India. Gandhi discounted this fear too by saying he felt that ‘Hindus will not assist Mahomedans in promoting or bringing about an armed conflict between the British Government and the allies, and Afghanistan. British forces are too well organized to admit of any successful invasion of the Indian frontier’.

Meanwhile, Maulana Abdul Bari<sup>32</sup> had suggested that if the British continued with their obdurate stand of committing injustice to the Khalifa, Indian Muslims should give up the country in protest and migrate to a Muslim land or Dar-ul-Islam— Afghanistan. Following his fatwa, about 18,000 Muslims sold their properties to move to Afghanistan—a move that brought them severe ruin. Interestingly, instead of denouncing such a move, Gandhi, the leader of the Khilafat movement, said: ‘The flight of Mussulmans is growing apace—they are cheered en route. That it is better for them to leave [a] State which had no regard for their religious

sentiment and face a beggar life than to remain in it even though it may be in a princely manner.’<sup>33</sup> The seeds of Pakistan, it seemed, were sown three decades before it actually materialized.

Right from the very beginning, there were voices in the Muslim community that considered this a ruinous move. Muhammad Ali Jinnah of the Muslim League opposed the Khilafat agitation.<sup>34</sup> The All-India Shia Conference passed a resolution of loyalty to the British in its meeting held at Nagina, a town in Bijnore district of the United Provinces, on 3 April 1920.<sup>35</sup> The honorary secretary of the Khilafat Committee, Badruddin Koor, had cautioned:

If Muslims [of India] embark on this ruinous course, I am afraid we may have to suffer even long after Khilafat controversy terminates. It is clear that non-cooperation report emphasizes that the Indian Mussulman should refrain from violence and bloodshed. But those who are fully acquainted with the Muhamedan temperament and feelings and who see the Indian atmosphere as at present charged with religious incitement and fervour will hesitate to believe that the advice will be acted upon if non-cooperation is to be made a living factor. I do not expect a large and unwieldy community of uneducated and highly sensitive people goaded to disappointment and despair by the apathy of Great Britain and its allies in the Khilafat question will ever do so. The risk is therefore clear.<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, prior to his initiation into the Khilafat, Muhammad Ali himself had scoffed at the very idea of Muslims joining hands with the Hindus or the Congress on any political issue. In an article, ‘The Communal Patriot’, in his newspaper, *The Comrade*, Ali had lampooned the efforts of Indian Muslims to join hands with the Congress to fight victimization of the Muslims of Tripoli and Persia. ‘What has the Muslim situation abroad to do,’ he wondered, ‘with the conditions of the Indian Muslims?’ He believed that the fundamental differences between the Hindu and Muslim communities needed to be sorted out before any alliance could be forged. ‘Have the questions that really divide the two communities lost their force and meaning?’ he wondered and rationalized: ‘If not, then the problem remains exactly where it was at any time in recent Indian history.’<sup>37</sup> It remains unknown what had changed for him to do a volte-face and support

what he had ridiculed a few years ago. Barring the Ali brothers, the fact that several Muslim leaders were sceptic of the non-cooperation method is explained by Jawaharlal Nehru:

I remember the meeting <sup>38</sup> because it thoroughly disappointed me. Shaukat Ali, of course, was full of enthusiasm; but almost all the others looked thoroughly unhappy and uncomfortable. They did not have the courage to disagree, and yet they obviously had no intention of doing anything rash. Were these people to lead a revolutionary movement, I thought, and to challenge the British Empire? Gandhiji addressed them, and after hearing him they looked even more frightened than before. He spoke well in his best dictatorial vein . . . this is going to be a great struggle, he said, with a very powerful adversary . . . when war is declared martial law prevails, and in our non-violent struggle there will also have to be dictatorship and martial law on our side if we are to win . . . these military analogies and the unyielding earnestness of the man, made the flesh of most of his hearers creep . . . as we were coming home from the meeting, I asked Gandhiji if this was the way to start a great struggle. I had expected enthusiasm, spirited language, and a flashing of eyes; instead we saw a very tame gathering of timid, middle-aged folk. <sup>39</sup>

That the Ali brothers had their misgivings about the nature of the movement even after joining it becomes apparent in the anecdote narrated by Swami Shraddhanand in his memoirs. A staunch Arya Samaji and a shuddhi activist, he had begun working with the Congress since its Amritsar session in 1919 that he presided over. He joined the nationwide protests against the Rowlatt Act and frequently interacted with maulanas to broker peace between the communities. In the Calcutta session of September 1920, he was sitting on the dais along with Shaukat Ali. He heard him loudly telling a few others in his company: ‘Mahatma Gandhi is a shrewd *bania* . You do not understand his real object. By putting you under discipline, he is preparing you for guerrilla warfare. He is not such an out and out non-violencist [sic] as you all suppose.’ <sup>40</sup> ‘I was shocked,’ said Shraddhanand, ‘to hear all this from the big brother and remonstrated with him, which he treated with humour.’

Shraddhanand tried to warn Gandhi about the possibility that his ‘motives were being misrepresented’. But these were not taken seriously. In the Khilafat conference at Nagpur, maulanas recited ayats from the

Quran that contained frequent references to violent jihad ‘against and the killing of *kafirs*’. When Shradhdhanand drew Gandhi’s attention to this, he ‘smiled and said: “They are alluding to the British bureaucracy”’. In reply, Shradhdhanand told him that ‘it was all subversive of the idea of non-violence and when a revulsion of feeling came, the Muhammadan Maulanas would not refrain from using these verses against the Hindus’.<sup>41</sup> Once again Gandhi disregarded this politely.

Despite all these seemingly contradictory stands and opposition, Gandhi was obdurate that while the Khilafat was a matter of faith for Muhammad Ali, he himself would not mind ‘laying down my life for the Khilafat’. He hoped that this generous support would ‘ensure the safety of the cow, that is my religion, from the Mussalman knife’.<sup>42</sup> He even advocated three slogans for Hindus and Muslims alike, to be chanted one after another in every congregation: ‘*Allaho Akbar, Bande Mataram/Bharat Mata ki Jai*, and *Hindu-Musalman ki jai*.’<sup>43</sup> About the diffidence about the first slogan, an overtly religious Muslim one, he implored: ‘Hindus may not fight shy of Arabic words, when their meaning is not only totally offensive but even ennobling. God is no respecter of any particular tongue.’<sup>44</sup> Speaking in Karachi on 22 July 1920, Gandhi warned the Hindus that if they did not help the Muhammadans in their time of trouble, their [own] slavery was a certainty.<sup>45</sup> At a public meeting in Vadtal in Gujrat on 19 January 1921, Gandhi implored the masses:

I tell all the Hindu sadhus that if they sacrifice their all for the sake of the Khilafat, they will have done a great thing for the protection of Hinduism. Today the duty of every Hindu is to save Islam from danger. If you do this, God Himself will inspire them to look upon Hindus as friends and Hindus will look upon Muslims as friends.

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However, as the sceptics had predicted, within a year of the launch of the Non-cooperation movement, the Muslims were growing restive and impatient. It was not as easy to secure British concessions on this issue, as Gandhi’s promise had held out to them. Gandhi himself acknowledged that ‘in their impatient anger, the Musalmans ask for more energetic and more



prompt action by the Congress and Khilafat organizations. To the Musalmans, *Swaraj* means, as it must mean, India's ability to deal effectively with the Khilafat question.' <sup>47</sup> He even advocated that he 'would gladly ask for postponement of *Swaraj* activity if thereby we could advance the interest of the Khilafat'.

Muslim leaders such as Faqir Qayamuddin and Mohammad Abdul Bari jointly wrote to the president of the Central Khilafat Committee, Miya Mahomed Haji Jan Mohammad Chotani, on 14 May 1920:

Lessons of forbearance and patience are troublesome. Tell Mr Gandhi that while I myself will be guided by his advice, I will not restrain those people who in their haste go against it although I will not stimulate them, because in spite of entertaining different opinion, I have promised to go by his consent . . . but it should be borne in mind that we shall not sit (idle) relying upon him, but thanking him for his sympathy, will fulfil our religious obligation. This is a religious duty, which is unalterable. In its discharge, reliance can be placed on no one but God—whoever, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, prevent us from this, his tool will be included in the list of enemies. <sup>48</sup>

Other Muslim leaders too were unwilling to heed the advice of patience and continue the Non-cooperation movement with Gandhi in the absence of tangible results. They did exactly what was feared they might—invite the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India for the pan-Islamic cause. In his misguided enthusiasm, Gandhi went to the extent of even supporting such a move: 'I would, in a sense, certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan, if he waged a war against the British Government. That is to say, I would openly tell my countrymen that it would be a crime to help a government which had lost the confidence of the nation to remain in power.' <sup>49</sup> Even his most ardent supporters were shocked by such statements that had no roots in pragmatism or practicality.

The Nagpur session of the Congress held immediately thereafter, in December 1920, cemented Gandhi's influence over the party. It endorsed several ideas that were close to his heart—promotion of swadeshi or homespun clothes, enforcement of prohibition of alcohol, striving for Hindu-Muslim unity and declaring the charkha or spinning wheel as a key

to Indian freedom. Most importantly, Gandhi promised the Congress that his method of struggle through non-cooperation would lead to the establishment of swaraj within a year. This raised the hopes of all the members who decided to give it their best shot. However, and most interestingly, what swaraj actually meant was never clearly defined. It was left open and malleable to anyone's interpretation. Some called it self-rule and complete independence, others termed it limited self-rule within the British dominion, while the staunch Khilafatists linked to it a strong desire for Afghan invasion.

The Nagpur session endorsed Gandhi's plan of a triple boycott— legislatures, courts and educational institutions maintained or aided by the government, as part of the Non-cooperation agitation. Eminent leaders appealed to students to leave their educational institutions and this was met with a wholehearted and enthusiastic response by the youth across India. Many of these youngsters organized themselves into the corps of National Volunteers—a group of young men of daring, militant character. Forceful and sometimes violent imposition of hartals, and picketing to prevent the sale of liquor and foreign goods were conducted in several places.<sup>50</sup>

As part of non-cooperation with the government, the Congress withdrew its candidates from the seats to the councils in an attempt to create an administrative deadlock. Gandhi had hoped that the Congress's boycott of legislatures would lead to a wholesale abstention from the voting process by the voters too. 'Will a single Moderate leader,' asked Gandhi, care to enter any Council if more than half his electorate disapproved of his offering himself as a candidate at all? I hold that it would be unconstitutional for him to do so.'<sup>51</sup> But he was mistaken. A quarter or less of the voters did not heed the Congress's call and non-Congress candidates too contested the elections and were duly returned to the councils as well. They of course proved to be ineffectual in terms of true representation of the people. The Congress used this trump card to communicate that the elections held in the wake of the Reforms was not representative of the people's mandate and was a complete failure. Even

the British grudgingly acknowledged this, as Sir Frank Sly, the governor of the Central Provinces, mentioned in his speech on 22 November 1924: ‘At the first election many of the electors, under the influence of the Non-Cooperation movement, abstained from voting, and members were returned to the Legislative Council who could not claim to be really representative of public opinion, and some of them were unfit to exercise the responsibilities of their position.’ <sup>52</sup>

Courts too were boycotted. Leaders of the Bar, like Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das, gave up their practice as an example of sacrifice and this was emulated by several others. Large numbers of students began a boycott of their schools and colleges, and held protest marches, black flag processions and so on. All these activities under the larger umbrella of non-cooperation created, for the first time in modern Indian history, a dedicated rank and file of full-time freedom fighters.

The government followed an initial policy of indifference and then persecution when maintenance of law and order became a problem. Finally, Gandhi met the viceroy, Lord Reading, in Simla six times between 13 and 18 May 1921. The proceedings were largely unknown but in the meeting, the viceroy managed to extract a promise from Gandhi to secure an apology from the Ali brothers for allegedly making incendiary speeches calling to violence during the Non-cooperation movement.

The government had intercepted a telegram—a wire sent to the Amir of Afghanistan inviting him to invade India and urging him to not make peace with the British—written in Persian, allegedly by Muhammad Ali. Swami Shraddhanand mentions this incident in his memoir. Muhammad Ali had feigned complete ignorance in the matter as he knew neither Persian nor Arabic and he was made a maulana only by virtue of the duties of tabligh (conversion) that he had conducted. On reaching Anand Bhawan, Pandit Motilal Nehru’s Allahabad residence, Muhammad Ali took Shraddhanand aside and taking out a paper from his handbag, gave him a draft of a telegram to read. ‘What was my astonishment,’ noted Shraddhanand, ‘when I saw the draft of the selfsame telegram in the peculiar handwriting of the Father of the non-violent cooperation

movement!’<sup>53</sup> Gandhi reached Anand Bhawan the next day and when asked by Sharaddhanand about this matter, did not remember to have sent any such telegram.

To prevent their prosecution, as threatened by the viceroy in the Simla meeting, Gandhi managed to extract an apology from the Ali brothers. This lowered the prestige of Gandhi as well as that of the Ali brothers and weakened the Non-cooperation movement to an extent. The leaders were seen as striking deals with their opponent. The Ali brothers tried to wriggle out of the embarrassment by making several public statements that the apology was just incidental.

Subsequently, their call to Muslims, through convenient fatwas issued by clerics, which deemed working for the British as irreligious, led to their prosecution and sentence to two years’ rigorous imprisonment. This reinvigorated the flagging Non-cooperation movement and gave it new impetus. Nationwide strikes, agitations, boycott of the Prince of Wales Edward VIII’s visit and other programmes were implemented with great gusto, inviting repressive measures from the government. The movement was not without violence. In Bombay, in November 1921, protests degenerated into mob violence and looting, policemen were beaten up in three days of rioting and about fifty-eight civilians killed, with 400 injured.<sup>54</sup> Gandhi expressed deep remorse at this violence.

The one year that Gandhi had declared for the attainment of swaraj was coming to an end. At this time, negotiations for an amicable settlement began with Chittaranjan Das and Madan Mohan Malaviya of the Congress acting as conduits between Gandhi and the viceroy. The latter stated his terms clearly. If the Congress agreed to call off the movement, the government would release all political prisoners imprisoned during the movement, and in due course, the Ali brothers too. They would also summon a Round Table Conference between the government and the Congress to settle the future constitution of India. Young Subhas Chandra Bose, who was an active volunteer of the movement and jailed for participation, reminisces:

Rightly or wrongly, the Mahatma had promised *swaraj* within one year. That year was drawing to a close. Barely a fortnight was left and within this short period something had to be achieved in order to save the face of the Congress and fulfil the Mahatma's promise regarding *swaraj*. The offer of the Viceroy had come to him as a godsend. If a settlement was made before December 31st and all the political prisoners were released, it would appear to the popular imagination as a great triumph for the Congress. The Round Table Conference might or might not be a success, but if it failed, and the Government refused to concede the popular demands—the Congress could resume the fight at any time, and when it did so, it would command greater prestige and public confidence. <sup>55</sup>

But Gandhi's insistence on the release of the Ali brothers as being contingent to any compromise ruined the deal. Chittaranjan Das who was playing interlocutor was 'beside himself with anger and disgust. The chance of a lifetime, he said, had been lost.' <sup>56</sup>

Gandhi then embarked on a mass Civil Disobedience movement from Bardoli, a small tehsil in the Surat district of the Bombay Presidency, on 1 February 1922. Gandhi mentioned in his letter to the viceroy that this was to carry on till all prisoners convicted in the movement were released, the press freed from interference, and the redress of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs was taken up. It was undoubtedly a bold ultimatum. From Bardoli the fire spread to Assam, Bihar, Central Provinces, Madras Presidency and other parts of India. No-tax campaigns, boycott of foreign goods and picketing were planned all over the country, shaking the very foundations of the British government.

On its part, the government did not take the developments lightly. On 6 February, the viceroy virtually declared war, bent upon crushing this upsurge. Just a day earlier, on 5 February, an incident in a small village called Chauri Chaura near Gorakhpur in the United Provinces inadvertently provided a way out of the deadlock. The police had opened fire on demonstrators, before running out of ammunition and locking themselves up in their station. The excited mob set fire to the police station and as the harried officers came running out, some twenty-two of them were hacked to death and their bodies thrown into the flames. After that, events progressed quickly. Gandhi decided to use the Chauri Chaura

incident as an excuse to call off his movement at a time when it had peaked and agree to a Round Table Conference instead. In a speech on 10 February at Bardoli, calling off the much-hyped and anticipated movement, Gandhi blamed this on the fact that the ‘country at large has not accepted the teaching of non-violence. I must, therefore, immediately stop the movement for civil disobedience’.<sup>57</sup> Two days later, on 12 February, the working committee called off the movement formally and with its adoption by the AICC in a fortnight, Civil Disobedience was history.

Sitting in faraway Port Blair, Vinayak was keeping a close watch on these massive political developments in mainland India. He denounced the Khilafat movement as an ‘*aafat*’ or a calamity and menace to the country, warning that a wave of fanaticism would sweep the country and engulf it in its treacherous grip.

The death of Lokmanya Tilak in India gave a fillip to these movements. It is a belief current among us that when a great man dies, nature herself is unable to bear the shock and she erupts in hurricanes and typhoons, in pestilence and epidemics full of evil portent to the world. The exit from the Indian world of a powerful personality like Lokamanya Tilak ushered in the mad intoxication of Khilafat agitation conspiring with the cult of the Charka as a way to Swaraj in one year . . . The Non-cooperation movement for Swaraj based on these twin principles was a movement without power and was bound to destroy the power of the country. It is an illusion, a hallucination, not unlike the hurricane that sweeps over a land only to destroy it. It is a disease of insanity, an epidemic and megalomania.<sup>58</sup>

The abrupt calling off of the movement greatly dampened the enthusiasm of thousands of people who had been galvanized. As several historians and commentators have contended, it possibly pushed back the attainment of freedom by several years, if not decades. Writing about the popular sentiment in the country, Subhas Bose states:

The Dictator’s decree was obeyed at the time but there was a regular revolt in the Congress camp. No one could understand why Mahatma should have used the isolated incident at Chauri Chaura for strangling the movement all over the country. Popular resentment was all the greater because the Mahatma had not cared to consult

representatives from the different provinces and because the situation in the country as a whole was exceedingly favourable for the success of the civil disobedience campaign. To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity. The principal lieutenants of the Mahatma, Deshbandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and Lala Lajpat Rai, who were all in prison, shared the popular resentment . . . Deshbandhu . . . was beside himself with anger and sorrow at the way Mahatma Gandhi was repeatedly bungling. He was just beginning to forget the December blunder when the Bardoli retreat came as a staggering blow. Lala Lajpat Rai was experiencing the same feeling and it is reported that in sheer disgust he addressed a seventy-page letter to the Mahatma from prison.

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Even Jawaharlal Nehru opined that they were very angry to learn ‘of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts . . . the young people were even more agitated. Our mounting hopes tumbled to the ground and this mental reaction was to be expected.’ He found it deplorable that a remote village in an ‘out-of-the-way place’ now determined the end to a ‘national struggle for freedom’.<sup>60</sup> As Romain Rolland stated in graphic terms:

It is dangerous to assemble all the forces of a nation, and to hold the nation, panting, before a prescribed movement, to lift one’s arm to give the final command and then, at the last moment, let one’s arm drop, and thrice call a halt just as the formidable machinery has been set in motion. One risks running the brakes and paralyzing the impetus.<sup>61</sup>

Realizing that Gandhi’s hold over the Congress was weakening, the government sprang into action. He was tried at Ahmedabad on 18 March 1922 on the charges of instigating disaffection against the government. He pleaded guilty and explained why he had turned from a British loyalist to an uncompromising non-cooperator. The sessions judge sentenced him to six years’ simple imprisonment. The chances of revival of a movement that was so wedded to a single personality fizzled out with this. The Congress split up, with senior leaders such as Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru resigning from the party in anguish and forming a new organization called the Swaraj Party.

## Cellular Jail, May 1921

Even as the country was going through a political ferment, Vinayak received a letter from the Government of Bombay. The jamadar smiled as he handed the letter to Vinayak, telling him that it brought good news. The Government of Bombay had finally agreed to shift the Savarkar brothers from Cellular Jail to one of its own. The reason behind this was not an acceptance of their petitions, but the fact that the government was contemplating a closure of Cellular Jail. Having been given several such false alarms about his release or transfer, Vinayak was indifferent. He had completed ten years in prison by then and was hoping to be given the privilege of applying for a 'ticket' that was normally made to prisoners after three years of incarceration. This entitled a prisoner to live outside the prison, with family and options to earn a livelihood. After such a long time, the option of transfer to an Indian jail perplexed Vinayak. Having served ten years in Port Blair would he be eligible for any privileges in the new prison, he wondered.

The next morning, he was asked to meet the jailor who told him to pack up and get ready for his departure. Vinayak had mixed emotions. At Cellular Jail he at least had his brother's company, while back in India they were surely going to be lodged in separate prisons. Friends, fellow prisoners and the locals poured in to wish him well and see him off. With the meagre amounts many of them earned, they brought sweets, flowers, fruits, biscuits and other gifts for their 'Bada Babu'. They were overwhelmed by his untiring efforts to make their lives better, even while suffering himself. With a mantra on his lips that he made the others repeat, Vinayak bid adieu to the torture cell that had been his home for a decade:

One God, one country, one hope,  
One caste, one life, one language,  
We stand by these. <sup>62</sup>



The gates of Cellular Jail that had creaked open for him in 1911 were opening once again. Babarao and Vinayak made their way out. Vinayak whispered to his brother: 'This little threshold is a borderland between life and death. From death we are crossing into life only by stepping athwart the threshold. Yes! We have crossed it and stepped into the land of the living. And now? We do not mind very much. Let the future take care of itself.' <sup>63</sup>

A Maratha prisoner, Kushaba, who had been raised to the position of a jamadar and was shortly to receive his ticket of freedom, rushed forward, defying the escort that guarded the brothers, and tried to garland Vinayak with fresh champaka flowers. A police officer tried hard to ward him off, but this precious gift seemed to Vinayak a validation of all his efforts and the unalloyed love of a fellow countryman. Thanking him, they made their way to S.S. *Maharaja*, the same steamer that had brought them to Port Blair. This time they were dumped in a dingy cabin along with lunatics on board. Babarao was burning with fever and was herded with this pack. After much protest they were moved to a place that had slightly better ventilation. As they reached Indian shores, Vinayak felt an inexplicable thrill of setting foot on mainland India after such a long time.

### Calcutta/Ratnagiri, May 1921

On 26 May 1921, the steamer docked at the port of Calcutta and the brothers were taken away to Alipore Jail. As Vinayak feared, he and Babarao were separated and put in different cells. Vinayak turned back several times to watch his brother walking away forlornly, coughing incessantly, and he felt as though they would never see each other again.

The same day that the brothers reached Alipore, a Calcutta periodical, *Capital*, run by the city's influential Anglo-Indians, carried an article, 'Ditcher's Diary', which alleged that Babarao was an expert in wireless messaging; that he used this to send messages to fellow revolutionaries through the German wireless network while he was in the Andamans, calling on them to attack via the Sumatra Islands. The article justified

their continued captivity in the larger interest of national security. Narayanrao had dragged the publication to court on defamation through his solicitors, Manilal and Kher. In its 28 July 1921 issue the *Capital* deeply regretted the publication of such a baseless and slanderous article and offered an unconditional apology to the Savarkar brothers.

Meanwhile, in Alipore prison, Vinayak overheard interesting chatter between two sepoys who were deployed to keep a watch over him at night. They were talking to each other excitedly:

We are going to have Swaraj in two months. For a powerful yogi of the name of Gandhi has begun his fight with the Government. The British are helpless against him. For a bullet-shot does not hurt him. If put in prison, he knows how to come out of it. Such superhuman powers he possesses. He vanishes from his cell and is seen standing beyond the outer wall. Such is the magic he wields. This has happened several times.

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Given the quick release from jail on each imprisonment, such myths abounded about Gandhi. There were similar legends about Vinayak too. He recounts a sepoy asking him, in an obvious reference to the Marseilles episode, how many days he had swum in the sea. When he replied that it had taken him only a short ten-minute swim to the quay, the sepoy was shocked and his belief in Vinayak's miraculous powers was shattered! Vinayak recounts: 'My habit of reporting correctly what happened at Marseilles had lost me many friendships in life and their reverence for me.' 65

After a week, Vinayak was dispatched from Calcutta by train to Bombay. From there, he was taken to the district jail in Ratnagiri where he was lodged as Convict number 558. Babarao had been taken away to Bijapur prison in northern Karnataka. The first few weeks at Ratnagiri were miserable for Vinayak. During his last few months in the Andamans, he was getting better-cooked food and milk that had helped his body recuperate from the debilitating illness. But in Ratnagiri, he was once again denied milk and fed badly baked bread. Further, he was kept in solitary confinement and all concessions—clothing, freedom from hard

labour, reading, writing on paper or a slate and interacting with fellow inmates—granted in the Andamans were withdrawn. The same uniform that he had when he was lodged in the Bombay prisons before he was sent to Port Blair, with the iron badge carrying the year of his release—1960—was given to him. It made him feel that he was serving his sentence from the start, all over again. He was given the task of spinning cotton and denied any books to read. This melancholy got to him and yet again, he seriously contemplated suicide. He battled with his mind and gave himself courage and hope to bear it all with resilience and continue the fight without giving up in a cowardly fashion. He decided to get back to his earlier resolve of mentally composing poems and committing them to memory. This was the best way he could keep his mind occupied in the throes of loneliness and despair.

The worsening condition of his brothers distressed Narayanrao. He wrote to Jamnadas Dwarkadas, the editorial-in-charge of *Young India* and a close associate of Gandhi, on 15 September 1921, seeking his intervention. Narayanrao quoted Section 55 of the IPC that provides every convict sentenced for transportation for life, a commutation of the punishment by the government after fourteen years, with or without the consent of the offender. He also brought attention to the government resolution of the judicial department (No. 5308) dated 12 October 1905 that allowed release of lifers after completing fourteen years of imprisonment, inclusive of remission earned. In Babarao's case, he explained, twelve years of imprisonment had been completed as of 9 June 1921. During the Delhi Durbar, he had received a remission, and this added up to twenty-five months. This amounted to a total punishment of fourteen years, making him eligible for release as per the rules quoted above. In view of the visit of the Prince of Wales, he urged Jamnadas to influence the government to seek his brothers' release. He added:

Apart from whether you are a cooperationist or non-cooperationist; apart from whether you are a Tilakite, a Gandhite, or a Besantive; apart from whether you are a loyalist or a seditionist, you must feel pious disdain towards this sort of vindictive policy of a Government towards two individuals whom the Government claim to be

their subjects. And all this when my brothers have declared to accept the New Reforms and work constitutionally in future; when a member of the Council of State of the standing of Mr A. Rangaswami Ayyangar offers as much sum as the Government demands as security. Dear Jamnadas, this sort of individual tyranny, I am sure will make any justice loving man abhor it—because true justice is always blended with mercy. <sup>66</sup>

In his reply dated 13 October 1921, Jamnadas maintained that he had spoken to the government and that he was ‘afraid that nothing could be done in the matter. The question was re-examined by the Government of India as recently as June last, and they are not prepared at present to reopen it.’ <sup>67</sup>

Vinayak sent another petition to the government on 19 August 1921. <sup>68</sup> The text of this petition, unlike several others from the Andamans, clearly indicates the spirit of a broken and dejected man. The frustration borne out of the abominable conditions in the Ratnagiri District Prison, when he was hoping for a better future after spending ten years in the Andamans and the good work he had done there, is obvious. For the first time, he expressed ‘regret’ for his revolutionary past—something he had skirted around and never stated equivocally in all the earlier petitions. He confessed that he was not the same man as in the days of his conviction and ‘he sincerely regrets that he should have ever been caught up in the whirlwinds of political passions and ruined the brilliant career that was already his’. But in the wake of the reforms ushered in by the Government of India Act and the looming threat of a possible Afghan invasion (which he calls ‘Asiatic hordes’) ‘leaves him convinced that a close and even a loyal cooperation and connection with the British Empire are good and indispensable for both of them’. He drew attention to the release of revolutionaries such as Barin Ghose, Hemchandra Das and Pyarasingh who had been convicted for similar crimes. If someone was poisoning the government’s ears or attributing motives to his petitions to make him a scapegoat, he wished to disassociate from such mischievous acts. He pledged to eschew political life. ‘His broken health,’ Vinayak added, ‘and the long sufferings make him determined—apart from any such condition—to retire and lead a

private life and so he is willing to undertake to observe honestly this or any other such definite and reasonable condition that the Government may be pleased to dictate.’ It seemed to defy all logic that ‘all the thousands of seditious convicted before and after the petitioner, none has been held up in Jails so long as the petitioner and his brother (they have remained while all those lifers convicted with them have long been released)’.

If his ill luck persisted and the government chose to disregard this petition, he sought a redress to his grievances. Had he been in an Indian jail for eleven years, he would have automatically earned two or more years of remission. Had he continued in the Andamans, he would have had recourse to a ticket of leave and get his family to stay with him. He had gained no benefits here; in fact, he received the worst disadvantages of both ends. He therefore requested for either a remission of two to three years as per Indian jail norms or a return to the Andamans with the sanction of a ticket leave that would enable him to take his family—from whom he had been separated for such a long time—along with him. ‘He would,’ promised Vinayak, ‘if allowed this much at least—be simply glad to lead a retired and private life forgotten by and forgetting the world in the blessings of a dear home life—that world which is so terribly afraid of having its safety disturbed by so hapless, hopeless and broken individual as the petitioner.’

He hoped the ongoing Non-cooperation and Khilafat agitations would not influence the government’s decisions in this matter. In the Andamans too he had voiced his support of the other prisoners who had received general amnesty following the royal proclamation, for signing a ‘pledge that they would abstain from politics and revolutionary activity for a certain number of years’. He wrote in his memoirs: ‘My advice to my friends was that there was nothing wrong in it, as it referred to a future contingency and was in the best national interest.’<sup>69</sup> He appears to be applying the same principle to himself in his 1921 petition.

Around the same time, Yamunabai, Vinayak’s wife, also petitioned<sup>70</sup> Sir George Lloyd, the governor of Bombay, seeking a release for Babarao on the same terms that Narayanrao had set out in his letter to Jamnadas. She

hoped that in the interim the brothers would be allowed a monthly letter or an interview and access to books and newspapers that were not proscribed by the government.

On 23 November 1921, the Government of Bombay replied to Vinayak's petition, rejecting his requests, pointing out 'that the question of granting remission to prisoners returned from the Andamans is under the consideration of Government'.<sup>71</sup> The brothers were, however, allowed access to books and newspapers and interaction with other prisoners.

Vinayak made use of this opportunity to continue with the shuddhi activities that he undertook in the Andamans, as the condition was similar when it came to forceful or induced conversion of convicts. He also voiced his protests about the disgusting prison protocol when it came to answering the call of nature. There was no partition and no door to the lavatories that were arranged in a line, and the prisoners were made to sit down rubbing shoulders with one another. There was no roof overhead and they had to use these open lavatories in all kinds of weather. They were not allowed to take water inside and had to wash themselves at a water tap a little distance away. The repeated protests by Vinayak and the other prisoners whom he inspired led the jail administration to introduce changes.

With access to writing, Vinayak managed to complete three poems that were in various stages of composition: 'Kamala', 'Gomantak' and 'Saptarshi'. He also wrote a miscellaneous set of poems entitled 'Virahoswasa' (The Sighs of Separation). Narayanrao published complete editions of these poems. Now that he had access to books, Vinayak read and reread the *Dasabodha* of Ramdas. It was a book that had captivated him as a child, and it was his way of drawing inspiration at a time when his morale was at its lowest.

He learnt from Narayanrao that Babarao was at the Bijapur prison. When Narayanrao had visited Babarao in December 1921, he was dressed in khadi. The jail authorities had told him that he could meet his elder brother only if he changed his garments. Finding this offensive and insulting, Narayanrao protested and the meeting got cancelled. The dank,

suffocating and deserted cell of Bijapur had a disastrous impact on Babarao's already sinking health. He was given the daily labour of grinding 35 pounds of wheat <sup>72</sup> and he was in complete solitary confinement. This led Babarao to the limits of insanity, even as his headache and diarrhoea accompanied with stomach spasms resurfaced. His knees gave way and he began suffering from arthritis that was to trouble him all his life. A few friendly sparrows whom he fed grains were his only source of cheer. Before long, the jail authorities drove them away too. Bedbugs, mosquitoes and scorpions made the dark cell a veritable hell.

With the help of Benjamin Guy Horniman, British journalist and editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, Narayanrao actively campaigned to move Babarao from Bijapur jail. Finally, in January 1922, the government shifted him to the Sabarmati prison in Ahmedabad. But here too he received no treatment for his illness for a long time, before being shifted to a prison hospital. It was clear that Babarao was dying. He petitioned the government on 4 July 1922, putting forth his case and also about the remission he had earned.

While it was solitary confinement at Sabarmati too, he was at least taken out for a walk by the warden every evening. The breath of fresh air, the sunlight and the sight of chirping birds brought some relief. He also met Maulana Hasrat Mohani, a veteran Khilafatist, who was also lodged as a prisoner here. His interactions with the Maulana during the evening walks made Babarao aware of the many sinister subplots of the Khilafat movement, including the planned Afghan invasion. There were rumours about a purported 'Gandhi–Amanullah pact', between Gandhi and the Amir of Afghanistan, calling upon the latter to invade India. All this rattled Babarao and despite his failing health he wished that he was free so that he could tour the country and open the eyes of the people to these realities. It was during this time that he became a vociferous critic of Gandhi and his philosophy. He considered the spinning wheel, filling up of prisons, Non-cooperation movement and the boycott of schools and offices woolly-headedness. Though he appreciated the inherent call towards self-

reliance as symbolized by the charkha that Gandhi popularized, he found it meaningless in the age of machines.

While a natural consequence of fighting for freedom was repression and imprisonment, he failed to fathom how merely going to prison was an index of patriotism, as was becoming the norm in the country. There were no dearth of jails and more could be constructed to lock up every revolutionary. He believed one could do more for the country being outside prison. He felt it was ethical, if need arose, to even escape from prison in order to fight for the nation. Like Vinayak, he too believed that blindly following the path of cooperation or non-cooperation did not help much. One needed to calibrate the political response depending on how the government was reacting and hence ‘responsive cooperation’ was a better alternative.<sup>73</sup>

Narayanrao was informed that his brother’s health was failing. He came rushing to Sabarmati. The civil surgeon examined Babarao and opined that he would live for another few days only. The government finally took notice of the condition because it did not want him to die in custody. They ordered his release. In September 1922, thirteen years after entering jail in June 1909, Babarao was released from prison on a stretcher. The harrowing days of prison life were over for him. With the loving care of his family and providence, Babarao recuperated, thereby defying the civil surgeon’s prophecy.

Meanwhile, it was in the dark confines of Ratnagiri prison that Vinayak began writing his magnum opus on his political philosophy—his conception of what constituted a ‘Hindu nationalist identity’. These were distilled from his experiences in the Andaman and Ratnagiri jails with respect to the conversions, his own attempts at shuddhi and sangathan and the raging debates in the country surrounding the Khilafat agitation. The word that he popularized and which holds immense political currency in contemporary India was ‘Hindutva’ or ‘Hindu-ness’.





## Who Is a Hindu?

**R**ahimatullah M. Sayani was an affluent Muslim belonging to the Khoja community who were disciples of the Aga Khan. He was associated with the Congress right from its inception. After Badruddin Tyabji, he was the second Muslim president of the Congress and presided over its twelfth annual session in Calcutta in 1896. In a candid presidential address, Sayani outlined, among other issues, the feelings of alienation among Muslims of India and attributed his reasons for the same. Sayani mentioned that before the advent of the British, the Muslims were the rulers of the country, with all the advantages of the ruling class. From the monarch to the courtiers to the landlords and officials, everyone was a co-religionist; the court language was theirs; they inherited positions of trust and responsibility that came along with emoluments and influence as their birthright. The Hindus, though part of the polity, were ‘tenants-at-will’ of the Muslims, were subservient and in awe of them.<sup>1</sup> But a stroke of ill luck brought them down to the level of their Hindu countrymen. Being a ‘very sensitive race’ the Muslims resented this and would have nothing to do with their new rulers or their new fellow subjects, hitherto subordinates.

With the advent of English education in the country, the Hindus who were accustomed to learning a foreign language, as they had under their

Muslim rulers, took to English naturally and easily. But the Muslims were yet to take to anything that ‘required hard labour and application, especially as they had to work harder than their former subjects, the Hindus’. They resented the idea of competing with those they considered inferior. The consequence of this was a turning of tables, with the Hindus becoming superior and the Muslim gradually being ‘ousted from their lands, their offices; in fact everything was lost, save their honour . . . they were soon reduced to a state of utter poverty. Ignorance and apathy seized hold of them while the fall of their former greatness rankled in their hearts’. The numbers proved Sayani’s claims. By 1867, eighty-eight Hindus and not a single Muslim had passed the MA and BA examinations.

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It is important to understand the long history behind this sense of alienation and separatism among a vast section of Muslims in India, particularly its leadership and clergy. This also becomes a prelude, setting the context in which Vinayak’s philosophy of Hindutva took birth. The political situation and the Hindu–Muslim equations prompted the urgency with which he composed such an exposition from the troubling confines of Ratnagiri prison. The leaderless disorientation in Hindu society, it being led in various directions and towards unrelated causes, and its own inherent divisions of caste and creed needed an intellectual response. Vinayak hoped to do that through his treatise.

There are numerous contradictions too. The same constitutional reforms that Vinayak endorsed in his petitions from Cellular Jail had provided the introduction for separate Muslim electorates. This move undoubtedly helped the later solidification of Indian politics on religious affiliation.

After the failure of the 1857 War of Independence, where re-establishing Bahadur Shah Zafar as the emperor of India was an important objective, the Wahabi movement of 1857–58, under Enayet Ali, did not join hands with the leaders of the 1857 movement. They fought for the establishment of a theocratic Islamic state, or dar-ul-Islam, in India. The Hindus were completely aloof from this long-drawn Wahabi struggle. After this, the Muslims as a community, by and large, did not take active

part in any political organizations, including the INC. Being perceived as among the chief conspirators in 1857 further reduced their influence with the British and a general dejection gripped the community. At this point, Sir Syed Ahmed appeared as a beacon of hope. He took it as his mission to both mend fences between the Muslim community and the British, and also introduce the community to modern education. In fact, he published an entire tract, *The Loyal Mohammedans of India*, in which he took pains to explain that if there was any community in India that could be trusted and were fast bound with Christians, it was the Muslims of the country, who would be their staunch friends and loyalists. Inculcating this sense of loyalty to the British was one of the declared objectives of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College that he set up in Aligarh in 1877. He vehemently opposed those of the community who were against the British—be it ulemas or those associated with the Congress. According to Syed, the Congress was fighting for a representative government on British lines—one in which the majority voice reigned, which would entail a fourth of the population comprising Muslims getting a short shrift. He never tired of emphasizing that India was a conglomerate of several nations and that the Muslims formed a distinctive unit. In a speech, he articulates this belief:

In a country like India where homogeneity does not exist in any one of the fields (nationality, religion, way of living, customs, mores, culture, and historical tradition), the introduction of representative government cannot produce any beneficial results; it can only result in interfering with the peace and prosperity of the land . . . the aims and objects of the Indian National Congress are based upon an ignorance of history and present day realities; they do not take into consideration that India is inhabited by different nationalities; I consider the experiment which the Indian National Congress wants to make fraught with dangers and suffering for all the nationalities of India, specially for the Muslims. The Muslims are in a minority, but they are a highly united minority. At least traditionally they are prone to take the sword in hand when the majority oppresses them. If this happens, it will bring about disasters greater than the ones which came in the wake of the happenings of 1857 . . . the Congress cannot rationally prove its claim to represent the opinions, ideals, and aspirations of the Muslims. <sup>3</sup>

The thrust of his Aligarh movement was that Hindus and Muslims were separate entities with distinctive outlooks, conflicting interests, and in a way, separate nationalities. In fact, he was the first proponent of the ‘two-nation’ theory that was to have catastrophic results on the future of India. To quote Sir Syed:

In whose hands shall the administration and the Empire of India rest? Now, suppose that all English, and the whole English army, were to leave India, taking with them all their cannon and their splendid weapons and everything, then who would be rulers of India? Is it possible that under these circumstances two nations—the Mahomedans and the Hindus—could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down. To hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceivable. <sup>4</sup>

Regarding the Congress demand that a section of the viceroy’s council should be elected by the people, Sir Syed debated:

Let us imagine the Viceroy’s Council made in this manner. And let us suppose, first of all, that we have universal suffrage, as in America, and that all have votes. And let us also suppose that all Mohammadan electors vote for a Mohammadan and all Hindu electors for a Hindu member, and now count how many votes the Mohammadan member will have and how many the Hindu. It is certain that the Hindu member will have four times as many, because their population is four times numerous . . . and now how can the Mohammadan guard his interests? <sup>5</sup>

Thus, democratic representation or appointments based on competition would work to the Muslim detriment and result in a Hindu rule. As a result, British rule was in the best interests of the community, which should also stay away from political agitation and act as a counter to the agitating Hindus, Sir Syed postulated. That the Congress suffered from an acute lack of Muslim participation in its early years is seldom mentioned. Over the first twenty-one years, from 1885 to 1905, the average attendance of Muslim delegates in the first five sessions was 15 per cent; that fell to 5 per cent and below in the subsequent fifteen sessions. <sup>6</sup> Muslims of Allahabad, Lucknow, Meerut, Lahore, Madras and other places passed

resolutions condemning the Congress. Newspapers such as *Mahomedan Observer*, *Victoria Paper*, *The Muslim Herald*, *Rafiq-i-Hind*, and *Imperial Paper* spoke unequivocally against the Congress, as did a powerful Muslim organ of northern India—the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*.<sup>7</sup> Riots over issues such as cow slaughter and processional music in front of mosques further widened the growing gulf between the two communities, which the British took advantage of.

For instance, Lord Curzon managed to win over Muslims who were initially opposed to the Partition of Bengal by convincing them that it was in their favour. Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, one of the most influential Muslim leaders of East Bengal, sided with the British. Many Muslims saw in the creation of the province of East Bengal and Assam a culmination of the dreams of the Aligarh movement—a separate Muslim unit within the Indian body politic. At a meeting held in Dacca on 30 December 1906, a resolution of prominent Muslim leaders upheld the Partition of Bengal plan and criticized the swadeshi movement raging against it.<sup>8</sup>

The British actively encouraged petitions from prominent Muslim leaders seeking employment of a due proportion from the community in government service, abolition of competitive examinations for the community for recruitment to services, appointments of Muslim judges in every high court and chief court, communal or separate electorates for municipalities and Muslim electoral colleges for elections to legislative councils. Correspondence between Viceroy Lord Minto's private secretary, Colonel Dunlop Smith, and Muslim leaders clearly demonstrates this, where, among other things, he carefully orchestrates the whole plan of action:

But in all these matters I want to remain behind the screen and this move should come from you. You are aware, how anxious I am for the good of the Musalmans, and I would, therefore, render all help with the greatest pleasure. I can prepare and draft the address for you. If it be prepared in Bombay then I can revise it because I know the art of drawing up petitions in good language. But Nawabsaheb, please remember that if within a short time any great and effective action has to be taken, then you should act quickly.<sup>9</sup>

This ‘engineered’ deputation submitted its memorandum to Lord Minto who gladly accepted it. Ramsay Macdonald, the future prime minister of Britain, too had reminisced: ‘The Mahomedan leaders are inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials and that these officials have pulled wires at Simla and in London, and of malice aforethought sowed discord between the Hindu and the Mahomedan communities by showing the Muslims special favours.’<sup>10</sup> The British press also picked up and played on this division of interests within the country and that the distinctive Muslim views entitled them to be constituted as a separate entity.

Elated by the favourable reception from the government, the Muslim leadership felt the urgent need of a political association to voice their demands better and also act as a counter to the Congress. There was no pan-Indian organization of the Muslims; all they had were loosely knit local units and groups of nawabs and eminent persons. Nawab Salimullah of Dacca advocated the idea of a Central Muhammadan Association whose chief goals were to support the British government and to look after the rights and interests of all the Muslims of India, in addition to acting as a bulwark against the Congress. The scheme was accepted, and at a meeting held on 30 December 1906, it was resolved that a political association called All India Muslim League should be established. At a meeting held in Karachi on 29 December 1907, the aims of the League were drawn—promoting pro-British feelings and loyalty towards the government among Muslims, protecting the rights and interests of Muslims of India and preventing rise of feelings of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to the earlier mentioned objectives.<sup>11</sup> There was opposition to movements like the Shivaji festival promoting a Hindu leader—more so one who fought against the Mughals—as a national hero was anathema.<sup>12</sup> The secretary of the League declared:

We are not opposed to the social unity of the Hindus and the Mussalmans . . . but the other type of unity (political) involves the working out of common political purposes. This sort of our unity with the Congress cannot be possible because we and the Congressmen do not have common political objectives. They indulge in acts calculated to weaken the British Government. They want representative Government,

which means death for Mussalmans. They desire competitive examinations for employment in Government services and this would mean the deprivation of Mussalmans of Government jobs. Therefore, we need not go near political unity [with the Hindus]. It is the aim of the League to present Muslim demands through respectful request, before the Government. They should not, like Congressmen, cry for boycott, deliver exciting speeches and write impertinent articles in newspapers and hold meetings to turn public feeling and attitude against their benign Government. <sup>13</sup>

It was in this context of intense distrust and discord that we had earlier seen the letter from Ziauddin Ahmad—later vice chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University—to Abdullah Suhrawardy who was at India House in London, asking Muslims to refrain from participating in activities of Shyamji, Vinayak and other revolutionaries. The spirit of British loyalty and seeking distinctiveness from the Hindus and the Congress that Sir Syed had induced in the community was to remain for a long time with most leaders, barring a few exceptions. As Sir Percival Joseph Griffiths, a prominent businessman who also worked for Indian Civil Service largely in eastern India, noted: ‘Whatever may have been other effects of the foundation of the Muslim League, it set the seal upon the Muslim belief that their interests must be regarded as completely separate from those of the Hindus and that no fusion of the two communities was possible.’ <sup>14</sup>

In its annual session held at Amritsar in December 1908, the Muslim League expressed vehement opposition to all the ‘mischievous efforts’ to unsettle the settled fact of the Partition of Bengal. <sup>15</sup> In the Imperial Council in 1910, when Bhupendra Nath Bose raised the question of reversing the Partition of Bengal, members Shams-ul-Huda of Bengal and Mazhar-ul-Huq of Bihar strongly opposed the move. They warned that if the government meddled with this ‘beneficent measure, it would be committing an act of supreme folly and would create unrest and discontent where none existed now’. <sup>16</sup> That the views of prominent leaders of the community remained unchanged is evident from Muhammad Ali’s speech as Congress president in 1923, in which he referred to the government’s policy of reversing the Partition of Bengal as an important cause for the alienation of the Muslims from the British government. <sup>17</sup>

Throughout 1907 and 1908, heated debates were held regarding separate electorates and the weightage that was proposed by the Muslim deputation and consented to by Viceroy Lord Minto. The Muslim leadership argued that owing to the vast social, cultural and religious differences between the two communities, they feared that a Hindu majority would not be able to deal with them suitably or represent them fairly. It was also pointed out that Muslims should get a greater representation in the different councils than was warranted by their numerical strength in the country's population. The logic offered for this was rather perverse. The deputation had stated that Muslims had ruled India for 700 years before the British arrival and hence they had a natural claim to greater 'political importance', which should be reflected in the councils. They also maintained that the community had played a vital role in defending the country and this enhanced its importance further.

The Morley–Minto Reforms of 1909 not only awarded separate Muslim electorates, but also the number of their members in the council was much more than the numerical strength of their population. The seeds of discord and of being two separate nations had thus been sown several decades before the freedom movement took birth. Gopalkrishna Gokhale lamented:

It was a commonplace of Indian politics that there can be no future for India as a nation unless a durable spirit of cooperation was developed and established between the two great communities . . . the union of all communities is no doubt the goal towards which we have to strive, but it cannot be denied that it does not exist in the country today and it is no use proceeding as though it existed, when in reality it does not <sup>18</sup> . . . over the greater part of India, the two communities had inherited a tradition of antagonism which though it might ordinarily lie dormant, broke forth into activity at the smallest provocation. It was this tradition that had to be overcome. <sup>19</sup>

The eagerness of the Hindu leaders and the Congress to elicit Muslim support and forge a united front, disregarding the embers of discord and behaving like they never existed in the first place, made the Muslim leadership put a premium on their support. In the annual session of 1908, the Muslim League demanded an extension of the principles of communal



representation to local bodies, appointment of both a Hindu and a Muslim to the Privy Council and a due share for Muslims in all state services.

At a joint session of the Congress and the Muslim League held at Lucknow in December 1916, the two parties agreed to allow the over-representation for the Muslims in the legislatures and councils. In return, the Muslim leaders agreed to join the Congress movement demanding Indian autonomy. Famously known as the Lucknow Pact, it was headed by Tilak from the Congress side and by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League. It demanded that four-fifths of the provincial and central legislatures be elected on a broad franchise and half the executive council members were to be Indians elected by the councils themselves. Most of these proposals were embodied in the Government of India Act, 1919. After its initial opposition, the Congress agreed to the proposal of separate electorates for Muslims in provincial council elections and for weightage beyond their population in all provinces except Punjab and Bengal, where Hindu and Sikh minorities were taken into consideration. It was heralded as a beacon of Hindu–Muslim unity. It paved a natural way for the Khilafat movement, briefly bringing together the two communities.

One of the most tragic offshoots of the Khilafat movement was the blood-curdling atrocities committed by the Moplahs (Mapillas) of the Malabar in August 1921. A band of fanatic Muslims, they were given to frequent violent outbreaks which were sometimes driven by economic factors and at others by religious reasons. Being tenants-at-will of Hindu landlords, or *jenmi* s, they bore deep resentment against their masters who charged high rents for the lands they tilled. Spurred by the religious call of the Khilafat movement and the speeches of the Ali brothers, the Moplahs decided to strike decisively. Agrarian grievances of the Moplahs as an excuse for this pogrom does not convey the whole truth; the violence had theological sanction. The *Manchester Guardian* highlighted that despite agrarian grievances

. . . one certain element is a desperate religious fanaticism . . . India broods the horror of the cold-blooded massacres by the Moplahs, still daily showing how Hindus fare in

the hands of fanatical Mohammedans. The public, obscurely but rightly, connect the holocaust of Hindu lives and property with Khilafat preachers and realize that the rule even of the arrogant British is better than no rule. <sup>20</sup>

Though the Khilafat was a movement against the British, several past grievances got fused into the volatility of the situation. Weapons were organized and preparations made to declare the coming of the Islamic kingdom. One Khilafat leader, Ali Musaliar, was proclaimed the raja, Khilafat flags were raised, and Ernad and Walluvanad were declared Khilafat kingdoms. Unfortunately, it was the hapless Hindu community of Malabar, not the government, that bore the brunt of the outrage. Mass murders of Hindu families, brutal rapes of women in front of their family members, murders of pregnant women, desecration of temples, cow slaughter, forcible conversions, pillage, arson and loot reigned till the British troops took control. The tragic memorial of the women of Malabar to Lady Reading reads:

It is possible that your Ladyship is not fully apprised of all the horrors and atrocities perpetrated by the fiendish rebels; of the many wells and tanks filled up with the mutilated, but often only half-dead, bodies of our nearest and dearest ones who refused to abandon the faith of our fathers; of pregnant women cut to pieces and left on the roadsides and in the jungles, with the unborn babe protruding from the mangled corpse; of our innocent and helpless children torn from our arms and done to death before our eyes and of our husbands and fathers tortured, flayed and burnt alive; of our hapless sisters forcibly carried away from the midst of kith and kin and subjected to every shame and outrage which the vile and brutal imagination of these inhuman hell-hounds could conceive of; of thousands of our homesteads reduced to cinder-mounds out of sheer savagery and a wanton spirit of destruction; of our places of worship desecrated and destroyed and of the images of deity shamefully insulted by putting the entrails of slaughtered cows where flower garlands use to lie, or else smashed to pieces . . . we remember how driven out [of] our native hamlets, we wandered, starving and naked, in the jungles and forests. <sup>21</sup>

Sankaran Nair points out to several other tortures like skinning Hindus alive and making them dig their own graves before their slaughter. <sup>22</sup>

The Congress leaders disbelieved the stories from Malabar initially and Gandhi himself spoke of the 'brave God-fearing Moplahs' whom he

described as patriots who were ‘fighting for what they consider as religion, and in a manner which they consider as religious’.<sup>23</sup> He went on to add: ‘Hindus must find the causes of Moplah fanaticism. They will find that they are not without blame. They have hitherto not cared for the Moplah. It is no use now becoming angry with the Moplahs or Mussalmans in general.’<sup>24</sup> Ironically, his allies, the Khilafatists, passed resolutions congratulating the Moplahs for their heroism. Rationalizing Gandhi’s strange stand, Sankaran Nair notes:

There are two possible answers. The first, and the most probable, is that the politician within him [Gandhi] had for the time being enthralled the saint—his aim was to keep the Hindu-Mahomedan entente alive; the second, that the saint had mastered the man: religious anarchy with all its horrors being infinitely to be preferred to law and order under Satanic British Rule.<sup>25</sup>

Criticizing Gandhi’s stand, Ambedkar wrote:

Any person could have said that this was too heavy a price for Hindu-Moslem unity. But Mr Gandhi was so much obsessed by the necessity of establishing Hindu-Moslem unity that he was prepared to make light of the doings of the Moplas and the Khilafats who were congratulating them . . . Speaking of the Muslim silence over the Mopla atrocities Mr Gandhi told the Hindus: The Hindus must have the courage and the faith to feel that they can protect their religion in spite of such fanatical eruptions. A verbal disapproval by the Mussalmans of Mopla madness is no test of Mussalman friendship. The Mussalmans must naturally feel the shame and humiliation of the Mopla conduct about forcible conversions and looting, and they must work away so silently and effectively that such a thing might become impossible even among the most fanatical among them.<sup>26</sup>

Gradually, as the horrors of Malabar became more pronounced on the national scene and punctured holes in the avowed unity that Gandhi had been propounding, the Congress Working Committee passed a lame resolution, mildly admonishing the Moplahs.

Whilst however condemning violence on the part of the Moplas, the Working Committee desires it to be known that the evidence in its possession shows that the provocation beyond endurance was given to the Moplas . . . the Working Committee

regrets to find that there have been instances of so-called forcible conversion by some fanatics among Moplas, but warns the public against believing, in the Government and inspired versions.<sup>27</sup>

The efforts to minimize the scale and the impact of the carnage, just so that the farcical show of unity could be maintained nationally, were disgraceful. While a small incident in Chauri Chaura forced Gandhi to call off a well-oiled Civil Disobedience movement, one wonders how a blot that was much more heinous did not cause any ripples. The Muslim League too justified the Moplah outrage as a religious war against the British, in which the Hindus got caught in the crossfire as they were seen to be aiding the colonial masters. The Khilafat conference in its session at Cocanada held in 1923 expressed its solidarity with the Moplah ‘martyrs’. Shaukat Ali moved a resolution calling it a duty of every Muslim towards the brave Moplahs to provide for the maintenance of one Moplah orphan and that he and his brother would take the initiative for this. This was after the government intervened and crushed the uprising with a heavy hand, leaving several Moplahs dead.

Vinayak strongly condemned the barbarity of the Moplahs and the pusillanimity with which the Congress reacted to this, just to save their movement. He wrote several essays and articles warning people about the dangers and realities of the Khilafat and pan-Islamism movement—many of which were published after his release from jail. He wondered why there was no open debate or discussion with the Hindus of the country on whether they wanted to align with such a movement, and more importantly, if they were educated enough about its pros and cons.<sup>28</sup> He lamented that most Hindus were not even aware of the history of political Islam or its theology. No wonder some of them had made generous invitations to the Khalifa to shift to India where he would be crowned as an unofficial religio-political head of all Indian Muslims. What kind of a suicidal and ignorant step was this? Vinayak questioned.

He also educated Indians about the differences in the approach towards the caliphate between Shia and Sunni Muslims. The Shias considered the

Khalifa as someone from the Holy Prophet's bloodline. The Sunnis had no such compunctions; it was sufficient that the Khalifa belonged to the Quraish community, just as the Prophet. The former believed that the person who occupied this position was one of great piety and blessed with spiritual powers, while the latter believed that removing a Khalifa, no matter how incompetent or corrupt he might be, was impossible. Given the theological differences between the two sects, it was almost impossible for them to have a common Khalifa or worship in the same mosque. That all the Muslims of the world would unite and select their Khalifa was not an option that the religious denominations granted them and the Muslim theologians and leaders of India knew this very well, argued Vinayak. Yet, to assert a false sense of unity and supremacy, they had beguiled the Hindus and the Congress that such a thing was possible and they needed to rally around the idea. What locus standi did an Indian Muslim, who was not free in his own country, have that his wish or voice would be accepted by the British and more by the larger Muslim world, wondered Vinayak. This despite a Muhammad Ali claiming from the rooftops that he was a Muslim first and an Indian later.<sup>29</sup>

The calamity Vinayak warned his compatriots about was of a possible invasion of India from an external power or the sanction of that power for the creation of islands of autonomous Muslim centres within India. He apprehended a possibility wherein the new Amir of Afghanistan, who had come to power after a bloody assassination of his predecessor, had been plotting an invasion of India for long. Unwittingly, the Congress and the Hindus were playing into these designs even as reports of Islamist religious soldiers, being trained for this purpose in Siberia were gathering steam, claimed Vinayak. The Moplah riots were just a trailer of what calamity was set to befall India, he warned.

At Ratnagiri prison, Vinayak decided to formulate an intellectual response to these very troubling socio-political realities of the times, postulating the fundamentals of Hindu identity and unification, despite the trying conditions of prison life and his failing health. Unlike his other works that were composed in Marathi, this book was in English. Evidently,

the readership that he had in mind went beyond the Marathi-speaking populace; it was aimed at the country at large. Given the obvious strictures that he was under, Vinayak wrote the book under the nom de plume ‘A Maratha’. It was smuggled out of prison and later published by Narayanrao.

Right from his childhood, Vinayak had bemoaned the lack of unity and organization in Hindu society, ridden as it was with innumerable caste differences and other complexities. Finding an answer to ‘Who is a Hindu?’ seemed germane to him at this point of time. From the confines of jail, he had been watching with alarm Gandhi taking the Hindu community for a ride during the Khilafat agitation. The relative increase in the Muslim population that the census had established,<sup>30</sup> and the uncertain status of untouchables and tribal groups as Hindus for enumeration purposes made the definition of a Hindu all the more critical.

Yet again, Vinayak employed the agency of history as he had during his work on the 1857 War of Independence to create a sense of identity, pride and belonging. About the constant insinuations about the book being an ode of hatred, especially towards the Muslims, historian Janaki Bakhle opines:

Savarkar is widely reviled in Indian history as an apostle of hate; through a reading of *Hindutva* I argue that he might better be understood as a spurned lover . . . *Hindutva* in its time was also a reminder to a Hindu community that even if Gandhi had left the political milieu, there was no need to worry. A political Hindu and a true nationalist was back and ready to lead India, even from behind prison walls. *Hindutva* was a pugilistic punch thrown against Gandhi in the competitive political ring for national leadership.<sup>31</sup>

The concept of a Hindu identity had been an ongoing nationalistic project for long. Most often it was pushed to the forefront of politics during invasion, immigration or colonial occupation. Different groups throughout Indian history have—like several others across the world—tried to look to their past and to religious texts to locate a teleological narrative. Such a narrative produces a sense of identity that can be claimed, and also

legitimized in the wake of external influences. Right from the ancient saints such as Adi Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhwa, to the medieval Bhakti and Sufi poets, to modern reformers such as Dayanand Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, and even Mahatma Gandhi—there has always been a call for revival of what was known as Indian values and cultural identity.

However, it was Vinayak who extended the word ‘Hindutva’ beyond religious adherence to mean a term of ethnic nationalism. The short book that he produced proved to be highly influential, not only during the time he wrote it, but in contemporary Indian political discourse as well. Some found (and still find) the concepts elucidated as a much-needed reinforcement of Indian ideals and identity, while others criticized (and still do) it for fanning political separatism. Nonetheless, it remains an important document in the discussions around Indian identity, both as a cultural and political entity. Elucidating the importance of this book, Janaki Bakhle writes:

*Hindutva* is one of the few texts written by an Indian nationalist that links the present Hindu moment of Indian history to the pre-independence anticolonial period. Not even Gandhi’s own texts from the 1920s, much as they are read by academics, can claim such a time span of influence. However, *Hindutva*’s influence has not been without controversy. Five decades after it was written, it became the bible of militant and exclusionary Hindu nationalism, taking as its chief enemy the minority Muslim community of India. The book would also come to encapsulate and exemplify Savarkar’s entire oeuvre of writing and would dramatically influence the course of modern Indian history. <sup>32</sup>

The book is lyrical, masterfully crafted and boasts passages of romantic literary flourish. But through it all, Vinayak manages to logically situate the term ‘Hindu’. Where did it come from? What did it mean? To whom? And when?

To arouse the interest of the English-educated Indian, he begins the book with a reference to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and the famous phrase ‘What’s in a name?’ The reference to the name (‘Hindu’ in this case) was to illustrate that unlike the Shakespearean logic, here, the name

mattered a lot as he posited the first layer of Indian identity on it. It had different meanings for different people, no doubt, but throughout the text Vinayak deduced that the constant reiteration of this name through the history of the Indian people itself crystallized their first degree of identity. It also allowed him to lay out the first syllogism connecting the name (Hindu) with the country (Hindustan).

Janaki Bakhle mentions the strategies that Vinayak employed in the writing of the book:

. . . Four rhetorical strategies Savarkar employs: the politics of naming, the poetics of the list, the enchantment of territory, and the management and evocation of affect. Through these strategies he names into being a mythic Hindu community, identifies the magical territory it inhabits, and invokes through his enchantment of territory a militant affect of love. Savarkar uses a number of registers in *Hindutva*, from the theoretical and declamatory to the polemical, but the one he deploys most often is the poetic. <sup>33</sup>

At the outset, Vinayak postulated that the essence of being a ‘Hindu’, defined by him as ‘Hindutva’ or Hindu-ness, was completely different from the popular religious connotation of ‘Hinduism’. Incidentally, it is believed that Chandranath Basu first coined the term ‘Hindutva’—a neologism with Sanskrit etymology—in his 1892 Bengali work, *Hindutva—Hindur Prakrita Itihas* (Hindutva—An Authentic History). <sup>34</sup> But it was undoubtedly Vinayak who popularized the term within a short span of time.

He postulated that ‘the ideas and ideals, the systems and societies, the thoughts and sentiments which have centred round this name [Hindutva] are so varied and rich, so powerful and so subtle, so elusive and yet so vivid’ that it has taken centuries to mould it. Hindutva was not a word for Vinayak but an entire history of the land and its people. The related term—‘Hinduism’—was ‘only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva’. Inability to understand this difference, he opined, had ‘given rise to much misunderstanding and mutual suspicion between some of those sister communities that have inherited this inestimable and common treasure of



our Hindu civilization'. Hindutva was an all-embracing philosophy, to understand which he delved deeper into the word 'Hindu' itself and its captivating power over so many brave men for the longest period of human history. In his own words:

What is in a name? Ah! Call Ayodhya, Honolulu, or nickname her immortal Prince, a Pooh Bah, or ask the Americans to change Washington into a Chengiz Khan or persuade a Mohammedan to call himself a Jew, and you would soon find that the 'open sesame' was not the only word of its type. To this category of names which have been to mankind a subtle source of life and inspiration belongs the word 'Hindutva,' the essential nature of significance of which we have to investigate into . . . . Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva. Unless it is made clear what is meant by the latter, the first remains unintelligible and vague. Failure to distinguish between these two terms has given rise to much misunderstanding and mutual suspicion between some of those sister communities that have inherited this inestimable and common treasure of our Hindu civilization . . . . Hindutva is not identical with what is vaguely indicated by the term Hinduism. By any 'ism' it is generally meant a theory or a code more or less based on spiritual or religious dogma or system. But when we attempt to investigate the essential significance of Hindutva we do not primarily—and certainly not mainly—concern ourselves with any particular theocratic or religious dogma or creed . . . . Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of our Hindu race. <sup>35</sup>

Several issues of contemporary discourse, such as the Aryan Invasion Theory (AIT), racial bloodlines and foreign rule, find place in his work. He located factors that contributed to the ideological phantasm of a Hindu identity, legitimized those assertions with logical deductions (and sometimes hyperbolic) from history, and finally used this to create a common rallying point.

Vinayak appealed to a hoary Hindu past—one that was imagined and defined by a monolithic Hindu identity, linked geo-culturally to a mythical and ageless Hindu nation. This nation continued to exist beyond the vicissitudes of history and political change. He begins his historical narrative at the very 'beginning', which according to him is when the first Aryans 'settled down' in different parts on the banks of the Indus river, or Sindhu.

It must be mentioned that contentious debates are still under way on the subject of the AIT. According to this theory, nomadic tribes migrated from Central Asia around 1500 BC to the subcontinent, absorbing the advanced, dark-skinned Dravidian inhabitants and giving birth to an Indus or Vedic culture. Many scholars have refuted the theory, both through scientific and genetic studies, as well as scriptural studies of the earliest treatise of mankind, the Rig Veda, that was composed during this period.

However, Vinayak mildly settles for the AIT and seems to indicate that the Aryans came from Persia and thereabouts. He inferred that upon coming to this land they felt a deep sense of oneness and belonging to the river that sustained them. They began to call this land *Sapta Sindhu* or the land watered by seven rivers and presided over by the Sindhu, or Indus. The people who belonged to this land came to be known as the Sindhus, which gradually changed to ‘Hindu’ given the way Sanskrit terms were mispronounced. He quoted the *Zend Avesta* to corroborate this, wherein the people here were called *Hapta Hindu*—again a corruption of the syllable ‘S’ with ‘H’. This was what the contemporaneous ancient Persians called the people of this part of the world.

This brave race soon expanded the frontiers of their occupation—forests were felled, agriculture flourished, cities rose, kingdoms thrived. In time, several other names such as Bharata, Bharatavarsha, Bharatakhandā, Aryavarta, Brahmavarta, Dakshinapatha and so on became prevalent. So while the umbilical cord with the Sindhu (and hence ‘Hindu’) might have been forgotten, it was never cut off. The foreigners, be it the Avestic Persians, the Jews or the Greeks, continued to address the people of the land as Hindus. Even Xuan Zang (Hiuen-Tsang), the Chinese-Buddhist monk who travelled widely across India in the seventh century AD, persisted in calling the people here as ‘Shintus’ or ‘Hintus’. Thus ‘Hindustan’, for Vinayak, was a fulfilment of the wishes of the Vedic forefathers of the land who made the name their first choice.

He contested the popular narrative that the subcontinent was merely a disparate mass of warring kingdoms and nationalities and that it was the British who had welded them together to give us a sense of nationhood.

Quoting from one of the eighteen Mahapuranas—a genre of ancient and medieval texts of Hinduism—the *Vishnu Purana* , he states: ‘We have met with no better attempt to define our position as a people than the terse little couplet in the *Vishnu Purana* , “The land which is to the north of the sea and to the south of the Himalaya mountains is named ‘*Bharata* ’, inhabited by the descendants of Bharata.”’<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly, the unitary nature of the nation state and its existence stretching back to pre-British and even pre-Islamic times was a common narrative for both Gandhi and Vinayak, ideological opponents though they were. In his *Hind Swaraj* , that he wrote in 1909 as a manifesto of his thoughts for India, Gandhi stated:

The English have taught us that we were not one nation before, and it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently they divided us . . . I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men travelled throughout India . . . They learned one another’s languages . . . they saw that India was one undivided land so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world. Any two Indians are one as no two Englishmen are.<sup>37</sup>

In an obvious rebuttal of the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, Vinayak stated that Buddhism did not collapse merely because of its philosophical differences with Vedic Hinduism or its internal bickering. Instead, Vinayak explained, the problem was at the political level. Buddhist expansion was disastrous to both national virility and the existence of India. It was not an eventual decline; in its very inception, at its core, Buddhism was incompatible with nationhood because of its philosophy of non-violence. This preponderance with non-violence meant that the Indian nation fell easy victim to warlike outsiders such as the Huns. Buddhism, he stated, had nothing to offer against violence and thus the Indians had to go back to the Vedic ‘fire’ to make steel to fight.<sup>38</sup>

Non-violence, he opined, was answerless when pitted against ‘people inferior to Indians, in language, religion, philosophy, mercy, and all the soft human attributes . . . but superior to them in strength alone—in fire and sword’.<sup>39</sup>

India’s history for Vinayak was her political history comprising violent and decisive battles, rejuvenating the Indian nation. Racing down centuries of history in a massive sweep, Vinayak asserts that despite the triumphs and turbulences of various centuries, invasions, the spread of Buddhism to other lands, the intermingling of races and communities and the creation of a cosmopolitan unit, the word ‘Hindu’ somehow stuck. Hindutva was thus a shared political history, the result of countless actions, conflicts, comingling and cooperation. It was not about religious, spiritual or theocratic codes of law. Despite the criticism that is often mounted against him for perpetuating myths of ‘racial purity’ (and thereby superiority) for the Hindus, just as it was in the case of European nationalism, a closer reading of his work illustrates a more pragmatic view of race as being relatively and subjectively constructed:

After all there is throughout the world, so far as man is concerned, but a single race—the human race kept alive by one common blood, the human blood. All other talk is at best provisional, a makeshift and only relatively true . . . To try to prevent the commingling of blood is to build on sand. Sexual attraction has proved more powerful than all the command of all the prophets put together. Even as it is, not even the aborigines of the Andamans are without some sprinkling of the so-called Aryan blood in their veins and vice versa.<sup>40</sup>

In a section, ‘Hindutva at Work’, he proclaims that both friends and foes contributed equally to enable these words ‘Hindu’ and/or ‘Hindustan’ to supersede all other definitions and designations of this land and its people. ‘The enemies,’ he claimed, ‘hated us as Hindus and the whole family of peoples and races, of sects and creeds that flourished from Attock to Cuttack was suddenly individualized into a single being.’<sup>41</sup> It was this Hindutva that ran like a vital spinal cord through the ‘body-politic’ and made ‘the Nayars of Malabar weep over the sufferings of the Brahmins of

Kashmir'. He further states: 'Our bards bewailed the fall of Hindus, our seers roused the feelings of Hindus, our heroes fought the battles of Hindus, our saints blessed the efforts of Hindus, our statesmen moulded the fate of Hindus, our mothers wept over the wounds and glorified over the triumphs of Hindus.' <sup>42</sup>

To substantiate this unitary nature of identity he quotes the works of several poets and teachers across centuries. From Chand Bardai—who wrote *Prithviraj Raso* about the valorous twelfth-century king Prithviraj Chauhan in Rajasthan; to Bhushana—the poet who eulogized Chhatrasal, the seventeenth-century Bundela king; to Shivaji Maharaj's initiation by his mentor Dadaji Kondke; and to the Sikh gurus, Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Their common terms of usage were 'Hindu', 'Hindawan' or 'Hind' and fighting for its cause. Divided though they were by time and space, their cause and commitment were, according to Vinayak, a fight for the 'Hindu' cause—evidently not a religious one, but a national identity. This spirit remained with the Marathas, who had unified the country regarding a pan-national outlook in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before falling to the might of the East India Company.

With this historical sweep, Vinayak propounded:

The geographical sense being the primary one has, now contracting, now expanding, but always persistently been associated with the words Hindu and Hindusthan till after the lapse of nearly 5000 years if not more. Hindusthan has come to mean the whole continental country from the Sindhu to Sindhu—from the Indus to the Seas. The most important factor that contributes to the cohesion, strength and the sense of unity of a people is that they should possess an internally well-connected and externally well-demarcated 'local habitation,' and a 'name' that could, by its very mention, rouse the cherished image of their motherland as well as the loved memories of their past. We are happily blessed with both these important requisites for a strong and united nation. Our land is so vast and yet so well-knit, so well demarcated from others and yet so strongly entrenched that no country in the world is more closely marked out by the fingers of nature as a geographical unit beyond cavil or criticism, as also is the name Hindusthan or Hindu that it has come to bear. The first image that it rouses in the mind is unmistakably of our motherland and by an express appeal to its geographical and physical features it vivifies it into a living being . . . In America as well as in France, the word 'Hindu' is generally understood thus exactly in the sense of an Indian without any religious or cultural implication. And had the word Hindu been left

to convey this primary significance only, which it had in common with all the words derived from Sindhu then it would really have meant an Indian, a citizen of Hindusthan as the word Hindi does. <sup>43</sup>

The first essential prerequisite of Hindutva was a geographical one, and the way in which its people identified themselves, as did the rest of the world. This was the ‘land of Hindus’ or Hindustan. Here a ‘Hindu’ did not mean someone who merely followed the religion; he was primarily a citizen—either in himself or through his forefathers who had revered this land as his motherland. According to Vinayak, the factors that bonded this group despite their geographical separation in this vast tract of land were those of common blood, common culture, common epics, common laws and rites, the Sanskrit language, common feasts and festivals, and the shared works of art and literature. Thus, a nationalism led by cultural integration was another essential component of this ‘Hindu-ness’ that had run unbroken over millennia.

Vinayak postulated that the Hindus are not merely citizens of the Indian state because of the love they share for their motherland; it is because of the bonds of common blood. They are not only a rashtra, or nation, but also a jati (race). He finds absolutely nothing amiss therefore among intermarriages between people of various castes—a stand much ahead of its times. He finds sanction for such inter-caste marriages even in the holy epics and scriptures of the land. From the characters of Karna, Babhravahana, Ghatotkacha, Vidura and others to historical figures such as Chandragupta Maurya who married a Brahmin to beget Bindusara, Ashoka who married a Vaishya and Harshavardhana who gave his daughter to a Kshatriya despite being a Vaishya are examples he uses to illustrate the fluidity with which the caste system operated.

Quoting the scriptures, Vinayak makes a case that an individual could lose his or her caste and be relegated to another by sheer virtue of actions and not necessarily birth alone. A Shudra could thus become a Brahmin and vice versa by the kind of actions they performed rather than the families they were born into. He quotes a Sanskrit verse that emphasizes

this fluidity: ‘The family is not really called family; it is the practices and customs that are called family. One that does his duties is praised on earth and in heaven.’ He speaks about several warrior-caste Kshatriyas who lost their respect by taking to agriculture or other professions not mandated for them, and similarly several tribes, considered as outcastes, elevating themselves to the position of a Kshatriya or a Brahmin by virtue of their deeds. The authors of both the great epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—were Valmiki and Vyasa respectively who were born in communities termed low caste, but they were venerated to the status of sages and immortalized as authors by the power of their actions.

Such fluidity, Vinayak suggests, existed even in non-Vedic communities. Hence, it was perfectly normal to witness a family that had a Buddhist father, a Vedic mother and a Jain son. Intermarriage permitted between Jains and Vaishnavs in Gujarat, Sikhs and Sanatanis in Punjab and Sindh offer similar illustrations. Thus, for Vinayak, the word ‘Hindu’, in fact, encapsulates a racial unity of all Indians. Replete with rhyme and alliteration, he propounds, as an ace poet, the following theory:

Some of us were Aryans and some Anaryans; but Ayars and Nayars—we were all Hindus and own a common blood. Some of us are Brahmans and some Namashudras or Panchamas; but Brahmans or Chandalas—we are all Hindus and own a common blood. Some of us are Daxinatyas and some Gauds; but Gauds or Saraswatas—we are all Hindus and own a common blood. Some of us were Rakshasas and some Yakshas; but Rakshasas or Yakshas—we are all Hindus and own a common blood. Some of us were Vanaras and some Kinnaras; but Vanaras or Naras—we are all Hindus and own a common blood. Some of us are Jains and some Jangamas; but Jains or Jangamas—we are all Hindus and own a common blood. Some of us are monists, some, pantheists; some theists and some atheists. But monotheists or atheists—we are all Hindus and own a common blood. We are not only a nation, but a *Jati*, a born brotherhood. Nothing else counts, it is after all a question of heart. We feel that the same ancient blood that coursed through the veins of Ram and Krishna, Buddha and Mahavir, Nanak and Chaitanya, Basava and Madhava, of Rohidas and Tiruvelluvar courses throughout Hindudom from vein to vein, pulsates from heart to heart. We feel we are a JATI, a race bound together by the dearest ties of blood and therefore it must be so. <sup>44</sup>

With this proclamation, he virtually sounds the death knell for the centuries-old entrenched caste system that had sapped Indian society of all

vitality. As was to be seen in his further writings, as well as his work in Ratnagiri, Vinayak actively campaigned for the collapse of the debilitating caste hierarchies and untouchability. He opined that a Hindu marrying another Hindu might lose his or her caste (which was immaterial for him) but never one's Hindutva, which went beyond these barriers. A Hindu believing in any theoretical or philosophical or social system, orthodox or heterodox, never loses one's Hindu-ness or Hindutva. They all have the inheritance of a common blood of the Sapta Sindhus.

He also found a civilizational unity among all Hindus. Vinayak defined 'civilization' as the expression of the mind of man and what he had made of the matter available to him. The story of 'the civilization of a nation is the story of its thoughts, its actions, and its achievements. Literature and art tell us of its thoughts; history and social institutions of its actions and achievements.'<sup>45</sup> The commonality of our shared history and inherited works of art and architecture binds us all as a nation, he postulated. Despite several regional differences in detail, some broad common features of rites, festivals, feasts, and rituals across the country indicate the oneness of this race. Everyone who is a 'Hindu' inherits these treasures that have come down from their forefathers. Extolling Sanskrit as the language from which all other present languages have sprung, he stated:

Our Gods spoke in Sanskrit; our sages thought in Sanskrit, our poets wrote in Sanskrit. All that is best in us—the best thoughts, the best ideas, the best lines—seeks instinctively to clothe itself in Sanskrit. To millions it is still the language of their Gods; to others it is the language of their ancestors; to all it is the language par excellence; a common inheritance, a common treasure that enriches all the family of our sister languages.<sup>46</sup>

The umbrella of 'Hindu' religions—Sanatanis, Arya Samajis, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs—was a clever and carefully constructed social coalition of like-minded faiths that originated in the Indian subcontinent. In this hypothesis of Hindu-ness, where did the Muslim (or the Christian) stand? In a section titled 'Foreign Invaders', Vinayak traces the advent of the several hordes of Islamic invaders who ravaged the country and termed



this as a civilizational clash. He lamented that the ‘pressure of a common foe’, and the unity that hatred towards a common object can bring, was never utilized by Sindhustan to forge herself ‘into an indivisible whole as on that dire day, when the great iconoclast crossed the Indus’.<sup>47</sup>

He bemoaned how the conquest continued for centuries thereafter. ‘Arabia ceased to be what Arabia was,’ Vinayak explains. ‘Iran, annihilated, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Tartary—from Granada to Gazni—nations and civilizations fell in heaps before the sword of Islam of Peace!’ He adds that India had to face a multitude of marauders, from the Arabs, Persians, Pathans, Baluchis, Tartars, Turks and Mughals. Vinayak makes a distinction between a ‘moral nationalist Indian’ and a ‘non-nationalist Indian’. Akbar, Dara Shikoh and Maulvi Ahmed Shah (as depicted in his book on the uprising of 1857) belonged to the former category, while Aurangzeb to the latter.

The distillation of Vinayak’s arguments culminates in a wondrous self-composed Sanskrit couplet that he and subsequent followers of his political ideology have used as a determinant of Hindu identity:

*Aasindhu Sindhu paryanta yasya Bharata bhumika  
Pitribhu punyabhushchaiva sa vai Hinduriti Smritah.*

One who considers this vast stretch of land called Bharat  
From the Sindhu to the Sindhu (Indus to the Seas)  
as his fatherland (or land of one’s ancestors) and holy land  
is the one who will be termed and remembered as a Hindu.

In this definition, there is an implicit challenge to the prevalent Gandhian philosophy of sacrosanct issues such as the Khilafat, going beyond the sacral geography of India by precisely defining its contours—from the Indus to the seas.

The social coalition of Hindu religions naturally fulfilled all the criteria postulated by Vinayak. Vinayak’s hypothesis of identification for a Hindu was someone who looked upon this land of his forefathers as his holy land; someone who inherited the blood of the race of the Sapta Sindhus; and one

who expressed a common affinity to the classical language, Sanskrit, someone who shared common history, culture, art, laws, jurisprudence, rites, rituals, ceremonies, sacraments and festivals. Common nation (rashtra), common race (jati) and common culture (sanskriti) were the definitive markers of Hindutva. But the construct was a secular paradigm as it distanced itself from religions, including Hinduism. He imagined the Indian nation as a spatial unity that linked distinct communities, regions and territories under the broad rubric of Hindu identity. Within that space of the primordial Hindu nation, the state must defend the integrity and sovereignty of the sacred motherland (Bharat Mata) from all foreign encroachment.

Vinayak argued that in an idealistic world, the first parameter—geography—should suffice to identify a ‘Hindu’ as a resident of India. This might well become the case in the future, he states, when ‘all cultural and religious bigotry has disbanded . . . and religions cease to be “isms” and become merely the common fund of eternal principles that lie at the root of all that are a common foundation on which the Human State majestically and firmly rests’.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the additional parameters of a bond of common blood and obeisance to a common civilizational heritage and culture become necessary in his definition. The nation, for Vinayak, was equivalent to civilization.

With this definition, Vinayak opined that his Muslim and Christian compatriots, whose ancestors were originally Hindu and had been forcibly converted, have inherited with the Hindus the common fatherland. This country is the land of their ancestors too and hence their pitrubhumi (land of forefathers)<sup>49</sup> as well, that none can deny them. They have also inherited the common language, culture, law, customs, folklore and history. However, according to Vinayak, the bone of contention was whether Hindustan was their holy land as well. The Khilafat and the transnational allegiance must have weighed heavily on Vinayak’s mind while making such a deduction, but he does it nonetheless in a dispassionate manner:

For though Hindusthan to them is Fatherland as to any other Hindu, yet it is not to them a Holy land too. Their holy land is far off in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smacks of a foreign origin. Their love is divided. Nay, if some of them be really believing what they profess to do, then there can be no choice—they must, to a man, set their Holy land above their father land [sic] in their love and allegiance. That is but natural. We are not condemning nor are we lamenting. We are simply telling the facts as they stand. <sup>50</sup>

But did this definition preclude the Muslims and Christians from being a part of the ‘Hindutva’ fold? Here, Vinayak seems to contradict his own hypothesis by saying anyone can make it a ‘matter of choice’ to love ‘Hindu’ culture and the land and thereby qualify to be a part of the fold.

Are you a monist—a monotheist—a pantheist—an atheist—an agnostic? Here is ample room, oh soul! Whatever thou art, to love and grow to thy fullest height and satisfaction in this temple of Temples . . . Ye, who by race, by blood, by culture, by nationality possess almost all the essentials of Hindutva . . . ye have only to render whole hearted [sic] love to our common Mother and recognize her not only as *Pitribhu* but even as a *Punyabhū* and ye would be most welcome to the Hindu-fold. This is a choice, which our countrymen and our old kith and kin, the Bohras, Khojas, Mamons, and other Mohamedan and Christian communities are free to make—a choice again which must be a choice of love. <sup>51</sup>

Nationalism was simplified to a choice to love and express that love, monogamously, towards one’s country. This was the highest form of love against which all other variations between humans appeared to pale. He writes about people like Sister Nivedita and Annie Besant, both Christians, who were committed to the cause of India and her nationalism. Sister Nivedita was born Margaret Elizabeth Noble and was an Irish teacher, author and social activist who later became an ardent disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She worked tirelessly in the Ramakrishna Mission on issues related to female education and emancipation. Annie Besant was a British socialist, theosophist, women’s rights activist and a staunch supporter of both Irish and Indian self-rule. How were we to classify people like these

who had given everything to the cause of this country and its people? He writes about Sister Nivedita:

Our patriotic and noble-minded sister had adopted our land from Sindu to the seas as her Fatherland. She truly loved it as such, and had our nation been free, we would have been the first to bestow the right of citizenship on such loving souls. So the first essential may, to some extent, be said to hold good in her case. The second essential of common blood of Hindu parentage must, nevertheless and necessarily, be absent in such cases as these. The sacrament of marriage with a Hindu, which really fuses and is universally admitted to do so, two beings into one, may be said to remove this disqualification. But although this second essential failed, either way to hold good in her case, the third important qualification of Hindutva did entitle her to be recognized as a Hindu. For, she had adopted our culture and come to adore our land as her Holyland [sic]. She felt, she was a Hindu and that is, apart from all technicalities, the real and the most important test. But we must not forget that we have to determine the essentials of Hindutva in the sense in which the word is actually used by an overwhelming majority of people. And therefore we must say that any convert of non-Hindu parentage to Hindutva can be a Hindu, if bona fide, he or she adopts our land as his or her country and marries a Hindu, thus coming to love our land as a real Fatherland, and adopts our culture and thus adores our land as the *Punyabhū*. The children of such a union as that would, other things being equal, be most emphatically Hindus. <sup>52</sup>

Vinayak's seminal work had several consequences in the socio-political life of the country after 1923. One of them was the birth of the organization known as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) that adopted Hindutva as its ideology and *raison d'être*.

Meanwhile, after his release from prison, Babarao had, despite his failing health, decided to take an active part in the Hindu Mahasabha, the pan-India body that was established in 1915 to represent and safeguard Hindu interests. <sup>53</sup> He formed a separate group, Tarun Hindu Sabha, to enlist the support of young Hindus and consolidate them politically. Over the next four to five years, he travelled extensively to establish twenty-five to thirty branches with some 500 youth under its banner. Like Abhinav Bharat, members of the Tarun Hindu Sabha were involved in physical exercise and gymnastics, in addition to shuddhi ceremonies and attempts towards abolition of the caste system.

Towards the end of 1924, Babarao arrived in Nagpur to generate support for the Sabha. He stayed with Vishwanathrao Kelkar, his friend and distant relative. Through Kelkar, he was introduced to a young, spirited medical doctor, Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, who, as a student, had been a member of the revolutionary Anushilan Samiti in Calcutta's National Medical College. Instead of pursuing medical practice, Hedgewar had thrown himself into the nation's cause. In 1919, he started an organization of youngsters known as National Union and later worked with the Hindu Mahasabha.

Over several hours of discussions with Babarao, they decided that there was no point having multiple organizations serving the same cause of Hindu unity. Hedgewar was fired with the imagination of having a united, well-oiled pan-Indian volunteer organization for and of Hindus. Along with Babarao and other Hindu leaders such as Dr B.S. Moonje, Dr L.V. Paranjpe and Dr B.B. Tholkar, Hedgewar started the RSS on 27 September 1925, on the auspicious day of Vijayadashami.<sup>54</sup> A shakha, or branch, of Hindu teenagers and youngsters congregated in the ruins of Salubai Mohite Wada in Nagpur's Mahal area. Babarao was present on this momentous occasion, among the founding members of the RSS. It is said that Hedgewar asked Babarao to design the bhagwa (saffron flag) and the pledge of the fledgling organization. The pledge had the words Hindu Rashtra, or Hindu Nation, which was possibly the first time it had been used in Indian polity. Even though Vinayak was sympathetic to their cause, he had differences of opinion in the politics and world view of the RSS.

Janaki Bakhle sums up the timing and the significance of *Hindutva* :

*Hindutva* was a political argument made in a poetic register. It was an argument with and against an unnamed Gandhi at an opportune moment when he seemed finished with politics. *Hindutva* was also a political cry from behind prison walls, reminding the larger world outside that even if Gandhi was no longer on the political scene, Savarkar was back. He was still a leader, a politician capable of pulling together a nationalist community. But unlike Gandhi, he was offering a sense of Hindu-ness that could be the basis for a more genuine and, in the end, more effective nationalism than that of the Mahatma. The startling change for its time was Savarkar's assertion that it was not religion that made Hindus Hindu. If Gandhi had officiated at the marriage of

religion and politics, and Khilafat leaders were using the symbols of religion to forge a community, Savarkar argued that name and place were what bound the Hindu community, not religion . . . The fundamental (negative) contribution of *Hindutva* was to install a new term for nationalist discourse, one that was both modern and secular, if open to a secular understanding of religious identity. In place of religion qua religion, he secularized a plethora of Hindu religious leaders. In so doing, he did not create a sterilely secular nationalism. He did quite the opposite. *He enchanted a secular nationalism by placing a mythic community into a magical land .* <sup>55</sup>



12

## The Interpretation of Thoughts

After completing his book on Hindutva, over the next twelve to thirteen years, Vinayak wrote prolifically on a wide range of topics—from his views on the caste system and its eradication, social evils, cow protection and international affairs to his conception of God and a need for mechanization and a capitalist economy for India. All these writings—articles, essays and booklets—shaped his political philosophy and social outlook, creating the foundation on which his future politics would be fought. A fraction of these writings is presented here, some in first person and others paraphrased.

### On the Caste System

Despite being born in an orthodox and religious Chitpawan Brahmin community, Vinayak despised the caste system right from childhood. This has been illustrated in the kinships he developed with children from various castes and strata of society, and how he dined at their homes. At a time when most members of his community forbade sea travel for fear of a loss of caste, Vinayak was among the few Brahmins who travelled to London for his education. He had no qualms about going non-vegetarian as well, unlike most Brahmins of the time. As his political thoughts matured

during his long years of incarceration, he penned essays on the abhorrent practice of the caste system and untouchability and how these sapped the nation of all vitality. Advocating a strong case for their total, complete and unconditional eradication at a time when these ideas were not yet a part of the political discourse popularized by either Gandhi or Ambedkar, he was the first to envision a casteless India.

### The Seven Shackles of Hindu Society: <sup>1</sup>

The origin of the chaturvarna system of four varnas (classes) that then solidified themselves into the castes is utterly meaningless in contemporary society. In what is construed as a 'low caste'—the Mahars—we have had such illustrious saints as Chokha Mela and such brilliant thinkers such as Dr Ambedkar, whose piety and intellect far surpasses many a Brahmin's. In north India, several Brahmins have been involved for generation after generation in the profession of agriculture and have remained by and large illiterate. This goes against the grain of the caste that they belong to, and are identified as the intellectual elite. Similarly, Brahmins have been taking on the roles of goldsmiths, tailors, cobblers and so on, while individuals belonging to those (non-Brahmin) communities have taken to education and cleared prestigious examinations such as the ICS or MA. The Rajputs despise the Jats so much that if the latter get on to their horses, they are usually beaten up and then ostracized. But when the same Jat becomes a Sikh, he is counted as the first among Kshatriyas. In many places in the country, Kayasthas are condemned as Shudras, but from among the community such brilliant minds like Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal, Subhas Bose and others have emerged, who have clearly surpassed the intellect, vigour and vitality of any Bengali Brahmin.

Superiority on the basis of one's work is hardly a factor in society today due to the aforementioned professional intermingling. Hence, the very edifice from which the caste system drew its strength has weakened and it remains both an unnecessary and harmful vestige of society. These



examples prove that the oft-held belief that heredity was a determinant of talent and intellect is false, and an individual's environment is what shapes his character and conduct. The claim to glory on the mere basis of one's birth, and not worth, is an utterly erroneous and futile one—a national foolishness so to say. Fossilizing oneself to scriptural injunctions to the contrary is another idiocy. These scriptures, often self-contradicting, were created by human beings and were relevant in a particular context and in a particular society. With all due respect to them, they need to be discarded as and when society evolves, and new rules and laws that are relevant to contemporary times need to be codified. That is the only sign of a society that is vibrant, and not stagnant and dead. These scriptures, however, are important historical signposts of the times in which they were composed, and they made the Indian society of that time what it was. So, they deserve all our respect as important archival documents of our civilization's evolution. Thus, I reverentially bow my head to the vast, Himalayan corpus of Sanskrit literature of the *Shrutis* , *Smritis* , Puranas, *Itihasas* as they have shaped our Hindu mind over centuries. But I will not allow them to become fetters in my feet and retard my progress towards modernity, but instead draw inspiration from them to move ahead on modern, scientific terms.

One of the most important components of such injunctions of the past that we have blindly carried on and which deserves to be thrown in the dustbins of history is the rigid caste system. This system has vivisected our Hindu society into so many micro-fragments, forever at war with one another. From temples, streets, houses, jobs, village councils, to institutions of law and legislature, it has only injected a spectre of eternal conflict between two Hindus; weakened our unity and resolve to stand united against any external threats. It is one of the biggest impediments in the conception of a Hindu Rashtra. The liberation and unification of countries across the world, be it America or Europe has been possible only by unshackling these false divisions between peoples. Why can a similar approach not be achieved in our nation?

But before we dismantle something, let us pause to understand what is it that we want to unshackle ourselves from. The bondage of foreign rule is obviously what we need to strive to liberate ourselves from. However, the ‘swadeshi’ fetters or self-created shackles that we have are sevenfold in my view. Every true Indian needs to resolve in his or her mind to absolve oneself of these below mentioned seven fetters. Only then through the collective conscience of the nation and its people can any progress be achieved on this front. These seven fetters are as follows:

1. **Vedoktabandi:** The exclusivity of access to Vedic literature and rituals to only the Brahmin community must be immediately dissolved. Vedic literature is civilizational knowledge for the entire human race and India’s unique gift to mankind. How can any one group assert its proprietary hold over it? Active propagation of its learning and internalization among all communities not only within but also outside India must be encouraged without delay.
2. **Vyavasayabandi:** An individual’s choice of profession must be left entirely to him, based on his aptitude and capability. Merely carrying on with a profession by virtue of one’s birth into a clan defeats the purpose of both the person and the profession. Threats of ex-communication if an individual chose a profession outside one’s fold, as is common today, is a terrible evil. Without the motivation of challenge and competition, or lack of aptitude, and merely following what one’s father or his father did makes one both complacent and unproductive. Even a Hindu priest must not become one just due to heredity. He would need to qualify himself through examinations like any other profession and rise up the ranks. Only then would he prove to be an enlightened and educated priest and not someone who babbles verses taught to him in the cradle! The highest echelon of Hindu society, the panda or priest, and the lowest of a bhangi or scavenger should not be a hereditary one at all. I am conscious that this is too revolutionary a

suggestion, but unless we begin somewhere, how will we achieve the goal? Dr Ambedkar belongs to the Mahar caste that traditionally skinned dead animals. If by virtue of his heredity, Dr Ambedkar were left to do just this, would our country not have lost one of its most brilliant thinkers and intellectuals? How can caste determine what job you are good at? This is a meaningless tradition that not only curbs individual talent and creativity but also depletes the productivity of our Hindu rashtra and has to be done away with.

3. **Sparshabandi:** The practice of untouchability is a sin, a blot on humanity, and nothing can justify it. Consider only that untouchable which is injurious to one's health, not fellow human beings. Unshackling this one foolish fetter would bring crores of our Hindu brethren into the mainstream. They would serve the country in various capacities and defend her honour.
4. **Samudrabandi:** The day we forbade crossing the seas to go to foreign lands and deemed it as a loss of caste heralded our collapse on various fronts. The vast Hindu Empire that spread from Moscow to Egypt shrunk into what it is today. Our foreign commerce and trade opportunities diminished. Cultural and educational interactions and osmosis stopped. Our naval forces that were once the pride of the world crumbled like dust and made us susceptible to invaders who easily defeated us. All of these contributed to an insular and insulated society that was content in its own world, blissfully ignorant about what was happening across the world. More and more students, Hindu *sangathanist* s (organizers), and young Indians must be encouraged to cross the seas with no fear of losing caste and bring back to us the best of the world and carry the fragrance of India and her culture to every corner of the globe.
5. **Shuddhibandi:** The folly of disallowing reconversions to Hinduism is a self-destructive one. How easily Hindus converting to Islam or Christianity merge in their new milieu. Yet the same

facility is not available to a non-Hindu who might earnestly wish to return to his or her fold or adopt Hinduism as a matter of faith. This shackle seriously depletes our numbers and makes the Hindu community a ready preying ground for the conversion factories that are always looking at swelling their numbers, many times by stealth or inducements. I have nothing against those who convert to another faith by sheer conviction. But such examples are rare. Why should we not allow the enhancement of our numbers due to some antiquated idea that does not even have any scriptural sanction that we cannot convert to Hinduism?

6. **Rotibandi:** Unshackling ourselves from this one thoughtless fetter—the belief that one loses one’s caste through inter-caste dining—can help liberate us as a society. Having food from the hands of Christian missionaries during famines or being forcibly fed beef during a communal riot have been sufficient grounds for millions of Hindus to lose their caste and religion. How stupid a belief can this be? The evils of Shuddhibandi and Samudrabandi are in fact the monstrous offspring of Rotibandi. Only that food which harms your health is to be prohibited. Eating and drinking with another human being can, by no stretch of imagination, ruin something as esoteric as one’s religion. This needs a lot of careful contemplation and introspection. Religion is in the heart, the soul, the spirit; not the stomach! There is no food that is prohibited. Anything that is healthy, nutritious and tasty must be generously and merrily indulged in, no matter who has cooked it or where it was available. The whole world has robbed us and feasted on our grains—have they all turned Hindu? How then does a Hindu dining with a Muslim make him lose his caste?
7. **Betibandi:** The intemperate practice of abolishing inter-caste marriage has caused our Hindu society a lot of harm. I am not for once suggesting that every Brahmin or Kshatriya must find for himself a Mahar or bhangi bride. That would be pushing towards the extreme and again on the basis of coercion. But if the virtues,

character, temperament, hearts and minds of a couple meet, despite them being from different castes of a Hindu fold, should they be forbidden from leading a life together? Instead of demonizing such marriages, they must be honoured. This strengthens the Hindu society and thereby the Hindu rashtra. You are Hindu, despite whatever caste you belong to. So how does marrying another fellow Hindu become a prohibition?

## Caste System Is Not a Part of Sanatan Dharma<sup>2</sup>

Any discussion on the caste system today automatically leads the discussant to believe that this practice is an integral and important part of the ancient Sanatan dharma of our land. It is essential to bust that myth first in order to have an intelligible and rational discussion on the subject. The word dharma has multiple meanings. In a sense it refers to 'laws'. But here too there are various categories of laws. Natural laws such as the law of gravity or the law of fluids are known to all. A quest towards the primordial nature of the universe leads to religions, sects, schools of thought, which create a set of laws of their own. These systems generate several subordinate laws that are intimately connected to daily life and they give rise to religious rites and rituals. Most people believe that these rituals are God-ordained and have to be followed to the last detail. Then there are political laws that hold countries and societies in order.

Sanatan refers to those ideas and beliefs that predate time, which are axiomatic and indestructible. These are the concepts that have come about in our Vedas, Upanishads or the Bhagavadgita. Even if the human race annihilates, these concepts stay—such is the foundational importance of beliefs. I sometimes feel that even God himself might not be able to dismantle them.

Given such an abstract and important concept of Sanatan, using it loosely with dharma and associating that with man-made rituals and practices is being disingenuous with that eternal truth. How can we associate social practices such as caste system, or opposition to widow

remarriage, or even vegetarianism, that have merely evolved with time in our society, to something as magnificent as the indestructible, eternal Truth? These can be dismantled in no time and hence can never be counted as an essential feature of ‘Sanatan’. It is important to understand this distinction to make a dispassionate case against the caste system. In the past, ideas of sanyas (renunciation) and *niyog* (impregnating a woman with the seed of a sage) were considered holy and quintessential. These were dismissed with time as our society evolved. Did that mean our Sanatan dharma collapsed? Hence it is not as if opportunities to change have not been grabbed by the Hindu society. Unlike other faiths that have remained assiduously fossilized to a book, we have been constantly evolving and growing and that is what has kept our faith and society vibrant and alive. No amount of social reforms can bring down this well-entrenched edifice of Sanatan dharma from the face of the earth and hence one has to have that inner belief and confidence.

Refer to Lord Krishna’s declaration in the Gita: ‘*Chaturvarnyam maya srushtam*’ or ‘It is I who have created the four varnas’. Another meaning of the word ‘varna’ is colour. Evidently, different human beings have different qualities and virtues. All that Krishna is saying is I create human beings who are different in nature, character, virtues and values—yet, good or bad, they are all my creation alone. Nowhere in this declaration does he state that I also make those virtues hereditary for the person’s successive generations! When Lokmanya Tilak created a board of trustees for the *Kesari* newspaper, did it mean those trustees were to hold that position for heredity? When such a truism cannot exist for a simple newspaper, can it be true for human existence? The belief is that ‘*Janmena jayate Shudrah*’ or we are all shudras at birth. As life progresses, we attain qualities, education and virtues to graduate to various levels of consciousness and thinking—that is the fundamental concept behind the four-varna system.

If these varnas are what are the bedrock of our civilization and if we believe in the verse that states that there can be no further categories, how is it that we have defied this maxim and created a fifth class of

untouchables? Degrading millions of people of our land to a position worse than animals is the most dehumanizing act that we could have committed. It is permissible to pat a dog or domesticate one, but shaking the hand of a scholar like Ambedkar makes you lose your caste? How preposterous can such a belief be? Thus those who have already destroyed the chaturvarna system by creating the fifth varna of untouchables are crying foul about the collapse of Sanatan dharma if the practice is abolished. What can be more ironical?

Even if for the sake of argument we were to assume that the four varnas are indeed eternal, should it not mean that there are merely four categories of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. How are there numerous sub-castes within the Brahmin community itself then? There are as many castes as there are provinces, beliefs and even human beings? If all of them belonged to the same varna, why is intermarriage and dining not possible within these micro sub-sects of Brahmins or Kshatriyas? Does that itself not defy what people say was the creation of Lord Krishna? Even if we assume that 'Betibandi' was part of the Sanatan dharma amongst varnas, where was a mention of 'Rotibandi' or inter-varna dining? When Lord Rama ate the fruits tasted by a low-caste woman Shabari, was he causing grievous harm to our great Sanatan dharma? Or when Lord Krishna dined in the houses of the illiterate cowherds of Vrindavan, did the edifice of our dharma come crashing? If our gods led by such examples, why are we stuck to some antiquated beliefs that are crippling our society and are hugely detrimental to the interests of a vast majority of our Hindu society? The one opposing the reforms and abolition of such practices is in fact the biggest enemy of both the Sanatan dharma and also our Hindu rashtra. We need a caste system not of birth and heredity but of virtues and qualities.

Any reformer who seeks to uproot harmful social practices or preach about reforming society has to first contend with a fall in his popularity. He will be defiled, demonized and debunked. He must be prepared for this. That is what Jesus Christ meant when he told the majority who opposed him: 'Ye build sepulchres unto those whom your fathers stoned to death!'

Centuries after they were mocked or unaccepted, today the same Jesus or Buddha and Muhammad are gods and prophets of millions of people. But anyone who looks at how they were treated by their contemporaries knows that such a status was hardly accorded to them in their lives. Jesus was crucified; the Buddha had to face a murderous attack; Prophet Muhammad had to flee, was injured in battle, and was condemned as a traitor.

So, reformers who disturb the status quo, who become unpopular, who disturb the social equilibrium, who hurt religious sentiments, who turn their back on majority opinion, who think rationally have had to face the inevitable consequences of their actions. Social reform by its very definition implies rooting out evil social customs and exorcizing the society of its well-entrenched beliefs. Obviously, a man who stands up to reform centuries-old religious practices and beliefs of millions will turn unpopular and be hated. A man who has made popularity his business will naturally succumb to popular will out of fear. A true social or religious reformer should only be driven by the desire to do good for the larger society. As far as I am concerned, so that I am not torn about the choice between popularity and public good, I have this stamped on my mind: *Varam janahitam dhyeyam kevala na janastuti* (It is better to think only of the welfare of people, not receive adulations from them).

### On Cow Protection: The Bovine Is not Divine<sup>3</sup>

In an agrarian country like ours, cows and bullocks are one of the most beneficial animals. There are few animals that are as docile, non-violent and helpless as a cow and it is but natural to have a feeling of intense love and affection towards it. After one's mother's milk, it is only the cow's milk that is consumed by everyone. The varieties of edibles and sweets that are made from this milk are also relished by one and all. Hence, to protect and sustain the cow is both our personal as well as familial duty. At least in the case of Hindustan, it is also our national duty. It is natural that we also feel a sense of immense gratitude towards an animal that is so useful to us in multiple ways. This gratitude towards the cow is consistent



with the Hindu trait of compassion towards all living beings. That we should look upon that extremely useful animal with the same affection as for a family member is no doubt in keeping with our noble trait of humanism.

However, each time I question those who worship cows, they enumerate all these benefits that she gives, right from her milk to her dung. Her usefulness is what makes her worthy of worship. But assume briefly that instead of the life-nourishing milk she spewed out venom like a serpent, or attacked us like a lion instead of standing, docile, by our side. Would we still worship her as a mother? Even if we did worship, it might be out of fear and not out of love or gratitude. Thus I have established that our worship for her stems from her utility and our subsequent gratitude for the same.

Animals such as the cow and buffalo and trees such as banyan and peepal are useful to man, hence we are fond of them; to that extent we might even consider them worthy of worship. Their protection, sustenance and well-being are our duty; in that sense alone these are also our dharma or duty! Does it not follow then that when under certain circumstances, that animal or tree becomes a source of trouble to mankind, it ceases to be worthy of sustenance or protection, and as such its destruction is in humanitarian or national interests and becomes a human or national *dharma*? When humanitarian interests are not served and in fact harmed by the cow and when humanism is shamed, self-defeating extreme cow protection should be rejected.

While I have no problem with protecting this beautiful creature, I hesitate to worship it as a goddess. We cannot loosely use the terms of 'god' and 'goddess' on any being. From among a mass of ignorant humans, a few enlightened beings are worthy of reverence. When they graduate further in consciousness, we elevate them to the position of gods or divine beings. In such a scenario how could a mere animal, albeit very lovely and very useful, which does not even have the common sense that the most ignorant human being has, be considered a god? Elevating an animal that eats garbage and indiscriminately passes excreta anywhere and

everywhere to the status of a goddess is in my view insulting to both humanity as well as divinity. On the one hand we consider scholarly human beings like Ambedkar or saints like Chokha Mela as impure due to their caste; but on the other the urine of an animal suddenly becomes soul purifying for us! Is this not a great fallacy and contradiction?

Our ancestors might have elevated the cow to a divine status to induce a sense of responsibility towards its protection. But we took that too literally. We should bear in mind that the cow is an object of utility for the human being and not vice versa. Doing so degrades the status of human beings. The object of worship should be greater than its worshipper. Likewise, a national emblem should evoke the nation's exemplary valour, brilliance and aspirations, and make its people superhumans. Thankfully no wise men have emerged with a dozen Sanskrit verses enumerating the rituals of cow worship. Else we would have had to witness comic scenes of people dressing their cows in beautiful saris, lifting it and placing it on an altar for daily worship!

History is replete with examples of how our enemies and invaders have used this innocent sentiment of ours against us, by using the cow as a shield even in wars. Seeing a large group of cows in front of the army of the enemies, Hindus renounced their weapons, as they did not want to incur the sin of killing cows. That the Muslim invaders knew this weakness of our society and effectively used it time and again through our long history is documented in the writings of their own chroniclers. To defile our places of worship, all they needed to do was to adorn our idols with bovine flesh before smashing them to smithereens. To save a few temples, a handful of Brahmins and some cows, we ended up sacrificing our entire country to foreign powers. Does this augur well for any nation? These ritual-ridden, illogical, self-destructive beliefs spawned a national and religious cowardice that kept us suppressed for centuries. When Hindu forces marched on Multan, the Muslims threatened to destroy the famous Sun temple there. When Malhar Rao Holkar, the Maratha chieftain, sought to liberate Kashi, the Muslims threatened to defile all things holy to the Hindus. The pious Hindus backtracked at such moments for fear of being

responsible for the razing of temples, the humiliation of Brahmins and cow slaughter.

Had the Hindu soldiers killed those cows used as shields and then annihilated the enemy lurking behind them, would not thousands of cows and temples been saved in successive generations? More importantly, would our Hindustan have been conquered? Hence I argue that taking cow protection to an extreme at the cost of human interests, is lethal, as history has proved to us.

The symbol of Hindutva is not the cow but the man-lion or Narasimha. The qualities of god permeate into his worshipper. Considering the cow to be divine and worshipping her has rendered the entire Hindu nation docile like the cow. It started eating grass. If we are to now indeed establish our nation on the basis of an animal, let that animal be the lion. Using its sharp claws in one leap, the lion fatally knocks and wounds its opponents. We need to worship such a Narasimha. That and not the cow's hooves is the real mark of Hindutva. The cow, exploited and eaten at will, is an appropriate symbol of our present-day weakness. But at least the Hindu nation of tomorrow should not have such a pitiable symbol.

Have horses and dogs not been man's most trusted companions from time immemorial? A dog offers total and unconditional love to its master, aids man in his hunting expeditions, guards homes and is loyal till his last breath. Yet, we use the term 'dog' pejoratively for people we dislike! Why do we not worship a dog too and why be partial only towards a cow, only because she gives us milk? Is the utility of a dog or a horse any less, if that is the only yardstick for worshipping them? Horses, mules and donkeys have played such an important role in major battles against our nation's worst enemies. Do we then begin a series of worship for these creatures as well, or would it suffice to assiduously undertake a protection mechanism for them?

When we look at countries such as America we get a sense of what can be achieved when we strip the emotions of divinity and concentrate on the utility factor of animals such as the cow. Huge farms and modern, scientific animal husbandry techniques to increase milk output so that no

child in this country goes hungry without milk must go hand in hand with protection. Every care must be taken to ensure that these valuable creatures remain free from diseases and infections, and have healthy progeny. This is the actual Gokul of Krishna that our scriptures talk about. Huge ranches where they can stroll around joyfully exist in America. Whereas in our country where we consume its urine as a divine product, are there any organizations that work for their protection, welfare and development? Is that not the real irony of the matter?

However naive our Hindu practice of cow worship might be, it is at least not cruel. But the religious fanaticism of those non-Hindus whose religion itself is based on hatred for the cow is not only naive but also brutal in their zealotry. They have no right whatsoever to mock the Hindus. The non-Hindus should discard their hatred for the cow and for the sake of national unity and economic progress involve themselves in genuine cow protection. Of course agitate, if you need to, for the closure of the slaughterhouses that have come up everywhere; protect the cow, do not befool yourself into worshipping her.

I am sure these thoughts of mine will anger several cow worshippers and I am prepared for their angry backlash! But careful contemplation will make them realize the truth in my argument. To those who consider my views as blasphemous, let me say that it is you who are committing blasphemy by stuffing thirty-three crore gods into the poor animal's belly!

I am no enemy of the cow. I have only criticized the false notions and tendencies involved in cow worship with the aim of removing the chaff and preserving the essence so that genuine cow protection may be better achieved. Without spreading religious superstition, let the movement for cow protection be based and popularized on clear-cut economic and scientific principles. Then alone can we achieve genuine cow protection like the Americans. A worshipful attitude is undoubtedly necessary for protection. But it is improper to forget the duty of cow protection and indulge only in worship. The word 'only' used here is important. First protect the cow and then if you absolutely have to, please worship it too if you so desire!

## On Modernization among Muslims <sup>4</sup>

Just as it is my duty to repeatedly tell the Hindu nation to abandon its silly religious customs, observances and opinions in this age of science, so I will also tell Muslim society, which is an inevitable part of the Hindustani nation, that it should abandon as quickly as possible its troublesome habits as well as religious fanaticism for its own good—not as a favour to the Hindus, not because the Hindus are scared of your religious aggression, but because these practices are a blot on your humanity, and especially because you will be crushed in the age of science if you cling on to an outdated culture.

You should abandon the belief that not even a word in the Quran can be questioned because it is the eternal message of God, even as you maintain respect for the Quran. But the norms that seemed attractive to an oppressed but backward people in Arabia at a time of civil strife should not be accepted as eternal; make a habit of sticking to only what is relevant in the modern age.

Oh Muslims! Just think what the Europeans reduced you to after they escaped from the clutches of the Bible, to master the sciences that are beneficial for our times. You were pushed out of Spain, you were subjected to massacres, and you were crushed in Austria, Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria. Your control over Mughal India was snatched away. They are ruling you in Arabia, Mesopotamia, Iraq and Syria.

Just as our yajnas, prayers, Vedas, holy books, penances, curses could not harm the Europeans, so too will your Quran, martyrdoms, namaz, religious lockets make no difference to them. Just as the maulvis sent armies to war in the belief that the men who fought under the banner of Allah would never lose, so did our pundits peacefully sit back to repeat the name of Rama a million times. But none of this prevented the Europeans. With their advanced weapons, they not only decimated the Muslim armies, but they even toyed with the fallen flag of Allah.

And that is why Mustafa Kemal Ataturk has broken the bonds of all religious laws that have kept the Turkish nation backward. He has

borrowed civil law, criminal law and military law from Switzerland, France and Germany, to replace the rules in the Quran. The literal meaning of what is said in the Quran no longer matters. The only question today is what is essential for national advancement in the light of modern science. Turkey can hold its own against Europe today because Kemal has given primacy to modern science in his nation. If Turkey had remained bound within the covers of the Quran, as it was during the reign of Kemal Sultan or the Khalifa, the Turks would still be licking the boots of the Europeans, as the Indian Muslims are doing today. If they want to advance as the Turks have done, Indian Muslims should abandon the religious fanaticism that has been nurtured over a thousand years, and accept modern science.

#### On the Age of Machines and Scientific Temper <sup>5</sup>

The era that our country is now entering is the one that Europe had entered two centuries ago. This means we are 200 years behind Europe.

Economists have termed this as the age of machines. The kind of opposition from traditionalists and proponents of the status quo that we are witnessing today in India is similar to what Europe also experienced 200 years ago. This is an inevitable outcome each time traditional beliefs and value systems are challenged by modern science. During Europe's transition into the industrial and mechanized era, it was widely apprehended that the demoniac machines would result in undermining religion, humans would become emotionless like machines, we would lose our arts and culture and there would be a rampant spurt of unemployment. It was believed that the very prosperity that the use of machines promised would itself be destroyed by their introduction. These shrill warnings of doomsday raged across Europe along with a 'Back to Nature' clarion call.

In India too religious beliefs held us back from adapting to machines earlier than now. Lisbon witnessed a catastrophic earthquake in the eighteenth century. Religious leaders of Europe declared that the earthquake was the result of the Protestant treachery against the Roman Catholics. It was God's way of punishing human beings because Protestant

marriage ceremonies were led by women, that Protestant priests were allowed to marry, and the Pope's sermons were no longer considered infallible. And how did society react to these meaningless religious proclamations? By launching a crusade to annihilate the errant Protestants.

How can such religiously blinded souls understand physical and scientific explanations for earthquakes, let alone try to use seismology to design machines that could perhaps help them predict the risk of an earthquake or mitigate disasters? Finally, Europe could truly embrace the machine age only when such naive religious beliefs were dismantled by a scientific temper.

However, it is our misfortune in India that even someone as influential as Gandhiji invokes his 'inner voice' to attribute the recent massive Bihar earthquake as God's punishment for the barbaric caste system! I still wait to hear what his inner voice will tell us about why Quetta was rocked by an earthquake! As if political leaders were not enough, our religious gurus are not far behind in raising such beliefs. The Shankaracharya and other religious leaders have sworn by scriptures to let us know that this earthquake was caused by attempts to dismantle the caste system. It is funny how the logic works both ways! What can one say about the common masses when such influential leaders hold such superstitious and naive views on scientific matters? They are obviously gripped by the unfounded and inexplicable fear of God and his machinations, which they see in every physical phenomenon. Is there a monsoon deficit? Then let's read the *Mandaka Sutra* of the Rig Veda, invoke the frogs and make them croak the rains in! Are ships sinking due to floods? Let's chant the *Varuna Sukta* and offer coconuts to the Lord of the Ocean. Has there been a plague epidemic? The easiest panacea is the sacrifice of a goat. On Eid commemorate a mass slaughter of innocent animals and cows, and presto! your God overhead is suddenly mighty pleased with you! Is God too as corrupt and self-serving as our honourable collector who will not act till he is offered a handsome gift of a dozen ripe mangoes? Does any rationale or logic support this kind of credulous and gullible beliefs?

But science and scientific temper rely on cold logic and reason. These are physical phenomena that can be experienced and repeated under controlled conditions. If water is boiled to a known temperature, it will turn to steam, irrespective of any God's wishes or your failure to read the mantras or namaz! A machine does not punish us for forgetting to propitiate that frightful god you so fear. This scientific temper is the foundation and cornerstone of the machine age and modernization, which will lead to prosperity for India.

Are machines a boon or a bane? Those berating machines as a bane must realize that each of our human senses is several times more potent than any machine can ever hope to be. The machine acts as a handmaiden of man. If he uses it for destructive purposes, it can cause mass destruction. However, the same machine if put to good use by a virtuous and intelligent human mind can work miracles. The subject of debate therefore is not at all about the machine and its virtue, but that of humanity. Unemployment is not a side effect of mechanization but of inequitable distribution of resources and wealth and, for this, it is the social structure and evils that are to be blamed. If they are rectified, these problems too would be automatically solved.

If a country has managed to successfully augment its food production and textile manufacture by more than tenfold through mechanization, and yet the people of that country are hungry and unclothed, do we lay the blame at the doorstep of the poor manufacturing machines? It is through science, modern thoughts and industrialization that we can ensure that every man and woman in India will have a job to do, food to eat, clothes to wear and a happy life to lead.

## On Cinema <sup>6</sup>

'The movies are one of the beautiful gifts of the 20th Century. This is the machine age. We are surrounded by things made with the help of machines. The world of entertainment cannot be an exception to this rule. Please understand that I refuse to condemn the advances made in



technology. I would like modern machines to spread rapidly so that the whole of humanity is happier.

‘I dislike any restrictions on the innovative spirit of the human mind. That is because modern progress and modern culture have emerged out of innovation. The very essence of the progress made by humanity over the past many years in science and knowledge can be found in contemporary cinema. There is no better example of the use of modern technology than the movies, and that is why I will never back any restrictions on them.’

These remarks by Veer Savarkar are a stinging answer to the contempt with which Mahatma Gandhi has spoken about movies. When I asked Savarkar whether he was implicitly criticizing Gandhi, he asked me: ‘Is there anything common between Gandhi and me?’

He went on: ‘I saw my first silent movie when I was a student in London, and I liked it immensely. I have seen some talkies as well, but not too many. I doubt the theatre can compete with the movies. It will barely survive in a corner just as the folk arts barely survive in our villages today. But its best days are behind it. There is no need to feel bad about this. What is the use of the wooden plough in the age of the tractor? The wooden plough will be used only where there are no tractors. I deeply oppose the charkha philosophy of going back to nature. Films are even superior to novels. However well written be the biographies of national heroes such as Shivaji, Pratap or Ranjit, there is no doubt their stories will be more enjoyable and impactful on the screen. Films can even be used to educate our youth. We see life reflected very well on screen.

‘It is better to borrow a good thing rather than have nothing at all. But one should not blindly copy the work of others. As in all other fields, it is essential that our people are nationalists in the field of cinema as well. Everything else comes after that. The film industry too should believe that it would do everything possible for the progress of the entire nation. Our movies should focus on the positives of the country, keep aside the negatives and have pride in its victories. There is no value in making movies on national defeat or on our failings. These should be forgotten.

Our youth should be inspired by movies that focus on the positive side of things.’

## Yeravada Jail, 1923

In 1923, Vinayak was shifted from the Ratnagiri District Prison to the Yeravada Central Prison in Poona. He had been lodged there earlier in 1910 and this seemed to him like a flashback to the long, eventful and tough decade that had followed. Here, he found many inmates of Cellular Jail who had been repatriated to the Indian mainland. This included the revolutionaries of the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Yeravada, however, presented an interesting confluence of opposing ideologies of the Indian freedom struggle—the revolutionary convicts, as well as Gandhi’s non-violent satyagrahis, non-cooperation activists and Khilafatists. About the latter, Vinayak writes:

The Non-co-operators and the Khilafatists had not seen even two years of prison-life. They were raw, vainglorious men, and they bragged of their suffering before those who had passed through ten years or more of transportation for life in the Cellular Jail of the Andamans—the brave Sikhs who had never winced under the severest hardships! They vaunted their worthless ‘Satyagraha’ and their short imprisonment for it before these terrorists and presumed to despise them! I began here to criticize severely all these followers of Gandhi that their eyes might see clearly . . . They hated the name of Hindu *Sanghatan* as detrimental to the nation. I denounced fiercely these honest but perverse notions. I would go up a tree, others would gather in the courtyard opposite, and political prisoners would keep a watch occupying strategic positions around them. Thus we carried on discussions on politics from day to day. I was then transferred to the courtyard itself, when every alternate day regular meetings were held and discussions carried on to disillusion these novices of their strange notions on politics. I followed the same method here that I had adopted in the Andamans—holding meetings, giving lectures and arranging discussions. Gradually all of them joined in them. Winning *Swaraj* by *Charaka* [sic], supporting the Khilafat movement as the duty of the Hindus, and ridiculous definitions of non-violence, I exploded them all by invincible logic and by an appeal to history. And these honest young patriots were at last won over to our side from their jejune politics, and from their inexperience and ignorance of the world around them. <sup>7</sup>

Gandhi too was lodged in the same jail—in the cell adjacent to Vinayak’s—following the Civil Disobedience movement and his trial. Vinayak openly criticized the methods of the Mahatma, who heard about this from his followers in prison. There were several occasions when Vinayak had serious differences of opinion with those supporting non-cooperation, totally taken in by the ideals of truth and satyagraha.

He mentions in his memoir about how in Ratnagiri, like in the Andamans, political prisoners would procure scraps of newspapers and read them in stealth. Many of those in jail for participating in the Non-cooperation movement objected to this, as they believed hiding the truth was a sin. He did not let go of a single occasion to embarrass those who took Gandhi’s philosophy almost literally and to ridiculous extremes. One such follower was known to flatter the prison cook and get an extra piece of bread to eat. Once, during dinner, when the man had taken this extra piece and settled down to eat, Vinayak and his revolutionary friends raised a false alarm that the superintendent was coming for an inspection. The Gandhian quickly hid his extra piece of bread in fright. The entire group burst out laughing and mocked him. Did his adherence to truth permit him to pilfer? they asked. Another associate of the man responded that it was no violation of truth to stealthily eat an extra piece of bread because it was a basic human necessity to feed one’s stomach. But smuggling newspapers was a violation of truth and harmed the national cause, he hypothesized. Vinayak was often annoyed by these illogical arguments and writes in his memoir that this attitude was all too common among several of Gandhi’s followers and Khilafatists in jail. <sup>8</sup>

Vinayak’s transfer to Yeravada coincided with the appointment of Major Murray as inspector of the jail. He had earlier served as superintendent of Cellular Jail and inspector general of prisons in the Punjab. He was a liberal man with a humane disposition. Murray appointed Vinayak as the head of the quinine factory at jail. He was permitted to conduct classes for young convicts and was also tasked with creating a library, like he had done in the Andamans. Vinayak continued with the shuddhi activities that he undertook at Cellular and Ratnagiri jails.

Despite pleas not to wake everyone in the prison with the loud call for namaz, several Muslim prisoners insisted on it as an integral feature of their faith. To counter this, under Vinayak's leadership, many Hindu convicts began singing devotional songs and verses from the Ramayana at the top of their voice. If the prison authorities objected to such nuisance, Vinayak would promptly reply: 'Why should you object to his prayer? Either stop all of them or let everyone be free to pray as he likes.'<sup>9</sup> This eventually stopped the practice of the early morning calls to prayer at prison. As Vinayak writes:

One nuisance cancelled the other. What punishment could not stop, counter-goondaism had silenced. I silenced a Khilafatist editor-prisoner by a similar counter-move. He used to touch water for the Hindus on the plea that Muslims were as much human beings as they. I entirely agreed with him on the point and I called upon an untouchable and scavenger to dip his pot and take water from a vessel of water for the Muslims. And the Khilafatist who was preaching broad humanitarian principles at once went at the untouchable and would not touch the water as being unholy for the *Namaz*. When I had exposed them two or three times they quietly took their water from a [non-] Hindu water-carrier and stopped touching the water reserved for the Hindus.<sup>10</sup>

Vinayak even organized lectures on various martyrs of the revolutionary struggle, including Madan Lal Dhingra, in order to inspire fellow convicts.

Around this time, the governor of Bombay, Sir George Lloyd, visited the prison to conduct an extended interview with Vinayak. The latter believed that this was yet another fruitless endeavour since the time he met Sir Reginald Craddock a decade ago in the Andamans. He candidly admitted to the governor:

I was compelled to be a revolutionary and a conspirator when I had discovered that there was no peaceful or constitutional method open to me to attain the goal I had in view. But if the present reforms prove to be useful for the furtherance of our hopes in a peaceful way, we shall very willingly turn to constitutional method and pursue gladly the constructive work on the principle of responsive cooperation. Revolutionaries, as we were described to be, our policy was as much of responsive cooperation as that of those who swore by other methods. We will utilize to the full the present reforms in pursuance of that principle and with a similar object in view.

National good was our sole objective and if peaceful means served that end, we had no reason to cling to our old ways. <sup>11</sup>

He was given a patient hearing after which the governor departed. Nothing was heard for months thereafter. But the Government of Bombay had begun discussing Vinayak's release in earnest from 1922. The official opinion on this ranged from a disapproval of an early release to that with severe strictures that would limit or forbid his political activities. Another subject of concern for the government was the choice of his residence in the event of his conditional release. Given the sensitivity, the cities of Bombay, Poona and Nashik were overruled. In the end, the government seemed to be inclined towards releasing him from prison and allowing him to reside in confinement at Ratnagiri, with all political activities curtailed. This was the result of years of Narayanrao's efforts to lobby support for his elder brother and secure his release.

Interestingly, an article published in the Marathi newspaper, *Swatantrya*, called for Vinayak's release. Dated 13 September 1923 and titled, 'Savarkar—the Champion of Liberty', the author wrote:

It was Vinayak's policy that alien power, be it British or Muhammadan, must be extirpated . . . O Maharashtra—Get Up! Raise up in your mind the principles of Vinayakrao!! O *Janasthan* [Nashik] get up! Vinayakrao is yours, so begin to exert yourself so that he must be released . . . But if Government does not release him we will blame them and resort to any available means of releasing him. <sup>12</sup>

The concluding threat was least likely to have influenced the government's decision and in any case would have possibly dissuaded them from releasing a man they had deemed dangerous for over a decade now.

Finally, on 4 January 1924, the Home Department of the Government of Bombay agreed on the conditions of Vinayak's release. Alexander Montgomerie, secretary to the Home Department in Bombay, was to officiate these conditions. Interestingly, fourteen years ago, Montgomerie had served a brief term as the district magistrate of Nashik during Vinayak's trial. He wrote:

In exercise of the power conferred by Section 401 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, the Government in Council hereby remits conditionally the unexpired portion of the sentences of transportation for life passed upon Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. The order for the conditional release of the convict should be sent to the Superintendent, Yeravda Central Prison, who should take an agreement from the convict accepting the conditions specified in the Order and forward it to Government, through the Inspector-General of Prisons, with a report that the convict has been released in pursuance of the order. <sup>13</sup>

This was followed by a series of meetings between the government and Vinayak, who agreed to, and signed, the conditions of his release. The conditions were not too unusual; what was extraordinary was the duration for which they were imposed—a period of thirteen years, from 1924 to 1937. Initially, the conditions were placed for a five-year term, but they were subsequently extended twice. The conditions of release were:

1. That the said Vinayak Damodar Savarkar will reside within the territories administered by the Governor of Bombay in Council and within the Ratnagiri District within the said territories, and will not go beyond the limits of that district without the permission of Government or in case of urgency, of the District Magistrate.
2. That he will not engage publicly or privately in any manner of political activities without the consent of Government for a period of five years, such restriction being renewable at the discretion of Government at the expiry of the said term. <sup>14</sup>

Vinayak understood the repercussions of his failure to adhere to the conditions of his release. He writes: ‘Should I fail to fulfil those conditions or any portion of them . . . I may be arrested by any police officer without warrant, and remanded to undergo the unexpired portion of my original sentences.’ <sup>15</sup> If he committed offences that would warrant his remand, he would have to serve yet another term of imprisonment for at least twenty-five years more!

5 January 1924

It was the last night of Vinayak's long and strenuous prison journey. He was, however, not told about it till the following morning. That night, little did he know that the next day he would be stretching himself on a 'bed in a room with window all open to the light of the moon, and without any warder patrolling along the corridor' <sup>16</sup> to disturb his sleep. The biting January cold was further accentuated by some unseasonal showers. Water had poured in from the cell's upper window and his clothes were all wet. The two coarse blankets were hardly enough to protect him from the inhospitable weather. He willed himself to sleep, wondering how much longer this suffering would last.

The next morning, he was summoned to the superintendent's office and conveyed the good news. He froze in utter disbelief. From March 1910, when he was imprisoned in London, he had been transported from jail to jail across continents. The reality that this was now coming to an end was hard to believe. The political prisoners exulted and congratulated him. The Sikh revolutionaries warmly embraced him and implored him not to forget them. With deep gratitude, Vinayak responded to their warmth before departing:

My brothers, you will surely bear me out when I say that, ground down under the sufferings as I was during the fourteen long years that I spent in the Andamans and even to the last day here, I have not flinched or retracted from what I was preaching all my life. I have given you the stories of all our martyrs and I have advised all along to hold firm by our creed of violent resistance if circumstances were to force it upon us. I have kept the flag flying. When I heard the sentence passed upon me fourteen years ago, the words dancing upon my lips were the same that are dancing upon them today. I uttered them then, I have uttered them during my long stay in prison, and they come forth from my mouth today, to be carved on your heart and mind, and to ring in your ears for good. Let us say all of us, 'Glory to the Goddess of Freedom; Victory to our Mother.' <sup>17</sup>

Changing from his prison uniform, that had almost become a part of his being, to civilian clothes, Vinayak was overcome with mixed emotions—

melancholy tinged with joy. Murray shook his hand and wished him well. 'Take care of the future,' he said. The large iron gates of the prison creaked open. Vinayak struggled to keep his eyes open in the bright sunlight. Outside, his family was waiting for him, joy writ large on their faces.

Vinayak's long incarceration in prison might have ended, but the journey towards his cherished goal of liberating his motherland and actualizing his theories of Hindutva and social reform, which he had conceptualized within the confines of the prison, was just beginning. He took a deep breath, filling himself with the fragrance of free air, and with a spring in his step and plans for the future, Vinayak moved on to the next momentous milestone of his life.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### Full Text of 'O! Martyrs'

*The battle of freedom once begun  
And handed down from sire to son  
Though often lost is ever won!!*

**T**oday is the 10th of May! It was on this day, that, in the ever-memorable year of 1857, the first campaign of the war of Independence was opened by you, oh martyrs, on the battlefields of India. The Motherland, awakened to the sense of her degrading slavery, unsheathed her sword, burst forth the shackles and struck the first blow for her liberty and for her honour. It was on this day that the war cry *Maro Firungee Ko* was raised by the throats of thousands. It was on this day that sepoys of Meerut having risen in a terrible uprising marched down to Delhi, saw the waters of the Jumna glittering in the sunshine, caught one of those historical monuments which close past epoch to introduce a new one, and had found, in a moment, a leader, a flag, and a cause, and converted the mutiny into a national and a religious war.

All honour be to you, oh Martyrs; for it was for the preservation of the honour of the race that you performed the fiery ordeal of a revolution, when the religious of the land were threatened with a forcible and sinister conversion, when the hypocrite threw off his friendly garb and stood up into the naked heinousness of a perfidious foe breaking treaties, smashing crowns forging chains, and mocking all the while our Merciful Mother for the very honesty with which she believed the pretensions of the white liar, then you, oh martyrs of 1857 awoke the Mother, inspired the Mother and for the honour of the Mother, rushed to the battlefield, terrible and

tremendous, with the war cry *Maro Firungee Ko* on your lips, and with the sacred mantra ‘God and Hindustan’ on your banner! Well did you in rising! For otherwise although your blood might have been spared, yet the stigma of servility would have been the deeper, one more link would have been added to the cursed chain of demoralizing patience, and the world would have again contemptuously pointed to our nation saying ‘She deserves slavery, she is happy in slavery! For even in 1857, she did not raise even a finger to protect her interest and her honour!’

This day therefore, we dedicate, oh martyrs, to your inspiring memory! It was on this day that you raised a new flag to be upheld, you uttered a mission to be fulfilled, you saw a vision to be realized, you proclaimed a nation to be born!

We take up your cry, we revere your flag, we are determined to continue that fiery mission of ‘away with the foreigner’!, which you uttered, amidst the prophetic thunderings of the Revolutionary war—revolutionary, yes, it was a revolutionary war. For the war of 1857 shall not cease till the revolution arrives, striking slavery into dust, elevating liberty to the throne. Whenever a people rises for its freedom, whenever that seed of liberty gets germinated in the blood of its martyrs and whenever there remains at least one true son to avenge that blood of his fathers, there never can be an end to such a war as this. No, a Revolutionary war knows no truce save liberty or death! We, inspired by your memory, determine to continue the struggle you began in 1857, we refuse to acknowledge the armistice as a truce; we look upon the battles you fought as the battles of the first campaign—the defeat of which cannot be the defeat of the war. What? Shall the world say that India has accepted the defeat as a final one? That the blood of 1857 was shed in vain? That the sons of Ind betray their fathers’ vows? No, by Hindustan, no! The historical continuity of the Indian nation is not cut off. The war that began on the 10th of May of 1857, is not over on the 10th of May of 1908, nor shall it ever cease till a 10th of May to come, sees the destiny accomplished, sees the beautiful Ind crowned, either with the lustre of victory or with the halo of martyrdom.

But, O glorious martyrs, in this pious struggle of your sons, help! O help us by your inspiring presence! Torn in innumerable petty selves, we cannot realize the grand unity of the Mother. Whisper, then, unto us by what magic, you caught the secret of Union. How the Firungee Rule was shattered to pieces and the Swadeshi thrones were set up by the common consent of Hindus and Mahomedans. How, in the higher love of the Mother united the differences of castes and creeds, how the venerated and venerable Bahadur Shah prohibited the killing of cows throughout India, how Shrimant Nana Saheb, after the first salute of thundering cannon to the Emperor of Delhi—reserved for himself the second one! How you staggered the whole world by uniting under the banner of Mother and forced your enemies to say ‘Among the many lessons the Indian Mutiny conveys to the historian and administrator none is of greater importance than the warning that it is possible to have a revolution in which Brahmins and Shudras, Mahomedan and Hindu were united against us and that it is not safe to suppose that the peace and stability of our dominion in any great measure depends on the continent being inhibited by different races with different religious systems, for they mutually understand each other and respect and take a part in each other’s modes and ways and doings.’ Whisper unto us the nobility of such an alliance of Religion with Patriotism—the true religion which ever is on the side of patriotism, the true patriotism, which secures the freedom of religion!

And give us the marvelous energy, daring and secrecy with which you organized the mighty volcano; show us the volcanic magma that underlie the green thin crust, on which the foe is to be kept lulled into a false security; tell us how the chapatti—that fiery cross of India, flew from village to village and from valley to valley, setting the whole intellect of the nation on fire by the very vagueness of its message and then let us hear the roaring thunder with which the volcano at last burst forth, with an all-shattering force, rushing, smashing, burning, and consuming into one continuous fiery flow of red hot lava flood! Within a month regiment after regiment, prince after prince, city after city, sepoy, police, zemindars, pundits, moulvis, the multiple-headed Revolution sounded its tocsin and

temples and mosques resounded with the cry ‘*Maro Firungee Ko!*’ Away with the foreigners! Meerut rose, Delhi rose, rose Benares, Agra, Patna, Lucknow, Allahabad, Jadagerpoor, Jhansi, Banda, Indore,—from Peshawar to Calcutta and from the Narbada to the Himalayas, the volcano burst forth into a sudden, simultaneous and all-consuming conflagration!!

And then, oh martyrs, tell us the little as well as the great defects, which you found out in our people in that great experiment of yours. But above all, point out that most ruinous, nay the only material drawback in the body of the nation, which rendered all your efforts futile—the mean selfish blindness, which refuses to see its way to join the Nation’s cause. Say, that the only cause of the defeat of Hindustan was Hindustan herself; that shaking away the slumber of centuries the Mother rose to hit the foe but while her right hand was striking the Firungee dead, her left hand struck. Alas, not the enemy but her own forehead! So she staggered and fell back into an inevitable swoon of 50 years!

50 years are past, but oh restless spirits of 1857, we promise you with our heart’s blood that your Diamond Jubilee shall not pass without seeing your wishes fulfilled!! We have heard your voice and we gather courage from it. With limited means you sustained a war, not against tyranny alone but against tyranny and treachery together. The Duab and Ayodhya, making a united stand, staged a war not only against the whole of the British power but against the rest of India too; and yet you fought for three years, and yet you had well nigh snatched away the crown of Hindustan and smashed the hollow existence of the alien rule. What an encouragement this! What the Duab and Ayodhya could do in a month, the simultaneous, sudden and determined rising of the whole of Hindustan can do in a day! This hope illumines our heart and assures us of success. And so we avow that your Diamond Jubilee the year 1917 shall not pass without seeing the resurging Ind making a triumphant entry into the world!

For, the bones of Bahadur Shah are crying vengeance from their grave! For, the blood of dauntless Laxmi is boiling with indignation! For the shahid Peer Ali of Patna, when he was going to the gallows for having

refused to divulge the secrets of the conspiracy, whispered defiance to the Firungee, said in prophetic words, 'You may hang me today, you may hang such as me every day, but thousands will still rise in my place—your object will never be gained'.

Indians, these words must be fulfilled! Your blood, Oh Martyrs, shall be avenged!!!

Bande Mataram!

## APPENDIX II

### Full Text of 'Will and Testament', 1910

#### (I)

It was the month of Vaishakha: The sky above and the terrace underneath were washed and quivered in the delightful Moonlight. The dear little creeper of Jai daily fondly watered by Bal blushed and bloomed in fragrant flowers.

They were the days of summer vacation and friends and Comrades, all the dear and near ones had gathered under one roof. Fame waited upon that noble band of youths and chivalry surrounded them with a halo of transparent Purity and Young Brilliance.

Their hearts were welling up with fresh love and they breathed an atmosphere suffused with noble breezes of high aspirations and chivalrous resolves. Young and tender creepers clung there to noble and aspiring trees and the townsmen lovingly called that grateful garden a 'Dharmshala'.

Thou served the meals; the dishes used to be juicy and inviting all the more for thy serving. The Moon was delightful above and we all friends and families sat along, now musing, now lost in stirring and stimulating conversations. Now we listened to the moving story of the Princely Exile of Ayodhya or of the stirring struggle that set Italia free. Now we sang the immortal exploits of Tanaji or of Chitore or of Baji and Bhau and Nana: the anxious analysis is that with tearful eyes recounted the causes of the downfall of our distressed Mother; the keen and watchful synthesis that planned daring schemes of Her Ultimate Deliverance; the ceaseless activity that laid bare the wounds of our Mother and sturred and roused and fired the imagination of hundreds of highly metalled youths to high resolves.

Those happy days that dear company, those moonlit nights, the romantic aspirations, the chivalrous resolves and above all the Divine Ideal that informed and inspired them all and made us take up our cross and follow it!

Dost thou remember it all? Dost thou remember the stern vows and consecrating oaths mutually administered and the hundreds of noble youths initiated into the ranks of His Forces? The youths pledging themselves to fight and fall as Baji fell—the young girls to watch, enthuse, and die as the girls of Chitore died!

Nor was it blindness that goaded us on to that Path! No! We entered in it under the full blaze of the searching light of Logic and History and Human Nature knowing full well that those who would have Life must lose it; we took up our Cross and deliberately followed Him!

(2)

Having first called to the mind those consecrating oaths and stern vows so solemnly taken by us with that band of dear comrades and chums, cast thou an eye on the Present! Not even a dozen years have rolled by: and yet so much is already accomplished! Cheerful indeed is the outlook! The whole country is roused throughout its length and breadth! She has cast off the beggar's bowl and put Her hand on the hilt of Her sword! Stern worshippers are pouring in their thousands into His Temple and the Sacrificial Fire too has begun to rise in angry leaping flames on His altar.

The Test has come, Oh Ye! Who has taken the stern vows and pledged your solemn words to see the great sacrifice accomplished: Who is, say! Ready to fall the first victim and immolate himself in this roaring fire that Good may triumph over the forces of Evil!

No sooner did Shree Rama challenge his votaries thus than did our family. Oh, noble sister! Volunteer itself and pray 'Here are we, Oh Lord! Honour us by sacrificing us first in those blazing flames!!'

We will work and die in defence of Righteousness—thus had we pledged our words. Behold, we enter the flames! We have kept our word!



The stern vows we took to fight under Her banner in order to win Her Freedom back even at the cost of our lives have thus been fulfilled. What a relief! Blessed indeed are we that He should have given us strength to burn down the Self in us to ashes before our very eyes. We have served the Cause and fighting fell. This was all we aimed at!

(3)

We dedicated to Thee our thoughts; our speech and our eloquence we dedicated to Thee, Oh Mother! My lyre sang of Thee alone: my pen wrote to Thee alone, Oh Mother!

It was on thy altar that I sacrificed my health and my wealth. Neither the longing looks of a young wife vainly waiting for my return nor the pearls of laughter of dear children, nor the helplessness of a sister-in-law stranded and left to starve could hold me back at the call of Thy Trumpet!

My eldest brother—so brave, so sternly resolute, and yet so oftly loving—was sacrificed on Thy altar. The youngest one—so dear, so young—he too followed him into the flames; and now here am I, Oh Mother! Bound to Thy Sacrificial Pillar! What of these! Had we been seven instead of only three I would have sacrificed them all—in thy cause!

Thy Cause is Holy! Thy Cause I believed to be the Cause of God! And in serving it I knew I served the Lord!

Thirty crores are Her children! Those amongst them who possessed of this divine rage die in Her cause shall ever live! And our family tree, Oh Sister! Thus uprooted shall strike its roots deep and bloom immortality.

(4)

And what even if it does not bloom and like all other Mortal Things withers and gets mixed up with the dust of oblivion! We have fulfilled our pledges and strove suppressing Self to secure the Triumph of Good over Evil. To us that is enough. To us sacrifice is success.

Whatever pleased the Lord to bestow on us have we consecrated to Thee to day! And if ever it pleases Him to bestow on us ought else that too

would certainly be laid at Thy feet alone!

Scanning thus Thy thoughts, discriminating thus, continue dear Vahini to uphold the traditions of our family and stand faithfully by the Cause. The divine Uma practising severe austerities in the snowclad Himalayas: the girls of Chitore with young smiles playing on their lips mounting blazing flames.

These are thy ideals! Thou art hero's better-half! Be Thy life as supremely heroic as to prove, that, that radiant courage and spirits' strength which the weaker sex of Hind displayed are not yet dimmed or diminished.

This is my last word to thee; my will and my testament. Good bye, dear Vahini, Good bye! Convey my best love to my wife and this:

That it was certainly not blindness that goaded us to this path! No! We entered it under the full blaze of the searching light of Logic and History and Human Nature: knowing full well that a Pilgrim's Progress leads through the Valley of Death, we took up our Cross and deliberately followed Him!

## APPENDIX III

### Petitions by V.D. Savarkar

#### 1. Petition from V D Savarkar (Convict No. 32778) to Reginald Craddock, Home Member of the Government of India, dated November 14, 1913

I beg to submit the following points for your kind consideration:

1. When I came here in 1911 June, I was along with the rest of the convicts of my party taken to the office of the Chief Commissioner. There I was classed as 'D' meaning dangerous prisoner; the rest of the convicts were not classed as 'D'. Then I had to pass full 6 months in solitary confinement. The other convicts had not. During that time I was put on the coir pounding though my hands were bleeding. Then I was put on the oil-mill—the hardest labour in the jail. Although my conduct during all the time was exceptionally good still at the end of these six months I was not sent out of the jail; though the other convicts who came with me were. From that time to this day I have tried to keep my behaviour as good as possible.
2. When I petitioned for promotion I was told I was a special class prisoner and so could not be promoted. When any of us asked for better food or any special treatment we were told 'You are only ordinary convicts and must eat what the rest do.' Thus Sir, Your Honour would see that only for special disadvantages we are classed as special prisoners.
3. When the majority of the casemen were sent outside I requested for my release. But, although I had been [caned] hardly twice or thrice and some of those who were released, for a dozen and more times, still I was not released with them because I was their casemen. But when after all, the order for my release was given and when just then some of the political prisoners outside were brought into the troubles I was locked in with them because I was their casemen.
4. If I was in Indian jails I would have by this time earned much remission, could have sent more letters home, got visits. If I was a transportee pure and simple I would have by this time been released, from this jail and would have been looking forward for ticket-leave, etc. But as it is, I

have neither the advantages of the Indian jail nor of this convict colony regulation; though had to undergo the disadvantages of both.

5. Therefore will your honour be pleased to put an end to this anomalous situation in which I have been placed, by either sending me to Indian jails or by treating me as a transportee just like any other prisoner. I am not asking for any preferential treatment, though I believe as a political prisoner even that could have been expected in any civilized administration in the Independent nations of the world; but only for the concessions and favour that are shown even to the most depraved of convicts and habitual criminals? This present plan of shutting me up in this jail permanently makes me quite hopeless of any possibility of sustaining life and hope. For those who are term convicts the thing is different, but Sir, I have 50 years staring me in the face! How can I pull up moral energy enough to pass them in close confinement when even those concessions which the vilest of convicts can claim to smoothen their life are denied to me? Either please to send me to Indian jail for there I would earn (a) remission; (b) would have a visit from my people come every four months for those who had unfortunately been in jail know what a blessing it is to have a sight of one's nearest and dearest every now and then! (c) and above all a moral—though not a legal—right of being entitled to release in 14 years; (d) also more letters and other little advantages. Or if I cannot be sent to India I should be released and sent outside with a hope, like any other convicts, to visits after 5 years, getting my ticket leave and calling over my family here. If this is granted then only one grievance remains and that is that I should be held responsible only for my own faults and not of others. It is a pity that I have to ask for this—it is such a fundamental right of every human being! For as there are on the one hand, some 20 political prisoners— young, active and restless, and on the other the regulations of a convict colony, by the very nature of them reducing the liberties of thought and expression to lowest minimum possible; it is but inevitable that every now and then some one of them will be found to have contravened a regulation or two and if all be held responsible for that, as now it is actually done—very little chance of being left outside remains for me.

In the end may I remind your honour to be so good as to go through the petition for clemency, that I had sent in 1911, and to sanction it for being forwarded to the Indian Government? The latest development of the Indian politics and the conciliating policy of the government have thrown open the constitutional line once more. Now no man having the good of India and Humanity at heart will blindly step on the thorny paths, which in the excited

and hopeless situation of India in 1906-1907 beguiled us from the path of peace and progress. Therefore if the government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me, I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government, which is the foremost condition of that progress. As long as we are in jails there cannot be real happiness and joy in hundreds and thousands of homes of His Majesty's loyal subjects in India, for blood is thicker than water; but if we be released the people will instinctively raise a shout of joy and gratitude to the government, who knows how to forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge. Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the government?

Hoping your Honour will kindly take into notion these points.

2. Full text of petition submitted by V.D. Savarkar to the Chief Commissioner, Andaman Islands, October 1914:

To the Chief Commissioner,

Sir,

The undersigned petitioner most humbly begs to tender the following petition, with a fervent hope that it will be forwarded to the Indian Government.

1. Ever since this world shaking war that is now being fought in Europe broke out, nothing has sent such a thrill of hope and enthusiasm in the heart of every true Indian patriot as

the fact that Indians including the youth of India have been allowed to wear arms of fight against the common foe in defence of this country and the Empire. A thing which one has a right to protect is a thing in which one feels a sense of ownership; and fighting side by side with the other citizens of the Empire, the rising generation of India is sure to feel a sense of equality and therefore of a sincere loyalty to the same.

2. Believing that the ideal of all political science and practice is or ought to be one Universal State; that therefore humanity is higher patriotism, and therefore any empire that succeeds in wielding a number of conflicting races and nations in one harmonious whole without letting the growth of any one be stanchd by the overshadowing domination of another, is a distinct step to the realization of that Ideal: I rejoiced to see the volunteering movement succeed and felt confident in the ultimate triumph of the far sighted and truly Imperial policy of conciliation and confidence inaugurated by Lord Hardinge's administration. If the Government will but continue it, if the manhood of the nation be allowed to share the glories and responsibilities of the Empire with perfect equality with other citizens of it, then Indian patriots of all shades and opinions can conscientiously feel that burning sense of loyalty that one feels for one's motherland.
3. Therefore I most humbly beg to offer myself as a volunteer to do any service in the present war, that the Indian Government think fit to demand from me, I know that a Kingdom does not depend on the help of an insignificant individual as I am, but then I know this also that every individual however insignificant, is duty bound to volunteer his or her best for the defence of that Kingdom. I also beg to submit that nothing can contribute

so much as to the widening and deeping [sic] the sentiment of loyalty in the Indian people as a general release of all those prisoners who had been convicted for committing political offences in India. Such a step at such a time would dispel the illusion which the foreigners seem to be labouring under, that because the Indians fight for equal rights inside the Empire, therefore they must be eager to get rid of it altogether and worse invite others to side over them, secondly, the majority of these convicts would be staunchly attached to that power which might as it proved to chastise, would thus prove mightier still to forbear and forgive: and moreover when the Royal road of constitutional success is thrown so wide open as Lord Hardinge has done, who is so depraved or fanatical as to hang to the thorny paths of blood or crime? Above all it is but a frank truth that there cannot be a real and whole hearted sympathy felt in a thousand homes in India—however they may hate the Germans—to that power which has kept a husband or a son or a father or a friend rotting in the jail: for blood is thicker than water. But a general release will, especially at such a critical time, make such a deep impression on the grateful people of India will touch their imagination to such a degree as no amount of Durbars and fireplays after the war ends can do, It will prove beyond all evil that English and Indian sons have perfect confidence in each other as far as the Imperial defence is concerned.

4. If the Government suspect that my real intention in writing all this is only to secure my release, then I beg to submit let me not be released at all, with my exception let all the rest be released, let the volunteer movement go on—and I will rejoice in that as if myself was allowed to play an active part. It is only through a sincere desire to

see the right thing done that I have dared to write this frank and outspoken petition for your gracious consideration.

I beg, etc  
V.D. Sarvakar [sic]

3. Full-text of petition from V.D. Savarkar to the Government of India, dated October 5, 1917:

To  
His Honour, the Secretary to the Government of India  
Home Department.

May it please your Honour!

Some three years ago, in 1914 I had sent a petition on the following points to the Government of India; and Lord Hardinge was pleased to let me know that it was 'impossible'—not that the Government was unwilling, to give effect to my proposals under the then circumstances.

The war, and all that it means, had definitely and materially changed the political relations of almost all peoples and states. A new spirit has manifested itself in man and whole nations are being roused and animated by new visions and new hopes, which have found responsible and glowing expressions in the utterances of presidents of Republics and Ministers of Empires. Neither India nor the British Empire as a whole could have remained unaffected by this great democratic upheaval in the world. In them too old order of Race-domineerings and race-subjections is giving place to that of co-operation and Commonwealth. The nucleus of an Empire-cabinet; the presence in it of the ministers of the colonies and two representatives, though nominated, of India; the permission to be enrolled as volunteers to the Indian youths; the throwing open of Commissions in the army; the great speech of



the Premier in which he declared that the supreme test of the British Statesmanship would depend on the extent to which it succeeds in making the millions of Indians feel—not a sense of dependence—but that of ‘real partnership’; and to crown all the most important, definite and determined declaration by the present Secretary of State, not only as to the goal but even as to its immediate, though partial, realization in Indian administration; all these facts undeniably show that henceforth the Indian government, is not only to be conducted consistently with the interest of the Indian people but that it recognizes the first principle of all progress that the party who decides what the interests are is, in the main, the people themselves. Thus the circumstances, which Lord Hardinge referred to, are or are being changed for the better.

Therefore I venture to point out that if the policy of Co-operation and Commonwealth, so successful wherever it had been pursued, is to be followed in the Indian administration, then what Durbars and fireworks can so fitly inaugurate it, as the immediate release of the Indian political prisoners? No royal manifestos and elephant processions so touch and move, not only the imagination, but also the heart of the Indian people, as the release of their kith and kin would do. Confidence can only be evoked by showing confidence. In Canada revolts and rebellions were the order of the day: a bold statesman like Lord Durham rose and showed confidence—and now the grandsons of the Leaders of those rebellions are fighting in Flanders on the British side. The Boers fought and lost the day; but the English realizing the gravity of the situation and remembering the history of America and Cape Colony, behaved as a wise conqueror should do, and gave them autonomy and the result is that though a Dewett did rebel, yet there only a Dewett to be put down and not a Botha too! Or can India be suspected of being less confiding and less generous in her response to any magnanimous and sincere dealing of the British

people? History shows that the fault of India, if fault it was, had been, not that she was less but that she was too generous and too confiding. The Grant of Home Rule, if wholeheartedly conferred would make our people, and for our own interest, for more closely bound to this Empire, so long as the interest of all of us are served by and through it, than the colonies had ever been.

Secondly, I for one, and I can say the same thing of the majority of those whom I know, cannot have the slightest animosity towards an Empire simply because it is so. No; believing in as I do that the Ideal of all political science and political art is, or should be, the Human State; embracing all nations, based on perfect equality of opportunities to progress and on liberty that respects itself in others—I can have nothing but sympathy with an Empire that binding a vast portion of mankind together takes us nearer to such an Ideal as that. If India is allowed to become an autonomous partner in this commonwealth and if in the immediate future, at least a majority is secured in the Viceregal Council for Indians, then there would be some much to do to purge and cleanse our society that all our energies could be required to consolidate what we have already secured. It was no fanatical, much less an ‘anarchical’ opposition to any Empire as such but a sense—sincere and killing sense of despair to effect any substantial advance in the land when all paths to progress were barred by the ‘Trespassers would be prosecuted’—that drove us to face the dangerous by-ways of political life. When there was no Constitution, it seemed a mockery to talk of constitutional movements. But now if a constitution exists, and Home Rule is decidedly such, then so much political, social, economical and educational work is to be done and could be constitutionally done that the Government, may securely rest satisfied that none of the present political prisoners would choose to face untold suffering by resorting to underground methods for sheer amusement! So not only the release of political prisoners would evoke confidence in

India by proving to them the sincerity of the British Government in inaugurating this change in the administration and the status of India in the Empire, but in addition to this immediate good it is not likely to do any harm in future too.

Thirdly, just as the only release of prisoners would not remove the roots of discontent in Indian unless it was accompanied with far reaching reforms in the state, so also no installments of those Reforms would, taken by themselves, be able to satisfy and win the heart of the people unless it was accompanied by the release of their prisoners. How can there be peace and mutual confidence and love in the land in which thousands of families are literally torn to pieces and every second home has either a brother or a son or a husband or a lover or a friend snatched away from its bosom and kept pining in the prisons? It is against human nature, for blood is thicker than water.

Fourthly, all over the world the prisons have been thrown open to those who had been pent up for the sake of political principles. Not to mention Russia, France, Ireland and Transvaal. Even Austria could not refuse amnesty to her political prisoners even while the war is still hanging heavy over her. Nor could it be said that the prisoners thus released were convicted of 'general participation only' for in the case of suffragists, almost all of them had been convicted of 'individual acts', to quote Mr. Bonar Law, including arson, and yet were released immediately after the war broke out. It could not be that a step, which had been thought beneficial in all the nations in the world should prove disastrous only in India.

Fifthly, as long as some of those whose names are rightly or wrongly, but undoubtedly revered by thousands of souls are still kept in the Jail and are looked upon as foes to the present order of things, so long the tradition of opposing authority would continue to produce its own devotees and even blind followers. But if these people go back and if even a few of them, conscientiously

convinced that the good of their country was no longer in danger in co-operation with the British people, preached so and set an example to that effect, then the men who look up to them as models would also be convinced that a new day had risen and so a new start is to be made by a new path in fresh air and sunshine, leaving the gloomy adventures to the night that is past.

Sixthly, the majority of Indian prisoners are convicted in conspiracy cases, in which one has to suffer for the deeds of others in addition to one's own, and secondly some of them have already put in 10 years or 9 or 8 and few have put in less than two years of hard, trying and dismal servitude. Many of them deserve to be, and under Indian jail systems would have already been released, on the ground of time and health alone.

For all these reasons I have ventured to put forth this petition setting forth in a frank way my own belief and expectations and I trust and hope that this would be brought to the notice of the Secretary of State for India when he visits our shores.

In conclusion, I beg to add, in all sincerity, that if the Government thinks that it is only to effect my own release that I pen this; or if my name constitutes the chief obstacle in the granting of such an amnesty then let the Government omit my name in their amnesty and release all the rest; that would give me as great a satisfaction as my own release would do. If the Government does ever take this view of the question then the amnesty should be so complete as to include those also who are exiles from India and who as long as they are proclaimed strangers in their own land are likely to be bitterly antagonistic to that Government in India but many of whom would, if allowed to come back, work for the Motherland on the open and constitutional lines, when this new and real constitution is introduced there.

Hoping that your Honour would not grudge the satisfaction of having put my case before the Secretary of State to me, was

though unknown is yet in stress, a prisoner yet for the sake of a people.

I am,  
Your most obedient  
Sd/- V.D. Savarkar  
Prisoner No. 32778.

4. Full-text of petition from V.D. Savarkar to the Government of India, dated March 20, 1920:

In view of the recent statement of the Hon. Member for the Home Department to the Government of India, to the effect that ‘the Government was willing to consider the papers of any individual, and give them their best consideration if they were brought before them’; and that ‘as soon as it appeared to the Government that an individual could be released without danger to the State, the Government would extend the Royal clemency to that person,’ the undersigned most humbly begs that he should be given a last chance to submit his case, before it is too late. You, Sir, at any rate, would not grudge me this last favour of forwarding this petition to His Excellency the Viceroy of India, especially and if only to give me the satisfaction of being heard, whatever the Government decisions may be.

I. The Royal proclamation most magnanimously states that Royal clemency should be extended to all those who were found guilty of breaking the law ‘Through their eagerness for Political progress.’ The cases of me and my brother are pre-eminently of this type. Neither I nor any of my family members had anything to complain against the Government for any personal wrong due to us nor for any personal favour denied. I had a brilliant career open to me and nothing to gain and everything to loose individually

by treading such dangerous paths. Suffice it to say, that no less a personage than one of the Hon'ble Members for the Home Department had said, in 1913, to me personally, ' . . . Such education so much reading . . . you could have held the highest posts under our Government.' If in spite of this testimony any doubts as to my motive does lurk in any one, then to him I beg to point out, that there had been no prosecution against any member of my family till this year 1909; while almost all of my activity which constituted the basis for the case, have been in the years preceding that. The prosecution, the Judges and the Rowlatt Report have all admitted that since the year 1899 to the year 1909 had been written the life of Mazzini and other books, as well organised the various societies and even the parcel of arms had been sent before the arrest of any of my brothers or before I had any personal grievance to complain of (vide Rowlatt Report pages 6 &c.). But does anyone else take the same view of our cases? Well, the monster petition that the Indian public had sent to His Majesty and that had been signed by no less than 5,000 signatures, had made a special mention of me in it. I had been denied a jury in the trial: now the jury of a whole nation has opined that only the eagerness for political progress had been the motive of all my actions and that led me to the regrettable breaking of the laws.

II. Nor can this second case of abetting murder throw me beyond the reach of the Royal clemency. For

- a. The Proclamation does not make any distinction of the nature of the offence or of a section or of the Court of Justice, beyond the motive of the offence. It concerns entirely with the Motive and

requires that it should be political and not personal,

b. Secondly, the Government too has already interpreted it in the same spirit and has released Barin and Hesu and others. These men had confessed that one of the objects of their conspiracy was ‘the murders of prominent Government officials’ and on their own confessions, had been guilty of sending the boys to murder magistrates, etc. This magistrate had among others prosecuted Barin’s brother Arabinda [Aurobindo] in the first ‘Bande Mataram’ newspaper case. And yet Barin was not looked upon, and rightly so, as a non-political murderer. In my respect the objection is immensely weaker. For it was justly admitted by the prosecution that I was in England, had no knowledge of the particular plot or idea of murdering Mr. Jackson and had sent the parcels of arms before the arrest of my brother and so could not have the slightest personal grudge against any particular individual officer. But Hem had actually prepared the very bomb that killed the Kennedy’s and with a full knowledge of its destination. (Rowlatt Report, page 33). Yet Hem had not been thrown out of the scope of the clemency on that ground. If Barin and others were not separately charged for specific abetting, it was only because they had already been sentenced to capital punishment in the Conspiracy case; and I was specifically charged because I was not, and again for the international facilities to have me extradited in case France got me back. Therefore I humbly submit that the

Government be pleased to extend the clemency to me as they had done it to Barin and Hem whose complicity in abetting the murders of officers, etc., was confessed and much deeper. For surely a section does not matter more than the crime it contemplates. In the case of my brother this question does not arise as his case has nothing to do with any murders, etc.

III. Thus interpreting the proclamation as the Government had already done in the cases of Barin, Hem, etc. I and my brother are fully entitled to the Royal clemency 'in the fullest measure'. But is it compatible with public safety? I submit it is entirely so. For

a. I most emphatically declare that we are not amongst 'the microlestes of anarchism' referred to by the Home Secretary. So far from believing in the militant school of the type that I do not contribute even to the peaceful and philosophical anarchism of a Kuropatkin [sic] or a Tolstoy. And as to my revolutionary tendencies in the past: it is not only now for the object of sharing the clemency but years before this have I informed of and written to the Government in my petitions (1918, 1914) about my firm intention to abide by the constitution and stand by it as soon as a beginning was made to frame it by Mr. Montagu. Since that the Reforms and then the Proclamation have only confirmed me in my views and recently I have publicly avowed my faith in and readiness to stand by the side of orderly and constitutional development. The danger that is threatening our country from the north at the hands of the fanatic



hordes of Asia who had been the curse of India in the past when they came as foes, and who are more likely to be so in the future now that they want to come as friends, makes me convinced that every intelligent lover of India would heartily and loyally co-operate with the British people in the interests of India herself. That is why I offered myself as a volunteer in 1914 to Government when the war broke out and a German-Turko-Afghan invasion of India became imminent. Whether you believe it or not, I am sincere in expressing my earnest intention of treading the constitutional path and trying my humble best to render the hands of the British dominion a bond of love and respect and of mutual help. Such an Empire as is foreshadowed in the Proclamation, wins my hearty adherence. For verily I hate no race or creed or people simply because they are not Indians!

- b. But if the Government wants a further security from me then I and my brother are perfectly willing to give a pledge of not participating in politics for a definite and reasonable period that the Government would indicate. For even without such a pledge my failing health and the sweet blessings of home that have been denied to me by myself make me so desirous of leading a quiet and retired life for years to come that nothing would induce me to dabble in active politics now.
- c. This or any pledge, e.g., of remaining in a particular province or reporting our movements to the police for a definite period after our release—any such reasonable conditions meant genuinely

to ensure the safety of the State would be gladly accepted by me and my brother. Ultimately, I submit, that the overwhelming majority of the very people who constitute the State which is to be kept safe from us have from Mr. Surendranath, the venerable and veteran moderate leader, to the man in the street, the press and the platform, the Hindus and the Muhammadans—from the Punjab to Madras—been clearly persistently asking for our immediate and complete release, declaring it was compatible with their safety. Nay more, declaring it was a factor in removing the very ‘sense of bitterness’ which the Proclamation aims to allay. Therefore the very object of the Proclamation would not be fulfilled and the sense of bitterness removed, I warn the public mind, until we two and those who yet remain have been made to share the magnanimous clemency.

IV. Moreover, all the objects of a sentence have been satisfied in our case. For

- a. We have put in 10 to 11 years in jail, while Mr. Sanyal, who too was a lifer, was released in 4 years and the riot case lifers within a year;
- b. We have done hard work, mills, oil mills and everything else that was given to us in India and here;
- c. Our prison behaviour is in no way more objectionable than of those already released; they had, even in Port Blair, been suspected of a serious plot and locked up in jail again. We two, on the contrary, have to this day been under extra rigorous discipline and restraint and yet during the

last six years or so there is not a single case even on ordinary disciplinary grounds against us.

V. In the end, I beg to express my gratefulness for the release of hundreds of political prisoners including those who have been released from the Andamans, and for thus partially granting my petitions of 1914 and 1918. It is not therefore too much to hope that His Excellency would release the remaining prisoners too, as they are placed on the same footing, including me and my brother. Especially so as the political situation in Maharashtra has singularly been free from any outrageous disturbances for so many years in the past. Here, however, I beg to submit that our release should not be made conditional on the behaviour of those released or of anybody else; for it would be preposterous to deny us the clemency and punish us for the fault of someone else.

VI. On all these grounds, I believe that the Government, hearing my readiness to enter into any sensible pledge and the fact that the Reforms, present and promised, joined to common danger from the north of Turko-Afghan fanatics have made me a sincere advocate of loyal co-operation in the interests of both our nations, would release me and win my personal gratitude. The brilliant prospects of my early life all but too soon blighted, have constituted so painful a source of regret to me that a release would be a new birth and would touch my heart, sensitive and submissive, to kindness so deeply as to render me personally attached and politically useful in future. For often magnanimity wins even where might fails.

Hoping that the Chief Commissioner, remembering the personal regard I ever had shown to him throughout his term and how often I had to face keen disappointment throughout that time, will not

grudge me this last favour of allowing this most harmless vent to my despair and will be pleased to forward this petition—may I hope with his own recommendations?—to His Excellency the Viceroy of India.

I beg to remain,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

(Sd.) V.D. Savarkar,

Convict no. 32778

5. Petition from V.D. Savarkar to Rufus Daniel Isaacs, Earl of Reading, Governor-General of India, dated August 19, 1921, Ratnagiri District Prison:

To

HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA, in COUNCIL;

Through HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE GOVERNOR OF BOMBAY, in COUNCIL

The HUMBLE PETITION of VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR, Convict No. 558, in RATNAGIRI DISTRICT PRISON, sheweth that—

1. The petitioner, who was convicted in 1910 and transported to the Andamans in 1911, was brought back to the Indian Jails this year. He has thus put in nearly 11 years in Jail. Had he been in Indian Jails throughout these years he could have earned anything between 2 to 3 years of remission as he had been promoted to the rank of a Foreman (a first rank convict officer). So practically he had put in nearly 14 years of imprisonment, the maximum, which under the usual practice, entitles a

convict's case for being considered with reference to his conditional release.

2.

- a. Moreover the announcement of the proposed visit of His Royal Highness the PRINCE of WALES raise a strong hope in him that now at least His Excellency the Viceroy and especially His Excellency the Governor of Bombay would be pleased to forgive all that had been offensive in his past and extend to him the benefit of the amnesty so long denied to him.
- b. In praying for this extension he is not asking for any new interpretation of the Royal Proclamation, as the amnesty had already been extended to cases worse than those of the petitioner; e.g. Barin Ghose who confessed to have ordered the murders and Hem Das who actually manufactured the bomb with full knowledge of its destination (vide Rowlatt Report); as well as Pyarasingh and others of the Punjab case who were charged under dacoity &c., actions technically falling outside the 'State Offences' but arising out of them, were released in virtue of that amnesty.
- c. The petitioner begs to assure His Excellency that he is not the man he was in the days of conviction. Then he was a mere boy. Since then he has grown not only in age but also in experience; and he sincerely regrets that he should have ever been caught up in the whirlwinds of political passions and ruined the brilliant career that was already his. Ever since the visit of the Right Honourable Mr. Montague [sic] to India he [SAVARKAR] had

repeatedly affirmed his faith in the Reforms and the promises made by the Government in his [SAVARKAR's] previous petitions to the Government. The sight of the linked Asiatic Hoards, now hanging over the Frontiers and who had been an hereditary curse of India—at any rate the non-Mahomedan India—leaves him convinced that a close and even a loyal cooperation and connection with the British Empire are good and indispensable for both of them—only he prays that it may be lasting and fruitful.

- d. But if anyone had been attributing any other motive to him then the petitioner begs to state that such secret reports be not relied upon in face of his frank and full above confessions of his faith. His past will bear out the fact that he is not given to own any belief he does not contribute to. Men over zealous or over anxious to please the Government enraged at their own past misdeeds had always been making the petitioner a scapegoat by attributing to him words or acts without any foundation.
- e. But to disarm any suspicion that may yet linger in the Government Quarters, the petitioner begs to solemnly pledge his word of honour that he shall cease to take any part in politics whatever. His broken health and the long sufferings make him determined—apart from any such condition—to retire and lead a private life and so he is willing to undertake to observe honestly this or any other such definite and reasonable condition that the Government may be pleased to dictate.

f. These reasons added to the fact that of all the thousands of seditious convicted before and after the petitioner, none has been held up in Jails so long as the petitioner and his brother (they have remained while all those lifers convicted with them have long been released) make him confident that the visit of H.R.H.[sic] the Prince would mark the end of their misery and that he and his brother G.D. Savarkar (in whose case the above mentioned grounds hold good to even a greater extent) would be released.

3. But if the petitioner's ill luck still persists in suppressing the Voice of Mercy then as a last alternative he prays that the special grievances arising out of his sudden transfer from the Andamans should be redressed: Had he been in the Indian Jails throughout these 11 years the petitioner would have earned something like 2 years of remission or even more. Had he been in the Andamans to the end of his term he would have been by this time eligible to be sent out on Ticket of Leave and could have taken his family there, in virtue of the system there. But as it is he is deprived of the advantages of both these systems. So he prays that either:

- a. The remission of 2 to 3 years be restored to him,  
or
- b. He be allowed to take his family with him and sent back to the Andamans on Ticket of Leave. Even the meanest of convicts, after putting in 9 years in the Andamans and with a year of good conduct, is entitled to lead a private life under the ticket of leave system—and it would not be much if the petitioner expects that at least that much

will not be denied to him, after putting in 11 years in the Andamans and in the Jails, and with 7 years of Jail good conduct. He would—if allowed this much at least—be simply glad to lead a retired and private life forgotten by and forgetting the world in the blessings of a dear home life—that world which is so terribly afraid of having its safety disturbed by so hapless, hopeless and broken individual as the petitioner.

4. In conclusion the petitioner humbly begs to emphasize that the continuation of this agitation or that in India may not be allowed to prejudice the interests of the petitioner. He would not have suggested this but for public statements to this effect both in the press and the platform. He could have no control over the actions of millions of people and to make him and his brother suffer longer on ‘administrative grounds’ would be to punish them for the actions of others, which are entirely beyond his power to check.
  5. He is confident that this petition would not fail in persuading His Excellency the Governor-General and His Excellency the Governor of Bombay to order the immediate release of the petitioner and his brother—for which act of kindness he would ever pray for Their Excellencies’ long life and prosperity.
6. Full-text of Ganesh Damodar Savarkar’s petition, dated July 4, 1922, Sabermati Jail

To  
His Excellency,  
The Governor of Bombay in Council.



May it please your Excellency:

I was sentenced on the 8<sup>th</sup> of 1909 to a sentence of transportation for life, passed by me partly in Indian jails, but largely at Port Blair from 1910 to 1921. Both under the rule which makes a life convict eligible for release at the end of 14 years including remission and the recommendation of Indian Jails Committee which has advised the release of life convicts at the end of 10 years including remission, I am entitled to an immediate release.

At the time of general amnesty given to political prisoners in December 1919 and my brother Vinayak D. Savarkar were unjustly [sic] excluded for the time being from the benefit of the general pardon and when my brother represented the matter to His Excellency the Viceroy about both of us we were informed that his Excellency 'is not prepared at present to extend to them the benefit of the amnesty'. The decision to exclude us was not final, as the language of the official reply makes it clear. I therefore trust that even at this late date, we brothers will be granted the release, which we had reason to expect even in 1919. But apart from this my claim to release is over due under the 14 years rule, for if the remission due to me during my stay at Port Blair in my various capacity of ordinary 3rd class convict and 2nd and 1st class convict is counted. I have completed these 14 years in June 1921 and my brother will complete in the current month of July 1922. So far however we have been deprived of there mission rightly and justly due to us. Throughout our stay at Port Blair we were put in Cellular Jail and given hard labour and our condition of jail life were all those of rigorous imprisonment in an Indian jails [sic], unlike what happens in the case in the case of ordinary transportees. But while incarcerated in Port Blair we were denied the rights accruing from such incarceration i.e. the right of securing a self-supporting ticket at the end of 10 years which is generally synonymous with ticket of leave and the like. And now

we are being denied of the rights accruing from the sufferance of rigorous imprisonment in an Indian jail. The Inspector General of prisons during his visit to Vijapur jail informed me in reply to my verbal inquiry, that the question of me and my brother being granted remission would be decided very shortly and in reply to a written petition send to him by me in March last, he replied that the question was still under consideration of the government. I respectfully contend that it is very unjust to us that while suffering the hardships of both kinds of imprisonment we are being deprived of the rights accruing from either. I am entitled to an ordinary Port Blair remission of about 950 days and my brother about 840 days approximately and therefore under 14 years rule both of us are entitled to an immediate release, my 14 years having been completed with remission if given long ago in 1921.

The recommendations of the Indian Jails Committee however entitle us to a release at the end of 10 years including remission and since I have finished 13 years of actual imprisonment and my brother 11½ years we are entitled to be released at once. Government have released all the other prisoners in connection with the Nasik murder and conspiracy cases, we cannot but regard it as a matter of extreme hardness that my brother should be singled out for exclusion.

My record of jail conduct ever since 1914 viz. for over 8 years has been very good there being not a single punishment inflicted on me. My brother's record is far better than that of any other political prisoners in Port Blair since he has only one or two punishments in about 1913 or 14 throughout the long period of 11½ years. In my case the punishment inflicted on me in 1909 and 1910 at Yeruda [sic] jail were [sic] for inability to grind the full 35 lbs. of the grains which was obviously beyond my strength as my considerable decrease in weight during the period proves. The punishment given to me in Port Blair were [sic] due to extremely hard labour given to me along with other political prisoners and

the conjoined action taken by us to stop the persecution which physically was unbearable. But later on since 1914 I never joined in any such action although the strike was taken up again at times by others. For the last more than 8 years of jail life, in Port Blair and in India I have given no occasion to any jail official to take any disciplinary measure against me and even the Chief Commissioner of Andamans testified to me his 'appreciation of my good behaviour'. I had been officially informed which in Bijapur that the Chief Commissioner has recommended for us to the Government. I therefore respectfully urge that I and my brother are entitled to immediate release under.

1. The promise of the future consideration of granting amnesty implied in His Excellency's reply to my brother.
2. The general rule regarding release after completion of 14 years including remission, and,
3. The recommendation of Indian Jails Committee regarding release after completion of 10 years including remission. I therefore request the early and favourable consideration of the petition

I beg subscribe myself  
Your Excellency's petitioner  
[signature]

Sabermati Jail

Date 4 July 1922

7. Full text of petition submitted by Sai. Yamunabai Vinayak Savarkar to Sir George Lloyd, Governor of Bombay, n.d. (c. 1921–22), Bombay:

To,  
His Excellency Sir George Lloyd,  
Governor of Bombay,

BOMBAY.

Respected Sir,

I, the undersigned, Sister-in-law of Ganesh Damodar Savarkar, one of the prisoners formerly transported to Andamans but now brought from there and kept in the Ahmedabad Jail, beg to lay before Your Excellency the following few lines of favourable consideration.

2. According to the Jail Committees recommendations, some 700 prisoners who have served out more than 10 years of their sentences have been released by Your Excellency's Government. Among these, a prisoner by name of Mr. V.N. Joshi, who was sentenced to transportation for life in the Jackson murder case itself, has also been released. My brother-in-law was transported for life for the mere publication of a book-let containing a few poems, and thus his offence is perhaps almost insignificant as compared with that of Mr. V.N. Joshi referred to above. Besides, my brother-in-law has actually completed more than 13 years of his term in prison, and his conduct in Jail is exemplary. Therefore if Mr. Joshi was entitled for release, under the Jail Committee's recommendations, my brother-in-law was more so. I therefore fervently appeal to Your Excellency to take these facts into consideration and like Mr. Joshi, release him.
3. My brother-in-law's release is due from other point of view also. According to the Indian Penal Code, Section 55, no prisoner can be retained in prison for more than fourteen years. This term, as per Government Resolution No. 5308 (Judicial Dept.) dated 12-10-1905 includes also the remission earned by the Convict. My brother-in-law has, from the date of his sentence (9th June 1909), been all along, kept in prison, even in the Andamans. He has thus served more than 13 years of his sentence actually in rigorous imprisonment. Adding to this the remission which he should and would have earned in the Indian

Jail—and every prisoner confined in prison earns nearly 2 months remission per year, as a prisoner, and more than that as a convict officer—I believe he has completed his fourteen years, and therefore I pray that, even on this ground, his release is now due. I need not point out that, according to the Jail Committee's recommendations, his release is really overdue. I pray therefore that he should be released on either of the grounds shown above.

4. Until his release I pray that he should be given all the concessions which he enjoyed in the Andamans as a first class prisoner, Viz.

1. A letter or an interview with a parcel once a month.
2. Books not prescribed by Government.
3. Newspapers sanctioned by Government.

5. In conclusion, I beg to point out that my brother-in-law has been trebly [sic] wronged.

1. While in the Andamans, he has been denied the benefits of comparative freedom given to a transported prisoner. There he was, for all the thirteen years nearly, kept in rigorous imprisonment, and was not let out as an ordinary transported prisoner.
2. Secondly, my brother-in-law has not been treated as a prisoner undergoing rigorous imprisonment, although he has been undergoing it, in lieu of transportation. As such, he should have got nearly 2 ½ years remission, and entitled for release, under Sec. 55 of the Indian Penal Code.
3. Thirdly, as I have pointed out above, he has not been given the benefit of the Jail Committee's recommendations, and although he was more entitled for release than Mr. Joshi,

he has not been released. Thus all the benefits of a transportee, or of a prisoner undergoing rigorous imprisonment, and all the chances of release have been unjustly refused to him till now!

I therefore pray that, as mere justice demands, he should be released immediately.

I beg to remain,  
Sir,  
Your most obedient servant,  
[signature—in Devanagari]

Address: c/o Dr. N.D. Savarkar  
Girgaon, Bombay

8. Full text petition from V.D. Savarkar's wife, Yamunabai Savarkar to Sir Lloyd George, Governor of Bombay, n.d. (c. 1921–22)

To His Excellency Sir George Lloyd,  
Governor of Bombay,  
BOMBAY.

Respected Sir,

I, the undersigned, wife of Mr. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, one of the prisoners formerly transported to Andamans but now brought from there and kept in the Ratnagiri Jail, beg to lay before Your Excellency the following few lines for favourable consideration.

2. According to the Jail Committee's recommendations, some 700 prisoners who have served out more than 10 years of their sentences have been released by Your Excellency's Government. Among these, a prisoner by name Mr. V.N. Joshi, who was sentenced to transportation for life in the Jackson murder case itself, has also been released. My husband was transported for life for a less heinous crime than that of Mr. Joshi. The latter

was actually concerned in the murder of the late Mr. Jackson, while my husband was not. My husband has also, like Mr. Joshi, completed more than 11 ½ of his Jail life. Besides, his Jail conduct has also been exemplary. Therefore if Mr. Joshi was entitled for release, under the Jail Committees recommendations, my husband was more so. I therefore fervently appeal to Your Excellency to take these facts into consideration and like Mr. Joshi, release him.

3. My husband's release is due from other point of view also. According to the Indian Penal Code, Section 55, no prisoner can be retained in prison for more than fourteen years. This term, as per Government Resolution No. 5308 (Judicial Dept.) dated 12-10-1905 includes also the remission earned by the Convict. My husband has, from the date of his sentence (24 December 1910), been all along, kept in prison, even in the Andamans. He has thus served more than 11 years and 6 months of his sentence actually in rigorous imprisonment. Adding to this the remission which he should and would have earned in the Indian Jail—and every prisoner confined in prison earns nearly 2 months remission per year, as a prisoner, and more than that as a convict officer—I believe he has completed his fourteen years, and therefore I pray that, even on this ground, his release is now due. I need not point out that, according to the Jail Committee's recommendations, his release is really overdue. I pray therefore that he should be released on either of the grounds shown above.
4. Until his release I pray that he should be given all the concessions which he enjoyed in the Andamans as a first class prisoner, Viz.

1. A letter or an interview with a parcel once a month.
2. Books not prescribed by Government.
3. Newspapers sanctioned by the Government.

5. In conclusion, I beg to point out that my husband has been trebly [sic] wronged.

1. While in the Andamans, he has been denied the benefits of comparative freedom given to a transported prisoner. There he was, for all the eleven years nearly, kept in rigorous imprisonment, and was not let out as an ordinary transported prisoner.
2. Secondly, my husband has not been yet treated as a prisoner undergoing rigorous imprisonment, although he has been undergoing it, in lieu of transportation. As such, he should have got nearly 2½ years remission, and entitled for release, under Sec. 55 of the Indian Penal Code.
3. Thirdly, as I have pointed out, he has not been given the benefit of the Jail Committee's recommendations, and although he was more entitled for release than Mr. Joshi he has not been released. Thus all the benefits of a transportee, or of a prisoner undergoing rigorous imprisonment, and all the chances of release have been unjustly refused him till now! I therefore pray that, as mere justice demands, he should be released immediately.

I beg to remain, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,  
[Signature in Devanagari]



## APPENDIX IV

### Is Hindusthan Disarmed? <sup>1</sup>

#### The Hypnotism that binds our hearts

Nothing brings home to us more painfully the hypnotism that is paralyzing the centres of our action than our blind and unreasoning belief that Hindusthan is disarmed and that therefore we cannot successfully inaugurate a revolution to overthrow the rule of Britain. There are many men, and among them, even Desh. Gokhale, <sup>2</sup> who say, ‘we are not in love with British rule; we understand that absolute independence is the only logical goal for Hindusthan; we would even fight for it in an open war. But where are the arms with which to fight? How can we fight their maxim guns and quick-firers and repeating rifles? How can we fight against their navy?’ And, believing that they have raised unanswerable objections and given irresistible arguments against revolution, they advise the nation that it is therefore impossible, unwise, and suicidal to think of war and attempt to overthrow the British yoke. And a section of our countrymen have adopted this false reasoning, and filled with the despair that comes of belief in one’s own impotence, act as a heavy drag on the advancing force of the Revolution.

It is one of the worst symptoms of the demoralization that has set in upon us as the result of long years of slavery and western ‘education’ that our people should thus deify this machine. They forget that it is man that makes the machine and not the machine that makes the man. They have lost their belief in the infinite capacity of the Human Mind and are filled with materialistic fears that machines have got the power in themselves of opposing the advancing tide of a national revolution. They forget that if

the enemy has got machine guns, we also, if we set about it, can make them, or purchase them in the world's market, or capture them from the enemy himself. They also do not take into account the stores of arms that are already in the country waiting only to be used by us for the achievement of our independence. Alas, what a pathetic sight it is to see the descendants of Shri Ram and Shri Krishna, Arjun and Bhim, the Ghazis and the Akalis, Nana Saheb and Khan Bahadur, tremble before a puny race of shop-keepers, because forsooth, these are armed with modern guns and cannon, and we are not! Where is our heroism, where is our love for fighting gone? Have we lost our resource and faith in ourselves and the greatness of our destiny? Have we become so blind that we do not see the large quantity of arms that is still in the country available to us and the immense possibilities of increasing the same? One could have scarcely believed it, but it is nevertheless true, that many of our countrymen think that we are not in a position to face the British enemy in battle. It is therefore necessary that we should clear this ignorance and the weakness and pusillanimity that is possessing their hearts on account of this ignorance by placing the right estimate of our situation before the country.

Are we really disarmed?

It is of course true that the detestable 'Arms Act' passed by the cowardly Briton in 1879 is on our Statute Book, and that our men are not allowed to possess a gun even for protection against robbers or wild beasts. It is also true that we are not allowed to carry a gun or sword or revolver without a license, which is systematically refused to genuine Hindusthanees. But let us not forget that the 'Arms Act' does not extend to the States of our Princes. There every man can get himself armed to the teeth if he pleases. In those States there is no ban placed upon that elementary right of every man to carry arms. And thanks to the Revolution of 1857 the whole of Hindusthan is not painted red, and the States do not cover a small area. More than one-third of our country consists of these States wherein live over 60 millions of people with perfect liberty to purchase and carry

whatever arms they please. And these principalities are not crowded together in one place but are scattered all over the continent, so that every part of the territory directly tyrannized by Britain is within a few hours' distance from some important Hindusthanee State.

Of course attempts have been and are being made by the enemy to intimidate or cajole the Princes into introducing laws restraining the use of arms within their respective territories. The Princes have hitherto resisted this pressure, which it is nothing short of suicidal if they yield to. And there is no near prospect of our Princes, descended of warlike ancestors and governing warlike peoples, obeying the behest of the Firinghi in this particular. The Maharaja of Jaipur was once asked by the Viceroy if he would consider the introduction of the 'Arms Act' in his territory. The Maharaja is reported to have handed over his sword, to the Viceroy and pathetically said, slave that he was, that he was *personally* willing to yield his sword to the Viceroy, but that it was not in his power to force the Sirdars and subjects to do the same. The Nizam also was cunningly approached and it was proposed to him that he would be given 'permission' to increase his regular army if he would suppress his irregular troops and introduce some restrictions as to the use of arms in his kingdom. But the Nizam was clever enough to perceive the treachery of the Firinghi and refused to consider the proposal. And at the present moment the enemy is very fearful of pressing the Princes too much in respect of any matter about which they feel rather strongly.

Then again there are the old swords and matchlocks, spears and lances that are kept by the villagers in every part of the country. There are also the guns and other arms of the Police in every taluq, which it is so very easy for the people to take on any day when they want to begin the fight. It will thus be clearly seen that it is a mere idle superstition to say that there are no arms in the country, which the people could use in their fight for their independence.

The People in Western Countries are not much better armed

We ought to admit and once for all do admit that the arms that we have spoken of above cannot compare with the arms that are in the hands of the enemy. But at the same time let us not forget the all-important fact that no people on the face of the earth is sufficiently armed to enter into an equal fight with the government under which it is living. The 'Declaration of Independence' of the United States of America provides that the right to keep and carry arms is an inalienable right attaching to citizenship, and today every American citizen is entitled to carry a revolver or gun at his pleasure. In France and Belgium and Switzerland and England too, there is practically no restriction at all to the right of every man to carry arms. But can anybody say on this account that the people of those countries are able, so far as present possession of arms is concerned, today to engage in a bloody encounter with their respective governments? The cannon and maxim guns and howitzers are in the hands of the government, and the possession of a few revolvers and hunting-guns does not place them in a better position than the people of Hindusthan for the conduct of such a struggle. And yet, if there were in those countries a tenth part of the injustice and oppression that is committed in Hindusthan today, the people there would not pause so much as to consider whether they are armed or disarmed but rise at once like an avalanche and overwhelm the government with all its Maxims and Mausers!

### Odds always against the People

In fact, when all the great revolutions of the world broke out, were the people ever adequately armed to cope with the power of the tyrant? It is in the very nature of the relation between tyrant and oppressed that all the army and navy and means of offence and defence are in the hands of the tyrant, and that he uses them in repressing the least symptoms of liberty, showing itself among the people. The tyrant discourages the smallest exhibitions of a spirit of independence, self-reliance, strength and courage in the people he oppresses—he cannot brook a subject walking erect in his dominions. He keeps his mercenaries aloof from the civil populations and

forbids all intercourse between the two. And he carefully prohibits the use of arms by any of his subjects. And yet revolutions have broken out and revolutions have succeeded in the world ere now.

## The example of the French Revolution

Look at the Great French Revolution. When the great world volcano broke out, the people were entirely disarmed. There was not even a common feeling of nationality among them. Everybody felt himself to be a Provençal or a Parisian, a Breton or a Norman, and none believed himself to be a Frenchman. The artillery was in the hands of the king and the aristocracy and that tyrant blood that bleeds the people under the shelter of the throne. The army was composed of Germans and Swiss and Austrians who were ready to shoot down the masses at a moment's notice. And the people had nothing but pikes and crowbars, sticks and brickbats with which to fight the tyranny. But what was the result? On the 14th of July, 1789—that sacred day on which Liberty was first born on the continent of modern Europe, on which tyrants first began to tremble for their thrones and the People felt the first young thrill of victory and strength—the people marched against the Bastille, the well-defended fortress of tyranny and captured it in a few hours! Of course they could not and did not take the Bastille merely with the aid of their pikes and crowbars. The government had a large store of artillery and other arms in the Hotel des Invalides. Before the mercenaries of the king, 30,000 of whom under Besenval were encamped on the Champs de Mars not 6 furlongs off, could go and take it, a section of the people rushed at it, captured 12 pieces of cannon and 32,000 muskets, and with this brought the hated edifice down. Here was the resource of the Revolution! The taking of the Bastille is only one of the incidents of the Great Revolution. Wherever the people succeeded in the course of that great struggle, and they succeeded to a very large extent, it was always by a display of revolutionary activity, before which the rotten edifice of Tyranny yielded like a house of cards, and not by the possession of arms.

## The revolutions in Hindusthan

What happened in France in the 18th Century had already happened in Hindusthan in the 17th. There also the country was in the hands of the Moghuls who held it by force of arms and by the divisions among the Hindu kingdoms of the day. All the best-trained chivalry of the land supported the foreign domination, which appeared invincible in its apparent strength. And even the whole of Hindusthan did not rise against the tyrant. Only two of the most despised peoples of the time took it into their head that Hindusthan should have Swaraj and that the invader should not be the lord of the land. Arms they had very little to speak of. Cannon and artillery, heavy and light arms were all in favour of the Moghul. But the revolutionary impetus that was in them found its own weapons and neither its artillery nor its powerful allies could save the Moghul empire from the fate it deserved.

## The glorious six days of Milan

Italy shall supply to us our last illustration. It was 1848 and the city of Milan felt that it was its duty to show to the rest of Italy how to fight Austria. The 'leaders' advised the people that it was impossible for the city to offer any resistance to Radetzky with his 60,000 well-armed troops. But the instinct of the people was truer than the calculations of the 'leaders'. They overruled their leaders and determined to fight against those apparently heavy odds. In a single night the people had erected barricades at all the entrances to the city. Tables, chairs, desks, heir-looms were thrown by the people to build the barricades against the advancing columns of the enemy. And what had they to reply to the artillery of Radetzky? Nothing but old guns and knives and sticks and broken swords! Armed with these, the people defended for six days, displaying the most wonderful heroism, and on the seventh day Radetzky had to retire with the wreck of his fine army! Neither his artillery nor his numbers were of the least avail!

## The Invincibility of modern artillery is a mere Superstition

It will be objected that a great deal of improvement has been effected in the weapons of destruction within the last few years. But in the first place, the degree of improvement has been greatly, immensely exaggerated. It is in the interest of the capitalist class—that octopus that has now coiled itself round the world and is sucking its blood in a thousand shapes and a thousand forms, and which can continue its nefarious work only if the people who are its victims can be kept in a state of constant and permanent fear of its omnipotence—it is the interest of this capitalist class to make the people believe that their maxim guns are invincible, that their howitzers are all-powerful, and that if the people dare to rise against the existing order of things they will be annihilated into dust and ashes. But the truth is far otherwise. The mortality in all the latest wars of the world shows clearly how enormously exaggerated this pretended power of the modern gun is. Look at the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava. Remember how they rode one mile and a half right into the mouth of the cannon that was firing at them. The fire was hot and was pouring thick like hail, but still when they reached the cannon, half of the Brigade survived to silence them and turn them against the enemy! Study the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese war—the mortality is not more than in the wars of the last century. The history of the last Bastar rising should teach us the same lesson. And if the maxim guns were all-powerful, why has Britain retreated from the territory of Somali Mulla, covered with disgrace like a whipped cur? It will therefore be plain to anybody who gives a little thought to the subject that the strength of modern day artillery is extremely overrated. In the second place, the weapons in the hands of the people have also improved *pari passu*. The capitalist, true to his instincts, cannot afford to throw away his out of date guns. And by a natural process of commercial gravitation the weapons that were last taken away from use in the army come into the hands of the people. And the weapons thus available for the people at the first onrush at the present moment is not less inferior to the weapons that are in the hands of the tyrants than the

weapons available for the people during past revolutions to those possessed by the tyrants of those times. So we need not spend so much as a thought to the supposed difficulty created by the modern improvements in artillery.

## Navy powerless against us

As regards the ability of the enemy's navy to injure us, we have only to remember the words of Haidar Ali Khan's proclamation, which we reproduced in full in our last issue: 'As to their ships, though they may do us some damage on the sea-coast, yet that damage cannot exceed the distance of cannon-shot.' And the remarks of that great son of Hindusthan are no less true today than they were in 1781.

## The Terror of the Enemy and its Meaning

The very terror of the enemy should open the eyes of such of us as are blind to the fact that the possession of modern artillery and the 'greatest' navy in the world is not everything. The policy of repression, which the Firinghi has adopted against us is indicative of the fact that he feels that his artillery and army and navy would be powerless against us the day that even 1000 Hindusthanees make up their minds to brave them. And what cannot be done in such a country like Hindusthan? We can cut off their telegraph wires, smash the wireless apparatus, break down their rails, and their railway carriages and thus render the enemy powerless to transmit their troops with speed. By means of the bomb and the dynamite we can dismantle their cantonments and magazines and capture their guns and cannon and arm ourselves as well as them. And after all, how easy it is to forge these weapons! The blacksmiths of our country, with their natural intelligence and energy, can without the slightest difficulty cast and forge the most complicated machine-guns. And with our immense sea-board we can smuggle arms by the thousands—not all the fleet of England can prevent this if we determine to do it.



## We have the advantage of the Attack

And let us not forget this further advantage that we possess. We can choose the time when to begin the fight. The enemy, from the very nature of things cannot start the war of himself. We can attack and have the first shot. He can only defend. The choice of time and place is entirely in our hands and even a child knows what an immense advantage it is to fire the first shot.

## And we begin by guerilla war

And, again we do not start the war by at once engaging in pitched battle with the enemy. We must first form guerilla bands that should scour the country all round, attack the enemy where he is least powerful and run away to another place as soon as he forms himself in the first, cut off his food supplies, upset his commissariat, hang upon his rear, break the line of his communications, and generally like the wolf, fall upon him at every unguarded part and confuse him by the very rapidity and uncertainty of our movements; and thus exhaust him in every part of the country till we are strong enough to fight a pitched battle. This is the kind of war, which all nations struggling for liberty must first adopt. This is the kind of war which Shivaji and Guru Govind Singh, Moulvie Ahmed Shah and Tatyá Tope and Kunvar Singh, Garibaldi and Kossuth, Washington and William of Orange—in short, all the patriot warriors of the world adopted for the achievement of their country's liberation. We too have already adopted it in this our present Revolution. For, what if not guerilla bands, are these young men who loot the banks and offices of the British Government and attack the Svadeshi enemies of Hindusthan's independence? The enemy to suit his own purposes call them dacoits, as the revolutionaries of '89 were called brigands, as the Mahrattas were called bandits and highway robbers. But History will surely regard these young men as the pioneers of our Revolution, as the first young guerillas who broke the power and the backbone of the Firinghi and removed the hypnotism of our minds as to

the strength and resource of the enemy. Scouting—the master art of the guerilla—is not new to us. Our hunters and trackers, our gypsies and fakirs, our Kallars and Maravars are born scouts and their mastery of scoutcraft is unequalled. And the people of our villages would help us in every possible way—they hate the Firinghee so much. Even our enemies have confessed how the people were with the Revolutionaries in the great struggle of '57. Says Charles Ball, 'and all these bands of rebels (our patriots, whom, with Firinghee instinct, he calls rebels) were strengthened and encouraged to an inconceivable degree by the sympathy of their countrymen. They could march without commissariat, for the people would always feed them. They could leave their baggage without guard, for the people would not attack it. They were always certain of their position and that of the British, for the people brought them hourly information. And no design could possibly be kept from them while secret sympathizers stood round every mess table and waited in almost every tent in the British camp. No surprise could be effected but by a miracle, while rumour, communicated from mouth to mouth, outstripped even our cavalry.' And today, if anything, the people will be still more with us in order to destroy the insolent, brutal Firinghi.

## The Victory of Truth and Righteousness

Our guerilla bands would thus exhaust the enemy and increase their stores of arms by capturing a large number of the enemy's cannon, and would eventually grow into a large army. And then, the fight between those who fight for independence and for a principle and those who fight for empire and for paltry lucre can only have one issue—the victory of the principle and the destruction of the tyrannous empire.

So, brothers and sisters of Hindusthan, let us clear ourselves of the illusion that we are disarmed! Let us rush into the battlefield and hammer down the chains that are binding us. Kalkin—the new ideal of Swadharma and Swaraj—is already born amongst us, for Dharma is in Her death-throes and Adharma is prospering in the world! Let us flock to the

standard of the new Avatar and engage the tyrant in battle! Let our faith be great in the principle for which we fight! Let us fill ourselves with the haughty spirit of our ancestors and defend Dharma to the death! And Kali shall die, and a new age shall dawn for Hindusthan, and for all the world! —for the Scarlet Woman of the West will no more rule in Hindusthan and tyrannize the earth!

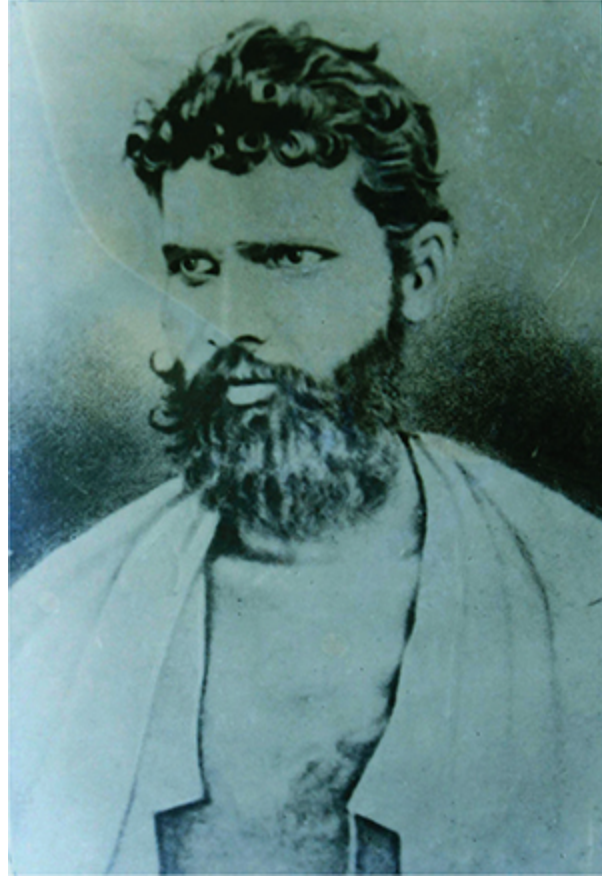


Vinayak's ancestral house, Bhagur



Photograph by author

Vinayak's birthplace, Bhagur



Wasudev Balwant Phadke



Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Damodar Hari Chapekar

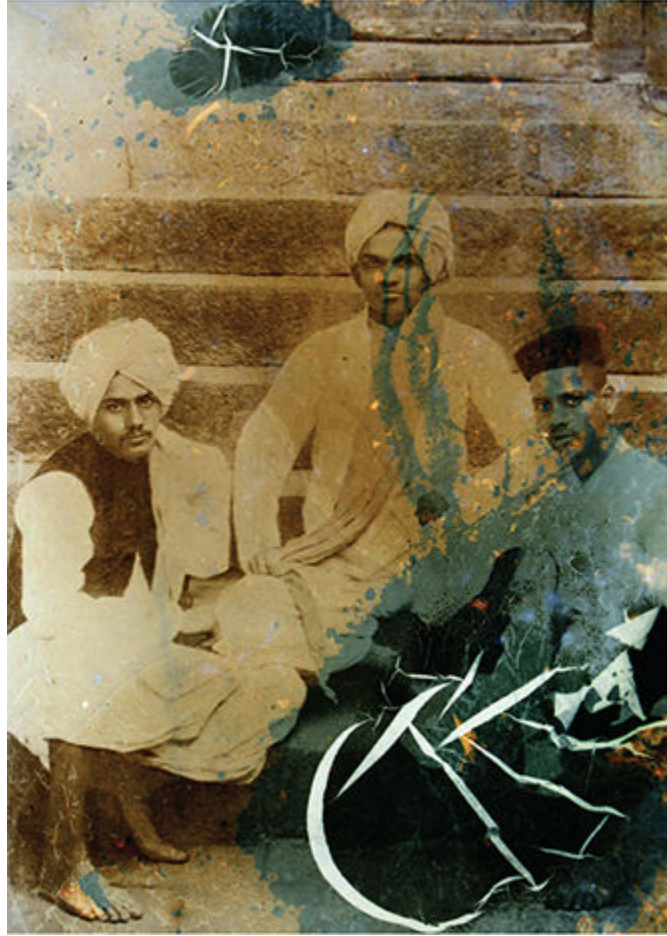




Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Hari Vinayak Chapekar





Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Vasudev Hari Chapekar, Mahadev Vinayak Ranade and Khanderao Keshav Sathe



Balakrishna Hari Chapekar



Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Vasudev Hari Chapekar



Photograph by author

The Ashtabhuj Bhawani idol, the family deity of the Savarkars, which is now at the Khandoba Temple in Bhagur





Photograph by author

The narrow lanes of Nashik where the Abhinav Bharat was born



Photograph by author

The Abhinav Bharat congregated here in Nashik



Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Young turks of the Abhinav Bharat





Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Aabaa Darekar alias Kavi Govind





Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

A 1901 photograph of young Vinayak



Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

A 1902 photograph of young Vinayak



Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Ramachandra Trimbak or Bhaurao Chiplunkar, Vinayak's father-in-law



Yamuna Bai (Mai) Savarkar



Ganesh Damodar Savarkar (Babarao)

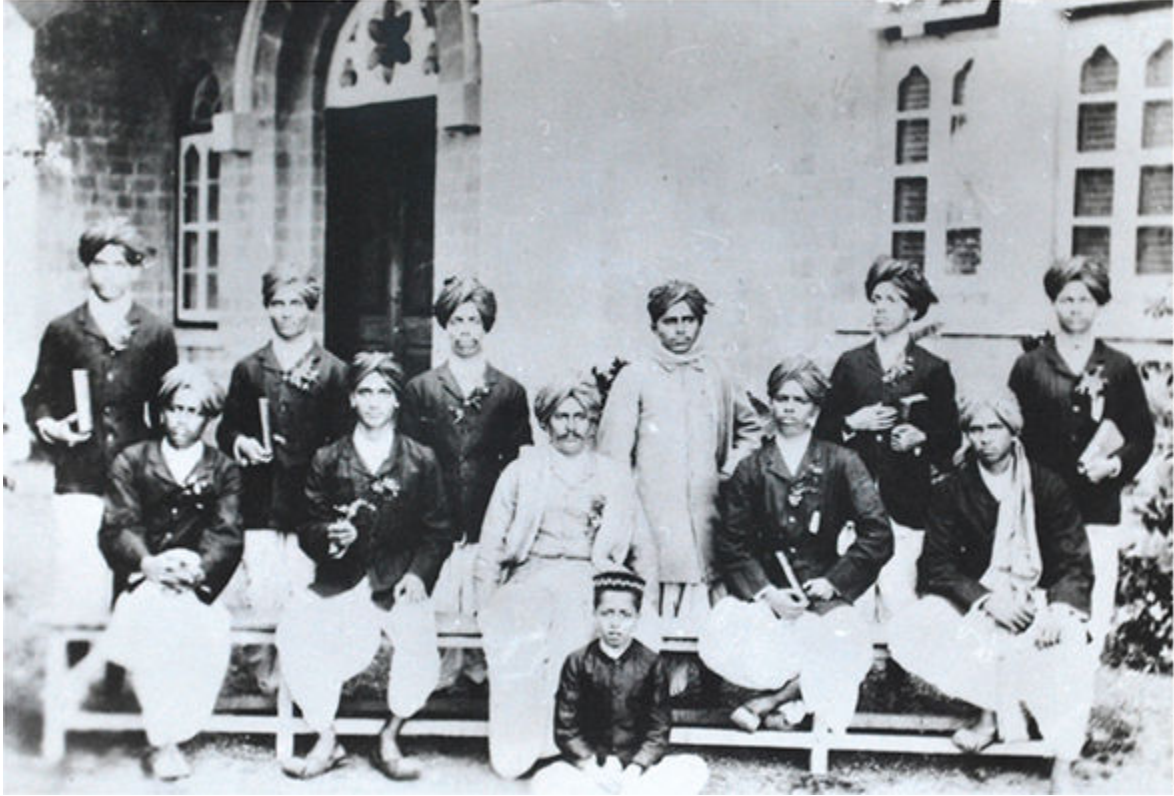




Yesu Vahini or Yashoda Bai Savarkar



Vishnu Mahadev Bhat



**Standing (L to R):** Vishnu Mahadev Bhat, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Ganesh Vishnu Ranade, Ganesh Hari Oak, and Ganesh Vasudev Joglekar  
**Sitting (Lto R):** Vasudev Narayan Moholkar, S.V. Gokhale, Krishnaji Pant Sath, Balakrishna Pant Gokhale, Vaidya  
**Seated on ground:** Ganapatrao Phadke





Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Bal Gangadhar Tilak



Shyamji Krishna Verma



Group Photograph taken in early 1909 at India House, London

**Standing (L-R):** Mitra, M.P.T. Acharya, Harnam Singh, Syed Haidar Raza, Dr Rajan and housekeeper Jack

**Sitting (L-R):** V.V.S. Aiyar, Gyanchand Verma, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Niranjana Pal, Khan, Lala Govind Amin



Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Koregaonkar, Niranjan Pal and Vinayak in London





Madan Lal Dhingra



Virendranath Chattopadhyay



V.V.S. Aiyar

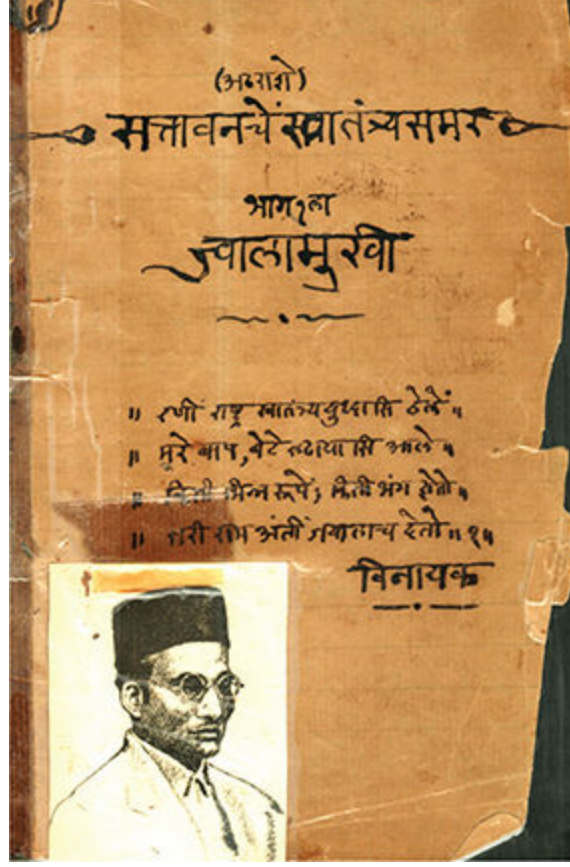


Madame Bhikaji Cama





Lala Har Dayal



Original of Savarkar's *The Indian War of Independence*

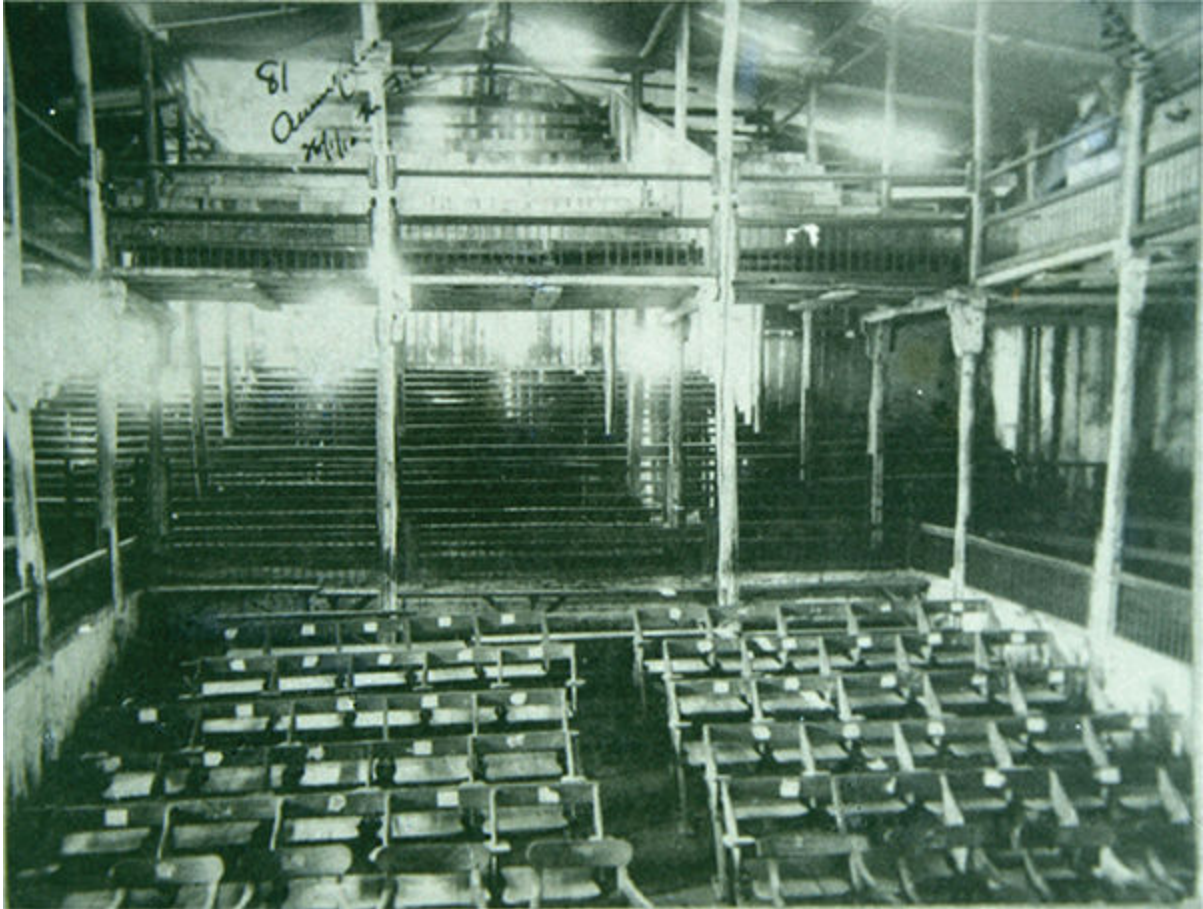


Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Anant Laxman Kanhere's photograph in a Nashik Studio just before he murdered Jackson



Krishnaji Gopal Karve



Vijayanand Theatre in Nashik where Jackson was murdered by Kanhere





Photograph courtesy of V.S. Joshi Collection, Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

David Garnett



Guy Aldred



Vinayak photographed after his arrest at Victoria Station in London





Savarkar in jail clothes

# THE HERALD OF REVOLT.

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All unsigned communications are written by the Editor.

## SAVARKAR ISSUE!

"Art thou a statesman, and canst not be a hypocrite? Impossible! Do not distrust thy virtues."—*Dryden*.

"The most formidable enemy of the public welfare is not riot or sedition, but despotism; it changes the character of a nation, and always for the worse: it produces nothing but vice."—*Helvetius*.

"Look on who will in apathy, and stifle they who can."

The sympathies, the hopes, the words that make man truly man:  
Let those whose hearts are disengaged in with interest or with ease,  
Consent to bear with quiet pulse of loathsome deeds like these!

—*J. R. Lowell*.

VOL. 2.—No. 10.]

LONDON, OCTOBER, 1912.

[ONE PENNY, MONTHLY.

## THE SAVARKAR CONSPIRACY.

I.

On 8th February, 1910, a warrant was granted by a magistrate in Bombay against the Hindu patriot, Vinayaka Damodar Savarkar, B.A., charging him with five offences under the Indian Penal Code, all of which were variations of the one offence. They were as follows:—

(1) Waging war or abetting the waging of war against the King in India. This offence is not quite equal to the offence of treason in England, the legal definition of war being any covert act calculated to subvert the Government. The offence is punishable by death or transportation for life and the forfeiture of property.

(2) Conspiring, in contravention of Section 121a of the Indian Penal Code, to deprive the King of the Sovereignty of British India or a part of it.

(3) Procuring and distributing arms in London in 1908, thus abetting the murder of Mr. A. M. T. Jackson, collector of Nasik, which occurred at a local theatre on 21st December, 1909.

(4) Procuring and distributing arms in London in 1908, and otherwise waging war against the King from London.

(5) Delivering seditious speeches in India, at Nasik and Poona, January to May, 1906; and in London, 1908 to 1909. This was also included in the first offence.

The warrant was granted against Savarkar in his absence, on the ground that these offences came within the Fugitive Offenders Act of 1881. A telegram was despatched to London, with the result that, on 22nd February, 1910, a provisional warrant was granted by the Bow Street Magistrate. As a consequence, Savarkar was arrested at Victoria Station on the 13th of the following month when leaving the Newhaven Boat Train from Paris.

Sir Rufus Isaacs, then Solicitor-General, defended these high-handed proceedings in the Divisional Court, on the ground that Savarkar waged war against the King in India in 1906, and then went away from that country. He was now to be found in England. In 1909, whilst in England, he had been guilty of certain acts, which, in law, constituted an offence in India as well as in England. For the purpose of Section 2 of the Fugitive

Offenders Act, it was immaterial that the going away preceded the offence, nor did it make any difference that the later offence was triable in England as well as in India. To this jargon of legal nonsense we oppose the real facts of the case. Savarkar was not a fugitive from India so far as the Acts of 1906 were concerned. He did not leave India because of anything he had done there. He came openly to London to study law, and no steps were taken against him at the time. So far as his 1909 acts in London were concerned, to claim that he was a fugitive from India for an offence committed in England against the English Government sounds strangely like nonsense. And here is the Section 2 of the Fugitive Offenders Act of 1881, which Isaacs claimed as covering Savarkar's alleged offence:—

"When a person accused of having committed an offence (in which this part of the Act applies) in one part of His Majesty's dominions, such person (in this Act referred to as a fugitive from that part) if found in another part of His Majesty's dominions, shall be liable to be apprehended, and returned in manner provided by this Act to the part from which he is a fugitive."

Here the accusation must be the cause of the running away for the person to be deemed a fugitive. But what can one say of an offence, openly committed in 1906, that the Government does not discover to be one until 1910? How could Savarkar flee in May, 1906, from an accusation made against him in February, 1910? And the London offences—how could they have been committed in "one part of (his) Majesty's dominions" (viz., India) whilst Savarkar, arrested in London, is held to be "found in another part," viz., the same place as that in which he committed the alleged offence?

Even the Lord Chief Justice was not satisfied with the absurd interpretation Isaacs placed upon this second section of the 1881 Act. So he called the latter's attention to the 33rd Section, which was as follows:—



Mr. V. D. SAVARKAR,  
the Hindu Patriot, who will be released from the  
Andamans Prison, Dec. 24th, 1960!

Guy Aldred's *The Herald of Revolt*, advocating the release of Savarkar

# THE **Bande Mataram**



Monthly Organ of Indian Independence.

„Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves.  
Be ye guides unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to no  
external refuge. Work out your liberation with diligence.  
(Gautama Buddha).“

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**A CALL OF DUTY.** — We must remind our readers that though this journal is „prohibited“ in Hindusthan, a very large number of copies nevertheless find their way into the homes of our countrymen, by whom it is much appreciated. We have frequently pointed out that the importation of all forms of revolutionary literature is a sacred duty incumbent upon every man and woman who is devoted to the cause of our country's independence. And we therefore request our readers to use every possible means that their ingenuity can devise to ensure the successful smuggling of this and subsequent issues of this journal into our country.

## Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.



Two years ago, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1910, Deshbhakta Savarkar escaped from the English steamer in the docks of Marseilles, and he ought to have been a free man, on his landing on the French soil according to all laws on Political Refugees! But, through the weakness of The French Government and the intrigues and dishonesty of the English, he was handed back to his political enemies and a comedy was played by the Hague Tribunal as a final scene of this sad

and shameful business! What life he and other Deshbhaktas are living on The Andaman Islands can be understood from the following statement published by „The Bengalee“ of 27 April 1912.

## Political Prisoners in India.

### Their Treatment in the Andamans.

During the first two years they (the political prisoners) were in jail. In jail there are various kinds of work to do, the most difficult being the oil-mil, whether by hand or by foot. The latter means that four men are tied to the mill and have to go round and round a centre post just as bullocks do. They have to press out 30 lb. of oil during the day. This is oil-mill work by foot. In the oil-mill work by hand you have to turn a handle round and round during the whole day, and thus press out about 30 lb. of oil.

Chopping Coconut bark is another species of work. One gets a huge log of wood, about half a maund in weight, and a wooden mallet about 4 lb. in weight. These things the prisoner gets in his cell. Then he has to place strips of coconut upon the wood block and go on striking them with the mallet. In this way a sort of fine dust is pressed out of the coconut strips, and only a fibrous substance remains; about 2 lb. or 1½ lb. of this fibrous substance the prisoner has to press out in the course of the day.

Ropemaking is the lightest work one gets in jail. About 3 lb. of coconut flax is given to the prisoner and he has to spin it into rope according to sample. There is another kind of work still. There is a kind of brood-based thorny plant called the rambhass. The prisoner is given about eighty or ninety of these leaves, and out of these he has to beat up 4 lb. of white flay. The leaves are about 2 inches, in thickness and from a cubit to two cubits in length. If even a drop of its juice touches the body it begins to itch and ultimately produces a kind of sore.

The political prisoners were comparatively well off at first. They made ropes or were put to chopping coconut bark. But

DOWN MY HUMBLE LIFE

FOR MY COUNTRY“

of the rambhass plant, and his hands were so badly blistered with it, that he suffered intense pain, and could not even touch his food. He refused to do the latter for change of work, but the heartless

Photograph courtesy of British Library, London

The *Bande Mataram*, July 1912 issue, seeking Savarkar's release





Photograph courtesy of British Library, London

Detailed deck plan of S.S. *Morea* that transported Vinayak from London



The Cellular Jail under construction, 1900



An old photograph of the Cellular Jail





Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

The Cellular Jail, Port Blair



Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

The flame of independence at the Cellular Jail, Port Blair





Photograph by author

Bar Fetters, Cellular Jail, Port Blair



Photograph by author

Cross-Bar Fetters, Cellular Jail, Port Blair



Kolhu or oil mill at the Cellular Jail







Photograph by author

Model of prisoners being whiplashed, Cellular Jail, Port Blair





Photograph by author

Model of prisoners grinding the oil mill or kolhu, Cellular Jail, Port Blair



Photograph by author

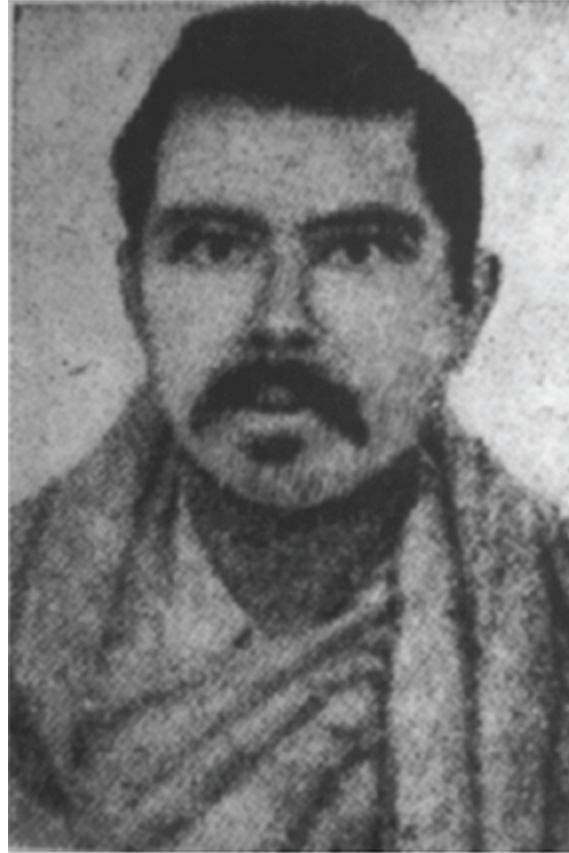
The Gallows, Cellular Jail, Port Blair



Photograph by author

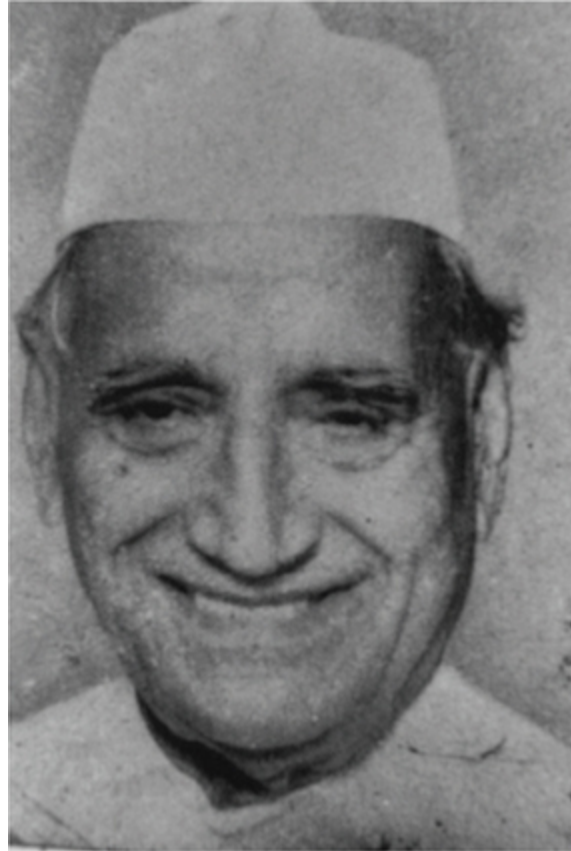
Vinayak's Cell, Cellular Jail





Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Ullaskar Dutt, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Babu Prithvi Singh Azad, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



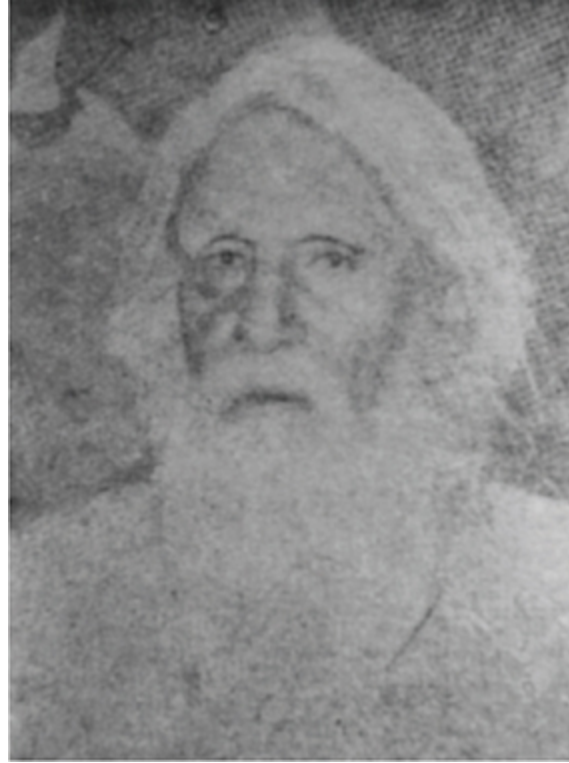
Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Hotilal Varma, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Indubhushan Roy, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Pundit Paramanand, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



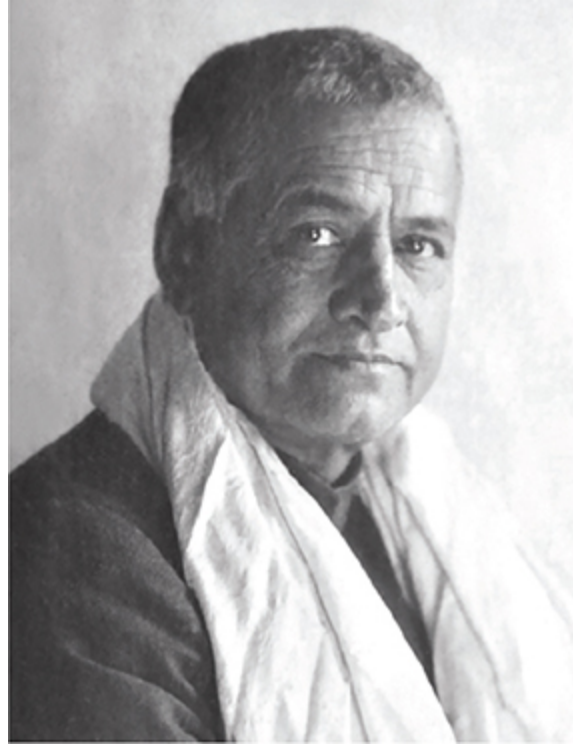
Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Sachindranath Sanyal, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



Photograph courtesy of the Cellular Jail, Port Blair

Upendranath Banerjee, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



Photograph courtesy of Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Bhai Parmanand, political prisoner at the Cellular Jail



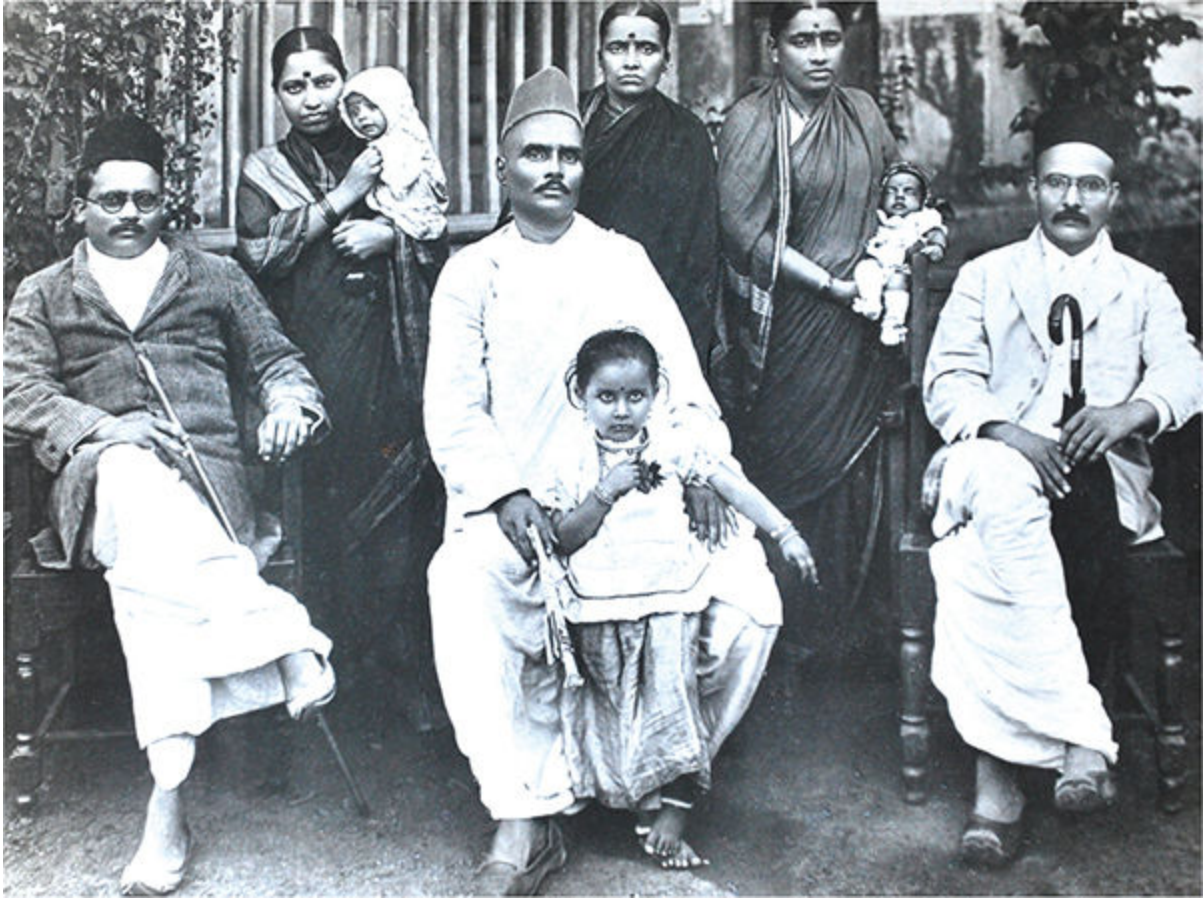


Photograph courtesy of Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai

Babarao Savarkar after his release from the Cellular Jail



Vinayak after his release from the Cellular Jail



The Savarkar brothers (L to R) Narayan, Ganesh and Vinayak, with Shanta, sister Maina Kale and Yamuna

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# Notes

## Prologue

1. Information gleaned from the interview of Dr Subodh Naik with Babasaheb Purandhare on 11 November 2018 in Pune.
2. V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1. (translated by the author), New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan.

## Chapter 1: The Early Years

1. R. Temple to the viceroy (Lytton): 3 July 1879 and 9 July 1879 (Mss Eur F86/5: 1877–1880), India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. V.N. Mandlik, ‘Preliminary observations on a document giving an account of the establishment of a new village named Muruda, in Southern Konkana’, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* , Vol. VIII (1864–66), p. 3; J. Wilson, *Indian Caste* , Vol. II, (Bombay, Edinburgh and London, 1877), pp. 20–21; I. Karve, ‘The Parasurama Myth’, *Journal of the University of Bombay* , Vol. I (July 1932).
5. E.E. McDonald, ‘The Modernizing of Communication: Vernacular Publishing in 19th Century Maharashtra’, *Asian Survey* 8.7 (1968), p. 596.
6. R. Temple to the viceroy (Lytton): 3 July 1879; British Library, London.
7. Mss Eur F86/5: 1877–80, British Library, London.
8. References to family ancestry in the Marathi biography of Babarao Savarkar: D.N. Gokhale, *Krantiveer Babarao Savarkar* , Vol. 2 (Srividya Prakashan, Poona, 1979), pp. 2–3.
9. V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, pp. 126–27.

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. The biography of Babarao mentions a different story about the idol being brought by an ancestor, Visaji Hari, who had fought the Makrani tribes of Malwa and confiscated it from their custody. It had then passed down the generations.
13. Here too there are different accounts given by Vinayak and Babarao. The latter's biography by D.N. Gokhale states (p. 7) that once the idol was given away to the priest of the Khandoba temple, he started getting horrifying dreams in which a snake began to appear and terrorize him. In utter fright, he returned the idol to the Savarkar family. Hence, the idol was not away from them for too long. One is not sure which version is correct.
14. Radhabai passed away in the Hindu Shaka Year 1814, Ashadha month, Shuddha Pratipada at 6 a.m. (D.N. Gokhale, *Krantiveer Babarao Savarkar* , Vol. 2, 1979, p. 11.)
15. Y.D. Phadke, *Visaya Shatakatil Maharashtra* , Vol. 1 (Srividya Prakashan, Pune, 1989), p. 8.
16. N.C. Kelkar, *Lokmanya Tilakyanchi Charitra* (Riya Publications, Kolhapur, 2012), p. 120.
17. Stanley Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale : Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961), p. 36.
18. Agarkar to Tilak, 25 December 1888, Tilak Papers, Kesari Office, Poona.
19. N.C. Kelkar, *Lokmanya Tilakyanchi Charitra* , p. 221.
20. V.S. Joshi, *Wasudev Balwant Phadke: First Indian Rebel Against the British Rule* , pp. 40–41.
21. References for the retaliation from Phadke, see: J. Kellock, *Mahadev Govind Ranade* (Calcutta, 1926); Letter of Temple to Lytton from British Library, London; and G.R.G. Hambly, 'Maharatta Nationalism before Tilak', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* , 49:2 (1962), pp.144–60.
22. *Bombay Gazette, 15 May 1879, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.*
23. *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India* , Vol. I (Bombay State Publication, Bombay, 1957), p. 89.
24. Ibid., p. 86.

25. Ibid., p. 128.
26. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* , 15 November 1879.
27. Hume to Northbrook, 1 August 1872, Northbrook Papers.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. William Bart Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume, C.B.: Father of the Indian National Congress, 1829 to 1912* (London, 1913).
31. Presidential Address of 1893 in V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, pp. 37, 90.

## Chapter 2: Painful Transitions

1. V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, pp. 309–12.
2. Commissioner-in-Charge, Poona, ‘Riots at Nasik Between Hindus and Muhammadans’ (16 February 1894), enclosed with Commissioner to G.C. Whitworth, Acting Secretary to Government, Judicial Department (15 March 1894), Bombay Archives Judicial Department (hereafter BAJD), Vol. 284, comp. no. 545, part III (1894).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. For references to these Hindu–Muslim disturbances, see, Shabnum Tejani. ‘Music, Mosques and Custom: Local Conflict and Communalism in a Maharashtrian Weaving Town, 1893–1894’, *Journal of South Asian Studies* , 30:2, pp. 223–40.
8. Copy of ruling in letter from Government Pleader, High Court (24 November 1893), with G.C. Whitworth’s departmental letter (15 March 1894), BAJD, Vol. 284, No. 545, part III (1894).
9. Inspector General of Police Bombay to Government of Bombay, 15 July 1899, Enclosure 2, Home Public A, September 1899, National Archives of India, New Delhi, p. 5.
10. V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, pp. 151–55.
11. Ibid., p. 152.
12. Prachi Deshpande, ‘Narratives of Pride: History and Regional Identity in Maharashtra, India c. 1870–1960’, (Tufts University, 2002), p. 156. (Unpublished Dissertation.)

13. Ibid., p. 151.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 152.
16. J.J. Heaton, private secretary to governor, demi-official, 10 March 1897, with GRGD cited no. 13 above; Rand to Secretary, GD, no. 752 of 1 March 1897, with GRGD no. 1272/765-P of 9 March 1897, Plague Compilation no. 127, GD Plague, Vol. 75 of 1897, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
17. Myron J. Echenberg, *Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894–1901* (New York University Press, New York, 2007), pp. 66–68.
18. Damodar Chapekar's autobiography in source material for *A History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II. (Government of Bombay, Bombay, 1958), pp. 954–65.
19. Ibid., p. 957.
20. Ibid., p. 961.
21. Ibid., p. 964.
22. Ibid., p. 1002.
23. Ibid., pp. 1000–10.
24. Ibid., p. 998.
25. Unknown to people, it is said that Tilak secretly funded the Chapekars, as also Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. This is referenced in the Marathi biography of Tilak—*Lokmanya Tilak aani Krantikarak* by Y.D. Phadke, and *Jnankoshkar Ganesh Rango Bhide* by Pratibha Ranade. Shahu Maharaj had a revolutionary club called Shivaji Club in Kolhapur. It is believed that since Chapekar wrote these in his memoir from the Yeravada jail and knowing that his writings would be tracked, he tried to provide cover to Tilak by even being excessively critical of him at times.
26. Ibid., pp. 975–76.
27. Ibid., p. 1001.
28. Ibid., p. 348.
29. V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra*, Vol. 1, p. 177.
30. Vishwanath Prasad Varma, *The Life and Philosophy of Lokmanya Tilak* (Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Agra, n.d.), p. 518.
31. *Kal*, 17 March 1899.
32. V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra*, Vol. 1, pp. 179–80.



33. S.S. Setlur and K.G. Deshpande, *A Full and Authentic Report of the Trial of the Hon'ble Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, B.A., LLB at the Fourth Criminal Sessions 1897* (The Education Society's Press, Byculla, 1897), p. 69.
34. *Ibid.*, Appendix A, p. 4.
35. *Ibid.*, Appendix A, p. 5.
36. Stanley Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale : Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961), p. 101.
37. Vishwanath Prasad Varma, *The Life and Philosophy of Lokmanya Tilak* , pp. 99–106.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
40. S.S. Setlur and K.G. Deshpande, *A Full and Authentic Report of the Trial of the Hon'ble Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, B.A., LLB at the Fourth Criminal Sessions 1897* , Appendix D, p. 40.
41. V.D. Savarkar, *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, p. 182.

### Chapter 3: The Birth of a Revolutionary

1. For more on Nashik's past, see *Gautami* , a collection/souvenir of articles by several scholars published by the Itihas Samshodhan Mandal of Nashik and Tryambakeshwar. It states that in the mythical krita yuga Nashik was known as Padmapura. During the Ramayana period, the demons Khara, Dushana and Trishara were believed to have been killed by Lord Rama here. That is how the city got the name Trikantak. During the time of Lord Krishna, it was known as Janmasthan and later became known as Dandakaranya (p. 21). It passed under the Satavahana emperor Gautamiputra Satkarni (AD 106–30) who occupied it from the Kshatrapas in the second century. In the seventeenth century, Shivaji erected several forts all over Nashik, which the British later destroyed. His guru, Saint Ramdas, had done penance at Takli near Nashik (p. 53). In 1766, Peshwa Madhav Rao I started a mint here (p. 22). During Aurangzeb's time the name of the town was changed to Gulshanabad. Till 1869, Nashik was part of the Ahmednagar district. In 1869, the British formed a separate Nashik district, and on 19 April 1888 Captain Bridge

- occupied Nashik (p. 22). It used to be a famous industrial town for centuries.
2. This battle took place on the night of 4 February 1670 on the fort of Sinhagad, near Pune, between Shivaji's commander Tanaji Malusare and Uday Bhan Rathod, the fort keeper under Jai Singh I, who was a chief in the Mughal army. The gallant war and martyrdom of Malusare wrought the fort for the Marathas and is part of Maharashtra's brave folklore.
  3. Thomas Frost. *The Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876. Vols 1 & 2.* London: Tinsley, 1876, Vol. 1, p. xi.
  4. V.D. Savarkar. *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, p. 224.
  5. Waman Krishna Paranjpe, *Kal Karte Shivaram Panth Paranjpe Jeevan* , 1st ed. 1945 (published by R.S. Deshpande), p. x.
  6. Savarkar makes a reference to this episode regarding the pandits of Kashi in his memoir *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, p. 240.
  7. For more details about the Chiplunkars and their association with Jawhar state, see V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol* (Bombay: Manorama Prakashan, 1985).
  8. This was carried out by Vishnu Pant Chhatre, whom Trimbak Bapuji brought into service as the ADC to the raja.
  9. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1950), p. 13.
  10. S.G. Malshe (ed.). *Savarkarancha Aprasiddha Kavita* (Bombay: Marathi Samshodhan Mandal, 1969), pp. 13–14.
  11. V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol* , p. 69.
  12. Son of Dadasaheb Khaparde, a close associate of Tilak.
  13. V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol* , p. 68.
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
  15. *Vividha Gyana Vistaar* , Edition no. 34, pp. 85–94.
  16. V.D Savarkar. *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, p. 295.
  17. V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol* , p. 76.
  18. Y.D. Phadke. *Lokmanya Tilak aani Krantikarak* (Bombay: Srividya Prakashan, n.d.), p. 63.
  19. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , 1950, p. 22.
  20. *Savarkar Samagra Vangmaya* , Vol. 1, p. 148.
  21. An honorific given to a scholar of history.
  22. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 16.

23. D.N. Gokhale. *Krantiveer Babarao Savarkar* , Vol. 2, p. 46.
24. Vishwas Vinayak Savarkar. *Athavani Angarachya* , 3rd ed. (Pune: Snehal Prakashan, 2001), p. 140.
25. EPP 1/46 ‘Card with portrait and text of Oath of Abhinava Bharat’, India Office Records (British Library, London).
26. D.N. Gokhale. *Krantiveer Babarao Savarkar* , Vol. 2, p. 79.
27. Ibid.
28. Y.D. Phadke. *Lokmanya Tilak aani Krantikarak* , pp. 56–57.
29. The complete list of places where Abhinav Bharat centres mushroomed was mentioned in the police inquest of Vinayak’s maternal cousin Balwant Ramakrishna Barve—Satara, Murtijapur, Poladpur, Harne Bunder, Umargaon, Kalyan, Bhiwandi, Thane, Vasai, Pen, Dahanu, Bhayander, Amhednagar, Baroda, Indore, Calcutta, Nagpur, Bhingar, Sholapur, Belgaum, Kolhapur, Dondaicha, Poona, Khed, Chinchwad, Dhule, Igatpuri, Ratnagiri, Bombay, Jalgaon, Panvel, Karad, Yeola, Aurangabad, and Erandol. See Y.D. Phadke. *Lokmanya Tilak* , p. 53.
30. He was a goldsmith and banker (*sowcar* ) who administered the oath to Anant Laxman Kanhere who later assassinated Jackson. Post-trial, Tonpe’s entire property, including several kilograms of gold and silver, were confiscated by the British and never returned to the family. His descendants continue an unsuccessful struggle to include Tonpe’s name in the hallowed list of freedom fighters of the country.
31. His brother was one of the Tilak followers who helped Tilak and Kakasaheb Khadilkar in their unsuccessful attempt of starting the Nepal Arms Factory.
32. V.M. Bhat. *Abhinav Bharat athava Savarkaranchi Krantikari Gupta Sanstha* (Mumbai: G.P. Parchure Prakashan Mandir, 1950), p. 32.
33. V.D. Savarkar. *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, pp. 292–94.
34. Ibid., p. 294.
35. Ibid., pp. 299–300
36. S.R. Vartak. *Bhaartiya Swatantryache Ranazunzar* , n.d., pp. 39–40; Y.D. Phadke. *Lokmanya Tilak aani Krantikarak* , p. 66; D.N. Gokhale. *Krantiveer Babarao Savarkar* , Vol. 2, p. 52.
37. Wacha to Naoroji, 16 February 1901 (Naoroji Papers, National Archives of India, New Delhi).

38. Curzon to Hamilton, 18 November 1900, Curzon Papers, MSS EUR F 111/159, India Office Records, British Library, London.
39. Gokhale to Natesan, 19 May 1904; Gokhale to Krishnaswami Iyer, 11 July 1904 and 2 August 1904, Gokhale Papers, Reel 5, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
40. Ray and others to Gokhale, 27 December 1905, Gokhale Papers, Reel 3, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
41. *Hindustan Review* , October–November 1905, p. 355.
42. T.N. Sareen. *Japan and the Indian National Army* (Delhi: Agam Publication, 1986), p. 1; For an overall impact of the war on Indian psyche, see also K.P. Dua. *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War (1905) on Indian Politics* (Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1966).
43. Chitragupta. *Life of Barrister Savarkar* (Madras: B.G. Paul & Company Publishers, 1926), pp. 23, 126–27. See also, Waman Krishna Paranjpe. *Kal Karte Shivaram Panth Paranjpe Jeevan* , 1st ed. (Published by R.S. Deshpande, 1945).
44. V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol* , pp. 81–82.
45. Waman Krishna Paranjpe. *Kal Karte Shivaram Panth Paranjpe Jeevan* , 1st ed., p. 127.
46. Great-grandfather-in-law of contemporary Indian politician Prakash Ambedkar.
47. Vishwas Vinayak Savarkar. *Athavani Angarachya* , 3rd ed., p. 90.
48. Y.D. Phadke. *Lokmanya Tilak aani Krantikarak*, p. 64.
49. V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol*, p. 85.
50. B.G. Tilak. *Bal Gangadhar Tilak: His Writings and Speeches* (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1922), pp. 49–50.
51. G.D. Karve and D.V. Ambekar (eds). *Speeches and Writings of Gopal Krishna Gokhale Vol. 2* (Poona: Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 196–97.
52. Waman Krishna Paranjpe. *Kal Karte Shivaram Panth Paranjpe Jeevan* , p. 128.
53. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 21.
54. V.M. Bhat. *Abhinav Bharat athava Savarkaranchi Krantikari Gupta Sanstha* , p. 49.
55. V.D. Savarkar. *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 1, pp.302–04.
56. Agamya Guru was also known as Nirvikalpa Yogendra and Laataswamy. He was a Kashmiri Saraswat Brahmin and a graduate

from Punjab University. He had also worked as sub-judge previously. He made a first public appearance in Calcutta on 11 June 1905 after a tour of Europe, the US and Japan. He was the Duke of Manchester's guru. He was rumoured to have an affair and a live-in relationship with a married European lady, Mrs Stanard. He started an ashram at Umbargaon for the translation of the Vedas. But having come under British surveillance for some of his speeches and activities, he was expelled from there and this was when he made his way to Poona on 17 February 1906 (Source: Y.D. Phadke. *Lokmanya Tilak aani Krantikarak* , p. 65.)

57. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , pp. 24-25; Jaywant D. Joglekar. *Veer Savarkar: Father of Hindu Nationalism* , 2006, p. 43.
58. For reference to Agamya Guru's imprisonment, see Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , pp. 24–25.
59. Sedition Committee Report 1918 (Government of India Publication of 1918), p. 5.
60. Testimony of Hari Narayan Pimple Khare; *Savarkar Case; Trial and Conviction; Question of extradition in case of failure at the Hague*, 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911; IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778, British Library, London.
61. Y.D. Phadke. *Shodh Savarkarancha* (Bombay: Shrividya Prakashan, 1984), p. 1.
62. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 25.
63. Report of A. Montgomerie, *Savarkar Case; Trial and Conviction; Question of extradition in case of failure at the Hague* , 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911; IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778, British Library, London.
64. *Gaelic American* was a prominent Irish-Catholic newspaper owned and operated by the Irish nationalist John Devoy who was a supporter of the Indian independence movement, and occasionally reprinted excerpts from the *Indian Sociologist* in the *Gaelic American*. Holding a position at his newspaper provided good 'cover' for an aspiring India House plant. R.V. Comerford. 'Devoy, John (1842-1928),' in Lawrence Goldman (ed.). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
65. Nicholas Owen. *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885–1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007),

- p. 67.
66. *Indian Sociologist*, January 1905. British Library, London.
  67. A.M. Shah. 'The Indian Sociologist, 1905-14, 1920-22'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 41.31 (2006), p. 3437.
  68. Now 65 Cromwell Avenue, London N6.
  69. V.D. Savarkar, *Shatruchya Shibirat* (Utkarsh Prakashan, 2019), p. 38.
  70. Letter from Rana to Shyamji, 12 November 1905, Indulal Yagnik. *Shyamji Krishna Varma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* (Bombay: Laxmi Publication, 1950), pp. 152–53.
  71. The fact that the scholarships did not come free but were on a repayment basis has been seldom revealed. It is mentioned in a note by Sir Curzon Wylie; Foreign Department, Internal-B, May 1906, #308; National Archives of UK, London.
  72. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 25.
  73. Letter from Tilak to Shyamji, Kesari Wada, Poona.
  74. Letter Courtesy Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai.
  75. During a trial in an English court in 1919 where he sued Sir Valentine Chirol for libel but lost, Tilak was hauled up for recommending a revolutionary like Vinayak. This is when he revealed that the first letter of recommendation had come from an anglophile such as Wrangler Paranjpe. V.S. Joshi, *Kranti Kallol* , p. 99.
  76. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 26
  77. Translation of a report submitted by Waman Narhar Dani, Constable 3rd Class, Buckle No. 739 of Nasik City to Chief Constable Nasik regarding speeches made by Vinayak Rao Sawarkar. *Savarkar Case; Trial and Conviction; Question of extradition in case of failure at the Hague* , 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911; IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778, British Library, London.
  78. Ibid.
  79. V.S. Joshi, *Kranti Kallol* , p. 104; Y.D. Phadke, *Lokmanya Tilak aani Krantikarak* , p. 66.
  80. V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol* , p. 104.
  81. V.D. Savarkar. *Shatruchya Shibirat* , pp. 22–23; V.M. Bhat, *Abhinav Bharat athava Savarkaranchi Krantikari Gupta Sanstha* , p. 51.
  82. D.N. Gokhale. *Kranteeveer Babarao Savarkar* , Vol. 2, p. 51.
  83. Report of Constable Vithal Dattatraya, Buckle No. 493, to Chief Constable of Nasik. *Savarkar Case; Trial and Conviction; Question of*

*extradition in case of failure at the Hague* , 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911; IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778; British Library, London.

84. Smallpox is called 'Devi' in Marathi.
85. V.S. Joshi. *Kranti Kallol* , p. 105.
86. V.D. Savarkar. *Shatruchya Shibirat* , p. 1.

#### Chapter 4: Inside the Enemy Camp

1. 'Indian Students at Cirencester College', 1908, Public and Judicial Department, IOR/L/PJ/6/897 3787, British Library, London.
2. S.N. Banerjea. *The Nation in the Making: Being the Reminiscences of Fifty Years of Public Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 26.
3. V.D. Savarkar. *Inside the Enemy Camp*.  
<http://savarkar.org/en/encyc/2018/3/23/Download-section.html>
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Accessed online from <http://savarkar.org/mr/pdfs/savarkaranchi-kavita-mr-v002.pdf> .
7. Sir Valentine Chirol. *Indian Unrest* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1910), pp. 348–49.
8. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1983), p. 12.
9. Shompa Lahiri. *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 5.
10. Ibid., p. 4.
11. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or, the Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1996), p. 66.
12. Ibid., p. 67.
13. Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India and a Liberal leader.
14. V.D. Savarkar. *Newsletters from London* .  
<http://satyashodh.com/Savarkar%20Newsletters1A.htm#one>
15. Retired ICS officer, one of the founding members of the Indian National Congress.



16. V.D. Savarkar. *Newsletters from London* .  
<http://satyashodh.com/Savarkar%20Newsletters1A.htm#two>
17. Lala Har Dayal Private Paper, List No. 77, Acc. No. 427, National Archives of India, New Delhi; 'History Sheet of Har Dayal of Delhi', prepared by The Director of Criminal Intelligence, Government of India, Judicial and Public Department, Home Proceedings. Vol. 817, 2507/07, India Office Library, London; Lala Lajpat Rai. *Young India: An Interpretation and a History of the Nationalist Movement from Within* (New York: B.W. Heusch, 1916), p. 195; Dharm Vir, 'Dr. Har Dayal', *Punjab's Eminent Hindus*, edited by N.B. Sen (Lahore: New Book Society, 1953), p. 57
18. 'History Sheet of Har Dayal of Delhi', prepared by The Director of Criminal Intelligence, Government of India, Judicial and Public Department, Home Proceedings. Vol. 817, 2507/07, India Office Library, London.
19. Sir Michael Francis O'Dwyer. *India As I Knew It* (London: Constable & Company, Ltd., 1925), p. 185.
20. See newsletters of the Ghadr Party: 'The Wickedness Practiced by English Missionaries', 7 April 1917, and 'The West Endeavouring to Christianize the East', 15 April 1917.
21. Balshastri Hardas. *Armed Struggle for Freedom: Ninety Years War of Independence, 1857-1947* (Poona: Kal Prakashan, 1958), p. 191.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
23. Seditious Committee Report, 1918, p. 61 (Secret Report published by the Government of India in 1918).
24. *Indian Sociologist* , Vol. III, October 1907, p. 38.
25. Chandra Chakraberty. *New India and its Growth and Problems* (Calcutta: Vijoyakrishna Brothers, 1951), pp. 25–26.
26. Virendranath Chattopadhyay Private Papers, PA Acc. No. 236, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
27. Chandra Chakraberty. *New India and its Growth and Problems* , pp. 25–26.
28. Shripad Shankar Navare. *Senapati* (Bombay: Mauj Prakashan, 1976), p. 30.
29. *The Mahratta* , 27 May 1938.
30. Shripad Shankar Navare. *Senapati* , p. 28.
31. A pleader drafts pleas in a court of law on behalf of his/her client.



32. R.A. Padmanabhan, *V. V. S. Aiyar* (New Delhi, 1980), p. 12.
33. M.P.T. Acharya. *Reminiscences of an Indian Revolutionary* . Edited by B.D. Yadav (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991), p. 12.
34. M.P.T Acharya. *The Mahratta* , 27 May 1938.
35. ‘History Sheet of Madame Bhikaji Cama’, prepared by the Criminal Intelligence Office, August 1913, No. 61. A.C. Bose. *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927. Select Documents* . New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002, p. 64.
36. Extracts from History Sheet of Madame B.R. Cama; Bombay Police Commissioner’s Office File No. 3218/H; Bulu Roy Chowdhury. *Madame Cama: A Short Life Sketch* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1977); India Office Records: MSS EUR F341/108.
37. Bulu Roy Chowdhury. *Madame Cama: A Short Life Sketch* , p. 6–7.
38. R.C. Majumdar. *History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Calcutta: Firma K.L Mukhopadhyay, 1962), p. 235.
39. Chitragupta. *Life of Barrister Savarkar* . Madras, 1926, p. 66.
40. Ibid., p. 67.
41. For more see, Gita Srivastava. *Mazzini and His Impact on the Indian National Movement*. (Allahabad: Chugh Publications, 1982).
42. S.N. Banerjea. *The Nation in the Making: Being the Reminiscences of Fifty Years of Public Life* ( London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 40.
43. V.D. Savarkar. *Inside the Enemy Camp* .  
<http://savarkar.org/en/encyc/2018/3/23/Download-section.html>
44. Ibid.
45. Joseph Mazzini. *Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini* . New ed., 6 vols (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1890).
46. V.D. Savarkar. *Inside the Enemy Camp* .  
<http://savarkar.org/en/encyc/2018/3/23/Download-section.html> .
47. Ibid.
48. ‘Opinion of the Honourable Advocate General in Regard to the Preface to a Translation of Joseph Mazzini’s Autobiography’, Judicial Department (Confidential) Proceedings, October 1907, pp. 31–34, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
49. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. *My Experiments with Truth* .  
<http://www.arvindguptatoys.com/arvindgupta/gandhiexperiments.pdf>

50. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* , Vol. 1 <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-1.pdf> (also mentioned the same in a speech in Bombay in 1896).
51. Ibid., Vol. 8. <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-8.pdf>
52. Ibid., Vol. 5. <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-5.pdf>.
53. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 29.
54. Notes from the Criminal Intelligence Department. Stevenson-Moore's note dated 13 January 1909. Home (Political A) February 1909, #204: 'Interception of the Khalasa (Khalsa) series of pamphlets', National Archives of India, New Delhi.
55. This is now a part of the British Library in London on Euston Road.
56. For a complete bibliography of the book, refer to V.D. Savarkar. *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* .  
[http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/the\\_indian\\_war\\_of\\_independence\\_1857\\_w\\_ith\\_publishers\\_note.v001.pdf](http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/the_indian_war_of_independence_1857_w_ith_publishers_note.v001.pdf)
57. Ibid.
58. *Lichfield Mercury* , 17 May 1907, courtesy British Newspaper Archive, London.
59. Newspaper *Leeds Mercury* , 13 May 1907, courtesy British Newspaper Archive, London.
60. V.D. Savarkar. *The Indian War of Independence* .  
[http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/the\\_indian\\_war\\_of\\_independence\\_1857\\_w\\_ith\\_publishers\\_note.v001.pdf](http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/the_indian_war_of_independence_1857_w_ith_publishers_note.v001.pdf)
61. For full text of 'O! Martyrs!' please see Appendix I.
62. 'Indian Students at Cirencester College', 1908, Public and Judicial Department, IOR/L/PJ/6/897 3787, British Library, London.
63. V.D. Savarkar. *The Indian War of Independence* .  
[http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/the\\_indian\\_war\\_of\\_independence\\_1857\\_w\\_ith\\_publishers\\_note.v001.pdf](http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/the_indian_war_of_independence_1857_w_ith_publishers_note.v001.pdf) ).
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. M.P.T. Acharya. *Reminiscences of an Indian Revolutionary* , p. 91.
74. Home/13-13A/1909/An Interception of book or pamphlet, Letter 14 December 1908. National Archives of India, New Delhi.
75. This was a law passed in 1878 by the British to control both revenue coming in from maritime trade, as also maintaining a vigil and control over movement (import and export) of goods to and from India.
76. Home/13-13A/1909/An Interception of book or pamphlet, Letter 14 December 1908, National Archives of India, New Delhi; Letter 18 December 1908, National Archives of India.
77. Courtesy British National Archives (BNA), London.
78. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 101.
79. ‘Weekly extract, paragraph 26 from Report on Native Papers Home (Special), 60-C/1908-10: ‘V.D. Savarkar: Book entitled “Indian War of Independence of 1857” by an Indian Nationalist’, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
80. James Campbell Kerr. *Political Trouble in India: 1907-1917* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), p. 242.
81. V.D. Savarkar. *Inside the Enemy Camp* .  
<http://savarkar.org/en/encyc/2018/3/23/Download-section.html> .
82. G.M. Joshi. ‘The Story of This History’, in V.D. Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* (Bombay: Phoenix Publications,1947), p. xvi.
83. Hamsaraja Rahabara. *Bhagat Singh and His Thought* (Delhi: Manak Publications, 1990), p. 90.
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85. *Free Hindustan* , Special No., 28 May 1946.

## Chapter 5: And the Storm Breaks

1. *Indian Sociologist* , June 1907, p. 22.
2. Ibid., p. 28.

3. (Secret) Prog. no. 144, DCI, 24.8.1907, B. August 1907, no 135–45; A.C. Bose. *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927. Select Documents* . New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002, p. 15.
4. *The Times* , 17 May 1907, British Newspaper Archives (BNA).
5. *National Review* , June 1907, British Newspaper Archives (BNA)
6. *Indian Sociologist* , July 1907, p. 25.
7. *Ibid.*, September 1907, p. 35
8. *Ibid.*
9. *The Daily Telegraph*, courtesy British Newspaper Archives (BNA)
10. *The Standard*, courtesy British Newspaper Archives (BNA)
11. *Indian Sociologist* , July 1907, p. 35.
12. A.C. Bose. *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927. Select Documents* . New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002, p. 15.
13. Home (Political), 1908, No. 1: ‘Diary of Political Events, 1907’, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
14. Weekly Report of the Director of Criminal Intelligence, 30 September 1907, POS 3094, British Library, London; Richard Popplewell. ‘The Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the Continent, 1905–14’, *Intelligence and National Security* . 3.1 (1998): 56–76, p. 59. O’Brien was posing as a member of the staff of the New York *Gaelic American*, Weekly Report for 28 September 1907 in H.D. (B); October 1907, Nos. 40–49.
15. Weekly Report dated 23 January 1909 H.D.(B); February 1909, Nos. 2–11 from Richard Popplewell. ‘The Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the Continent, 1905–14’, *Intelligence and National Security* . 3.1 (1998): 56–76, p. 135.
16. Madame Cama to the editor of the *Indian Sociologist* , quoted in the Proceedings of the Home Department, July 1913, Notes–Political–A, July 1913, pp. 4. OIOC, POS 6052, British Library, London.
17. Weekly Report of the DCI, 6 December 1910, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
18. Weekly Report of the DCI, 12 December 1910, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
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20. Courtesy British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

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22. Emily C. Brown. *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1975), p. 68.
23. *The Mahratta* , 29 October 1937. There is no mention of the colours and their correlation with communities in his speech.
24. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 67.
25. Bulu Roy Chowdhury. *Madame Cama: A Short Life Sketch* , pp. 15–16.
26. A.C. Bose. *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927. Select Documents* , pp. 15–17.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
28. ‘History Sheet of Madame Bhikaji Cama prepared by the Criminal Intelligence Office—August 1913, No. 61’; A.C. Bose. *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927. Select Documents* , 2002, p. 63.
29. Emily. C. Brown. *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* , 1975, p. 62.
30. R.A. Padmanabhan. *V.V.S. Aiyar* ( New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1980), p. 20.
31. Oral Archives: Transcripts of Interviews at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), Delhi.
32. Y.D. Phadke. *Senapati Bapat* (Delhi: National Book Trust, 1993), p. 14.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 15. The original reference in this book is also an article by Senapati Bapat himself for the Marathi newspaper *Daily Navakal* , 22 July 1956.
35. V.D. Savarkar. *Newsletters from London* , dated 19 July 1907. <http://satyashodh.com/Savarkar%20Newsletters1A.htm#d14>
36. David Garnett. *The Golden Echo, Vol. I* , p. 157. See also Janaki Bakhle. ‘Savarkar (1883–1966), Sediton and Surveillance: the Rule of Law in a Colonial Situation’. *Social History* 35.1 (2010): 51–75.
37. Home (Political), December 1908, National Archives of India, New Delhi and IOR Files, British Library, London.

38. Richard Popplewell. 'The Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the Continent, 1905–14'. *Intelligence and National Security* . 3.1 (1998): 56–76, p. 57.
39. Known also as CID or Criminal Intelligence Department.
40. Note of H.A. Stuart, Director, Criminal Intelligence Department, 13 June 1907, Home (Political), May 1908, No. 1: 'Proposed formation of a political service under the control of the Criminal Intelligence Department to furnish information about the spread of sedition', National Archives of India, New Delhi.
41. J&P, 826/04 in L/PJ/6/670; 'The Establishment of a Central Criminal Investigation Department in India', British Library, London.
42. Note of C. J. Stevenson-Moore, officiating director, Criminal Intelligence, 13 May 1908, Home (Political), May 1908, No. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
43. 'Personal Correspondence of Secretary of State Morley', 1908, Private Manuscripts, IOR/MSS/EUR/D/1090/2, British Library, London.
44. Harold Brust. *I Guarded Kings* ( New York: Hillman-Curl, Inc., 1936), pp. 106–08.
45. 'Internal Correspondence' 1907, Public and Judicial Department IOR/L/PJ/6/994, British Library, London.
46. M.P.T. Acharya. *Reminiscences of an Indian Revolutionary*. Edited by B.D. Yadav (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1991), p. 83.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., p. 84.
50. 'Subversive Speeches at India House'. See Paul Schaffel, 'Empire and Assassination: Indian Students, "India House", and Information Gathering in Great Britain, 1898-1911', unpublished dissertation, Wesleyan University, 2012, p. 94.
51. M.P.T. Acharya. *Reminiscences of an Indian Revolutionary* , pp. 86–87.
52. IOR/L/PS/8/67; Sep 1909-Sep 1913; *Employment and expenses of Indian informant, Sajani Ranjan Banerjea, alias Sukasagar Dutt, to watch Indian students in London* ; British Library, London.
53. Ibid. Letter dated 26 August 1913.

54. Kirtikar's existence in India House as a spy is produced from Koregaonkar's testimony. He also appears in Bakhle's account of surveillance during this period. He is also mentioned in Padmanabhan (pp. 36–41), Dhananjay Keer and Harindra Srivastava in their accounts. However, he is conspicuously absent in the accounts of Popplewell, who instead mentions an agent cryptically named 'C' who infiltrated India House successfully around the same time as Kirtikar. Whether this 'C' was Kirtikar is unknown.
55. Richard Popplewell, 'The Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the Continent, 1905–14', p. 67.
56. Shreedhar Raghunath Vartak, *Swatantryaveer Savarkaranchi Prabhaval* (Nasik: S.R. Vartak, 1972), p. 76.
57. V.M. Bhat. *Abhinav Bharat athava Savarkaranchi Krantikari Gupta Sanstha* (Mumbai: G.P. Parchure Prakashan Mandir, 1950), p. 87.
58. Vartak, Shridhar Raghunath. *Swatantryaveer Savarkaranchi Prabhaval* (Nasik: S.R. Vartak, 1972), p. 79.
59. Home (Political) / December 1908, 8 June 1908, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
60. Home Department/Political/60-A, 23 August 1908, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
61. Radhika Singha. 'Settle, Mobilize, Verify: Identification Practices in Colonial India'. *Studies in History* 16.2 (2000): 151–98, p. 193. Bhangis were, as Singha mentions, 'those who removed filth from habitations—treated as a highly polluting social strata in India, and were forced to wear distinguishing clothing'.
62. IOR/L/PJ/6/920; 'Establishment of a miniature rifle range at India house', Highgate; British Library, London.
63. Sedition Committee Report 1918, Secret report published by the Government of India, p. 31.
64. Ibid.
65. Thomas Frost. *The Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876. Vols. 1 & 2.* (London: Tinsley, 1876).
66. Ibid., p. 32.
67. Home Department/Political 1909, Important Documents at Ganesh Damodar Savarkar's House, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
68. Home Department/Political 1909-60-A, S-21, National Archives of India, New Delhi.



69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.; Letter dated 27 May 1909 C.J. Stevenson-Moore, Officiating Director, Criminal Intelligence.
71. English translation of the biography of Babarao Savarkar.  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/babarao-savarkar-v003.pdf> , p. 21.
72. Ibid., p. 22.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., p. 31.
75. Details about the insults Yesu Vahini from Uttara Sahasrabuddhe.  
*Bharatiya Swatantryaladhyatil Streeya* (Pune: Mehta Publishing House, n.d.)
76. English translation of the biography of Babarao Savarkar.  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/babarao-savarkar-v003.pdf> , p. 24
77. CID Circular No. 11, 28 October 1909, British Library, London, p. 7.
78. Home Political, May 1910, No. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
79. Daniel Brückenhaus. ‘The Transnational Surveillance of Anti-Colonialist Movements in Western Europe, 1905-1945’. Unpublished dissertation, Yale University, 2011, p. 57.
80. Proceedings of the Foreign Department, February 1906, Pro. No. 44, p 1–4, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
81. Foreign Department Notes, Internal-B, February 1910; Nos 9–10, p. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
82. Home Political, May 1910, No. 1, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
83. From the testimony of Miss Beck, ‘Proceedings of the Central Criminal Court, 19 July 1909; The trial of Madan Lal Dhingra’ CRIM 1/1135, National Archives of UK, London.
84. Ibid. Journalist Douglas William Thorburn’s testimony.
85. Ibid.
86. *Dundee Evening Telegraph* , 6 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
87. Testimony of Constable Frederick Nicholls and Detective Sergeant Frank Eadly; also *Dundee Evening Telegraph* , 6 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
88. *The Times* , 6 July 1909, p. 10.



89. V.N. Datta. *Datta Madan Lal Dhingra and the Revolutionary Movement*. ( New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1986), pp. 46–51.
90. *Dundee Evening Telegraph* , 6 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
91. ‘Information About the Revolutionary Party in London from H. K. Koregaonkar of India House’, 1909, Political Department: Indian States, IOR/R/R/1/1/10, British Library, London. Shompa Lahiri too talks about the ‘particularly crude and racist’ articles of the newspaper that spoke of Indians as dangerous sexual deviants, Shompa Lahiri. *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930* ( London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 89.
92. Testimony of Henry Stanton Morley, proprietor of an exhibition of automatic machines and the shooting range.
93. M.P.T. Acharya. *Reminiscences of an Indian Revolutionary* , p. 92.
94. Ibid.
95. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 52.
96. Ibid., p. 53.
97. Arguments to this effect have been made by A.G. Noorani. *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* ( New Delhi: Leftword Books, 2002), p. 14–15.
98. Testimony of Superintendent Alfred Isaac, National Archives of UK, London.
99. Testimony of Sub-Divisional Inspector Charles Glass, National Archives of UK, London.
100. Testimony of Inspector Albert Draper, National Archives of UK, London.
101. *Dundee Evening Telegraph* , 7 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
102. IOR/L/PJ/6/961: Files related to murder of Sir Curzon Wylie, British Library, London.
103. Harindra Srivastav. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 155.
104. EPP 2/1, *Bande Mataram* , 10 September 1909, British Library, London.
105. *Dublin Daily Express* , 6 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

106. *Birmingham Daily Gazette* , 6 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
107. Ibid.
108. He is mentioned as ‘Mr Palmer’ by M.P.T. Acharya in his *Reminiscences of an Indian Revolutionary* , p. 94.
109. Ibid.
110. *The Times* , 8 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA); *London Evening Standard*, 8 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
111. The *Daily Dispatch* and also *Northampton Chronicle and Echo* , 7 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
112. The *Bolton Evening News* , 13 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
113. *The Homeward Mail from India, China and the East*, 19 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
114. *The Mahratta* , 3 September 1937.
115. Memoirs of Pandurang Sadashiv Khankhoje, File no. 1, P.S. Khankhoje Collection.
116. *The Telegraph*, 12 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
117. Testimony of Dr Thomas Neville, Trial of Madan Lal Dhingra, National Archives of UK, London.
118. *The Telegraph* , 12 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
119. The Trial of Madan Lal Dhingra, National Archives of UK, London.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 56.
123. *Daily News* , 16 August 1909, BNA.
124. W.S. Blunt. *My Diaries, Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1884-1914* , Vol. II (New York: Knopf, 1921), p. 288.
125. The *Daily News* , 18 August 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
126. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 170.
127. Paul Schaffel. ‘Empire and Assassination: Indian Students, “India House”, and Information Gathering in Great Britain, 1898-1911’, unpublished dissertation, Wesleyan University, 2012, p. 87.
128. Ibid., pp. 170–71.
129. P&J Dept. 1909, No. 956, British Library, London.
130. W.S. Blunt, *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* , Part II (London, 1907), pp. 267–68.

131. *The Times* , 10 July 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
132. *Indian Sociologist* , July 1909.
133. *Ibid.* , August 1909.
134. Indulal Yagnik. *Shyamji Krishna Varma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* , p. 263.
135. *Ibid.*
136. *The Times* , 1 March 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
137. *Ibid.* , 19 March 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
138. *Indian Sociologist* , August 1909.
139. *Ibid.*
140. *Ibid.*
141. Case/Trial Details: Trial of Guy A. Aldred; CRIM 1/114/4, National Archives of UK, London.
142. *The Bande Mataram*, September 1909, published by Bhikaji Cama from Geneva, Switzerland; British Library, London. (The location is mentioned as ‘*Post Restante*’ . It is not a proper residential address but a message to say ‘Send my post to the local post office and not to my home address and I shall collect it from the post office’. It was a way of concealing one’s home address.)
143. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* , Vol. 9, 23 July 1908 to 4 August 1909, pp. 428–29.  
<https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-9.pdf>
144. *Ibid.* , Vol. 10, 5 August 1909–9 April 1910, p. 258.  
<https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-10.pdf>
145. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
146. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
147. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
148. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , pp. 186–87.
149. Chitragupta. *Life of Barrister Savarkar* , p. 126.
150. ‘Personal Correspondence of Secretary of State Morley’, July 1909, Private Manuscripts, IOR/MSS/EUR/D/573/21, British Library, London.
151. Richard Popplewell. ‘The Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the Continent, 1905–14’. *Intelligence and*

- National Security* . 3.1 (1998): 56–76, p. 62.
152. A.C. Bose. *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927. Select Documents* , p. 55.
  153. Ibid., p. 70.
  154. David Garnett. *The Golden Echo, Vol. I*, p. 148.
  155. Weekly Report of the DCI, 23 October 1909, OIOC, POS 3094, British Library, London.
  156. Ibid., 25 December 1909, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
  157. David Garnett. *The Golden Echo, Vol. I* , pp. 148–49.
  158. English translation of the biography of Babarao Savarkar, <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/babarao-savarkar-v003.pdf> ., pp. 34–35
  159. Published in the *Mahratta* , 27 May 1938.
  160. Translation by Anurupa Cinar, <http://anurupacinar.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Sagaras-Translation.pdf>

## Chapter 6: Endgame London

1. Bimanbehari Majumdar. *Militant Nationalism in India and Its Socio-religious Background, 1897–1917* (Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers, 1966), p. 94.
2. Testimony of Vishwanath Krishna Kale.
3. The entire episode of the Jackson murder in Nashik has been gleaned and reconstructed from extensive original sources of the court proceedings, witness depositions and the trial. Source material: ‘Savarkar Case; Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague’, 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911; IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778.
4. Testimony of Ganesh Balwant Vaidya.
5. Nasik Trial Judgment: Karve, Deshpande, Soman, Waman Joshi, Ganu and Datoos Joshi were arrested on 24, 23, 30, 22 and 22 December 1909 respectively. They made their statements on 6, 6, 3, 4, 2 and 5 January 1910 respectively.
6. Source: Testimonies of the accused accessed from ‘Savarkar Case; Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague’, 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911; IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778.

7. *Aberdeen Press and Journal* and *The Times* , 23 December 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
8. *Daily Telegraph* , 23 December 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
9. *Belfast Telegraph* , 31 December 1909, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
10. Emily. C. Brown. *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* , p. 79.
11. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London*, p. 200.
12. *Mlechchha* means a non-Aryan tribe, a Greek settler in India, from that a non-Indian, thus a foreigner, the British in this case.
13. *Indian Sociologist* , January 1910.
14. Ibid.
15. This is suggested in S.L. Karandikar. *Savarkar Charitra Kathan* (Pune: Modern Book Depot Prakashan, 1947), p. 332.
16. ‘Savarkar Case; Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague’, 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911; IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778.
17. Incident narrated by Jaywant D. Joglekar. *Veer Savarkar: Father of Hindu Nationalism* (n.p., 2006) and also by Harindra Srivastava, *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* .
18. R.A Padmanabhan. *V. V. S. Aiyar*, p. 73.
19. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 207.
20. Home Department/Political/Notes, 60-B, 1910; National Archives, New Delhi, p. 269.
21. Ibid., p. 271.
22. ‘The Savarkar Conspiracy’, *Herald of Revolt* , October 1912 issue (Guy Aldred, London).
23. Italicized comments by Guy Aldred.
24. Janaki Bakhle. ‘Savarkar (1883–1966), Sedition and Surveillance: the Rule of Law in a Colonial Situation’. *Social History* 35.1 (2010): 51–75, pp. 68–69.
25. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. *Freedom at Midnight* (Noida: Vikas Publishing House, 2016), p. 361.
26. Indulal Yagnik. *Shyamji Krishna Varma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* , pp. 286–87.
27. *Daily Telegraph* , 19 March 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).

28. *Willesden Chronicle* , 25 March 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
29. *Globe* , 14 March 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
30. *Daily Telegraph* , 15 March 1910. Alleged Indian Seditious: Murder Abetment Charge, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
31. IOR/J&P 847-1910: 189/349/2, British Library, London.
32. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 219.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 220–21. Letter from Aiyar to Shyamji from 81, Clarendon Road, North Kensington (West), dated 15 March 1910.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 222–23.
35. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 67.
36. David Garnett. *The Golden Echo, Vol. I* , pp. 151–52.
37. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , pp. 224–27. For full text of the Will and Testament, see Appendix II.
38. Bose, A.C. *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: 1905-1927. Select Documents* , p. 33.
39. Koregaonkar's testimony from IOR/L/PJ/6/1069: 'Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction', British Library, London.
40. 'Judgment' of the Special Tribunal Cases No. 2, 3, and 4 of 1910, pp. 8–9; from IOR/L/PJ/6/1069: 'Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction', British Library, London.
41. *Ibid.*
42. 'Testimony of Chanjeri Rao', from IOR/L/PJ/6/1069: 'Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction', British Library, London.
43. R. A. Padmanabhan. *V. V. S. Aiyar* , p. 80.
44. Solicitor General Sir Rufus Isaacs was later the viceroy of India, Lord Reading.
45. *The Times* , 25 April 1910.
46. *Ibid.* Here, Vinayak makes reference to the Arms Act of 1878 rendering it illegal for Indians to possess guns and any other weapons.
47. *The Times* , 2 May 1910.
48. *London Daily News* , 10 May 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
49. *The Times* , 3 June 1910.
50. *Ibid.*

51. Section 2 of the FOA reads: ‘When a person accused of having committed an offence (to which this part of the Act applies) in one part of (His) Majesty’s dominions, such person (in this Act referred to as a fugitive from that part) if found in another part of (His) Majesty’s dominions shall be liable to be apprehended and returned in manner provided by this Act to the part from which he is a fugitive.’
52. *London Daily News* , 3 June 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
53. Section 33 of the FOA: ‘Where a person accused of an offence can . . . be under this Act, or otherwise, tried for or in respect of the offence in more than one part of H.M’s Dominions, a warrant for the apprehension of such person may be issued in any part of (His) Majesty’s Dominions, in which he can, if he happens to be there, be tried, and each part of this Act shall apply as if the offence had been committed in the part of (His) Majesty’s Dominions where such warrant is issued, and such person may be apprehended and returned in pursuance of this Act, notwithstanding that in the place in which he is apprehended, a Court has jurisdiction to try him.’
54. Section 10 of the FOA: ‘Where it is made to appear to a Supreme Court that, by reason of the trivial nature of the case, or by reason of the application for the return of a fugitive not being made in good faith in the interests of justice or otherwise, it would, having regard to the distance, to the facilities of communication, and to all the circumstances of the case, be unjust or oppressive or too severe a punishment to return the fugitive either at all, or until the expiration of a certain period, such Court may discharge the fugitive, either absolutely or on bail, or order that he shall not be returned until after the expiration of the period named in the order, or may make some such other order in the premises as the Court seems just.’
55. *The Times* , 4 June 1910.
56. ‘The Savarkar Conspiracy’, *Herald of Revolt* , Vol. 2, No. 10, London, October 1912; IOR/L/PJ/6/1198; File 3899, ‘Proposed Prohibition of the “Savarkar Issue” of *Herald of Revolt* ’ , British Library, London.
57. *The Times* , 17 June 1910.
58. *The Times* , 21 June 1910.
59. *Ibid.*, 22 June 1910.
60. ‘The Savarkar Conspiracy’, *Herald of Revolt* , Vol. 2, No. 10, London, October 1912; IOR/L/PJ/6/1198; File 3899, ‘Proposed Prohibition of

- the “Savarkar Issue” of *Herald of Revolt* ; British Library, London.
61. Ibid.
  62. A left-wing Irish republican political party that was active in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It was founded by Arthur Griffith on 28 November 1905. It had close associations with several Indian revolutionaries including Shyamji, Madame Cama and Vinayak Savarkar.
  63. David Garnett. *The Golden Echo, Vol. I* , p. 157.
  64. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 234.
  65. Government of Bombay, Home Department (Special) 60-B/1910, 18/195, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
  66. *Herald of Revolt* , October 1912, p. 99.
  67. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , pp. 235–36.
  68. R.A. Padmanabhan, *V.V.S. Aiyar* , pp. 85–86.

#### Chapter 7: L’Affaire Savarkar

1. ‘Savarkar Case: Conduct of the Police Officials’. IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
2. This entire sequence has been reconstructed from the several letters exchanged between officers and the departmental inquiry reports that contain the testimonies of all the key players in this incident. Gleaned from: ‘Savarkar Case: Conduct of the Police Officials’. IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
3. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London*, p. 247.
4. Translation by Anurupa Cinar, <http://anurupacinar.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Atmabal-Translation.pdf>
5. Statement of Mr Guider, ‘Savarkar Case: Conduct of the Police Officials’. IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No, 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
6. No. 5730 of 1910, Judicial Department. ‘Savarkar Case: Conduct of the Police Officials’. IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
7. Ibid., p. 253.



8. Quoted in a letter from L.D. Carnegie of the British Embassy in Paris to Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. 'V.D. Savarkar: Arrest and Extradition; Escape and Recapture at Marseilles'. IOR/L/PJ/6/994. British Library, London.
9. Quoted in *Daily Gazette* , 25 July 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
10. *Daily Press* , 21 July 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
11. *London Daily News* , 20 July 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
12. Weekly Report of the DCI, 27 September 1910 and 11 October 1910, p. 2, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
13. Weekly Report of the DCI, 23 August 1910, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
14. Weekly Report of the DCI, 16 August 1910, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
15. Weekly Report of the DCI, 8 November 1910, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
16. 'Shall he be given up?', *Evening Telegraph* , 25 July 1910, BNA.
17. No. 26218/10 and no. 280 (26255), IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
18. J. & P. 2395. IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
19. Telegram from the governor of Bombay, 23 July 1910, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
20. J. & P. 2521, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
21. Note on Minute dated 29 July 1910, #1441063, National Archives, London.
22. Minutes of Interdepartmental Committee Meeting, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
23. Annex 2–Copy of Opinion of Attorney General on Savarkar's case. IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
24. Telegram from governor of Bombay, 5 August 1910, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911,

- British Library, London.
25. Telegram from Secretary of State to governor of Bombay, 15 August 1910, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
  26. Annex 2–Foreign Office statement dated 24 September 1910, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
  27. ‘Savarkar Case: Conduct of the Police Officials’, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
  28. Telegram from governor of Bombay, 20 August 1910, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
  29. Annex 2–Foreign Office statement dated 24 September 1910, IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
  30. Ibid.
  31. Letter from F.A. Campbell dated 30 September 1910, ‘Savarkar Case: Proceedings at The Hague (including result)’, IOR/L/PJ/6/1077, File No. 1131, British Library, London.
  32. J. & P. 3317. IOR/L/PJ/6/1058, File No. 284, 26 March 1910 to 25 January 1911, British Library, London.
  33. FO 881/9746 ‘Savarkar Arbitration Case’, National Archives, London.
  34. Ibid. Appendix.
  35. ‘Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague’, IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778, 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911, British Library, London.
  36. *The Times* , 7 October 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
  37. *Homeward Mail from India, China, and the East* , 15 August 1910, British Newspaper Archive (BNA).
  38. ‘Savarkar case: Reference to Arbitration’, IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 3823, 30 September 1910 to 10 February 1911, British Library, London.
  39. *London Daily News* , 23 August 1910, BNA.
  40. Born on 2 December 1855, Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar was a Saraswat Brahmin. He served as a Dakshina Fellow at Elphinstone

College and completed his law degree in 1881. In 1885, he was sent to England as part of a three-member committee to advocate Indian general elections in Britain. On his return, he joined the INC on 28 December 1885 and became president of the Lahore Congress Session in 1900. In 1901, he was appointed a judge at Bombay High Court. For his loyalty and service, the British knighted him in 1910. In fact, the judge who had sentenced Tilak in the sedition case, Justice Dawar, was also knighted immediately after passing the sentence. (Source: M.C. Chagla. *Roses in December: An Autobiography* [Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1975]). He was appointed as the first non-political president of the Bombay Legislative Assembly after the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. Even today his statue stands at the Bombay University Convocation Hall and his portrait hangs in the Bombay High Court. While Jawaharlal Nehru was studying at Harrow, his father, Motilal Nehru, sent him a letter with a photograph of Chandavarkar, advising him to follow the latter as his ideal. (Source: B.R. Nanda. *The Nehrus: Motilal and Jawaharlal* [London: Allen & Unwin, 1962]).

41. ‘Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague’, 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911, IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778.
42. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London*, pp. 265–66.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
44. As listed in the warrant of arrest issued against Vinayak dated 8 February 1910 by a magistrate of first class for Nasik, Bombay Presidency. ‘Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague’, 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911, IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778.
45. *Ibid.* Judgment in the Case.
46. The Poona branch was led by Keshav Shripad Chandwadkar, popularly known as Brahmagiri Bua.
47. Sedition Committee Report, secret report published by Government of India, 1918, p. 32.
48. Key witnesses in the case were Raghunath Venkatesh Gosavi, Vaman Narhari Dani, Hari Narayan Pimple, Keshav Sakharam Sindhakar, Keshav Raoji Gondhalekar, Ramachandra Appaji Ballad, Kashinath

Shamras Phatak, Chaturbhuj Jhaveribhai Amin Patidar, Harishchandra Krishnarao Koregaonkar, Chanjeri Rama Rao, Gopal Krishna Patankar, Ganesh Balwant Vaidya, Trimbak Krishna Burkule, Dattatraya Panduranga Joshi, Krishnaji Raoji Lele, Shaikh Lal, E.J. Parker, J.A. Guider and others. Their detailed oral testimonies are recorded in: 'Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague', 9 December 1910 to 23 February 1911, IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778.

49. Ibid.
50. J.A. Guider's Testimony, *ibid.*
51. R.V. Gosavi's testimony, *ibid.*
52. Incidentally, the manner of initiating members and the process of taking oaths was strikingly similar to how Mazzini recruited members for his 'Young Italy', as also was the process in other Italian secret societies such as Carbonari.
53. Bapu Joshi's testimony: 'Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague', 9 December 1910 to 23 February, IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File No. 778.
54. Chaturbhuj Amin's testimony, *ibid.*
55. Patankar's testimony, *ibid.*
56. E. Parker's testimony, *ibid.*
57. Judgment of the Nasik Conspiracy Case, *ibid.*, p. 12.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Gopal Krishna Patankar's testimony, *ibid.*
60. Barve's testimony, *ibid.*
61. Kashikar's testimony, *ibid.*
62. Narayanrao Damodar Savarkar's testimony, *ibid.*
63. Judgment of the Nasik Conspiracy Case, *ibid.*, p. 12.
64. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 269
65. This meant a jail term for twenty-five years.
66. Judgment of Nasik Conspiracy Case, pp. 13, 29, 'Savarkar Case: Trial and Conviction; Question of Extradition in Case of Failure at the Hague', 9 December 1910 to 23 February, IOR/L/PJ/6/1069, File no. 778.
67. *Emperor vs Vinayak Damodar Savarkar* , Case No. 1 of 1911, Judgment, *ibid.*

68. For the other accused the following punishments were meted: Keshav Shripad Chandwadkar (fifteen years); Gopal Krishna Patankar, Trimbak Gangadhar Marathe and Krishnaji Gopal Khare (ten years each); Vyankatesh Parashram Nagpurkar (seven years); Vishnu Mahadev Bhat, Sakharam Dadaji Gorhe, Purushottam Laxman Dandekar, Damodar Mahadev Chandratre and Gopal Govind Dharap (five years each); Shridhar Vasudev Shidhaye, Raghunath Vidyadhar Bhave, Damodar Chintaman Paranjpe and Vaman Kashinath Palande (four years each); Vishnu Ganesh Kelkar, Kashinath Daji Tonpe, Parashram Vaman Gokhale, Anant Vishnu Konkar and Vishwas Balwant Dawre (three years each); Vinayak Govind Tikhe, Balwant Ramachandra Barve and Sakharam Ranganath Kashikar (two years each); Narayan Damodar Savarkar, Vinayak Vasudev Manohar, Gangaram Rupchand and Raghunath Chintaman Ambedkar (rigorous imprisonment for six months). Vinayak Kashinath Gaidhani, Ramchandra Babaji Kathe, Govind Sadashiv Bapat, Hari Anant Thatte, Shankar Pandurang Mahajan, Mukund Pandurang Moghe, Keshav Ganesh Paranjpe, and Trimbak Vinayak Jog were acquitted and discharged. S.V. Vaidya, V.S. Barve and V.K. Phulamrikar had already been discharged at an early period of the trial. The judgment spelt a virtual death knell to the Abhinav Bharat as most of its important members were jailed and the ignominy and fear ensured that it lost all prevalent and future members as well. (Source: Nasik Case Trial Judgment; *'Savarkar Case: Trial & Conviction: Question of Extradition in case of failure at the Hague'*, File No. J. & P. 448/1911, British Library, London).
69. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , pp. 283–84.
70. Letter from Eyre A. Crowe to Sir Edward Grey, 15 February 1911. 'Savarkar Case: Proceedings at The Hague' (including result), IOR/L/PJ/6/1077, File No. 1131, British Library, London.
71. Letter of Jean Longuet, 'Savarkar Case: Proceedings at The Hague' (including result), IOR/L/PJ/6/1077, File No. 1131, British Library, London.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.

74. Award delivered at The Hague, 'Savarkar Case: Proceedings at The Hague' (including result), IOR/L/PJ/6/1077, File No. 1131, British Library, London.
75. Ibid.
76. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 296.
77. Ibid., pp. 294–95.
78. Ibid., pp. 296–97.
79. Weekly Report of the DCI, 10 October 1911, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
80. Indulal Yagnik. *Shyamji Krishna Varma: Life and Times of an Indian Revolutionary* , p. 292.
81. Weekly Report of the DCI, 30 August 1910 and 11 October 1910, OIOC, POS 3095, British Library, London.
82. Guy Aldred, 'The White Terror in India', August 1910, EPP 1/3, British Library, London.
83. *Herald of Revolt* , March 1911.
84. Ibid., October 1912.
85. The descriptive roll of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar taken on the 9 February 1911 at Bombay has the following personal details about him: 26 years old as on date, Height: 5'-2 1/2", fair complexion, medium build, Chest measurement: 32 inches; Special marks: Broad forehead, high cheek bones, a scar (1/2" x 1/8") on left frontal eminence, scar (3/4"x1/8" above inner end of right eyebrow, Scar (1/2"x1/8" above middle of left eyebrow). Is short-sighted and wears glasses. It was signed by the deputy inspector general of police, Criminal Investigation Department of Bombay on 10 February 1911. (Source: 'Savarkar Case: Trial & Conviction: Question of Extradition in case of failure at the Hague', File No. J. & P. 448/1911, British Library, London.)
86. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life*, <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 15.
87. For references to Congress and Tilak's *Kesari* , ibid., pp. 15–16.
88. Harindra Srivastava. *Five Stormy Years: Savarkar in London* , p. 297.
89. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life*, <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 18.

90. Ibid., pp. 6, 19.
91. Memo by the Judicial Department in Government of India, Home Department, Letter no. 1555C, 28 February 1919, Bombay, File 60D(a)/1919: 'Political Prisoners', Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai. The memorandum provided reference to Government letter no. 2022.
92. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life*, <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 25.
93. Ibid., p. 27.
94. Ibid., pp. 28–30.
95. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 99.
96. Of all the convicts in the Presidency, the most hardened criminals, cold-blooded murderers, rapists, heartless dacoits and others, who were deemed unfit to languish in any prison in the country, were the ones bundled up in steamers and dispatched to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman Island.
97. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 43.

## Chapter 8: Sazaa-e-Kalapani

1. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life*, <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf>
2. All the details about the islands and the settlement gleaned from: R.C. Majumdar *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* (New Delhi: Gazetteers Unit, Dept. of Culture, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1975, pp. 1–2); V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life*, <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> ); Barindranath Ghose. *The Tale of My Exile* (Pondicherry: Arya Office, 1922); Ullaskar Dutt. *Twelve Years of Prison Life* ( Calcutta: n.p. 1924); Sachindranath Sanyal. *Bandi Jeevan* (New Delhi: Atma Ram & Sons, 1963). Author's interviews with Dr Rashida Iqbal, curator of Cellular Jail Memorial, Port Blair.

3. Letter from Sir Stamford Raffles, governor of Benkoelen to the Government of India in 1818, in which he also rues that this policy did not meet its desired objective of transforming the criminals.
4. L.P. Mathur. *History of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands , 1756–1966* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1968).
5. R.C. Majumdar. *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* , pp. 62–63; Also interview with Dr Rashida Iqbal at Cellular Jail, Port Blair.
6. Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange. *Isolation: Places and Practices of Exclusion* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2004), p. 37.
7. R.C. Majumdar. *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* , 1975, p. 119.
8. Document at Cellular Jail, 4 September 1914 from J. Hope Simpson, officiating chief commissioner of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and superintendent of Port Blair to the secretary to the Government of India's home department describing the punishments meted to Vinayak and his stay in jail. Document courtesy Dr Rashida Iqbal, Cellular Jail, Port Blair.
9. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 63.
10. Upendranath Banerjee. *Nirvasiter Atmakatha* . n.p., n.d., p. 72.
11. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , pp. 64–65.
12. Ibid., p. 65.
13. Barindra Kumar Ghose. *The Tale of My Exile* , p. 53.
14. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , pp. 68–69.
15. Barindra Kumar Ghose. *The Tale of My Exile* , pp. 66–67.
16. Ibid., pp. 84.
17. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 86.
18. Ibid.
19. Barindra Kumar Ghose. *The Tale of My Exile* , p. 68.
20. Ibid., p. 100.
21. Ibid., pp. 71–72.



22. Ibid., p. 160.
23. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 139.
24. Barindra Kumar Ghose. *The Tale of My Exile* , p. 80.
25. 25. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 140.
26. Barindra Kumar Ghose. *The Tale of My Exile* ,, pp. 60–61.
27. Ullaskar Dutt. *Twelve Years of Prison Life* , p. 49.
28. Original article by Prem Vaidya published in *Tumhi Ahmi Apan Saglech* , a Marathi bimonthly (21 February–6 March 2000), edited by Avinash Dharmadhikari of Pune. Courtesy: Savarkar Smarark, Mumbai.
29. Barindra Kumar Ghose. *The Tale of my Exile* , p. 86.
30. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 82.
31. Ibid., p. 102.
32. Ibid., p. 149.
33. This version of Nand Gopal’s resistance is presented from Barindra Kumar Ghose. *The Tale of My Exile* , pp. 88–93.
34. Ibid., p. 90.
35. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 90.
36. Ibid., pp. 96–97.
37. Ibid., p. 101.
38. Ibid., p. 96.
39. English translation of the biography of Babarao Savarkar accessed online from <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/babarao-savarkar-v003> , p. 47.
40. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 103.
41. Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , p. 115.
42. The Jail History Ticket was a document that maintained a catalogue of the punishments given to a prisoner. This did not include the

- regular tasks, such as working on the oil mill or picking oakum, assigned to anyone. Even the punishments meted out were vastly underrated and reported, lest it catch the government's attention.
43. 'Jail History Ticket of V.D. Savarkar' [1911–1921], Government of India, Home Department (Special), 60(D)-F/1921, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai. Vinayak's Jail History Ticket also noted a petition submitted by him on 29 October 1912: 'Petitioner [requested] to be released from Cellular Jail because he has been in sixteen months and that his conduct has been better.' He sought to be released from Cellular Jail into the penal colony where 'ordinary' prisoners resided under much better conditions. That petition dated 29 October was rejected on 4 November 1912.
  44. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 133.
  45. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
  46. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
  47. *Ibid.*, p. 114–15.
  48. The 'Jail Ticket' mentions that he was allowed this information on 18 December 1912.
  49. V.D. Savarkar. *An Echo from Andamans* , Poona: Venus Book Stall, 1947, p. 13.
  50. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.
  51. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
  52. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 152.
  53. *Ibid.*, pp. 152–53.
  54. EPP 2/11, *Bande Mataram* , July 1912, British Library, London.
  55. R.C. Majumdar. *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* , p. 172.
  56. *Ibid.*
  57. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
  58. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
  59. *Ibid.*
  60. *Mahratta*, 28 July 1912, courtesy Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai.
  61. D.O. no. 18, 30 May 1912, Home. Poll. Dept. Cons. 1912, No 1. Quoted in R.C. Majumdar. *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* , pp.

- 181–82.
62. Letter from Medical Superintendent, Jail District, Port Blair, F.A. Baker, to Deputy Secretary of Home Department, M.S.D. Butler; Quoted in R.C. Majumdar. *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* , pp. 182–83.
  63. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 155.
  64. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
  65. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
  66. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
  67. *Ibid.*
  68. Details from ‘Jail History Ticket of V.D. Savarkar’ [1911–1921], Government of India, Home Department (Special), 60(D)-F/1921, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
  69. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 170.
  70. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

## Chapter 9: The Jail Chronicles

1. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 174.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Petition from V.D. Savarkar (convict no. 32778) to the Home Member of the Government of India, 14 November 1913. GOI, Home Department (Political A), February 1915, #68–160, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
4. Someone transported for life.
5. A leave ticket confers a limited degree of freedom at the settlement wherein convicts were provided a six-month allowance by the authorities in a transitional stage leading to eventual promotion to ‘self-support’. It was hoped that ‘self-supporters’ act as independently employed settlers. In time, ‘self-supporters’ would be granted a pardon to freely settle in the Andamans.

6. Petition from Nand Gopal (Prisoner No. 32240) to the Home Member of the Government of India, 15 November 1913, quoted in R.C. Majumdar. *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* , p. 209.
7. Petition from V.D. Savarkar (convict no. 32778) to the Home Member of the Government of India, 14 November 1913, Government of India, Home Department (Political A), February 1915, #68–160, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
8. A.G. Noorani. *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* , pp. 51–55; Dhananjay Keer. *Veer Savarkar* , pp. 150–53.
9. Home Department, Pol A. Feb 1915, No. 68–160, quoted in R.C. Majumdar. *Penal Settlement in the Andamans* , pp. 202–03.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 204–05, 221–22.
11. ‘Jail History Ticket of V.D. Savarkar’ [1911–1921], Government of India, Home Department (Special), 60(D)-F/1921, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
12. IOR/L/PJ/1314. File no 2286, 12 June 1914–24 September 1914, ‘Report on V.D. Savarkar, imprisoned for importing weapons into India; treatment in prison in the Andamans’; British Library, London.
13. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 178.
14. First Boer War from 1880-1881 and Second Boer War from 1899-1902.
15. Shashi Tharoor. *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2016), pp. 87–88.
16. *Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi* , Vol. 14, pp. 291–92, <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-14.pdf>
17. Vedicant. *India and the First World War: ‘if I die here, who will remember me?’* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2014).
18. Himani Savarkar. *Tejasvi Taare* (Mumbai: Savarkar Smarak, n.d.)
19. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 230.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 230–31.

22. Petition sent by V.D. Savarkar to the Chief Commissioner, Andaman Islands, October 1914, Government of India, Home Department (Political A), National Archives of India, New Delhi. Full text in Appendix III.
23. 'Jail History Ticket of V.D. Savarkar' [1911–1921], Government of India, Home Department (Special), 60(D)-F/1921, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
24. Covering note to the 'Petition of V.D. Savarkar', IOR/L/PJ/6/1525, File no. 806; October 1917–March 1918, British Library, London.
25. Sedition Committee Report, pp. 119–25. Secret report published by Government of India in 1918.
26. James Campbell Kerr. *Political Trouble in India: 1907-1917* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), pp. 241–42.
27. Alan. J. Ward. *The Easter Rising: Revolution and Irish Nationalism* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1980), pp. 4, 99–102.
28. James Campbell Kerr. *Political Trouble in India: 1907-1917* , pp. 246–47.
29. Peter Hopkirk. *Like Hidden Fire: The Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (New York: Kodansha, 1994).
30. This marginal note by the Kaiser on a telegram from the German ambassador in St Petersburg is quoted in Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht : die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914–18* (Dusseldorf: Droste, 2002) (original pub. 1962), p. 110.
31. The Kaiser's comments to Bernhard Heinrich Karl Martin von Bülow, a German statesman who served as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for three years and then as Chancellor of the German Empire from 1900 to 1909, 11 August 1908, quoted in Nirode Barooah. *India and the Official Germany, 1886–1914*. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1977), p. 59.
32. James Campbell Kerr. *Political Trouble in India: 1907-1917* , p. 252.
33. R21088-2, 114, clipping from *Nieuws van den Dag* reported to Nadolny, 3 September 1915, Politisches Archiv des Auswa r'tigen Amts, Berlin.
34. 21084-2, 94–5, Papen to Foreign Office, 31 May 1916; Politisches Archiv des Auswa r'tigen Amts, Berlin.
35. Sachindranath Sanyal. *Bandi Jeevan* , pp. 136–38.

36. Details of the 'Siam Project' and 'Batavia Plan' gleaned from James Campbell Kerr. *Political Trouble in India: 1907-1917* , pp. 259–65.
37. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , pp. 246–47.
38. Ibid., p. 125.
39. Ibid., p. 181.
40. Ibid., pp. 198–99.
41. Ibid., p. 199.
42. Ibid., p. 199.
43. Ibid., p. 194.
44. Ibid., p. 196.
45. Ibid., p. 198.
46. English translation of the biography of Babarao Savarkar  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/babarao-savarkar-v003.pdf> , pp. 53–54.
47. J.E. Llewellyn. *The Arya Samaj as a Fundamentalist Movement: A Study in Comparative Fundamentalism*. ( New Delhi: Manohar, 1993), p. 99; see also, Kenneth W. Jones. 'The Arya Samaj in British India, 1875-1947', in *Religion in Modern India*. Robert Baird (ed.) (New Delhi: Manohar, 1976).
48. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , pp. 218–19.
49. Ibid., pp. 317–18.
50. Ibid., pp. 283–85.
51. James Campbell Kerr. *Political Trouble in India: 1907-1917* , p. 372.
52. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 252.
53. Ibid., p. 210.
54. V.D. Savarkar. *An Echo from Andamans* , p. 55.
55. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* ,  
<http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 270.
56. Oral Archives–Interview transcript of Prithvi Singh Azad, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi.

57. Petition of V.D. Savarkar, IOR/L/PJ/6/1525, File no 806; October 1917–March 1918, British Library, London. Complete text in Appendix III.
58. Ibid.
59. John George Lambton, First Earl of Durham.
60. Ibid.
61. William Macneile Dixon. *Summary of Constitutional Reforms for India: Being Proposals of Secretary of State Montagu and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford* (New York: G.G. Woodwark, n.d.), p. 24.
62. Shane Ryland. ‘Edwin Montagu in India: Politics of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report’. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* , (2011), pp. 79–92.
63. Philip Woods. ‘The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1919): A Re-Assessment’. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* , pp. 25–42.
64. *Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi* , Vol. 19, <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-19.pdf>, pp. 197–98.
65. *Indian Annual Register* , 1920, Part I, pp. 379–84. (Published by the Government of India.)
66. *Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi* , Vol. 19, <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-19.pdf>, pp. 197–98.
67. V.D. Savarkar. *An Echo from Andamans* , p. 56.
68. Ibid., p. 70.
69. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , pp. 288–89.
70. An often-practised Hindu tradition where the wife gave up her maiden name after marriage to take on a new one that her husband’s family gave her during the ceremonies.
71. English translation of the biography of Babarao Savarkar, <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/babarao-savarkar-v003.pdf> , pp. 37–38.
72. Reference of her date of death from Uttara Sahasrabuddhe. *Bharatiya Swatantryaladhyatil Streeya* . The other date of her death mentioned by a few other authors is 20 April 1919.
73. V.D. Savarkar. *An Echo from Andamans* , p. 63.

74. IOR/L/PJ/6/1594, File No. 3132; February 1919–August 1920, The Rowlatt Bills and Disturbances in India: House of Commons questions and replies, British Library, London.
75. R.C. Majumdar. *History of the Freedom Movement in India, Vol. 3* ( Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962), p. 15.
76. Ibid., pp. 41–42.
77. Nigel Collett. *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* ( London: Hambledon, 2005), p. 323.
78. *Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi* , Vol. 18, pp. 219–22, <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-18.pdf>
79. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 300.
80. Indian Jails Committee Report, pp. 145–52. Government of India Publication, 1919-1920.
81. Ibid., p. 276.
82. ‘Royal Proclamation’ found in ‘Resolution recommending royal amnesty to the political prisoners, the Savarkar brothers, Bombay’, parliamentary question, IOR/L/PJ/6/1677, File no 3153, May 1920–June 1921, British Library, London.
83. 60D(b)/1919: ‘Political Prisoners: Proposed release of Ganesh Savarkar and Vinayak Savarkar in view of the Royal Amnesty,’ pp. 63–73, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
84. Refer to Appendix III.
85. Letter from Chief Commissioner, Andaman and Nicobar Islands to Government of India, Home Department, 20 May 1919, file 60D(a)/1919: Political Prisoners, 7, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai. It is not clear from the letter what these forbidden articles actually were.
86. Government of Bombay, Home Department, F. #60D(a)/1919, 7, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
87. Notes of the Government of India, Judicial Department, 29 May 1919, para. 2, 60D(a)/1919, 17, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
88. DuBoulay was quoting clause (iii) of paragraph 4 of the Government of India’s letter #1555C, 28 February 1919: ‘As regards persons convicted by Courts in British India, and sentenced under Chapter VI



of the Indian Penal Code for offences against the State or for kindred offences either under special laws, such as the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act or the provisions of laws which require the sanction of Government to a prosecution, the following principles have been suggested as appropriate: [. . .] (iii) Those who have been convicted of murder or attempted murder or abetment of murder to have any sentence above a single life sentence remitted.’

89. Telegram #4438 from Morrison, Government of Bombay to Superintendent, Port Blair, n.d. (ca May 1919).
90. Morrison, Internal Note, Government of Bombay, 30 May 1919, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
91. Confidential letter from Montgomery, Government of Bombay, Judicial Department, Bombay, 19 June 1920 to H. McPherson, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, in F# 60 D(b)/1919, 85. The Home Department’s recommendation was made in telegram #1439, Government of India, 8 December 1919. Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
92. Letter from Government of India, Home (Political) to J. Crerar, Secretary to Government of Bombay, Delhi, 24 February 1920, F# 60D(b)/1919: ‘Political Prisoners: Proposed Release of Ganesh Savarkar and Vinayak Savarkar in View of the Royal Amnesty Announced in December 1919’, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
93. Demi-official no. 1193, 20 May 1920, from H. McPherson, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department (Political), Simla to J. Crerar, Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Political Department, Bombay, 59-61, F# 60D(b)/1919, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
94. Sachindranath Sanyal. *Bandi Jeevan* , p. 226.
95. V.D. Savarkar. *An Echo from Andamans* , p. 65.

## Chapter 10: Political Potboiler

1. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* , Vol. 19, <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-19.pdf>, p. 348.

2. Ibid. The ‘earlier letter’ that Gandhi refers to in this letter is missing in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* .
3. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. *Young India: 1919-1922*. B.R. Prasad (ed). 2nd ed. (Madras: S. Ganeshan, 1924), pp. 94–98.
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13. Courtesy Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai, and interview of author with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’s grand-nephew, Ranjit Savarkar.
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31. *Ibid.*
32. A Muslim scholar from the Firangi Mahal in Lucknow and an active participant of the Khilafat movement.
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34. Saradindu Mukherji. ‘Caliphate Movement in India, 1919-1924’ (New Delhi: *India Policy Foundation*, 2015), p. 12.
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36. Home Political, June 1920, Secret No. 112, National Archives of India, New Delhi; see also Saradindu Mukherji. 'Caliphate Movement in India, 1919-1924', p. 10.
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38. This was an informal meeting convened in Allahabad during 1–2 June 1920, with the Khilafat leaders, after Gandhi failed to get the AICC to adopt his idea of initiating non-cooperation in alliance with the Khilafatists. Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and others were present with Gandhi and the Khilafatists.
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44. *Ibid.*
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58. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , p. 350.
59. Subhash Chandra Bose. *The Indian Struggle: 1920-1942* , Vol. II, p. 108.
60. Jawaharlal Nehru. *Nehru on Gandhi: Selections from Writings and Speeches* , pp. 38–39.
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63. Ibid.
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## Chapter 11: Who Is a Hindu?

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43. Ibid., p. 51.
44. Ibid., pp. 55–56.
45. Ibid., p. 58.
46. Ibid., p. 60.
47. Ibid., p. 26.
48. Ibid., p. 52.
49. It is erroneous to assume that Savarkar visualized the nation as a masculine ‘Fatherland’, as is normally postulated to provide equivalence with fascist movements in Europe. The nation for him since childhood was visualized as a Goddess, a Mother, a divine feminine power. Here, *pitrubhumi* means the land of the *pitrus* or ancestors to whom devout Hindus offer oblations during the *pitrupaksha* (fortnight dedicated to forefathers) each year to assist the journey of their souls and seek their blessings.
50. V.D. Savarkar. *Hindutva* , p. 71.
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53. In the wake of the communal mobilization of Muslims after the Morley–Minto Reforms and the birth of the Muslim League, a need was felt for establishing a national organization to represent Hindus and their interests. This finally took shape in 1915. It was named Sarvadeshik Hindu Sabha (later Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha in 1920) and met at Haridwar during the Kumbh Mela under the leadership of Maharaja Manindrachandra Nandi of Kasim Bazar. Several important personalities such as Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Swami Shraddhanand and Sir Tej Bahadur Saprú attended the conference. The goals of the new organization were: 1. To promote greater union and solidarity amongst all sections of Hindu community and to unite them as closely as parts of one organic whole; 2. To promote education among members of the Hindu



- community; 3. To ameliorate and improve the condition of all classes of the Hindu community; 4. To protect and promote Hindu interests wherever and whenever it may be necessary; 5. To promote good feelings between the Hindus and other communities in India and to act in a friendly way with them and in loyal co-operation with the government; 6. Generally to take steps for promoting religious, moral, social, educational and political interests of the community.
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## Chapter 12: The Interpretation of Thoughts

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2. Ibid. pp. 33–46.
3. Ibid., pp. 433–45.
4. Marathi article in the May 1934 Issue of the magazine *Manohar* , sourced from the Savarkar Smarak, Mumbai; original translation by Niranjana Rajadhyaksha published for *The Mint* dated 20 March 2016.
5. V.D. Savarkar. *Savarkar Samagra* , Vol. 3, pp. 496–517 (translated by the author).
6. In this undated interview to a Marathi journalist, Vinayak spoke about the virtues of modern cinema. Published in his book *Vividha Lekha* or *Various Essays* . Translation of the original Marathi piece by Niranjana Rajadhyaksha published for *The Mint* dated 20 March 2016.
7. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , pp. 374–75.
8. Ibid., p. 368.
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10. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf>

- [Savarkar.pdf](#) , p. 369.
11. Ibid., p. 378
  12. F# 143-K (d)/1928: ‘The Indian Stability Commission, 1923: Movements of a subversive character: 1) Communism, 2) Press and Platform (revolutionary)’, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
  13. A. Montgomerie, Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Home Department, Resolution #724, Bombay Castle, 4 January 1924. F# 60-D (e)/1923-24, Home (Special): ‘Convict (Life): Release of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.
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  15. Ibid.
  16. V.D. Savarkar. *My Transportation for Life* , <http://savarkar.org/en/pdfs/My-Transportation-for-Life-Veer-Savarkar.pdf> , pp. 382
  17. Ibid., p. 383.

#### Appendix IV

1. An article by Vinayak Savarkar that appeared in Volume 1 of *The Talwar* magazine from Berlin, April–May 1910. EPP 2/22, India Office Library, London.
2. Possibly means Deshbhakt Gokhale. A reference to Gopalkrishna Gokhale.

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