

Savarkar's Hindutva

Author(s): Ajit Karnik

Source: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 15 (Apr. 12-18, 2003), pp. 1426+1515

Published by: Economic and Political Weekly

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4413410>

Accessed: 26-03-2020 09:26 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Economic and Political Weekly is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Economic and Political Weekly*

Savarkar's Hindutva

Two letters have appeared (J V Deshpande, March 8 and S H Deshpande, March 15) in response to a letter to which I was a signatory (March 1). The main thrust of our letter (and the point was made up-front) was the Hindutva that Savarkar espoused. J V Deshpande relegates a reference to this towards the end of his letter after a detailed elaboration of Savarkar's role in the freedom movement. S H Deshpande too, after offering some of Savarkar's views on the citizenship of India, relegates to the end of his letter Savarkar's inconvenient ethics which he states "was relativist" and concedes that Savarkar "deserves blame on that count".

Savarkar's role in the freedom movement is controversial, but is a subject matter of historical interpretation. I do not take this up here, since there are historians better qualified than I, as well as J V Deshpande and S H Deshpande, to undertake that analysis. Here I want to point to the divisive and exclusivist philosophy that is inherent in Savarkar's thought. This philosophy is so repugnant in a democratic set-up that it needs to be condemned strongly by all. It is my belief, and I think the other signatories to the letter that we wrote will agree, that to honour Savarkar is to accord sanction and sanctity to this philosophy of his. This, I believe, to be very dangerous, especially in the communally charged times that we are passing through, but more generally if we are to call ours a democratic nation.

In support of my stand in the previous paragraph, I will refer to some excerpts from Savarkar's book, *Bhartiya Itihasatil Saha Soneri Paane* ('Six Golden Epochs in Indian History'). What I offer is my understanding of Savarkar's writings, which I believe to be representative of his philosophy. I remain open to the charge of selective references to Savarkar's writings, but that cannot be helped; interested readers may look up the book.

On pages 390-391 of the above-mentioned book, Savarkar takes to task

the Marathas for not taking revenge on Muslims in response to the atrocities committed around the year 1757 by Abdalli. Savarkar would have liked the Marathas to not just take revenge, but to annihilate Muslim religion (*Mussalmani Dharma*) and exterminate the Muslim people and make India "Muslim-free". He reports with great approval how Spain, Portugal, Greece and Bulgaria had done a similar thing in the past and ensured the safety of Christianity. Presumably, Savarkar would have liked India to be rid of Muslims to make the country safe for Hindutva. Clearly, the India he wanted to create had no place for Muslims: the country had to be cleansed of Islam and the followers of Islam.

Further (page 392), Savarkar is unrelenting in his criticism of the Marathas for failing to exact revenge, not only on Abdalli and his forces for their atrocities on Hindus, but on those ordinary Muslims who continued to live in Mathura, Gokul, etc. According to Savarkar, the Maratha army should have killed ordinary Muslims (i.e., not soldiers), destroyed their mosques and raped Muslim women. The revenge was to be taken, not on the perpetrators of the earlier atrocities, but on those who had nothing to do with the earlier episodes, on those who were ordinary residents of these places and whose only crime was that they shared their religion with the perpetrators of the earlier atrocities.

The above reference from Savarkar's book indicates that he believed in the collective guilt of Muslims: they were to be punished not for what they had done, but for what their co-religionists had done. It also shows that, according to him, Muslims were to be "punished" for historical wrongs: the Marathas were criticised for not taking revenge on Muslims now resident in Mathura, etc., for atrocities committed in an earlier period.

How relevant this is for the times we are living in is apparent to those who can see Hindutva for what it is.

(Continued on p 1515)

Subscription

Inland

	(Rs)			
	Six months	One year	Two years	Three years
Institutions	-	1000	1850	2650
Individuals	400	750	1400	2000

Concessional Rates

Teachers/Researchers	-	550	-	1450
Students	-	350	-	-

Concessional rates are available only in India. To avail of concessional rates, certificate from relevant institution is essential. Remittance by money order/bank draft preferred. Please add Rs 25 to outstation cheques towards bank collection charges.

Nepal and Bhutan

Institutions	-	1500	-	4150
Individuals	-	1250	-	3500

Foreign

	(US \$)					
	Air Mail			Surface Mail		
	Institutions					
	1yr	2yrs	3yrs	1yr	2yrs	3yrs
Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh	80	150	200	65	120	175
Other countries	150	275	375	90	170	240
	Individuals					
Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh	50	90	125	30	50	75
Other countries	100	175	240	65	120	170

All remittances to:

Economic and Political Weekly

Economic and Political Weekly

Hitkari House, 284 Shahid Bhagatsingh Road, Mumbai 400 001

Phones: 2269 6072/73 Fax: (022) 2269 6072
epw@vsnl.com
edit@epw.org.in

Editor : Krishna Raj

Associate Editor : Padma Prakash

Assistant Editors :

Anuradha Kumar, Vimala Subramanian
Angshuman Bhattacharya (EPW On-line)
Bharati Bhargava (Delhi)

Editorial Staff : Prabha Pillai

Editorial Consultant : Gautam Navlakha (Delhi)

Circulation : Gauraang Pradhan (Manager),

B S Sharma
circulation@epw.org.in

Advertisement Manager : Kamal G Fanibanda
advt@epw.org.in

General Manager : K Vijayakumar
queries@epw.org.in

EPW Research Foundation

C 212, Akurli Industrial Estate, Kandivali (East)
Mumbai 400 101, Phones: 2887 3038/3041
Fax: (022) 2887 3038.
epwrf@vsnl.com

Director : S L Shetty

under the chairmanship of A Bhattacharya (Presidency College, Calcutta) to evaluate the BAES estimation procedures, validity of which was challenged by DOA, concluded after detailed deliberations "that the BAES methodology was adequate in principle. The committee recommended several improvements, such as additional field staff, but did not find that past estimates had suffered from any systematic bias. It remarked that the bureau not being connected with the execution of agricultural programmes... has no difficulty in submitting the survey results objectively, and noted the advantage of the sample survey method over complete enumeration, viz, speed, economy, accuracy, and the ability to make statistical inference in terms of probability". The quote is from Boyce's article, 'Agricultural Growth in West Bengal, 1949-50 to 1980-81: A Review of the Evidence' (*EPW*, Review of Agriculture, March 1981). Boyce in his article amply documented the motive of both the state directorate of agriculture and the central ministry of food and agriculture for their upward revision of BAES estimates.

Since 1947 the area survey and crop-cutting experiment work in West Bengal

were conducted by ISI for the principal crops. The state statistical bureau (later rechristened as BAES) took over the work from the 1950-51 crop year. It did this work uninterrupted till 1985-86, i.e., for continuous 35 years. When a new sampling design was introduced and revenue officials inducted for crop area investigation work in 1986, it would have been a normal course of action if BAES had continued to remain in charge of its compilation, particularly when compilation of yield data was entrusted to it. That would not have involved extra cost while the expertise built up there over the years could be used gainfully. On the other hand, the area compilation work was assigned to DOA's evaluation wing which is not even headed by a statistically trained officer suitable for the job. The track record of this evaluation wing never raised any hope of objective and competent handling of the job. DOA had all along been distorting BAES estimates of crop area and production. This is a plain case of 'usurption'. What other word would have described this change more aptly?

Regarding Ray's disapproval of my referring to the paper by Banerjee, Gertler and Ghatak, I may state that Maitreesh Ghatak told me the other day this January

he might also re-examine the issue. For the benefit of those who had not read my letter in the Bengali fortnightly, *Desh*, referred to by Ray I may re-state the points briefly: (a) Using official data of rice it could be shown that the medium- or long-term growth rates of its productivity in West Bengal were not higher than those in Bangladesh (1979-93) where no land reforms were undertaken as in this state. The periods considered in case of West Bengal were (i) 1975-78 to 1983-86, (ii) 1983-86 to 1995-98 and (iii) 1975-78 to 1995-98. (b) The unprecedented surge in productivity witnessed in the post-1987-88 period in West Bengal might have been triggered by a host of factors like operation barga, off-the-record loosening of the iron grip around the statutory ration areas (with 10 million urban ration card holders) prohibiting entry of Bengal rice from the country side, etc. Incidentally, Banerjee and Ghatak tell us that of the total increment in productivity of rice in the concerned period (1979-93) in West Bengal, about 28 per cent could be attributed to direct and indirect effects of the operation barga. They have used official data for calculating the share. Now, why should we be afraid of clean data? [E]

Letters to editor

(Continued from p 1426)

A mosque is demolished in revenge for a temple that may have been destroyed in the past and, in the riots that followed, Muslims are punished for this 'historical' crime. Muslims in one city are butchered, burned and raped in order to avenge the inhuman burning of passengers on a train in a completely different city. All of this is justified in the name of collective guilt and is an echo of what we can find in the writings of Savarkar. One cannot, of course, hold Savarkar responsible for the actions of those who might wish to follow him; no leader can choose his followers, especially after he has passed from the scene. The point being made is that when India is going through such dangerous times, is it prudent to honour a person whose philosophy is deeply communal and hence anti-democratic?

S H Deshpande has expressed shock that we as academics wrote the letter of March 1 which, according to him, contained inaccuracies. Possibly; but

that can be a matter of debate. The letters of J V Deshpande and S H Deshpande have evoked in me a feeling of great pain and despair. S H Deshpande glibly describes Savarkar's ethics as "relativist" while J V Deshpande criticises us for "flying off the handle" when we "smell even remotely the odour" of Hindutva. When eminent academics fail to recognise the divisive, exclusivist, intolerant and communal position of Savarkar and, even more disturbingly, lend this position their tacit approval, one is seized with a terrible fear: a fear for all Indians, and a fear for India's future as a democratic and secular nation.

AJIT KARNIK
Mumbai

Nadimarg Massacre

I am appalled at the recent horrendous massacre of 24 Kashmiri Pandits including women and children

at Nadimarg village, by unidentified gunmen. While the identity of the killers is not yet established, it is clear that the killers were interested in undermining the 'healing touch policy' initiated by the Mufti Sayeed regime, setting back his initiatives to bring back the Pandits who had fled the Valley in a massive exodus in 1990.

I am heartened to see that the Kashmiri Muslims immediately rallied in support of their Pandit brethren and held large protest demonstrations. The entire Valley shut down on March 25 (*The Kashmir Times*, March 26) in response to a call for a strike by the Hurriyat Conference, thus sending a clear signal to the killers that Kashmiri Muslims do not approve of the killings of their Hindu brethren and that Kashmiriyat – the composite culture with glorious traditions of communal amity, tolerance and compassion – is still flourishing.