



Savarkar's Impact on Postcolonial India

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ABSTRACT

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), as the founder of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) ideology left permanent marks on colonial and postcolonial India. This article explores Savarkar's ideological framework for constructing postcolonial India as a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation-state). This ideological framework revolves around three key points: rejection of a combined or inclusive nationalism of the ruling Indian National Congress, doing away with communal concessions to minorities by implementing the principle of one man one vote, along with unconditional submission of minorities to absolute Hindu majority rule, and finally his comprehensive cultural reconsolidation of Hindus by employing Hindu nationalist symbols and principles in internal and external policies of India such as the national flag, national language, Kashmir issue, Pakistan policy, relations with Israel, and defense policy of India. Through his idea of Hindu Rashtra, Cultural consolidation of the Hindu nation, and building an Akhand Bharat (greater India), Savarkar sought to create an entity capable of sustaining and continuing ancient Hindu civilization.

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Introduction

The construction of *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu nation-state) was the pivot of Savarkar's ideological and political life. He considered the construction of a *Hindu Rashtra* a prerequisite of civilizational renaissance of Hindus. The end of colonial rule in India was a significant step toward this end but it was not the end itself. Thus, developing the postcolonial state of India as a Hindu rashtra, in accordance with the principles of his Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) ideology, became the center of his ideological and political pursuits.

The task was, however, not easy or straightforward. It was confronted with a variety of challenges, some inherent in Indian society and some the colonial legacy. The foremost inherent

challenge was the cultural diversity of India. India was a land of diverse people, speaking hundreds of different languages, with widely different pantheons of deities, dress codes, names and nomenclatures, cuisine, and even different dietary habits. It was not easy to knit these widely different cultures into a Hindu Rashtra, instead of a secular India. The colonial legacy also brought a number of challenges for Savarkar's Hindutva ideology. Some religious communities, such as Sikhs, were considered part of the wider Hindu nation according to Hindutva principles, but these communities were designated the status of religious minorities under colonial arrangements. These religious communities, like Sikhs, had enjoyed constitutional protections like separate electorates. Under Savarkar's Hindu Rashtra, these communities were bound to lose these special privileges.

In this context, Hindutva ideology faced some fundamental questions regarding the nature of the future Indian state and society. Foremost among these was the question of India's future constitution, its relation to Hindu history, religion, and continuity of ancient Hindu civilization. Another important ideological concern was aligning Hindutva ideals with the contingencies of the modern age. These questions were accompanied by issues such as the choice of national language and national symbols such as the national flag, and the cultural orientation of the proposed Hindu Rashtra.

Muslims of the subcontinent always held an important position in Savarkar's ideological framework. They were designated as the national "others" who could not be part of the Hindu nation or the Hindu Rashtra. The end of colonial rule did not fully solve this ideological riddle; rather, it presented it in a new form. The partition of India made the Muslims question both a national and international issue.

Nationally, it required answers to the questions regarding the status of the Muslim minority in the Indian state and society, the extent of their integration, and the freedom to practice and preach Islam in the proposed Hindu Rashtra.

The partition of India made this an international issue as well. This was a great source of pain and anguish for Savarkar. An *Akhand Bharat* (a united India) was, to Savarkar, an inheritance of the Hindu nation, and loss of this inheritance could not be tolerated. Therefore, undoing Pakistan and making India united again became a resounding theme of Savarkar's post-colonial ideological and political efforts.

Below is a brief view of Savarkar's impact on post-colonial India, its nationalism, and Muslims.

Research Methodology

This study employs library and archival research through qualitative thematic analysis of V. D. Savarkar's thought. Primary sources—his writings, speeches, and correspondence—are examined alongside secondary sources to investigate his vision of a Hindu *rashtra* (Hindu nation). The analysis concentrates on basic themes of sovereignty, minority policy, cultural consolidation, foreign relations, militarization, and the two-nation theory, placing Savarkar's framework within its historical moment and its impact on post-colonial India.

Savarkar and Partition of India

The independence of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 was inextricably linked with its contemporaneous partition—an outcome that V.D. Savarkar had insistently and strongly opposed since the early 1930s. Towards the end of colonial rule in India, Savarkar, as the president of the Hindu Mahasabha, vehemently opposed the partition of India and the making of an independent Muslim state. Culturally and territorially, a united India was the major point of the Hindu Mahasabha's manifesto during its 1946 election campaign. However, it did not fare well in the elections of 1946 and was completely routed by the Indian National Congress (INC), which favoured a composite, inclusive, secular nationalism unlike Savarkar's Hindutva, which presented the idea of a civilizational nationalism.

Hindu Mahasabha's defeat in the elections of 1947 cannot be attributed to a single factor. Internally, it failed to broaden its base in the public and also failed to translate its ideology into an effective political mobilization. Savarkar was, by nature, a revolutionary and not a political organizer like his INC or All India Muslim League (AIML) leaders. Externally, Hindutva ideology was competing with other nationalist ideologies like INC's composite nationalism and AIML's Muslim nationalism. During the elections, INC also campaigned against the idea of Pakistan. Thus, overlapping electoral narratives of INC and Hindu Mahasabha confused Hindu voters; this confusion ultimately favoured INC, rather than Hindu Mahasabha. Muslim voters, on the other hand, had no such confusion; they overwhelmingly voted in favour of the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan. Along with these, the British Government's hurry to transfer power to Indians also created an unfavourable environment for Savarkar's civilizational nationalism. The Mahasabha's poor performance in 1946 thus highlighted not only its organizational weakness but also the shifting outlines of Indian political consciousness on the eve of independence and partition.

Savarkar's revolutionary nature consistently dominated the pragmatic politician within him, restricting his ability to function as a negotiator or organizer in the style of contemporaries such as Jawaharlal Nehru or Muhammad Ali Jinnah. His uncompromising ideological stance and lack of political maneuvering barred him from reaching any meaningful accord with the Indian National Congress, even on the point of partition of India. Consequently, the Hindu Mahasabha under his leadership came to be reckoned not as a partner in the nationalist struggle but as one of the principal opponents of the Congress's vision of a secular India founded on modern nationalism.

Although the Mahasabha attempted to mobilize support by appealing to religious sentiment and by presenting Hindutva nationalism as the defining and the distinct feature of a Hindu nation, its efforts were diluted by the fact that Gandhi had long before integrated Hindu religious symbols and idioms into the political vocabulary of the Congress with far greater quality.¹ Gandhi's ability to infuse spiritual vocabulary with mass mobilization left little room for the Mahasabha to claim originality or legitimacy in this domain. As a result, Savarkar's ideological clarity did not translate into electoral strength, and the Hindu Mahasabha failed to establish itself as a force capable of challenging the Congress's dominance in the decisive and critical years leading up to independence and partition.

¹ Bidyut Chakrabarty and Bhuwan Kumar Jha, *Hindu Nationalism in India: Ideology and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 7–9.

Savarkar, in his writings and especially in *Hindutva*, repeatedly stressed that Hindutva was distinct from Hinduism and sought to incorporate all indigenous religions of India—such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—into a broader Hindu identity. Yet neither the Jains, Buddhists, nor Sikhs accepted this ideological construction in full. The British Raj’s decision to grant Sikhs separate electorates, parallel to those of Muslims, further highlighted their distinct communal identity.² Since Hindutva ideology was not rooted in their self-consciousness, these communities did not subscribe to Savarkar’s ideology. Moreover, Savarkar’s framework could not successfully rid itself of its Hindu foundation and manifestation, limiting its wider appeal.³ So the appeal of Savarkar’s Hindutva remained limited compared to Gandhi’s more inclusive and effective infusion of religious idioms into nationalist politics.

As the final phase of Indian independence drew near, the political narrative of the Congress and the British colonial authorities on partition became identical with that of the Hindu Mahasabha. Neither Congress nor the Mahasabha, however, formally acknowledged this convergence of narratives, which created confusion among the Hindu public regarding the positions of the two parties. In his parliamentary speech, Prime Minister Clement Attlee declared: “*We cannot allow a minority to place their veto on the advance of a majority*”.⁴ Also, as per the State Paper of May 16 (1946), the Cabinet Mission repudiated Mr. Jinnah’s demand for Pakistan.⁵ Similarly, on 7th July 1946, Pandit Nehru said:

“We are not going to agree to the division of India. We are not going to agree to any proposal which involves the splitting up of India into two parts or more. India is one and must remain one. The idea of Pakistan is wrong; it is a surrender to communalism and reaction.”⁶

Many other Congress leaders endorsed or echoed the same ideas, which closely aligned with the Mahasabha’s stance, thereby deepening the confusion among Hindu audiences. In contrast, the Muslim League maintained its position as the sole representative of the Muslims in colonial India, with no ambiguity among its followers—a position already confirmed by its decisive victory in the 1945–1946 elections.⁷

The acceptance of the idea of Pakistan and the resultant partition of India by the All-India National Congress marked both a political and personal setback for Savarkar. To him, it embodied a great betrayal of the Hindu nation by Nehru, Gandhi, and the Congress leadership.⁸ As Pandit Nehru later confessed, had Gandhi advised the Congress to resist the making of

² Paramjit S. Judge, “Politics of Sikh Identity and Its Fundamentalist Assertion,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 35 (August 28–September 3, 2004): 3948–3951, accessed September 18, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4415477>.

³ Gopal Guru, “*Appropriating Ambedkar*,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 27/28 (July 6–13, 1991): 1697.

⁴ *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons – Official Report*. First Session of the Thirty-Eighth Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 5th ser., vol. 420, “Eighth Volume of Session 1945–46” (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1946), 1415–1423.

⁵ *Statement by the Cabinet Mission and His Excellency the Viceroy*, May 16, 1946, *Parliamentary Papers* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1946).

⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru’s Speeches 1946–1949*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1958), 29.

⁷ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849–1947* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988), 145–150, 160–165, 170–172.

⁸ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966), 384–385.

Pakistan, the party would have continued the struggle.⁹ In protest, Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha urged Hindus not to celebrate India's independence on 15 August 1947, as freedom had come at the cost of national dismemberment.¹⁰ Consequently, in spite of his lifelong dedication to India's liberation and the years he had spent in imprisonment for that cause, Savarkar was not officially invited to the independence celebrations.¹¹

V.D. Savarkar's Idea of Pakistan

In Savarkar's understanding, three key forces were responsible for the partition of India: the British, the Congress leadership, and the Muslim community. He maintained that the British purposefully recognized and engaged only with those political parties that were timorous in temperament, pro-British in orientation, and hesitant to confront Muslim demands.¹²

At the same time, Savarkar maintained that Muslims were rewarded with a separate state exactly because they had abetted the British in consolidating their control over India. Thus, Pakistan, in Savarkar's estimation, was neither historically inevitable, nor the result of any democratic negotiation. Savarkar's post-independence struggle, therefore, mostly remained Pakistan-centric, which he regarded as a rupture of the sacred geography of India, a betrayal of Hindu interests and a perpetual impediment to the objective of creating Akhand Bharat (greater India), and a threat to the integrity of India.¹³

In the Hindu Mahasabha's estimation, Pakistan was bound to evolve as a radical Muslim state. In its calculation, Pakistan's impact would extend beyond South Asia, and it would become a pivot of Pan-Islamism. Further, there was a strong possibility that Pakistan would be successful in making a bloc of its neighboring Muslim countries to counter Indian influence. In case, this possibility is realized, Pakistan would become a permanent source of danger to India's existence. Thus, in Savarkar's Hindu nationalist framework, Pakistan was not merely a political or territorial rival but a permanent menace and source of instability to Hindu civilization.¹⁴ Even after the partition of India, Savarkar did not change his ideas about Pakistan. He maintained his point of view that at its core Pakistan was a religious entity and not a political one.¹⁵ He also maintained that Pakistan's existence and its future growth were closely connected with its Muslim identity, and from a Hindu nationalist point of view, the existence of Pakistan was a symbol of victory of Muslim nationalism over Hindu nationalism. Thus, the struggle against Pakistan did not end with the partition of India, but it was a perpetual phenomenon and part of the Hindu nationalist struggle of making a Hindu Rashtra and Akhand Bharat.

Savarkar's analysis also revealed that Pakistan was not only the result of British machinations, Muslim treachery, and the INC's compromise on Hindu interests. It also displayed an overall weakness of Hindu society. The entire Electoral College that voted the INC in 1946 elections was responsible for undermining the Hindu interests. Hindu society, according to Savarkar's assessment, was also weakened by adopting misleading Gandhian ideologies like passive

⁹ Leonard Mosley, *The Last Days of the British Raj* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961), 248.

¹⁰ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, 387.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 388-389.

¹² V. D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* (Bombay: Veer Savarkar Prakashan, 1971), p. 471.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ B. R. Ambedkar, *Thoughts on Pakistan* (Bombay: Thackers Publishers, 1941), 326.

¹⁵ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 127.

struggle and non-violent (Ahimsa). Similarly, rejection of conversion to Hinduism by Muslims or members of any other religious community was also a harmful trend of Hindu society. Collectively, these acquired faults and unforced errors of the Hindu society contributed to its failure at the crucial movements of the partition of India.¹⁶

In his speech delivered at Delhi on 8 August 1947, Savarkar emphasized an unceasing struggle against Pakistan; otherwise, “many Pakistans” would appear and India would disintegrate. This was also a clear warning to the Muslim community that remained in India after the partition and whom Savarkar considered as a permanent menace for India. In Savarkar’s opinion, the partition of India did not resolve the communal struggle in the subcontinent; it, rather, enhanced it further, especially when a huge population of Muslims was still present in India. Both the internal and external dangers could lead to further fragmentation of India.¹⁷

From 10 to 12 May 1951, a three-day commemoration was organized at Poona to honor the revolutionaries who had fought and sacrificed their lives in the struggle against British rule. On this occasion, Savarkar delivered a speech in which he stated that although three-quarters of the country had been liberated, one-quarter—the region of Sindhu, comprising Pakistan—remained outside India’s control. Without the recovery of this land, he argued, the freedom of Bharat (India) was incomplete, “a body without a soul.” For Savarkar, Sindhu held great symbolic import, as it was on the banks of the Indus (a river, now in Pakistan) that many of India’s sacred works had been composed. Thus, the loss of Sindhu (Indus River) was not merely territorial but civilizational, depriving India of a vital part of its spiritual heritage and rendering independence, in his words, hollow and unfinished.¹⁸

Pakistan, the partition of India, and the vision of its ultimate reunion in the form of Akhand Bharat (united India) became the defining cornerstone of Savarkar’s post-colonial thought. His speeches and writings constantly revolved around this theme, describing Pakistan as a civilizational rupture to India, a center of pan-Islamic tendencies, and a geographical as well as a political rival; undoing which was the only way to preserve the civilizational continuity of India. This primary narrative set the stage for his equally rigid views on the Muslim minority that remained within India after 1947, whom he regarded as a potential threat of further disintegration and instability.

Muslim minority in India

Savarkar did not consider Pakistan as a legitimate state but merely as a rebellious section of India. He also saw Muslims of India from his Pakistani perspective.¹⁹ Savarkar’s ideology of *Hindutva* (Hindu nationalism) had no space for Muslims. They were considered outsiders and a group which did not belong to the Hindu nation. After the partition of India, Savarkar’s ideology about the Muslim minority in India appeared in a new and even more stringent form. For instance, in a keynote statement of 25th September 1947, he fully supported the massacre of Muslims at the hands of Hindus and Sikhs and defended it as mere retaliation against the atrocities committed against Hindus and Sikhs by the Muslims.²⁰ He blamed Muslims for

¹⁶ V. D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, 473

¹⁷ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, 387.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 446.

¹⁹ Sheheen Kattiparambil, “Hindutva and the Muslim Subject,” *ReOrient* 8, no. 2 (Spring 2024): 42

²⁰ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 129.

conspiring to take over Delhi on the eve of the freedom celebrations. Muslims could succeed in their sinister designs had there been no massacre of Muslims in different districts of the Indian Punjab.²¹ Instead of treating Muslims as Indian citizens, Savarkar was of the view that Muslims should be treated as hostages and should be used as a bargaining chip to defend the rights of Hindu minority in Pakistan.²² In this regard Savarkar wanted to have a tit for tat policy towards Pakistan.²³ Savarkar was completely against the participation of Indian Muslims in military or civil armed forces of India as their loyalty was not above board, and in case of war with Pakistan, Indian Muslims would rise against India from within.²⁴

Savarkar, Muslim World, and Israel

Unlike many other religions and civilizations which came to India after the Aryans, Islam did not submerge and became part of the Hindu Civilization. Though Islam absorbed many local rituals and traditions, it clearly distinguished itself from Hinduism. Along with this, it also posed a direct challenge to the caste-based socio-religious order of Hindus.²⁵ Islam, with its ideal of perfect equality among all human beings without any distinction of caste, language or colour, was attractive to the lower classes of society, such as untouchables and to the followers of suppressed religious groups, such as followers of Buddhism. This attraction and the resultant conversion posed a very serious challenge to the caste-based Hinduism, and in the quest for its survival, it inspired many Hindu theologians and philosophers to work for the reforming the Hindu religion and society. Savarkar was fully aware of this historical fact.²⁶

The other established historical reality was that the Indian subcontinent had throughout history been invaded from the north-west²⁷, the East India Company was the only exception to this pattern. Among these north-western invaders Muslims were the last of all whose impact on the Indian sub-continent was everlasting. They had ruled India for almost a millennium before the East India Company wrapped up their empire. During this millennium, the internal strife was for the most part between Hindus and Muslims. This Muslim world, with its hostile history with India, was spread to the northwest of post-colonial India. This vast, hostile Muslim world could be a source of strength against India for newly emerged Muslim Pakistan, which was attached to this Muslim world not only ideologically but also geographically. Naturally, far-right Hindus of post-colonial India, including Savarkar, never felt at ease with this.

Savarkar, therefore, advised that the policy of Hindus towards the Muslims should be that of hostility, and they should work to damage the Muslim power in the world as far as possible. In one of his statements of 19th December 1947, he gave the outlines of an ideal Hindu policy towards the Muslim world.²⁸

²¹ Ibid., 130

²² Ibid., 131

²³ Ibid., 152

²⁴ Ibid., 133

²⁵ Bani Prasad, *The Hindu-Muslim Question* (Allahabad: Kitabstan, 1941), 6–8.

²⁶ B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (Bombay: Thackers Publishers, 1945), 131.

²⁷ Romila Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 210–215.

²⁸ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 136.

The making of Israel, for Savarkar, could be a starting point for the breaking up of the Muslim power in the world. He fully acknowledged the Jewish claims over the entire Palestine as the father land of Jews. He considered the proposed Jewish state and the people as the natural ally to Hindu-India, especially in breaking the power of the Muslim world.²⁹

Savarkar was not happy with the hesitation of the Congress government, which was reluctant in recognizing the Jewish people's right to a separate state in Palestine. Harping on the old cord of Muslim fear in the making of the INC's policies during colonial rule, Savarkar blamed the post-colonial Indian government for being afraid of a handful of Muslim countries of Asia in making its foreign policy. And in making such a policy, it ignored the supporting role played by the Muslims beyond the sub-continent in the making of Pakistan.³⁰

Making of a Hindu Nation in Post-Colonial India.

The establishment of a Hindu nation-state was the cornerstone for the civilization continuity of India, and the only way to reunite India, undoing Pakistan, and making an Akhand Bharat. The first step in achieving all these objectives was the construction of postcolonial India entirely on Hindu civilization bases or Hindutva ideology. This could only be done by concentrating political power in the hands of Hindutva proponents, such as the Hindu Mahasabha.³¹

Savarkar's Perception of the INC Government

The colonial legacy of the INC and the Hindu Mahasabha's bitter relationship and ideological divergence of the two continued in the new state of India.³² The INC wanted to establish India as a secular state, in accordance with its modern political ideas. On the other hand, Savarkar wanted to construct India in accordance with his Hindutva principles.³³ For him, the conflict with Congress was therefore not simply political but an intense ideological contest over the very identity of the Indian nation. On 11th November 1947, in his wire message, Savarkar openly reiterated this stance.

“It is not a conflict between two personalities but two ideologies. Congress can never advocate and promote Hindu cause...”³⁴

Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha consistently maintained that independence of India was the fruit of the long and hard struggle carried out by nationalist revolutionaries, rather than the consequence of Congress's constitutional politics or Gandhi's program of non-violent resistance. This interpretation was consciously propagated to undermine the political struggle of Congress and Gandhi, whose claim to leadership of the independence movement Savarkar rejected. In his view, Gandhi's hallmark philosophy of *ahimsa* (non-violence) was not a moral virtue but a dangerous weakness—indeed, a sin—that had historically devitalized the Hindu nation since its

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 135.

³¹ V. D. Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, 474

³² Tommaso Bobbio, “Somnath Mandir in a Play of Mirrors: Heritage, History, and the Search for Identity of the New Nation (1842–1951),” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 33, no. 4 (2023): 849–69, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186323000287>.

³³ B. G. Bhosale, “Indian Nationalism: Gandhi vis-à-vis Tilak and Savarkar,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 70, no. 2 (April–June 2009): 419–27.

³⁴ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 134.

earliest propagation. For Savarkar, elevating non-violence to the status of political creed represented both a treachery to India's revolutionary tradition and a grave hindrance to the establishment of a strong Hindu state.³⁵

Savarkar also made the Nehru government a target of sharp criticism, accusing it of exhibiting characteristic timidity toward Muslims. In his view, the post-independence leadership was prepared to challenge and suppress supporters of a Hindu *raj* within India, yet it hesitated to adopt a similarly stubborn stance against Pakistan. This accusation echoed Savarkar's broader conviction that the Congress leadership, shaped by Gandhi's legacy, unswervingly privileged conciliatory politics toward Muslims while resisting the assertion of Hindutva as a legitimate national framework, and both were tantamount to treachery.³⁶ For Savarkar, such policies not only enfeebled India's capacity to defend itself from the external threat of Pakistan but also diluted the possibility of consolidating a Hindu nation from inside.

Thus, for Savarkar, the establishment of a Hindu *raj* in post-colonial India could only be materialized if political authority was decisively secured by the followers of *Hindutva*. One aspect of this strategy was to deteriorate the standing of Congress and Gandhi in the public imagination by elevating revolutionary figures as the true heroes of independence. At the same time, he made efforts to expose what he regarded as the failures of Congress's internal and external policies, mainly its approach toward the Muslim minority and its timid posture towards Pakistan. In contrast, Savarkar asserted that only the ideology of *Hindutva* possessed the strength to resolve these challenges and provide India with a clear national direction. This view not only concludes his critique of Congress and Gandhi but also opens the way to an examination of the salient features of India as imagined in Savarkar's thought. This was the other essential aspect of his policy—to present the image of a Hindu India as envisioned by him, an India revitalized through the principles of *Hindutva* and freed from the ideological influence of Congress and Gandhi.

Salient Features of Savarkar's Hindu India

Savarkar's ideal India was one in which the Hindu people could flourish according to their own civilizational ideals. To achieve this end, he believed that post-colonial India must be rebuilt along the lines of *Hindutva*, so that its political, social, and cultural foundations reflected the spirit of Hindu nationhood. In his conception, all national symbols, institutions, and policies—from the colour of the flag and the choice of national language to the treatment of minorities, the principle of religious freedom, the organization of the armed forces, and the conduct of foreign relations—were to be the embodiment of *Hindutva*. Only through such broad alignment, Savarkar argued, could India attain unison, strength, and genuineness as a truly Hindu state.³⁷

National Flag of Hindu India

Savarkar's vision of Hindu India covered even the symbolic representation of the nation, where he vehemently rejected the Khadi flag of Congress bearing Gandhi's charkha (spinning wheel). Instead, he proposed a tri-coloured flag with a chakra, which he regarded as a more appropriate

³⁵ Ibid., 128.

³⁶ Ibid., 131-132.

³⁷ B. C. Swain, "Savarkar's Hindutva and the Evolution of Indian Nationalism," *Gurukul International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 13, no. 4 (2025): 18.

symbol of national strength and continuity. On 7th July 1947, in a telegram to Dr. Ambedkar, Dr. Rajendraprasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and Dr. N.B. Khare, the following demand was made by Savarkar:

“The standard of Hindustan must be Bhagwa-Ochre coloured. At any rate no flag which does not bear at least a stripe of Bhagwa colour can be recognized by the Hindus as a standard they can respect, the Charka must be replaced by a Chakara-Wheel or any other such symbol signifying progress and strength,”³⁸

For Savarkar, the incorporation of Gandhian symbols into the national identity was a real danger, as it risked inserting what he considered a weakening philosophy into the foundations of the state. Eventually, the Congress adopted the chakra flag in place of the charkha, a decision that Gandhi could not reconcile with, and to which he gave vent in his article published in *Harijan* on 3 August 1947.³⁹ This episode highlights the symbolic dimension of the ideological struggle between Savarkar and Gandhi and underscores Savarkar’s resolve to purge Gandhian influence from the institutions of Hindu India.

Nehru’s decision to exchange the charkha (spinning wheel) with Asoka’s Chakra (the round figure on the Indian flag) on the national flag formed part of a wider strategy to sideline the Gandhian vision of India’s socio-political future. The approval of the Asokan chakra was important not only as a universal symbol of peace but also as a recap of an imperial age in Indian history, when the state aggressively pursued territorial expansion. By reviving this symbol, Nehru emphasized the twofold nature of its promise—suggesting both a vision of international peace and the image of a sturdy, expansionist state.⁴⁰ At the same time, the chakra carried implications of continuity in India’s historical tradition, a theme that resounds with Savarkar’s insistence on linking the modern Hindu nation to its earliest civilizational past. In this respect, the expansionist and historical aspects of Ashoka’s chakra aligned closely with Savarkar’s concept of Hindu India, where national strength, unity, and continuity were central to the state’s identity.

Just as Savarkar asserted that the national flag must represent strength and continuity rather than Gandhian symbolism, he stretched this logic to the very name of the nation, urging that India be officially labelled as *Bharat* to uphold its civilizational identity.

Naming the Hindu India

National names express not only sovereignty but also indicate the spirit of the nation, and the politics of naming is closely attached to the organization of public memory around a state-preferred version of the historical past. The Puranic roots of *Bharat*—where texts such as the *Vishnu Purana* and *Markandeya Purana* describe *Bharatvarsha* as the sacred land between the Himalayas and the seas—provided a civilizational foundation for this identity.⁴¹ The legendary King Bharat, renowned for uniting South Asia, gave his name to the land, thus

³⁸ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 125.

³⁹ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, 390.

⁴⁰ Srirupa Roy, “A Symbol of Freedom: The Indian Flag and the Transformations of Nationalism, 1906–2002,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 3 (August 2006): 495–527.

⁴¹ Catherine Clémentin-Ojha, “‘India, That Is Bharat ...’: One Country, Two Names,” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 10 (2014).

representing ideals of unity and continuity. In modern nationalist imagination, including Nehru's *The Discovery of India*, Bharat was taken as a symbol of civilizational perpetuity.⁴² It was in this spirit that Savarkar wired the president of the Constituent Assembly on the 5th of August 1949, urging the adoption of *Bharat* as the official name of India.⁴³ For Savarkar, this choice was not simply nominal but ideological: it declared the continuity of Hindu India's historical tradition and united the modern state with its ancient civilizational identity. In relating the name to his broader scheme, Savarkar underscored that the Hindu nation must be rooted in symbols of strength, unity, and historical depth.

Language of Hindu India

For Savarkar, language was not just a medium of communication but a source of unity among the members of a nation. In his thought, languages like Sanskrit were profoundly connected to *Sanskriti* (culture), and in post-colonial India, Hindi could adopt this status. Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, was, in his view, the ideal language for Hindu India: it embodied civilizational continuity, cultural strength, and the symbolic unity of the Hindu nation.⁴⁴ Just as the flag and the name *Bharat* were to embed modern India in its ancient Hindu past, so too the national language had to reflect this legacy. On 5 August 1949, Savarkar sent a telegram to the President of the Constituent Assembly solemnly requesting that Hindi be adopted as the national language and Devanagari as the national script.⁴⁵ This proposal was also a direct rejection of Gandhi's idea of *Hindustani*—a composite language that incorporated many Urdu and Persian words. For Savarkar, Hindustani diluted Hindu identity, while Hindi in Devanagari would eradicate the lingering influence of Urdu, which he associated with Muslim rule, the most abhorred chapter of India's history in his imagination.

This position resounded with broader ideological currents of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hindu nationalists presented Hindi and its script as native, while describing Urdu and its Persian script as foreign. This ideological framing made Hindi a symbol of Hindu identity and Urdu an indicator of Muslim identity, inserting language in the politics of nationalism and communal differentiation.⁴⁶ By the 1930s and 1940s, the promotion of Hindi in Devanagari became closely associated with Hindu revivalist politics, while Hindustani was connected with Congress leaders like Gandhi and Nehru, who wanted to construct a composite, broad national identity. Figures like Savarkar openly intervened in these debates, pressing for Hindi in Devanagari as the national language to consolidate Hindu identity and fight the Congress's composite vision. Savarkar's intervention in 1949 thus echoed not only his own ideological vision but also the culmination of years of debates in which Hindi had been elevated as the language of Hindu nationalism and cultural exclusivism.⁴⁷

⁴² Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 59.

⁴³ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, 422.

⁴⁴ Rizwan Ahmad, "Scripting a New Identity: The Battle for Devanagari in Nineteenth Century India," *Journal of Pragmatics* 40 (2008): 1169.

⁴⁵ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 140.

⁴⁶ Rizwan Ahmad, "Scripting a New Identity: The Battle for Devanagari in Nineteenth Century India," *Journal of Pragmatics* 40 (2008): 1170.

⁴⁷ William Gould, "Rethinking Religion and Language in North India: The Hindi-Urdu Dispute and the Rise of Right-Wing Populism," *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 76 (April 2018): 29–44.

Political Representation: Abolishing Separate Electorates

The abolition of separate electorates in 1949 was a landmark moment for Savarkar's Hindutva vision. He had long opposed the colonial system that granted separate electorates to Muslims, Sikhs, and Dalits, observing it as a barrier against Hindu majority rule. For Savarkar, Sikhs and Dalits were essential parts of the Hindu nation, and their political separation was unacceptable both politically and ideologically.⁴⁸ His limited support for reforming caste practices, particularly untouchability, was driven by the desire to remove the rationale for Dalit separate electorates, though he never proposed abolishing caste altogether. In his ideal Hindu *rashtra* (Hindu nation), legislative authority would rest with the Hindu majority, led by upper-caste elites, resounding ancient India where Kshatriyas ruled with the guidance of Brahmins.⁴⁹ Thus, when the Constituent Assembly abolished separate electorates, Savarkar expressed great satisfaction, sending a telegram on 30 May 1949 to congratulate the Assembly for vindicating the “genuinely national character” of the Bharateeya state.⁵⁰

Savarkar's commendation of the abolition of separate electorates reveals the deeper logic of his Hindutva ideology. In Savarkar's understanding separate electorates did not equate political safeguards or democratic concessions to minorities. As far as his ideology of absolute Hindu majority rule was concerned, he considered separate electorates as an encroachment on its right to rule according to Hindu aspirations and an impediment to developing India as a Hindu Rashtra. Savarkar maintained that Sikhs and lower-caste Hindus (Dalits) were an integral part of the Hindu nation; therefore, there was no need for separate electorates. Savarkar's position on caste reforms may also be seen in this context. His insistence on the removal of untouchability was aimed at bringing more political unity among Hindus. Further, this political calculation did not harm the traditional caste society of India, where two upper classes—Brahmins (priests, scholars) and Kshatriyas (warriors, rulers)—existed. Thus, the Constitution Assembly's revocation of separate electorates was a commendable act as it removed a potential hurdle from the path of absolute Hindu majoritarian rule.

Minorities in Hindu India

Savarkar's idea of absolute majority rule substantially narrowed the socio-political space for religious minorities in postcolonial India. For him, preaching of non-Hindu religions like Islam and Christianity in India was not merely a spiritual act but a tool of changing Indian demography against Hindus.⁵¹ Within this Unitarian framework, he emphasizes that the Hindu majority “owes no such obligation to any minority whatsoever” to placate their fears by restricting its own strength, branding such concessions as characteristically “anti-national”.⁵² Accordingly, he rejects separate electorates, weightages, and special constitutional safeguards, maintaining that the democratic principle of “one man one vote” must prevail over communal concessions that violate national equity.⁵³ Minorities are thus required to render “exclusive and devoted allegiance” to the Hindusthani State, and those who maintain “extra-territorial” religious or

⁴⁸ V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu Rashtra Darshan* (Bombay: Laxman Ganesh Khare, 1949), 8.

⁴⁹ J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Chicago, 1985), 117-18.

⁵⁰ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 139.

⁵¹ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 60.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵³ V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, 10.

cultural allegiances are categorized as “incipient enemies” trying to establish a “state within a state”.⁵⁴ Ultimately, Savarkar advances that the permanence of the Hindu nation is secured through a policy of “reciprocity and reprisals,” wherein the status of minorities in India is a reflection of the treatment of Hindu minorities in non-Hindu states, while reconversion, or *Shuddhi*, is mentioned as a national duty to reclaim “long lost kith and kin” into the fold.⁵⁵ Savarkar’s proposed Muslim policy was one step ahead in treating them merely as a minority.

Savarkar’s insistence on absolute Hindu sovereignty was not restricted to political institutions or minority safeguards; it stretched to the cultural and geographical landscape itself, where he wanted to erase the lingering traces of foreign rule.

Removal of Foreign Symbols and the Re-Naming of India’s Geography

For Savarkar, the days of the Muslim rule in India were the “Cursed days” of the Hindu history, marked with “massacres, rapes, forcible religious conversions and enslavements of thousands of Hindu men and women.”⁵⁶

In this spirit, on 4th February 1960, in a statement, he advocated the elimination of symbols connected with Muslim and colonial domination by renaming cities and landmarks—such as changing *Ahmadabad* to *Ratnagiri* and rechristening the *Arabian Sea* to *Sindhu Sagar*—so that modern Hindu India could be firmly attached to its ancient civilizational heritage.⁵⁷

Savarkar used nomenclature to map a “sacred geography” that ideologically excluded religious groups with spiritual centers in foreign lands. The act of retrieving Hindu names functioned as an exercise of sovereign power, underscoring control over the national consciousness by identifying and removing “Semitic” linguistic exploitations.⁵⁸ The Hindu Mahasabha was motivated to recover a heroic past through historical revisionism that glorified ancient Hindu eras while maligning periods of Muslim rule to validate absolute majoritarian rule.⁵⁹ Changing the nomenclature had both present and future value. By fashioning the Muslims as the enemy, the Mahasabha used nomenclature to patch over internal social rifts, such as caste issues, and unite the Hindu community against an external “other”.⁶⁰ The contemporary and future use of nomenclature change also works to align state policy and institutional attitudes with a majoritarian vision that defines the Hindu *Rashtra* (Hindu nation-state) as the natural inheritor of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.⁶¹

⁵⁴ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 28.

⁵⁵ V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu Rashtra Darshan*, 13-14

⁵⁶ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 150.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁸ Pushpa Joshi, “Veer Savarkar and the Evolution of Hindutva,” *International Journal of Innovative Research in Technology* 11, no. 3 (2024): 813.

⁵⁹ B. C. Swain, “Savarkar’s Hindutva and the Evolution of Indian Nationalism,” *Gurukul International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 13, no. 4 (2025): 22.

⁶⁰ Vikram Visana, “Savarkar before Hindutva,” *Modern Intellectual History* 18, no. 4 (2021): 1115.

⁶¹ B. C. Swain, “Savarkar’s Hindutva and the Evolution of Indian Nationalism,” *Gurukul International Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 13, no. 4 (2025): 24.

Keeping Muslims out of the Hindu Mahasabha,

Savarkar had perceived the Hindu right, particularly the Hindu Mahasabha, as the future ruling party of India. Therefore, he was against opening the doors of the Hindu Mahasabha to Muslims, as reflected by his statement of August 1947, where he stated that including Muslims would “bound to be detrimental to the Hindu solidarity”.⁶² He characterized the party as a “Mandir for Hindu worship where Hindus alone can go.”⁶³ This was a rejection of Gandhian and Congressite “pseudo-nationalism” and an expression of “ethnicism,” maintaining that a nationalist movement must strictly reflect the identity of its common people.⁶⁴ The principle of excluding Muslims was not restricted to politics. He extended this principle to the entire institutional setup of Hindu India, particularly in the defense sector.

Defense of India

Savarkar’s post-1947 statements regarding the defense of India reflect a strategy based on absolute military strength, the exclusion of perceived internal threats, and a total rejection of communal appeasement and non-violence of Gandhi.

His defense of the India scheme may be seen in relation to his views on these five specific areas as follows:

Pakistan-Centric Defense and the Two-Nation Reality

Savarkar upheld that India and Pakistan remained two hostile nations and that defense policy must be centered on this “Islamite peril.” He contended that Pakistan, being founded on Islam, “can never become a true friend of India” and that even the cession of territory would not satisfy their desire to “conquer and convert the whole of Hindusthan into a Pakistan”.⁶⁵ In 1962, he warned that the “two nations will not become one nation and they should not become one nation either,” urging that all political problems be solved by judging what is most beneficial to the Hindu nation.⁶⁶

The Kashmir Issue

Regarding Kashmir, Savarkar had warned as early as 1937 that the region would become an important point of communal contention if armed protection was not extended to the Hindu minority in Kashmir.⁶⁷

Savarkar advocated for the “inseparable and total integration” of Kashmir with India, opposing any accord that surrendered territory through “appeasement”. He aligned with the motto for which Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerji died—“Ek Vidhan, Ek Pradhan, Ek Nishan” (One

⁶² V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 126.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Deepa S. Reddy, *Religious Identity and Political Destiny: Hindutva in the Culture of Ethnicism* (Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2006), 180.

⁶⁵ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 131, 150.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 150-151.

⁶⁷ Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, 177.

Constitution, One Prime Minister, One Flag)—and declared that Pakistan would not be appeased even if the whole of Kashmir were surrendered.⁶⁸

Defense Exclusively in Hindu Hands

The pivotal point of Savarkar's defense policy was the "militarization of Hindudom". In a statement issued on 25 September 1947, Savarkar demanded that the state an exclusively Hindu army and establish arms manufacturing factories manned exclusively by with Hindus to preempt offense and internal revolt.⁶⁹ He cautioned that by posting Muslims in key places in the army and police, and state management could be a serious risk, as they would likely "rise from within" as a fifth column to support Pakistani aggression.⁷⁰

Compulsory Military Training

Following the 1947 partition, Savarkar urged the youth to join the armed forces of India in their "hundreds of thousands" as their primary nationalistic duty was to protect the new country.⁷¹ In 1959, he openly pleaded with Prime Minister Nehru to follow a well-defined border defense policy and that military training should be compulsory for the Indian youth. Along with this, the Arms Act should be revoked to reinstate national prestige through punitive military reprisals.⁷²

Nuclear Weapons and Missiles

While Savarkar passed away before India conducted its 1998 nuclear tests, his advocacy for scientific modernity gave the ideological basis for the nuclearization of India. He argued that India must use "advanced rational thinking" and modern technology to harness the "laws of nature" for the defense of India.⁷³

After the 1965 war with Pakistan, Savarkar asserted that diplomacy was useless without military power and pressed the government to "equip India with all kinds of nuclear weapons and missiles" He contended that if China could build nuclear factories, Indian scientists could do so within a year or two to guarantee security through "reprisals of the same kind and measure".⁷⁴

Future Program of Hindu Mahasabha (Hinduising All Politics)

For Savarkar, the building of a Hindu *rashtra* (Hindu nation) was not a short-lived political ambition but a constant struggle that needed unwavering commitment from Hindus. To sustain this struggle, he urged them to adopt the following guiding principles of Hindutva as sacred vows, binding commitments that would discipline the community and turn it toward the realization of the desired national end:

"In this faith let the Hindus rise and renew this vow, (1) that we Hindus are a nation by ourselves. (2) that Hindusthan, this Bharat Bhoomi from the Indus to

⁶⁸ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 148, 150.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷³ Shri Krishan, "Discourses on Modernity," *Studies in History* 29, no. 1 (2013): 77–84.

⁷⁴ V. D. Savarkar, *Historic Statements by Savarkar*, 152.

the Seas is our Fatherland and Holy Land, (3) that in spite of the treacherous betrayal by the Congressite pseudo-nationalism in its abetting the crime of vivisection of our Country and our State we Hindus shall continue to resist the revolting Pakistani areas till they are forced to get re-annexed to our Central and Sovereign Akhand Hindusthani State. (4) That to achieve this consummation we will HINDUISE ALL POLITICS AND MILITARISE HINDUDOM.”⁷⁵

He also knew that nations are not built in a day, so was the case with the Hindu *rashtra* (Hindu Nation) for which a long struggle lay ahead, demanding resolve and sturdy actions guided by principles of Hindutva as he wrote in one of his letters to S.R. Rana on 9th March, 1950.⁷⁶

Thus, Savarkar regarded himself as having laid the lasting foundations of a Hindu *rashtra* (Hindu Nation) by providing Indians with an ideology of Hindutva—an ideological framework that sought to revive the Hindu nation and enable it to perpetuate its millennia-old civilizational life.

In the wider socio-political landscape of post-colonial India, Hindutva ideology became both a rallying point and a contesting point, influencing debates over national identity, majority-minority relations, and the meaning of sovereignty in a newly independent state.

Conclusion

In sum, Savarkar’s post-colonial ideological framework projected a Hindu *rashtra* founded on the unqualified sovereignty of the Hindu majority, the refutation of Congress’s “pseudo-nationalism,” and the undoing of communal concessions by applying the principle of “one man, one vote.” Pledge of exclusive and absolute allegiance to the Indian state was mandatory for minorities, while separate electorates, weightages, and constitutional safeguards were condemned as anti-national. National consolidation was sought to be achieved through cultural uniformity—renaming cities and seas, adopting *Bharat*, Hindi, and Nagari, and uplifting the Bhagwa flag as the national standard. His foreign policy was unwaveringly anti-Pan-Islamic, supporting Israel as a counterbalance to “Moslem fanaticism,” and refusing to cede any territory, especially Kashmir, to Pakistan, which he regarded as the embodiment of the two-nation theory and an eternal civilizational opponent. This theory, which legitimized partition, persistently shaped India’s post-independence politics by strengthening Hindu nationalist calls for unity against perceived external and internal threats. Finally, the revival and survival of this *Akhand Hindusthan* (united India) was predicated on extreme militarization, including exclusive Hindu armed forces and a nuclear arsenal, ensuring security through punitive reprisals. As a whole, these elements formed what Savarkar believed to be the durable foundations of a resurrected Hindu nation, capable of perpetuating its millennia-old civilizational life.

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⁷⁵ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 143.

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