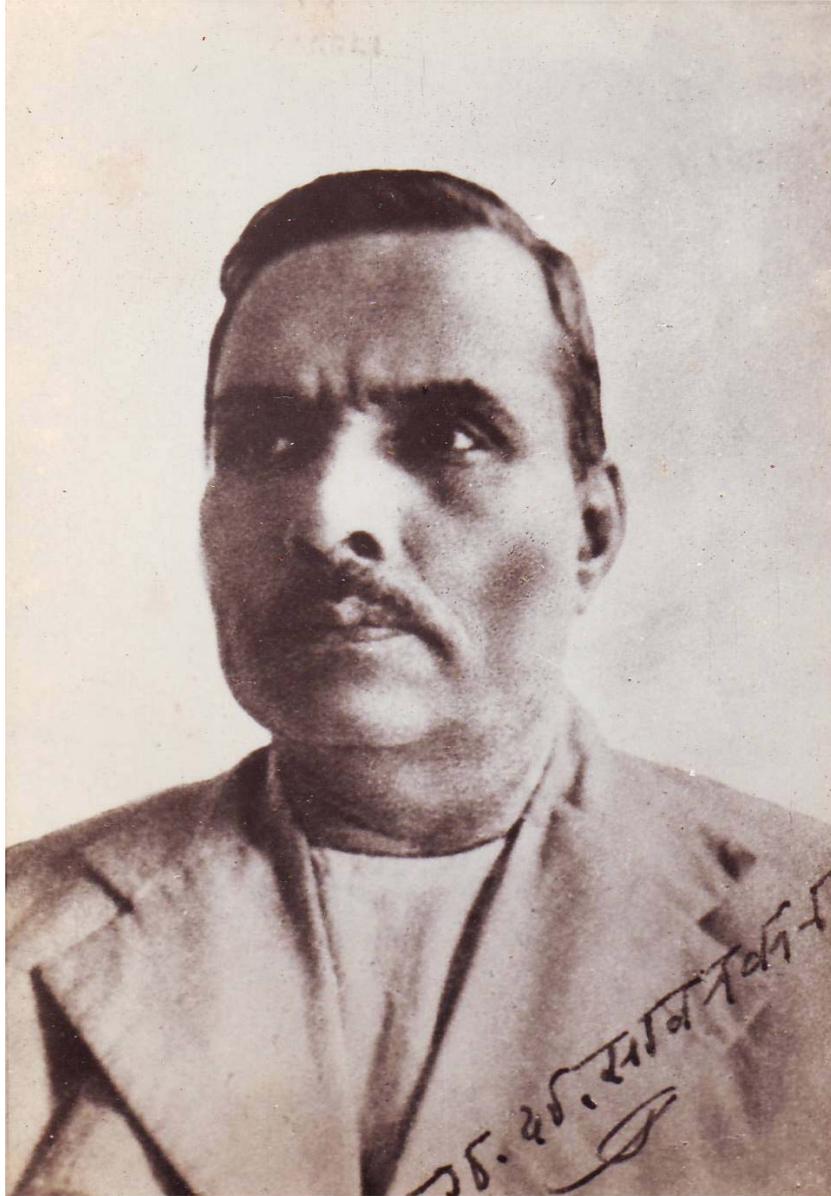


# *Biography of Babarao Savarkar*



## Preface

Ganesh Damodar Savarkar was a patriot of the first order. Commonly known as Babarao Savarkar, he is the epitome of heroism that is unknown and unsung! He was the eldest of the four Savarkar siblings - Ganesh or Babarao; Vinayak or Tatyarao, Narayan or Balarao were the three Savarkar brothers; they had a sister named Maina or Mai who was married into the Kale family. Babarao was a great revolutionary, philosopher, writer and organizer of Hindus.

The following account is largely an abridged English version of *Krantiveer Babarao Savarkar*, a Marathi biography written by DN Gokhale, Shrividya Prakashan, Pune, second edition, pp.343, 1979. Some part has been taken from *Krantikalol* (The high tide of revolution), a Marathi biography of Veer Vinayak Damodar (Tatyarao) Savarkar's revolutionary life by VS Joshi; Manorama Prakashan, 1985. Details of the Cellular jail have been taken from *Memorable Documentary on revolutionary freedom fighter Veer Savarkar* by Prem Vaidya, Veer Savarkar Prakashan, 1997 and also from the website [www.andamancellularjail.org](http://www.andamancellularjail.org). Certain portions dealing with Babarao's warm relations with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh founder Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar have been translated from Dr. Hedgewar's definitive Marathi biography by Narayan Hari Palkar; Bharatiya Vichar Sadhana, Pune, fourth edition, 1998.

Pune, 28 May 2008

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# 1 EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Babarao was born to Damodar pant (pant is an honorific in Maharashtra) and Radhabai (*lit: bai = lady*) Savarkar on 13 June 1879 in Bhagur village of Nashik district (Maharashtra). He was a sickly child and it seems poor health dogged Babarao throughout his life (In his last days, Babarao made notes of his life history as a patient. These notes are written in a lighter vein and are entitled *Rugnetihaas* or history as a patient). From early childhood, Babarao was a deeply religious person. This religiosity remained a feature throughout his life. He had immense reverence for the family deity, *Ashtabhujā devi* (goddess with eight arms, a form of Durga). The Savarkar family would gather in a circle before retiring to bed at night. On these occasions, the young Babarao would read aloud extracts from books such as *Bharatkathasangraha*, *Pandavpratap*, *Ramvijay*, *Harivijay*, *Shivleelaamrit* and *Jaimini Ashwamedha*. Damodar pant used to discuss important points from these extracts with his wife Radhabai. The children would be enriched listening to these conversations. Damodar pant also had Babarao read the novel *Prithviraj-Sanyogita*, *Nibandhamaalaa* (*lit: garland of essays*) by Vishnushastri (*shastri* is a title bestowed on an individual after passing an examination) Chiplunkar and the epic *Iliad*. Baba, Tatyā and Bal (*I* to be pronounced gutturally) would eagerly read periodicals such as *Kesari*, *Jagadhitechchu*, *Pune-vaibhav* and *Gurakhi*. By the time Babarao was eleven, he had read the *Bhagwadgita* though he did not understand Sanskrit. Whilst reading the sixth chapter of the *Gita*, he came across the term *yoga*. The word and its deeper meaning aroused his curiosity. His deep faith in the concept of reincarnation caused him to believe that in one of his past lives, he must have been a student of *yoga*. He even left his home for some time and wandered about seventy miles in search of a *guru*. His efforts did not however bear fruit. The young Babarao was also a good cook and was extremely orderly in his habits. He was also fond of nursing the sick. Unlike Tatyā however, he had no inclination towards poetry. When Babarao was around 13 years, he lost his mother. She was only thirty-two. On her deathbed, she beseeched all present to take care of her youngest son Narayan (Bal) who was just three years old. Damodar pant did not marry again as was the common practice in those days. Instead, he showered both paternal affection and maternal love on his children.

As per the prevalent custom at the time, Babarao was married when he was 13-14 years of age. The wedding took place in Trimbakeshwar, a holy place near Nashik some time in the beginning of 1896. The prospective bride Yashoda was the niece of Nanarao Phadke of Trimbakeshwar. Later, she was to be more popularly known as "Yesuvahini" (*vahini* is Marathi for sister-in-law). Shortly after marriage, Babarao completed his Marathi education and left for Nashik to pursue higher education in English. In Nashik, he learnt some *yogamudras* (yogic postures) from a mendicant named Balabuvā. Unmindful of his tender age, Babarao had also started practising austerities such as surviving on *ghee* (clarified butter) and water only for one month, and remaining awake for long hours in the night. Babarao was so immersed in his yogic pursuits that the famine and bubonic plague of 1896, the atrocities committed by the British especially by officer Rand, the assassination on 22 June 1897 of Rand and Ayerst by the Chapekar brothers in Pune had no impact on him. It is noteworthy that these very events had inspired his younger brother Tatyā to jump into the revolutionary struggle. Finally, the scourge of bubonic plague made its entry into Nashik, forcing Babarao and Tatyā Savarkar to shift back to Bhagur. Around this

time, Babarao used to spend 14-15 hours daily in his yogic pursuits. He would get up at four in the morning, bathe in the cold waters of the river Daarna (*D* to be pronounced as in *thus*; *n* to be pronounced as in *and*) and do *puja* before sunrise and engage himself in deep meditation. In 1899 on *vadya ekadashi* day of *Shravan* month, he had a divine experience. He now resolved to renounce home and go the Mayawati *ashram* of Swami Vivekananda. However, fate had willed otherwise! Plague had now spread its tentacles in Bhagur village. Babarao's youngest brother Narayanrao and father Damodarpant fell sick. Finally, Damodarpant Savarkar fell victim to plague in the early hours of 05 September 1899. Babarao's plans were aborted by the cruel hand of Fate. As the eldest son, he now resolved to look after his siblings and especially the eleven year old Narayanrao who was ill with plague. Unmindful of his own fever, Babarao nursed Narayanrao day and night and literally saved him from the jaws of death. Babarao now took charge of the house. The once fairly well-to-do Savarkar family now fell on hard times. Babarao found the idol of the family deity *Ashtabhujā devi* tucked somewhere in a corner. He relocated it to the temple of *Khandoba* (a local version of Lord Shiva) near the railway line in Bhagur where it is to be found to this day.

## 1.1 Babarao and Tatyrao:

Babarao had great affection for Tatyrao. When Tatyrao entered his matriculation class in 1901, Babarao became concerned about his higher education. When Tatyrao came to Nashik in 1897, Babarao used to do the cooking and then the two of them would eat and go to school. Babarao saw to it that Tatyrao did not bear the brunt of their poverty. To make two ends meet, Babarao had to sell Yesuvahini's ornaments one by one. What remained was a solitary traditional nose-ring given to her by her mother. It so happened that there was no money to pay for Tatyrao's fees. Babarao asked Yesuvahini for her nose-ring. Hitherto, Yesuvahini had given away all her ornaments without a murmur. But the nose-ring had a sentimental value to her. At Babarao's command however, she gave away the last token of her mother. Tatyrao's fees were paid. Little wonder then that Tatyrao had the deepest reverence for his beloved Yesuvahini. In a poem written to her in 1909 after Babarao's arrest, he has addressed her thus:

*" Mateche smaran hou na dile, shrimati vahini vatsale!...*

*Tu dhairyachi asasi moorti ! maaze vahini maaze sphurti !*

*Ramsevavrataachi purti ! breed tuzhe aadhich "*

("Because of you I had no reason to remember my mother, O loving sister-in-law! You are a symbol of bravery! My sister-in-law, my inspiration! To complete the penance of service to Ram has always been your motto"). In his book, *My Transportation for Life*(1926), he has referred to Yesuvahini as his childhood friend, his beloved mother and his trusted lieutenant in politics. Once, Tatyrao developed high fever. In a half-delirious state, he expressed concern about his education to Babarao. Tatyrao's concern seared Babarao's heart. Filled with affection for his brother, Babarao told Tatyrao that he should not worry; he Babarao would rather beg than allow Tatyrao's education to be interrupted. Tatyrao was himself prepared to earn and learn at the same time. He had even applied to *Kaal*/editor Shivrampant Paranjpe asking for any job that was available. But Babarao would have none of it. He did not want Tatyrao's education to be hampered by the demands of a job. In March 1901, Tatyrao was married to Yamuna (nickname Mai),

daughter of Ramachandra Trimbak or Bhausahab Chiplunkar (b 1863) who had risen to become *dewan* (minister) of the Jawhar principality near Thane in Maharashtra).

As Tatyrao's in-laws were well-to-do, the burden of Tatyrao's education on Babarao considerably lightened. Babarao was content that he could arrange for Tatyrao's higher education. He was certain that Tatyrao would use his education for the welfare of his people and country. To achieve this goal, Babarao did not think twice before sacrificing his own education. Babarao remained a non-matriculate.

## 2 INITIAL REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES

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Towards the end of November 1899, Tatyrao along with his friend Trimbak Mhaskar started a secret revolutionary group called *Rashtrabhaktasamooch* (*lit.*: collective of devotees of the nation). Babarao soon became a member of this group. The group had only two-three members. On 01 January 1900, as a means to attract and train prospective members of this secret group, Tatyrao, Mhaskar, Raoji Krishna Page (pronounced *Paa-gay*), Babarao, brothers Rambhau and Wamanshastri Datar formed an organization called *Mitramela* (*lit.*: group of friends). They were joined by Trimbak Vartak and the poet Govind. The group used to have weekly meetings and engage in political discussions. They had chosen around 20-25 books to equip themselves intellectually. Each member was required to read all these books. To disabuse a belief that students who engage in political work do not perform well academically, all members were expected to help each other in studies during examination time and older members were required to take tuitions of the younger ones. Instead of changing the venue of the meetings, it was decided to have them in an upper storied room in poet Govind's house (Govind Trimbak Darekar; his mother was a widow and a labourer, at eight years of age, he was crippled with polio; he used to earn a living selling kites and coloured paper caps and would compose *lavanis* or traditional Marathi folk songs; inspired by Tatyrao, he soon started composing patriotic songs; his most famous poem is entitled *Ranaaveen swatantrya konna milale* or *Who has got freedom without a battle*, he is famous as *Swatantryakavi* Govind or Govind, the bard of freedom). This room was adorned with pictures of heroes of the 1857 War of Independence. Lest someone suspect them of revolutionary leanings, they also had some pictures of gods and goddesses for good measure. The *Mitramela* started the practice of public observance of festivals. In the first year, the Ganesh festival was celebrated. From the second year onwards, *Shivaji utsav* was celebrated with gusto. Hitherto, the *Shivaji utsav* would mark an occasion of historical significance. For the first time now, it was emphasized that *Shivaji utsav* was a political programme. Shivaji was looked upon as a national hero who had secured back freedom for his country and hence worthy of remembrance and obeisance. While Babarao played a major role in the organization of these programmes, it must be said that his inclination was still towards religiosity and *yoga* and he looked upon the activities of his much younger colleagues with skepticism.

### 2.1 Liberation of the soul or liberation of the motherland?

When Tatyrao left for Pune in 1902 to pursue higher studies, the responsibility of the *Mitramela* naturally fell on Babarao. Babarao's mind was in turmoil. On the one hand, he felt that he had now fulfilled his worldly obligations and he should now take his wife's consent and renounce the world in pursuit of *moksha* (liberation of the individual soul and its merging with the Higher Soul) through the medium of *yoga*. On the other hand, he could see that his countrymen, suffering as they were under foreign rule, had no time or inclination to pursue *moksha*. Would it not be selfish on his part to forsake them and aspire for his own *moksha*? For months, Babarao grappled with himself. While devotion to the Lord is a mental pursuit, service of the motherland is a physical penance, he thought. Only he who masters both the body and the mind is truly worthy of attaining *moksha*. Finally, Babarao found his answer.

He resolved to make himself worthy of *moksha* by serving his motherland! He was now at peace with himself. He plunged whole-heartedly into the activities of the *Mitramela*.

## 2.2 Mitramela and Abhinav Bharat:



In May 1904, a large gathering of *Mitramela* activists took place in the Bhagwat *wada* ( *d* to be pronounced as in *dumbbells*; *wada*= old-style Maharashtrian house). Around 200 youngsters from different parts of Maharashtra participated. These young men debated on the aims and methods of armed revolution. Tatyarao was the moving spirit behind the gathering. His inspirational leadership firmed the resolve of all those present on the path of armed revolution. The young revolutionaries were greatly inspired by the Italian revolutionary Mazzini. On the lines of Mazzini's revolutionary organization *Young Italy*, the group now decided to rename their organization *Abhinav Bharat* (*lit.* New India). Convinced that without absolute political freedom, their country could never rise to her due exalted position among the nations of the earth and also that self-rule could be achieved only by waging a bloody and relentless war against the foreigner, the members of the *Abhinav Bharat* solemnly pledged to do everything in their power to fight for independence and place the lotus crown of *Swaraj* (self-rule) on the head of their Mother.

As secretary of the *Mitramela* and later the *Abhinav Bharat*, Babarao took the lead in inviting speakers such as Lokmanya Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, *Kaal* editor SM Paranjpe, Adv. Babarao Deshpande (Nagar), Shankar Balkrishna Deo (Dhule) and Syed Haider Raza to deliver lectures. These programmes were held initially in the Vijayanand and later in the Brahmanand theatres. Babarao was very particular that the lectures should start on time. People would flock to the theatre at least half an hour before the scheduled time. The theatre would be packed to capacity and people would wait outside. The lectures would be preceded by patriotic songs. On the occasions of *Shivaji jayanti* and *Dassara*, processions carrying palanquins would be organized in which hundreds of young men took part. The processionists would raise gutsy slogans such as *Swatantryalakshmi ki jai* (Victory to the Goddess of Freedom), *Veer Vasudeo Balwant ki jai* (Victory to Vasudeo Balwant Phadke, 04 November 1845- 17 February 1883; organized an armed struggle against the British in 1879; was tortured and sentenced to Transportation for Life in a prison in faraway Aden where he was subjected to hard labour; breathed his last there), *Shivaji Maharaj ki jai*. The sloganeering would reach a pitch when the procession made its way before the residences of British officers. Little wonder then that Nashik soon became the nerve-centre of revolutionary activities.

### 2.3 First-ever public bonfire of foreign goods:

On 20 July 1905, Lord Curzon announced the partition of Bengal. This raised a storm of protest throughout the country. Tatyrao was then studying for BA. On 07 October 1905, he organized the first-ever public bonfire of foreign clothes in Pune. A similar public bonfire of foreign clothes was organized by Babarao in Nashik. The bonfire was preceded by a public meeting that was presided over by Daji Vishnu Ketkar. Datar and Gosavi gave speeches. Babarao organized a spate of patriotic lectures in Nashik. The atmosphere in Nashik became charged with patriotic fervour. On 28 May 1906, the *Mitramela* organized a farewell meeting to Tatyrao who was proceeding to England for higher studies. Around 400-500 people assembled before the Bhadrakali temple in Nashik to listen to Savarkar's memorable speech on *Swadeshbhakti* (devotion to one's country).

### 2.4 Meeting with Lokmanya Tilak:

In September 1906, Lokmanya Tilak visited Nashik on the occasion of the Ganesh festival. While *Vande Mataram* and *swadeshi maalaacha vaapar kara* (*Use indigenous goods*) were the slogans to be heard elsewhere, in Nashik, it was the suggestive *Swatantryadevi ki jai* (*Victory to the Goddess of Freedom*) that was popular. It was in this charged atmosphere that Lokmanya Tilak was accorded a grand reception at the Vijayanand theatre. While the entire Nashik town wore a festive look, the members of the *Mitramela* decided to have a private meeting with Lokmanya Tilak and know his views on secret revolutionary activities. Only selected members were invited to this private meeting but with all these precautions, a government spy managed to sneak in. In his opening speech, Babarao stated that freedom could not be won by pleadings and petitions, it could be attained by adopting a Russian-style terrorism if need be. The shrewd Lokmanya, probably aware of the possible presence of spies, lent support to Babarao's argument in suggestive language. Drawing on his experience, he counseled the enthusiastic youngsters to exercise caution and wait till such time that the nation was prepared to adopt such a path.

### 2.5 Vande Mataram trial:

The annual Dassara procession organized by the *Mitramela* was returning from the Kalika Mandir. Babarao and other members raised loud slogans of *Vande Mataram*. On pretext that these slogans disturbed the British residents, an inebriated policeman objected to these slogans and asked the sloganeering youth to shut up. Worse still, he dealt a severe blow on Babarao's head with his baton. Enraged, Babarao leapt upon him and caught him by his throat. Soon, the others pitched in and thrashed the policeman. Realizing that their arrest was imminent, most youngsters escaped but the police nabbed Babarao and Adv. Waman Sakharam or

Babasaheb Khare and started taking them to a nearby police station. Babarao had some objectionable papers in his pocket. He knew that the police would surely frisk him. He walked ahead of the accompanying policeman and deliberately dashed against his colleague named Barve, thrusting these papers into his pocket at the same time. When Babarao and Khare reached the police station, they were greeted by a posse of thirty armed policemen. The policemen had come prepared to fire on the *Mitramela* activists but changed their mind when they saw only two of them. The policemen frisked both of them but could not find anything objectionable on their person. They released Khare but detained Babarao till two-thirty in the morning. The next day, some two hundred policemen descended on the town and arrested eleven people. Those arrested were Babarao, Adv. Khare, Wamanshastri Datar, Sakharam Dadaji Gore, Ramchandra Keshav Datar, Narayan Damodar Savarkar (Babarao's youngest brother), Khushalsingh Narayansingh Pardeshi, Mahadeo Balwant Gadgil, Narhar Dadaaji Ketkar, Kashinath Narayan Ketkar and Shridhar Raghunath Vartak. Ironically, some of those arrested were not at the scene of the incident and some were even out of Nashik when the incident occurred. Naturally, people felt that these arrests were just a pretext to intimidate the members of the *Abhinav Bharat*. The arrested revolutionaries were tried before the First Class Magistrate of Malegaon division, W. Plunkett. It dragged on for one year and became famous throughout Maharashtra as the Vande Mataram trial. To trouble these activists, the government carried out the trial proceedings in different parts of Nashik district. But the government's intentions backfired.

The four point programme of *swadeshi* (use of indigenous goods), boycott (of foreign goods), national education and *swaraj* (self-rule) received a fillip wherever the trial was conducted. The judgement was delivered on 08 May 1907. Adv. Khare, Narhar Dadaji Ketkar, Narayan Damodar Savarkar and Shridhar Raghunath Vartak were acquitted. The rest were convicted under section 332 of the Indian Penal Code. Wamanshastri Datar, Sakharam Dadaji Gore and Ramchandra Keshav Datar were fined Rs. 15 each and were required to each furnish two guarantors for Rs 50 each towards good conduct and sign a bond of Rs. 50. Khushalsingh Narayansingh Pardeshi was fined Rs. 30 and required to furnish two guarantors for Rs. 30 each and sign a bond. Babarao was fined Rs. 20 and required to furnish two guarantors for Rs. 100 each and sign a bond. After this incident, the authorities stepped up their surveillance of *Abhinav Bharat* activists. In 1907-1908, the Collector of Nashik, Jackson summoned Adv. Khare and asked him to refrain from making seditious speeches. It was only a matter of time before Babarao became a target of the government's wrath.

## **2.6 First imprisonment:**

On 11 June 1908, *Kaal* editor Shivrampant Paranjpe was arrested under Section 124A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code in Pune. He was taken to Mumbai on the same day to stand trial. Lokmanya Tilak happened to be in Nashik on that day for a private function. Learning of his colleague's arrest, he decided to proceed to Mumbai. As Tilak was aware of the close relations between Paranjpe and the revolutionary group in Nashik, he called Babarao and informed him of Paranjpe's arrest. He asked Babarao if he wished to accompany him to Mumbai. Babarao

quickly replied in the affirmative and returned to his house to do some packing. He then realized that it was necessary to put certain things in order before he could leave Nashik. He requested Tilak to proceed alone to Mumbai and said that he would join him by the next morning. Throughout the night, Babarao made the necessary arrangements and left by train for Mumbai next morning, accompanied by Narayanrao Savarkar, Dattopant Ketkar and Vishwanathrao Kelkar. On reaching Mumbai, these four friends proceeded by tram to the Esplanade Police Court where Paranjpe's trial was going on.

The tram station was some distance away from the Court. As the tram was passing by the Court, the four friends saw a police car meant for transporting prisoners standing in front of the Court. Assuming that this car must be carrying Paranjpe, Babarao jumped from the moving tram to catch a glimpse of Paranjpe. However, the car had not come for Paranjpe! It had come to take away the editor of *Hind Swarajya* who was standing trial for allegedly causing resentment. The road to the Court was blocked by some 500-600 people who had gathered there to greet the editor of *Hind Swarajya*. Babarao was trying to make his way to the Court. He saw an altercation between one Sub-inspector Muhammad Hussain and a Khoja gentleman at the entrance to the Court. The sub-inspector was threatening the Khoja. As was his wont, Babarao rushed forward to help the Khoja. But the frightened gentleman had gone away before Babarao could reach there. Muhammad Hussain now turned his wrath on Babarao and rudely asked him to clear away. But Babarao was not one to be intimidated. He asked the sub-inspector to behave civilly. At this Muhammad Hussain caught hold of Babarao's neck and started shoving him. Babarao retaliated. Seeing this, Superintendent of Police JF Guyder came on the scene and arrested Babarao. Meanwhile, Babarao's three associates had disembarked at the tram station and were making their way to the Court. When they learnt of Babarao's arrest, they met Tilak to make arrangements for Babarao's bail. Vishwanathrao Kelkar went back to Nashik to look after matters there. At the police station, the police searched Babarao. They found a book entitled *How the Russians Organize their Revolution* on his person. At this, Guyder started grilling Babarao. Babarao feigned innocence and said that someone was distributing some books at the tram station and he had taken a copy without seeing its contents. Babarao sounded so convincing that Guyder felt he was telling the truth. Guyder then asked Babarao his name. "Ganesh Damodar Savarkar" was the reply. Now Guyder's demeanour changed completely. So this was the "tiger of Nashik", he thought. He was happy that he had the famous Babarao in his clutches. He was now in no mood to release Babarao.

When news of Babarao's potentially prolonged arrest reached Nashik, Vishwanathrao Kelkar, poet Govind and Yesuvahini knew that a search of the Savarkar residence was imminent. Babarao's house had several books related to military training. Some of these books were shifted to poet Govind's house, others were burnt. This work of destroying evidence went on till four in the morning. As expected, the police party arrived half an hour later. The police went through Savarkar's house with a toothcomb. The search went on till two in the afternoon. Some fifty-two items were deemed to be incriminating and confiscated. These included a letter written to Tilak, a book publicizing speeches of Tilak and Paranjpe, *powadas* (patriotic songs) on the slaying of Afzal Khan and the conquest of Sinhagad fort, the sixth and seventh lectures delivered under the auspices of *Abhinav Bharat*, biography of Italian revolutionary Garibaldi, 150-200 copies of Mazzini's biography written by Tatyrao Savarkar, books such as *Science of War*, *Infantry Sword Exercise Book*, *Secret*

*Societies of the European Revolution*, orders for Savarkar's book on Mazzini and a dagger. As it turned out, these confiscated items did not implicate Babarao in this trial. However, they were to be used later as corroborative evidence against Babarao when he was sentenced to Transportation to the Andamans. Babarao's trial started on 13 June 1908. In spite of his best efforts, Babarao could not get a lawyer to defend him. He had to defend himself. The government accused Babarao of collecting 500-600 people with the aim of freeing Paranjpe and fomenting terror. This accusation could not hold water in the Court. Justice Aston commented, "I do not think there are reasonable grounds for believing that the common object of the crowd was to overawe the executive Government of India by criminal force or show of criminal force." This accusation thus quashed, the government now accused Babarao of disobeying Sub-inspector Muhammad Hussain who was discharging his duties while dispersing the assembled crowd. As proof, the government said that Babarao had worn his *dhoti* in a particular fashion and was also wearing the *langot* (small inner loin garment)! Though this was a completely frivolous argument, Justice Aston pronounced Babarao guilty under Section 151 A of the Indian Penal Code and Section 127 of the Bombay Police Act. On 17 June 1908, Babarao was sentenced to one month's rigorous imprisonment.

## 2.7 Last meeting with Tilak:

For the first few days, Babarao was lodged in the Dongri jail in Mumbai. On 24 June 1908, Tilak was arrested for writing an article called "*Deshache durdaiv*" ("*The country's misfortune*"). On 24 June, Tilak was kept at the Esplanade police station. His bail application was refused and he was shifted to the Dongri jail on 25 June. Babarao who was lodged in cell no.1 saw Tilak being led to his cell. The next morning, when all the prisoners were assembled together as usual, Babarao seized the opportunity to sit next to Tilak and strike conversation with him. He asked Tilak, "Balwantrao (Tilak's name), now that you are arrested, what will happen to (the political movement in) Maharashtra?" Tilak's reply was memorable. He said, "Baba, don't worry about Maharashtra. If Maharashtra is alive, it will not die with one man less. And if it is dead, one man alone cannot bring it to life. So why worry?" Tilak had just finished his reply when the warder asked the prisoners to disperse and go back to their respective cell. This proved to be the last meeting between Tilak and Babarao. The next day, Babarao was shifted to the Thane jail. Later, Tilak was sentenced to Transportation for six years to Mandalay in Burma while a year and a half later, Babarao was sentenced to Transportation for Life to the Andamans. The self-effacing answer that Tilak gave on that occasion remained fresh in Babarao's mind throughout his life.

## 2.8 In Thane jail:

In Thane jail, a secret police officer did his best to extract information from Babarao. Tatyrao's book on the 1857 War of Independence was being secretly printed in

Solapur. The government authorities suspected that Savarkar' biography of Mazzini (\*Savarkar had completed writing this book on 28 September 1906; in October 1906, he had sent the manuscript to Babarao; two thousand copies of this 257 page book was published by Babarao in June 1907 in Pune; the government banned the book in 1907) was also being secretly printed somewhere. The secret police officer was keen to know the address of this printing press. He feigned sympathy with Babarao and offered to do any printing work for Babarao at a press that he purportedly had in Mumbai. Knowing his true intentions, Babarao would politely thank him and keep mum. Finding that these tactics did not work, the government now subjected Babarao to hard labour to break him. The prisoners were required to grind flour with a heavy grinder. The grinder was supposed to be moved by four prisoners together. The government asked the other three prisoners in Babarao's batch to do nominal work with the result that Babarao had to do the work of four people. Babarao carried on manfully for two-three days. On the fourth day however, the strain began to tell on him and he excreted blood in his stools. His health deteriorated rapidly and the government was forced to hospitalize him. Babarao completed his one month term in hospital. The government released him and brought him to Mumbai. Vishwanathrao Kelkar, Narayanrao Savarkar and other members of the *Abhinav Bharat* were there to receive him. Babarao looked so pale and weak that they thought he had developed tuberculosis. Babarao came back to Nashik. Around this time, on the strength of a secret communication between the Moderate leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale and the British Government in which Gokhale had informed the Government about the strong links between Savarkar and Tilak, the Indian Government tightened their surveillance on the Savarkar residence.

## 2.9 Constant surveillance:

Babarao was now being constantly shadowed by plain clothes detectives. Pandurang Mahadev (Senapati) Bapat (born 12 November 1880) had returned from England after learning bomb-making. The police knew Babarao's close relations with Bapat and hence kept a close track of Babarao's movements. Babarao would be preceded and followed by detectives. This made it increasingly difficult for him to perform any revolutionary activity or household chores. Fearing police harassment, his acquaintances started avoiding him. But Babarao was not one to give up easily. Houses in old Nashik were clustered so closely that often there would be a single door separating neighbouring houses. Babarao would approach a house with a detective at his heels. Then leaving him waiting outside, Babarao would slip into a neighbouring house through a door. He would move from house to house and emerge at the other end of the street. Thus giving the detectives the slip, he would often disappear into neighbouring villages for a week or ten days at a stretch. In this ingenious fashion, he visited Baroda (now Vadodara), distributed manuals on bomb-making, met the rulers of small principalities and led the revolutionary movement in Maharashtra. When Babarao gave the slip to the secret police, they would frantically search for him often sending wireless messages to their head office in Mumbai.

This hide and seek game went on for seven-eight months. In that period, Babarao succeeded in teaching bomb-making to each and every branch of the *Abhinav Bharat*. However he knew that it would not be long before the authorities would nab

him and hand him some terrible punishment. On 17 December 1908, his house was searched. He now made up his mind to go underground. He learnt that Tatyrao would be sending a consignment of pistols through his colleague Chaturbhuj. Babarao now decided to receive this consignment and make provisions for his younger brother Narayanrao and wife Yesubai before going underground. With this in mind, he went to Mumbai in the first or second week of February 1909. He met Gopal Krishna Patankar, a member of the *Abhinav Bharat*. Babarao knew Patankar very well and had even helped the latter when he had started working as an agent for the Hindusthan Co-operative Life insurance company. It was to Patankar that Babarao now turned in desperation for help. Filled with worry and affection for young Narayanrao, Babarao beseeched Patankar thus, "My one brother is in England. Due to the Mazzini biography, it is impossible for him to step on the soil of his beloved motherland. I am now steeped in revolutionary activity. If I do not go underground now, I shall be sentenced to hard labour in some prison and my younger brother Narayan will be left unprotected. Since my father's death, I have looked after him as my own son, but now I have to bring him out of my wings for the sake of the country. I do not ask you for money but give me your word that you will protect Narayan. If you oblige, you will be protecting a family that is standing at the altar of the nation. Give me these alms!" Patankar gave his word and Babarao felt reassured. Actually, Narayanrao was more than twenty years old at that time and old enough to provide for himself. However, to Babarao's tender heart, he was still a child who needed protection. Now that he had made provision for Narayanrao, Babarao's heart yearned for Tatyrao who was in a faraway land. He felt he could not do enough for his beloved Tatyrao. He decided to show Tatyrao's horoscope to an astrologer to find what the future had in store for Tatyrao. The astrologer, a Punjabi gentleman named Pandit Ram Narayan, read Tatyrao's horoscope and at the insistence of Babarao's friend, also read Babarao's horoscope. He predicted that Babarao would lose his mother in that week itself. Then he paused and correcting himself, said that calamities as severe as a mother's death would surely fall on Babarao! Babarao only smiled. He knew that a revolutionary's horoscope had death written all over it. So there was nothing new in the astrologer's prediction. The calamity occurred on that very afternoon. The day was 28 February 1909!

## **2.10 Serenity in the face of calamity!**

On the afternoon of 28 February 1909, Babarao and his friends had gathered at the room of their colleague VM Bhat (\*VM Bhat was Babarao's maternal cousin; he later became a famous doctor, writer and an authority on *Yoga*), in Mohan Building in Girgaum, Mumbai. They were discussing the future course of *Abhinav Bharat* activities after Babarao went underground and the ways and means of contacting and assisting Babarao and his family. The discussion was going on in full swing when they heard a soft tap on the door. Babarao had given the slip to the police in Nashik and landed in Mumbai, so every one was sure that there were police outside. Soon the taps became louder and louder and were followed by heavy thumping. VM Bhat opened the door. Sure enough, Police Inspector Ramchandra Appaji Ballal of Nashik was outside. He summoned Babarao to the police station. VM Bhat accompanied Babarao. At the police station, Superintendent of Police, Mumbai JF Guyder and Deputy Superintendent of Police, Nashik Maruti Pandurang Todarmal

occupied two chairs. They had kept a vacant chair for Babarao in the centre. Armed police surrounded them on all sides. Perhaps the police feared that Babarao's friends would make a daring attempt to free him. Babarao was shown the arrest warrant. He had been arrested under sections 121 and 124A of the Indian Penal Code (1860). Babarao knew the significance of section 124A but that of section 121 had slipped his mind. He asked VM Bhat who was then studying Law what section 121 of the IPC meant. But VM Bhat kept quiet. Bhat went away with the information that Babarao's trial would be conducted in Nashik and he would be brought there on that very day. After Bhat left, Babarao was whisked away in a car. The car trip seemed interminable and all the while, Babarao faced a volley of questions. The police intended to confuse Babarao into giving away some vital information. One of the questions was, "So, you intend to overthrow the British, but how do you plan to go about it?" Babarao was not a weakling. He answered, "The British have promised to grant us freedom when we become worthy of it. So we plan to make ourselves worthy by intensifying our desire for freedom. Then the British will themselves grant us freedom. This is in fact what they have promised!" The police were nonplussed by this reply.

Sensing that it would be difficult to break Babarao, they now decided to harass him. Babarao was taken by train to Nashik that evening. VM Bhat got into the same train. Inspector Ballal was traveling in another second class coach. There were only two policemen with Babarao. Taking advantage of the situation, Babarao and Bhat spoke to each other. Bhat discreetly asked Babarao if there was anything incriminating lying about in his house. But Babarao was interested only in the significance of section 121 of the Indian Penal Code. Bhat tried hard to evade the question but Babarao would not relent. Finally, Bhat answered, "Section 121 deals with aiding and abetting treason against the King and the punishment for that is confiscation of all property and death by hanging or "Transportation for Life". Babarao silently listened to Bhat's pronouncement. "Is that all?" was his stoic response! It was now Bhat's turn to be taken aback. In a few minutes, Babarao fell fast asleep. He woke up only at Igatpuri station. Babarao had not mastered *yoga* in vain. Verily, he was a *sthitaprajna* (as per the *Gita*, a *sthitaprajna* is one who views happiness and sorrow with equanimity).

## **2.11 The currency note and the medicine bottle:**

On arrival in Nashik, Babarao was kept in custody as an undertrial. As he was an undertrial, Babarao was allowed to bring food from home. This Narayanrao would bring him everyday. Once, when Narayanrao came with the food, Babarao wrote a secret message on the water pitcher. The police realized this and concluded that Babarao was hiding something in his house. On 12 March 1909, when Narayanrao paid his visit, Babarao started talking to him in suggestive language. After talking of this and that, Babarao said, "Narayan, as repairs of our roof are going on, I have kept a five rupee note in a space above the *tulsi vrindavan* (it is a Hindu custom to keep the sacred *tulsi* or basil plant in the courtyard) and a medicine bottle in the window on the north-west corner. Take the five rupee note for yourself and give the medicine bottle to Bapu. Babarao had thought that the police were not paying attention but he was unfortunately wrong. The custody in-charge, Narhar Bapu

Joshi who was eavesdropping realized that Babarao was trying to pass on an important message to Narayanrao. He secured a search warrant from the First Class Magistrate Mr. Nissim to confirm the existence of these items in Babarao's house. By this time, Narayanrao was making his way to the Savarkar house. He was summoned half-way. He sent the utensils with a small boy. However, the police would not trust even the small boy. They summoned the boy as well.

## **2.12 The police raid:**

The custody in-charge, Narhar Babu Joshi accompanied by two constables raided Babarao's house. For a long time, they could find nothing in the space above the *tulsi vrindavan*. But when they lifted a tile, they found a secret passage in the wall. A heap of papers was hidden there. Amongst the papers written in purple ink was an illustrated bomb manual, a 68 page book with various addresses several letters and eleven copies of a pamphlet entitled "*Two historically significant essays*". The bomb manual had been sent from London by Tatyrao and was exactly similar to the bomb manual found in the Maniktola case in Calcutta. In his judgement, Justice BC Kennedy was to describe this manual thus, "It is a very complete and detailed document giving minute instructions for the making of a very large number of explosive bombs and fuses." The address book contained addresses of *Abhinav Bharat* members as also the address of Hemchandra Das who was an accused in the Maniktola conspiracy case. The confiscated letters were written by Tatyrao, VM Bhat, Lakshman Vasudeo Brahma (Satara) and Anandanand (Bengal) among others. The pamphlet had its origins with Tatyrao in London. It contained the manifesto released by the Begum of Bhopal during the 1857 uprising and referred to the British King as a tyrant and murderer. The police could thus collect valuable evidence which they were to use extensively in the so-called Nashik conspiracy case. The raid marked the beginning of the end of the *Abhinav Bharat*. During their journey from Mumbai to Nashik VM Bhat had asked Babarao whether there were any incriminating items in his house but Babarao had not answered him then. In an attempt to alert Narayanrao, he had now inadvertently led the police to the evidence they were looking for. If only Babarao had answered Bhat....! But these are the ifs and buts that history is made of.

## **2.13 Narayanrao's presence of mind:**

While the raid was being carried out in one part of the house, Narayanrao quickly found out the place where the "medicine bottle" was kept. Narayanrao found another heap of papers there. He climbed on the roof of the house and went to the neighbouring house. From there, he proceeded to poet Govind's house and handed over these papers to him. When the police realized that Narayanrao had disappeared for some time, they were furious. When they questioned him about his whereabouts, Narayanrao coolly replied, "I had gone next door to drink cold water."

After this raid, the police searched Babarao's house once more in March itself. This search did not yield much save armour and a broken bow.

### 3 TRIAL AND TRANSPORTATION

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Babarao's trial was conducted initially before the District Collector of Nashik, Jackson. Adv. Gole was the public prosecutor with the Deputy Superintendent of Police assisting him. Narayanrao Savarkar launched a tireless search for a defence lawyer and even raised a sum of Rs. 200 to meet the lawyer's expense but to no avail. Narayanrao would approach various lawyers but at the sight of plainclothesmen at his heels, they would decline to take up Babarao's case. Finally in desperation, Narayanrao went to Thane and met Adv. Thosar. "I have Rs. 200 only with me. My brother is in a grave crisis. Save him", pleaded Narayanrao. Thosar comforted Narayanrao and agreed to take up Babarao's case. Tears welled up in Narayanrao's eyes. Advocates Pradhan, Sathye, Ketkar and Gadre assisted Thosar. The public prosecutor Gole informed about the nature of the accusations against Babarao and detailed the incriminating items found during the raid on Babarao's house. He laid emphasis on the eighth and ninth booklets of the *Laghu-Abhinav-Bharat-Mala* (lit: garland of short essays of *Abhinav Bharat*). These contained 18 poems of poet Govind. These booklets had been printed in December 1907 at the *Swarajya* printing press in Solapur and published by Babarao in Nashik on 18 March 1907. The government contended that these poems preached treason and exhorted rebellion against the King. The government produced Gangadharpant Limaye, brother of Balwant Shankar Limaye who was the editor of the *Swarajya* periodical in Solapur as witness. The court also recorded the statements of the police officers involved in the raids and in Babarao's arrest as well as those of explosives and handwriting experts.

#### 3.1 Babarao's statement:

In his written deposition to the court, Babarao said, "I published and publicized these poems but due to the tumultuous situation in Hindusthan (India) in April 1908, I had neither time nor inclination to look into the sales of the book. I am solely responsible for my actions. Though I have not written these poems, I do not think that they were written to preach treason or incite people to rebel against the King. These poems were written keeping true incidents in the Puranas or history in mind and did not intentionally distort truth. The last stanza in the ninth poem tries to apply historical truths to the prevailing situation in Hindusthan. Neither the poet nor I had an ulterior motive. 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." In his oral statement, Babarao reiterated the above points. In addition, he said that he had published 3000 copies of the *Laghu-Abhinav Bharat- Mala* and as he had bought all the copyrights of this book, the name of the poet did not appear in them. The poems in the book were meant for recitation on festive occasions such as *Ganeshotsav* and *Shivaji jayanti*. The judge listened to Babarao's defence and remarked that it was "very clever". Saying that an ordinary person would interpret the poems in the same way as the government had done, he accepted the government's plea.

### 3.2 The judgement:

Babarao's trial received wide publicity. It was widely reported in the press. The verdict was a foregone conclusion. The publication of the poems was a mere pretext to imprison Babarao. Babarao's revolutionary activities were intensifying by the day, he had set up branches of the *Abhinav Bharat* in villages across Maharashtra, the technique of bomb-making and indeed consignments of pistols were making their way from London and Babarao's influence was spreading to Bengal, Punjab and Madras. Justice BC Kennedy pronounced the judgement on 08 June 1909. He ruled:

"The Penal Code has given me very little leeway to decide the quantum of the punishment. Under section 121, I sentence Ganesh Damodar Savarkar to Transportation for Life or *kaala pani* (*lit.* black waters; incarceration in the black hole of the Andamans) and order forfeiture of his entire property and -

"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."

As fate would have it, that day of 08 June was *Jyestha krishna navami* which happened to be Babarao's birthday as per the Hindu calendar. But as the *Kesari* (15 June 1909) put it, "Babarao heard this terrible punishment stoically". Babarao was now made to don the prisoner's garb. The yellowish cap which signified *kaala pani* now adorned his head. His hands and feet were bound in chains!

### 3.3 The first month in prison:

Babarao spent the first month of his sentence in Nashik jail. As he was not assigned any work, he had time to brood and ponder. His thoughts would turn to his beloved Narayanrao. "What will now happen to my Bal now that I am in prison?" was the question that would trouble him over and over again. Then he would console himself, "Bal is now old enough to look after himself. I can hardly provide for him for his lifetime. Bal will not be disheartened by our separation. He will bring honour to the Savarkar family." At times, his mind would be filled with anxiety and sorrow for his wife Yesubai. "I have wrecked her life. What happiness have I given her? She has accepted a life of penury for my sake. She has killed all her hopes and aspirations for the sake of my yogic and patriotic pursuits. Unfortunate one! With me on the way to the Andamans, all she can do now is to wait hopelessly for me. No doubt, she will leave this world without ever seeing me. With our two children dead in their infancy, she has nothing to look forward to. Alas, I have ruined her life!" But his inner voice would again console him, "No, her life has not gone in vain; indeed it has attained the highest fulfillment. Have not the lives of those who lived and died for a noble cause been similar? Did not Sita suffer anguish, humiliation and separation from her husband? But her noble life to this day, continues to be a

beacon for all humanity. Like Sita, my Yesu is a veritable *sati* (virtually untranslatable; *sati* roughly means a woman as pure as a goddess). Babarao's mind would also be filled with foreboding about the future of the revolutionary struggle. At times, he would despair that the revolutionaries may never attain the goal that they had set for themselves. Then again he would console himself thus, "So what if I have failed. Failures are but stepping stones to success. Is there any nation that has tried and succeeded without tasting the bitter fruits of failure? And why call our efforts a failure in the first place? So what if I have been arrested. Several others will come forward and take up the cause. Hitherto, people would shy away from taking the name of their country. At the least, they now have the songs of their country's liberation on their lips. Our lives have certainly not gone in vain. The first month passed thus with Babarao's mind in a state of turmoil.

### **3.4 Paraded in Nashik:**

The residents of Nashik had immense respect for Babarao. To demoralize and terrorize them, the government decided to parade Babarao in fetters. They wanted to make an example of Babarao with this crude display of arrogance. Babarao was paraded through the streets of Nashik with his hands and feet in handcuffs and fetters, the terrible yellowish cap signifying the horrifying punishment of *kaala pani* on his head, a bundle of his clothes, plate and water pot balanced precariously on his back. Armed guards walked in front and behind him. Babarao braved this humiliation with fortitude. Residents lined up on both sides to have his last *darshan* (glimpse, view) before he literally went into the jaws of death. Fearing police wrath, they tried hard to hold back their tears. When the procession reached the Kalalpura area of Nashik, some 100-125 children surrounded Babarao. They innocently asked Babarao why he was wearing the yellow cap, where he was going and when he was likely to return. Babarao who was walking calmly till then, was moved to tears by the innocent chatter of these children. This heart-wrenching scene moved even the stone-hearted policemen. At Nashik station, not a soul turned up to see off Babarao. Such was the fear instilled by the British authorities. Only two people close to Babarao mustered courage to be present there. One was a servant in his group of associates, the other was his friend. As the train blew its whistle, Babarao raised his hands bound in chains in a final salute to the town of Nashik. The train departed for Pune.

### **3.5 Yerwada jail, Pune:**

Babarao got a taste of what lay in store for him as soon as he stepped into the dreaded Yerwada jail in Pune. As he entered the gates, the clerks in the jail office mocked at him. He was now convict no. 4193! When Babarao entered his cell, the special *jamadar* (petty constable) named Malhari showered choice abuses on him. He placed 25 pounds of grain in front of Babarao and ordered him to grind this into flour by dusk. The hands that had held aloft the flag of revolution now were engaged in hard labour. Slowly, the daily quantity of grain to be ground was

increased to thirty-five pounds. Babarao was not used to hard physical labour. He would be exhausted after completing twenty pounds. Malhari would shower more abuses on him. This went on for eight to ten days. The exhausted Babarao was now given the punishment of "standing handcuffs". As per this sentence, Babarao was handcuffed and his hands were locked up to a hook in the wall measuring his height. Hence, he had to keep standing with his arms hung up to the wall for six hours continuously in the morning and four hours continuously in the evening. This inhuman punishment was meted out for seven days at a stretch. After that, he was ordered to again grind grain for the next day. As he could not complete the assigned task, he would again suffer the standing handcuffs for the next seven days. At times, he would be left with standing handcuffs throughout the night. Sometimes, his hands would be folded behind his back and handcuffed for hours. The meals served to the prisoners were ill-cooked, consisting of *bajra* bhakri (Indian bread) for two days, *jowar* bhakri for three days, wheat bread for one day and rice for one day in a week accompanied by *gur* (jaggery) and dry pulses (*bajra* and *jowar* are millets). On the days of special punishments, all that he would be served was a dry *bhakri* and salt. Babarao started getting bouts of diarrhea. His whole body used to ache terribly and the abdominal cramps would become unbearable. Things had reached a breaking point. And one day, they gave way.

### **3.6 Trial for diarrhea!**

One day when Babarao was hanging in "standing handcuffs", he got severe cramps in the abdomen. His body was burning with fever. Somehow, Babarao controlled the urge to pass stools. His upbringing did not permit him to pass motions while still standing in that state. When the cramps became unbearable, he convulsed his arms in desperation and managed to free them. He passed motions in the corner of his cell and resumed his punishment of "standing handcuffs". At that time, Malhari *jamadar* arrived on the scene. The heartless mercenary that he was, Malhari started abusing Babarao. From outside the cell, he raised his baton as if to strike Babarao through the bars. But he knew not that it was a lion that was caged inside. Holding the baton, Babarao roared, "You monkey, you not know whom you dare to strike! I have left my home and hearth caring two hoots for myself. I am not afraid of death. If you dare strike me, I shall take revenge by killing you." The commotion brought the other guards. It was now impossible for Malhari to beat up Babarao. He went angrily to the jail office and slapped a case on Babarao. The next day, the jailor and the prison superintendent came to Babarao's cell. Babarao explained to them the circumstances in which he had violated the jail rules. Babarao's tale moved the superintendent. He ordered a medical examination of Babarao. As per the prison convention, a prisoner was deemed to be ill only if he had fever. Absence of fever meant that the prisoner was hale and hearty! As luck would have it, when Babarao was examined, he was running a temperature of 105° F! The jail doctor transferred Babarao to hospital. There the quality of food was better. Even then, he lost 17 lbs weight during his six weeks stay in hospital. After discharge from hospital, he was given a relatively lighter job of spinning wool. He started getting 250 ml milk daily. His life became a little bearable. Above all, Narayanrao came twice to meet him in jail.

### 3.7 Meeting with Narayanrao:

After the district court in Nashik had sentenced Babarao to Transportation for Life in the Andamans, a petition had been made on Babarao's behalf in the higher court. When Narayanrao came to meet Babarao in jail, the two brothers discussed this petition. Narayanrao's heart broke when he saw his elder brother, nay his father, in this sorry state. He feared he would never see Babarao alive again. And what can one say of Babarao's feelings? The harsh sentence in the Andamans awaited him. And yet he had to boost the morale of his beloved brother. The strain was too much for both Babarao and Narayanrao. Both gave way to their feelings with profuse tears. The two meetings got over. But for Babarao, they left fond memories in their wake.

### 3.8 Momentous events:

On 21 November 1909, the Bombay High Court confirmed the verdict of the lower court. Of course, Babarao had not expected a different verdict. While Babarao was in jail, several momentous events which were directly or indirectly linked to Babarao were happening outside. Thanks to Tatyrao, India House, an inexpensive students' hostel in London was fast becoming a hotbed of Indian revolutionaries. Babarao was sentenced on 08 June 1909. On 09 June, a telegram was sent from Nashik to London informing the news of Babarao's Transportation. The news created a wave of anger among the revolutionaries in London. On 01 July 1909, Madanlal Dhingra assassinated Curzon Wylie at a public meeting in London.



In his declaration entitled 'Challenge', Dhingra admitted, "I attempted to shed English blood as a humble revenge for the inhuman hangings and deportations of patriotic Indian youths". For his 'crime', Dhingra calmly went to the gallows. It is obvious that Dhingra was referring to the deportation of Babarao. Here in Maharashtra, the news of Babarao's Transportation was agitating the minds of young men. Anant Laxman Kanhere (b. 1891), a 19 year old student of the Arts School in Aurangabad was a member of the *Abhinav Bharat*. Anant was a slender, almost delicate young man. But behind the soft exterior were raw daredevilry and patriotism. Angered by the punishment meted to Babarao, he decided to target the Collector of Nashik, Jackson who had committed Babarao's case to the Sessions Court. When some members of the *Abhinav Bharat* from Nashik went to meet Kanhere, he chastised them thus, "Our countryman (Babarao) Savarkar sacrificed his home and hearth for our country but it is shameful that not one amongst you from Nashik has shed his blood for him." Then he asked them point-blank, "If I decide to kill Jackson, will you help me?"

The plot was hatched. Savarkar had sent some pistols from London through his colleague Chaturbhuj. Kanhere took one of these pistols and emptied it on Jackson on the night of 21 December, 1909 at the Vijayanand Theatre, Nashik. In his declaration, Kanhere said, "I have done my duty. Jackson was instrumental in the deportation of Ganesh Damodar Savarkar and shielding Executive Engineer Williams who was involved in an Indian driver's death. I therefore killed Jackson. I do not

wish to escape." Kanhere and his associates Karve and Deshpande went smiling to the gallows on 19 April 1910 in Thane jail (\*Kanhere's fearlessness in the face of certain death moved even the sentencing judge Justice Heeton to exclaim, "What a pity that I have to send such a handsome and courageous youth to the gallows.>"). The British authorities and their Indian henchmen conducted extensive raids, arrested scores of young men in Nashik and tortured them. Cases were slapped on thirty-seven youth. Babarao was their inspiration. Naturally, the authorities turned their attention to Babarao who was languishing in jail. Babarao soon got the inkling of Jackson's killing.

### 3.9 Encounter with Guyder:

One day, when Babarao was spinning wool, the *jamadar* came running to him and said that the jailor wished to have a word with him (Babarao). When Babarao went there, he found the Deputy Superintendent of Police Guyder with two constables sitting next to the jailor. Making a show of sympathy, Guyder welcomed Babarao with a winning smile. He was conversant in Marathi and started speaking to Babarao in Marathi thus, "Oh Savarkar, how frail you have become. Are you not keeping well? Are you getting milk and light work?" Babarao was immediately on guard. He knew that Guyder's cunning behaviour was a harbinger of something terrible. Guyder wanted to prove that the weapons used in the Jackson killing had only one origin. He wanted to implicate Babarao in the conspiracy to kill Jackson. Guyder soon came to the point. The following exchange took place between Guyder and Babarao.

Guyder: What is this thing called *Mitramela*?  
 Babarao: It is an organization.  
 Guyder: And its aim?  
 Babarao: It organizes public celebration of festivals and lectures of great men to fulfill the aim of spreading knowledge.  
 Guyder: I see! Who is Chaturbhuj?  
 Babarao: Chaturbhuj? Many Hindu deities are Chaturbhuj (*//i*: four armed).  
 Guyder: Keep your deities aside. I want a person called Chaturbhuj.  
 Babarao: It is not possible for someone to be named Chaturbhuj. Chaturbhuj is an adjective in Marathi.  
 Guyder: Who is Hari Anant Thatte? (Hari Bhaskar Thatte was named president of *Abhinav Bharat* by Tatyarao before Tatyarao's departure to London. Of the two addresses given by Tatyarao to Chaturbhuj for delivery of the pistols one was that of Thatte).  
 Babarao: He is a friend of Tatyarao.  
 Guyder: What is his connection with the *Mitramela*?  
 Babarao: We used to collect donation for public festivities when he would come to Nashik.  
 Guyder: What is he president of?  
 Babarao: President? He is not president. He is a shy person. We did not ask him to preside over any function.

By this time, Guyder was frustrated by Babarao's answers. His mask of civility was wearing thin. He now decided to change tactics.

Guyder: Savarkar, do not give such answers. We have arrested your two brothers. Tell me the names of revolutionaries in Nashik. If you provide this information, we will release you and your brothers. Come on, out with the information. We will ensure your protection after your release and provide a monthly pension to you. Do not be afraid.

It was unthinkable for Babarao to expose his colleagues for selfish reasons. Guyder's treacherous talk of pension and protection repelled him. Politely but firmly, he thanked Guyder for his 'concern' but said he could not co-operate as he knew nothing. Seeing Babarao stick to his guns, Guyder finally showed his true colours. He now started threatening Babarao.

Guyder: If you do give full information, be assured that you will get a second Transportation

Babarao (smilingly): The question of a second transportation would arise if I survive the first one. So why bother?

Babarao's barb infuriated Guyder. He now bared his fangs.

Guyder: Savarkar, I understand your clever witticisms. Remember, I am Guyder. I have seen several patriots like you and have brought them to heel with whiplashes. Will you open your mouth or not?

Savarkar: No, I do not know anything.

Guyder: Savarkar, don't play with fire. Do you see what I have with me?

Guyder had brought electric wires. The mere sight of these electric wires was enough to make the most hardened criminals tremble with fear. A single electric shock would break criminals who would not budge with twenty whiplashes. Guyder now planned to use this inhuman torture on Babarao. But Babarao's spirit was indomitable. He resolved not to yield to the most barbaric torture. Guyder asked Babarao thrice to divulge the information that he desired. On all three occasions, Babarao declined to answer. Enraged, Guyder administered electric shocks to Babarao. Waves of electric current swept through Babarao's body sending his entire being into painful spasms. His body convulsed but except for cries of anguish, not a word escaped from Babarao's lips. This atrocity continued for forty-five minutes. But Babarao remained unshaken in his resolve. Ultimately, the fiend in Guyder had to accept defeat. As Babarao turned to walk back to his cell, Guyder could not but help exclaim, "Brave fellow!" After this incident, all concessions to Babarao were withdrawn. He was denied milk and the relatively light job of spinning wool. The vicious cycle of grinding grain, standing handcuffs and diarrhea resumed one again and did not stop so long as Babarao was lodged in Yerwada jail.

### **3.10 Unsuccessful efforts of rescue:**

Babarao was in Yerwada jail for one year. During this time, two attempts were made to secure his release. Both failed. The first attempt was made by a Goanese

revolutionary named Abasaheb in September 1909, barely two months after he was lodged in Yerwada jail. Abasaheb's cell was around 20-25 steps from Babarao's cell on the opposite side. When the warden used to lock the area from outside and leave, these prisoners in solitary confinement could press their faces against their floor and start conversing in low voices. Abasaheb was scheduled to be released after a month or two. He would console Babarao and promise to secure his release. When Abasaheb was finally released, he bid Babarao goodbye and promised that he and his colleagues would work out a plan to free Babarao. What this plan was will never be known because Babarao was shifted from Yerwada jail before Abasaheb could put his plan into action. The two were destined never to meet again. The second attempt was made a few months before Babarao was shifted from Yerwada jail. This attempt was made by an illiterate Maratha patriot. Though illiterate, this patriot had a deep understanding of revolutionary ways and means. He would discuss revolutionary methods with Babarao in minute detail. When an associate of this revolutionary was released, the date and time of Babarao's escape had been decided. But as luck would have it, Babarao was shifted out before this effort could succeed.

### **3.11 The caged lion:**

After a year in Yerwada jail, Babarao was shifted to Thane jail. In jail parlance, this was a 'halting camp' or an interregnum before the terrible sentence in Andamans commenced. The same back-breaking hard labour and maddening solitude were Babarao's only companions. An hour's walk in the open as recommended by a kind doctor was the only change in routine. Thane jail was a halting place for dangerous murderers, dacoits and rapists. It was here that criminals would be selected for transportation to the Andamans. One day, all the prisoners were lined up. Each prisoner was medically examined. The jailor who was a Parsi started throwing his weight about. When he approached Babarao, he suddenly started abusing Babarao without reason. "*Aye saala badmaash!*" ("You wretched rascal") he shouted. Babarao looked at the jailor in utter disdain. Now the jailor lifted his cane to beat Babarao. Babarao snatched it in a trice and raised it to hit the jailor. It was only the intervention of the jail constables that saved the day for the jailor. Babarao's ferocity alarmed the jailor and he quietly slinked away. Babarao was medically examined and declared fit. He was shifted to Alipore jail near Calcutta (now Kolkata).

### **3.12 Farewell, beloved motherland!**

Babarao was in Alipur jail for 5-6 days. The ship 'Maharaja' that was to transport him to the Andamans was anchored in the harbour. This ship would make nine trips to the Andamans in a year and transport prisoners from Madras (now Chennai), Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Rangoon (now Yangon) to the Andamans. Prisoners would be made to walk for around three miles on their way to the harbour. In the dark basement of this ship was a long and narrow cage. Prisoners would be packed like sardines in this cage. Babarao was pushed into this cage in the suffocating

company of murderers, dacoits and rapists. The stench was unbearable. The ship blew its horn, the anchor was lifted, it was time to depart. The ship left the harbour. As the shore receded from view, Babarao tried to catch one last glimpse of his beloved motherland. As he saw it, this was the last time he would be seeing his motherland. He thought he would never see beloved Bal again. He would never see his wife Yesu again. As Babarao was looking through the porthole to catch a glimpse of his motherland, he was rudely shoved by a burly Pathan who wanted to peep outside. As the coastline became invisible, even the hardened Pathan broke down and echoed the feelings of all present. "*Ghar chhoot gaya! Bhaiyya, ghar chhoot gaya!!*" ("We have lost our home! O brother, we have lost our home!!"), he wailed.

## 4 SITA-SAVITRI YESUVAHINI

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The story of Babarao is incomplete without the saga of his wife Yesubai, more popularly known as Yesuvahini. Even a great poet like Tatyrao is at a loss for words to describe fully her saga of silent sacrifice. Here is what Tatyrao has to say in her sacred memory: "She really dies as dies a *sati*. Did she not immolate her silent soul at the altar of our Motherland? Ah! As truly as a martyr dies for his Land or *Dharma* 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 *Dharma*....A Hindu girl inflames not but soothes, remembers though forgotten, each ever-newly edition of the immortal story of Sita." It is no exaggeration to say that Yesuvahini is the epitome of the glory that is Hindu womanhood, in the same mould as Sati, Sita and Savitri.

Yashoda or Yesu was born in 1885. She was the niece of Advocate Nanarao Phadke of Trimbakeshwar, a holy place near Nashik (Maharashtra). Advocate Phadke headed a large joint family of some 30-40 members. After his death, the responsibility of this large family fell on the shoulders of his son Anna. Yashoda was married to Babarao in 1896 at Trimbakeshwar, a holy place near Nashik. The young bride was merely eleven years old at that time. She was renamed 'Saraswati' after marriage but her maiden name 'Yesu' stuck on. Yesuvahini has herself narrated her first meeting with the young Tatya who was merely thirteen years old at the time. Curious to see his future sister-in-law, Tatya along with younger brother Bal landed up at the Phadke residence on the day before the wedding. Yesu was sitting before the Gaurihar (Parvati and Shiva) idols as part of the pre-wedding ceremony. She was suffering from conjunctivitis. All wedding preparations were complete. Tatya arrived at the doorstep and smartly asked, "Is this the Phadke residence? Then where is our *vahini*?" At this question, Yesu's maternal aunt asked him who he was. His smart replies won the hearts of the assembled women. Yesu's mother Mathutai (name Mathura) commented that she could not see enough of Tatya's loving, handsome and delicate frame." When the time came for the Yesuvahini's departure, she started crying. Her mother Mathutai consoled her. Seeing his *vahini* cry, Tatya stepped forward and assured Mathutai, "Mother, don't worry. *Vahini* has got conjunctivitis. We will give her medicines and cure her (Tatya probably thought that his *vahini's* eyes were watering because of conjunctivitis). The return journey at night from Trimbakeshwar to Nashik was made by the Savarkars in a bullock cart. Yesuvahini could hardly open her swollen eyes the next morning. It was the young Tatya who made up for her difficulty by describing the surrounding natural beauty. Tatyrao brought some water and washed her eyes. He remained true to his word. When they arrived in Nashik, Tatyrao got some medicines for his *vahini* and saw to it that she was cured.

Married life must have seemed happy to young Yesu at that time. Though she had no mother-in-law, her father-in-law Damodarant showered paternal affection on

her. She had a tall, well-built, brave and loving husband in Babarao. Yesubai had two sisters and no brother. But what she lacked in her parents' house was more than made up for in her husband's home. She had two brother-in-laws, indeed they became her brothers and sons rolled into one. Of the two, Tatyā (Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar) was of her own age. It was the young Tatyā who taught his beloved *vahini* to read and write. Yesuvahini learnt quickly. Yesuvahini has written Tatyā's memoirs in her own handwriting in a notebook. This notebook makes interesting reading. In return, Yesuvahini taught Tatyā several songs. Yesuvahini had a huge repertoire of traditional Marathi songs. Her voice was melodious. Listening to her, Tatyā would go in a trance. Thanks to Yesuvahini, he never felt the absence of his mother. The two would alternately sing one song after another and this competition would go on for several hours. Tatyā was a gifted poet even at that age. He would often compose songs on the spur of the moment. Babarao had no inclination towards poetry and would make light-hearted fun of the duo. Often, Babarao and Yesuvahini would cook together. Babarao and Tatyā would have mock fights hurling potatoes and onions at each other. When Tatyā felt he was at the receiving end, he would seek Yesuvahini's intervention. The initial years of Yesuvahini and Babarao's married life were thus full of bliss.

#### 4.1 Ascetic husband:

Babarao had a religious bent of mind. He became deeply interested in yogic pursuits. This made him increasingly detached from worldly life. He would spend long hours in *puja* (ritual worship) or doing *yoga*. Once, he even left the house in search of a *guru*. The change in Babarao naturally alarmed Yesuvahini but she could not confide her fears in anyone.

Babarao was sentenced in June 1909. A few days later, his property was confiscated. At that time, Yesuvahini used to live in the upper storey of the Datar family house in Nashik. When she heard the news that their entire property including all utensils was to be confiscated, she calmly removed important belongings and some utensils to the Datar house. A few petty belongings were all that remained to be shifted when the police came knocking. They went about their task of confiscating all the remaining items remorselessly, not leaving even a vessel of *dal* that lay on the fire. The police even took away vessels used in *puja* sparing only the idol and the sacred garment. As it happened, Narayanrao was out of station at that time. It was Yesuvahini who single-handedly faced this trial by fire. She was all alone in the empty house, tired and hungry. There was no one to turn to for succour. Devout as she was, she could not perform her daily *puja* because there were no *puja* vessels. It was Yesuvahini's habit not to touch food or water without performing *puja* and watering the *tulsi* plant. After noon, news of the police raid trickled and neighbours and acquaintances slowly started visiting the house. It was only when a kindly neighbour gave her some *puja* vessels that Yesuvahini performed her daily rituals and ate food. Godumai, the daughter of Adv. Khare came to offer her sympathy. But the sight of the lonely Yesuvahini moved her so much that she herself started sobbing. It was Yesuvahini who bravely told her, "Do not cry. It is only when several homes such as ours are devastated that the nation will prosper."

## 4.2 Lonely and distraught!

As dusk fell, all the neighbours and friends left one by one. Yesuvahini was left all alone in the dark and empty house. Where could she go? Her mind was in turmoil. Any one of Babarao's numerous friends would have gladly given her shelter but Yesuvahini could not bring herself to approach them. At last she decided to go to her maternal uncle's house. But she was the wife of a revolutionary who had been sentenced to Transportation for Life. She was unwanted by her own kith and kin. Her maternal uncle turned her away. At around 9 pm, Yesuvahini came to the Datar home in a disturbed frame of mind. She stood on the steps of the Datar house. Rambhau Datar's wife had just delivered a baby. There was happiness all around. No one paid attention to Yesuvahini as she stood all by herself. It was after some time that she was noticed. The Datar and Savarkar families were very close to each other. It was Rambhau Datar who came to Yesuvahini's rescue. He gave her shelter. The Datar's looked after Yesuvahini till her death.

Babarao's other friends, notably Bhaurao Bhat, Adv. Khare, Sakharampant Gore, Barve and the poet Govind helped Yesuvahini in whatever way they could. Barve used to regularly give wheat and jowar to Yesuvahini. Madam Cama used to send Rs 30 every month. Of these, Narayanrao would spend Rs. 15 on his education and Rs.15 would be given for Yesuvahini's upkeep. The help given by poet Govind knew no bounds. Govind was cripple and extremely poor. When the need arose, he would somehow raise Rs. 50-60 and give them to Yesuvahini. To keep her morale intact, he would tell her stories from the Vedanta, Ramayana-Mahabharata and the lives of great women. It is not without reason that Babarao was to pay the following tribute to poet Govind, "A true friend and helper of the patriots of *Abhinav Bharat* and their families." Govind was helping Yesuvahini at a great personal risk. No words can describe his selfless service to the Savarkar family in its hour of peril.

## 4.3 Arrest of Narayanrao:

In November 1909, the Viceroy Lord Minto went on a tour of the princely states of Gujarat. He was to visit Karnavati (Ahmedabad). The British authorities feared that activists of the *Abhinav Bharat* would come from Pune or Mumbai and cause disturbance. The government had intelligence that the *Abhinav Bharat* had relations with prominent individuals in the *Gangnath Bharatiya Vidyalaya* in Baroda (now Vadodara). Plainclothes securitymen from Pune and Mumbai had stationed themselves in Karnavati for at least a week before the Viceroy's scheduled visit to look for potential trouble makers. While these security measures were being undertaken in Karnavati, members of the Pune branch of the *Abhinav Bharat* such as Brahmagiribuwa were planning to hurl bombs on the Viceroy if he stepped into Pune. But in spite of the tight security in Karnavati, a bomb was hurled at the Viceroy's procession in Karnavati. The Viceroy escaped unhurt. The police apparently saw the hand of a Savarkar behind any disturbance that took place. They promptly arrested Narayanrao Savarkar who was at Sinnar near Nashik at that time. Narayanrao had established contacts in Baroda, Indore and other places to spread the message of revolution. The police decided that Narayanrao was somehow responsible for the incident in Karnavati. He was taken to Karnavati and beaten up to extract

information. But Narayanrao was a worthy brother to Babarao and Tatyrao. He refused to yield before the police beating. The police then took him to Baroda and Pune. It was only on the witness of a school principal who had seen Narayanrao buying vegetables in a Pune market that Narayanrao was released. Narayanrao's arrest took away Yesuvahini's last support. Yesuvahini had had two daughters but they had died in infancy. Narayanrao was like her own son. Now that he was grown up, she looked to him for support. With his arrest, she felt utterly helpless. She conveyed her feelings to Tatyrao who was in London at that time. Tatyrao wrote a poetic letter of consolation to his dear Yesuvahini. This remarkable letter entitled *Saantvan (Consolation)* is a landmark in Marathi literature.

#### 4.4 Saantvan:

Tatyrao wrote:

(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 the 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 Srihari and thus withered away there  
Became immortal and holy effecting *moksha* (deliverance)

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

(3)

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

#### **4.5 Narayanrao re-arrested:**

It seems Fate was bent on testing Yesuvahini to her fullest. Narayanrao who was arrested on the charge of hurling a bomb on Viceroy Minto was released on 18 December 1909. No sooner had Yesuvahini heaved a sigh of relief when the Collector of Nashik, Jackson was killed by revolutionaries in Vijayanand theatre, Nashik. A fresh round of raids, searches, arrests and torture followed. Narayanrao was arrested on the midnight of 23 December. He was tortured. In London, Tatyarao was arrested for his alleged role in the Nashik conspiracy (to kill Jackson). On 24 December 1910, Tatyarao was sentenced to Transportation for Life and Narayanrao was sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment. On 30 January 1911, Tatyarao was sentenced to Transportation for Life for a second time. A lesser woman would have collapsed but not Yesuvahini. She bore these reverses silently, careful not to appear dejected and desperate. She set an example to all those women whose husbands were engaged in revolutionary activities. But at times, her outward calm would give way to copious tears in the company of her closest friends. "My husband and Tatya have been imprisoned but what did Bal do to incur the wrath of the government. Is the government not satisfied with two victims from our family? Will they release my Bal? And what about Tatya? And will I ever be able to see my husband again?" she would lament.

#### **4.6 Shunned by society:**

When Babarao was arrested, other members of the *Abhinav Bharat* were free. They stood by Yesuvahini in her hour of crisis. But when Tatyarao and Narayanrao were arrested, all members of the *Abhinav Bharat* were implicated in the Nashik conspiracy. Virtually every patriotic young man in Nashik was placed in handcuffs. A reign of terror was let loose in Nashik. Ordinary folk started shunning any one who

was linked directly or indirectly to revolutionary activities. They were looked upon as criminals, even their shadow spelt ruin. People now turned their backs on Yesuvahini. Once, Yesuvahini hired a cart belonging to one Ganpat Malusare to go to her native place, Trimbakeshwar. It so happened that the manager of the famed Trimbakeshwar temple also wished to go to Trimbakeshwar. As he was about to mount the cart, he saw Yesuvahini already sitting there. He was taken aback. Here was the wife of a revolutionary who was serving a life sentence. To this pious temple manager, Babarao was a criminal and hence sharing a cart with his wife was tantamount to sin (\* this is not surprising. Even some revolutionaries considered King Edward VII as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu). He told the cart owner to ask Yesuvahini to dismount or else he would not get inside. The temple manager's words pierced Yesuvahini's ears. Burning with humiliation, she bowed down her head. Fortunately, it was the illiterate cart owner who stood by her. "I have eaten Phadke's salt (Phadke was Yesuvahini's maiden family name). Shame on me if I were to turn away a lady from that house. Vahini has originally hired my cart. If you have any objections, sir, you are welcome to make alternative arrangements." The temple manager walked away in a huff. Yesuvahini had to often face insults in her native place. Her brothers did not turn her away but villagers would curse her for becoming a burden on her brothers' families. Once at a gathering of women in her native Trimbakeshwar, a woman claimed that she was possessed by the 'goddess' who spoke through her. "When will the clouds of misery and hardships clear away from my life? When will I see my husband and his brothers" asked the god-fearing Yesuvahini to the woman. At this, the 'goddess' spoke with vehemence, "You shit by the hearth and then blame your destiny. Go away, you sinner!" Yesuvahini was disheartened. For two days thereafter, she wept silently.

#### **4.7 Keeping alive the flame of patriotism:**

There were several women in Nashik whose husbands were imprisoned for their revolutionary activities. Some of these women would gather in the house of Parvatibai Gadgil. Her husband Mahadev Balwant Gadgil was a member of *Abhinav Bharat* and had been imprisoned for six months for procuring pistols from Gwalior. Such was Gadgil's devotion to Babarao that he had kept Babarao's thick stick in his *puja* room. Gadgil's house was a haven for the wives of these imprisoned revolutionaries. These brave women would gather here and comfort each other. Amongst them, Yesuvahini was the only one whose husband had been sentenced to Transportation for Life and whose two brothers-in-law were also serving prison sentences. Her courage and fortitude was a source of inspiration to all these women. It was Yesuvahini who kept their morale high. With their husbands imprisoned, several patriotic songs were in danger of going into oblivion. These women would collectively sing them. Thus they kept alive the flame of patriotism. The poet Govind had composed a song especially for Yesuvahini. The first line of the song was "*sankati raksha mama kaant kaant*" ("protect me from crisis, dear husband"). Yesuvahini would think of Babarao and mutter the song before sleep overtook her at night. Often the same song would play on her lips when she got up in the morning.

#### 4.8 Janakibai's tragedy:

Yesuvahini was given safe haven by Babarao's associate Rambhau Datar. She used to look after his son. For some days, Yesuvahini's mother also came over to stay with her. When Rambhau was transferred to Pune, Yesuvahini went to Pune along with the Datar family. When in Nashik, Yesuvahini would rest for some time in the Vishnu temple. She would call over Tatyrao's wife Mai (Yamunabai) and shower maternal affection on her. It is noteworthy that even in her hour of distress, Yesuvahini looked after Janakibai, the distraught wife of Sakharampant Gore, an accused in the Nashik conspiracy case. After Sakharampant was imprisoned, the young Janakibai went into severe depression. She tried all sorts of penances in the hope that her husband would be released but her hopes were dashed. Sakharampant met a tragic end while in jail. After this, Janakibai lost all interest in life. She refused to eat and became extremely weak. To make matters worse, she lost bowel control. It was Yesuvahini who nursed her tirelessly. But Janakibai died tragically with her husband's name on her lips. "Will I meet the same fate as Janakibai" was the question that began to haunt Yesuvahini.

#### 4.9 Narayanrao settles down:

On 21 June 1911, Narayanrao completed his prison sentence and was released. His fame as a patriot meant that no college was willing to admit him. It was with great difficulty that he finally secured admission in the National Medical College, Calcutta. Fighting poverty and constant fear of official wrath, he completed his education, at times working as a clerk and often going hungry to make two ends meet. In 1912, when a bomb was hurled in Delhi on Lord Hardinge, he was arrested and brought to Pune but was released after a few days. In 1916, he qualified in allopathy, homeopathy and dentistry. In 1917, he started a dental clinic in Girgaum, Mumbai. Around this time, he married Haridini (after marriage, her name was changed to Shantabai).



Yesuvahini was happy that Narayanrao had finally settled. She came over to live with Narayanrao and his wife Shantabai. Yesuvahini led a simple life. She had two sets of simple clothes. She did not drink tea or read novels. She had lost all interest in life. However, with Shantabai, she would collect women every Monday. The women would collectively sing odes to Chhatrapati Shivaji. Each woman would then sing patriotic songs in turn. Thus, Yesuvahini gave these women lessons in patriotism.

#### **4.10 Efforts to release Babarao:**

Efforts to secure the release of Babarao and Tatyao had been initiated by Narayanrao in 1912. In 1915, both Yesuvahini and Mai (Yamunabai Vinayak Savarkar) had appealed to the Viceroy Lord Hardinge to release their husbands. Through letter no. 2328 dated 28 July 1915 and letter no. 3452 dated 11 October 1915 respectively, the Government rejected the applications of Yesuvahini and Mai.

#### **4.11 Endless pining for Babarao:**

In the second half of 1918, Yesuvahini went to Nashik. She stayed at the house of her maternal uncle, Wamanrao Dandekar. Her health was now failing. Ever since Babarao was imprisoned, Yesuvahini was dying a slow death. Towards the end of 1918, she became bedridden. She would get fever. She had a premonition that she would not live long. She yearned for one last glimpse of her husband. For several years, Yesuvahini had put on a brave front. Now with death staring at her, she was possessed by one last wish to see Babarao. She beseeched, wept and lamented but to no avail. Narayanrao made repeated attempts to secure permission for Yesuvahini's meeting with Babarao but each time, he received a stone-hearted refusal.

#### **4.12 Yesuvahini's tragic end:**

In the end, Yesuvahini developed swelling all over the body. The end was near. Even in that condition, her spirit was intact. Four days before she died, Godumai Khare came to meet her. Seeing Yesuvahini's hands bereft of bangles, Godumai asked her whether she was preparing new ones. "Godumai, my bangles would not fit me because of this swelling. That is why I removed them. Someone gave me new bangles but as they were foreign-made I did not wear them. Hence my hands are bare" was Yesuvahini's spirited reply. It was only after Godumai gave her indigenous bangles that Yesuvahini wore them. Narayanrao and his wife Shantabai were by her side when the end came. By this time, Yesuvahini had become delirious. In her delirious state, she would tell Shantabai, "O Laxmi (\*Laxmi and Haridini were the two maiden names of Shantabai), make preparations for the welcome." When questioned, she would say, "Don't you know. I am going to meet him." Seeing Yesuvahini's pitiable condition, the inconsolable Narayanrao took her head in his lap and looked searchingly at her. But Yesuvahini's vacant eyes were searching for Babarao, her incoherent talk centred round her husband. Yesuvahini gave one last pitiful glance at Narayanrao and left her mortal coil. She died on 20 April 1919.

Three days after she died, an official letter arrived. "There is no objection to Yashodabai Savarkar going to the Andamans to meet her husband" said the letter in cold print. Yesuvahini's last wish was thus fulfilled but she was no longer alive. She died childless, pining for her imprisoned husband who was thousands of miles away doing hard labour. Verily, if the Hindu race is alive today, it is only because it has produced women like Yesuvahini. She is worthy of being worshipped by the gods!

## 5 BABARAO IN THE ANDAMANS

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### 5.1 First encounter with Barrie:

In 1910, the '*Maharaja*' ship carrying Babarao touched the shores of the Andamans. Babarao stepped inside the gates of the Cellular Jail. It was like walking into the jaws of death. Babarao was sentenced to remain there like a living corpse for the next 25 years. All the prisoners were first lined up and made to sit in a row. Babarao was so exhausted by the journey that he rested his head against his bedding. His mind was so numb that the enormity of the horror that was the Cellular Jail failed to penetrate it. Suddenly someone shouted, "*Sarkaar!!*" ("*Master*"). "Stand up" barked a police officer. The prisoners were hurriedly made to stand in attention. "Barrie is coming" someone whispered. A police officer shoved Babarao and signaled him to stand. But Babarao was so exhausted that he could not bring himself to stand. A red faced potbellied white man of medium frame with frog- eyes, flat nose and a huge moustache appeared on the scene. A thick baton in his hand and a cigar between his lips completed his appearance. All the prison officials and hardened criminals alike seemed to tremble at his arrival. This was none other than the infamous Irish jailor Barrie, the terror of the Cellular Jail. No sooner had he arrived than he shot his first question, "Where is Savarkar?" Still sitting, Babarao answered, "Here I am." For a moment, Barrie was taken aback. This was the first time anyone and that too a prisoner had dared to answer him squarely. But he soon regained his composure and ordered Babarao to stand up. Babarao obeyed him. He did not wish to confront Barrie unnecessarily. Barrie went strutting to Babarao and explained to him the rules and regulations of the Cellular Jail. "If you break rules, remember you will have to deal with me" he threatened. With that parting shot, Barrie departed.

### 5.2 Cellular Jail:



One of the murkiest chapters in the history of the colonial rule in India is the *kaala paani*. The Andamans were then known as the Devil's Islands of the British Raj. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal are over 1200 km south of Kolkata and east of Chennai. The British chose them in order to isolate political prisoners physically, socially and politically. Conditions in these islands were most unhealthy and led to high rate of mortality. The prisoners were put to the hardest labour possible such as clearing jungles, cutting wood, preparing bricks and lime. They were treated worse than criminals. Boden Kloss, an English observer has recorded with intense feeling of sadness, "Prisoners were set free on

nearby Viper Island - to make friends, one supposes, with poisonous snakes. Who knows how many lived?" To be sent there was considered to be a living death and hence it came to be known as *Kaala Paani* (*lit.* black waters). During the First War of Independence of 1857, the British resolved to ship out freedom fighters, whom they called 'mutineers' from the soil of the mainland to distant islands and isolate them. A noting in Home Judicial, OC No. 21 dated 15 January 1858 states, "It has been determined by the Right Hon'ble the Governor-General in Council to establish a penal settlement on the Andaman Islands, for reception of the first instance of convicts sentenced to imprisonment, and to transportation for the crimes of mutiny and rebellion and for other offences connected therewith." The first batch of freedom-fighters reached Port Blair on 10 March 1858 from Calcutta. Their number was 200. About the first batch, it is reported that four Punjab mutineers died on the way before reaching Andamans and within three months of their arrival 64 of them died in hospital. Some of them were executed. The second batch of 171 convicts from Karachi came by the ships, the '*Roman empire*' and '*Edward*' in April 1858. By May 1864, the number of convicts grew to 3294. As the number of prisoners deported from the mainland started increasing to the staggering figure of 9603 by 1874, it became difficult to check their 'patriotic indiscipline'. An Order No. 423 dated 30 September 1893 was issued by the British administration for the construction of a bigger and well secured jail as a 'matter of great urgency' to dehumanize these freedom-fighters. The Jail was sanctioned at an estimated cost of Rs. 517352 (1893 prices!). Some 600 half-starved prisoners were used as forced labour for the construction of the Jail that was meant to imprison themselves and their fellow countrymen. Constant vigil was kept on these labour prisoners during the construction work so that no revolt was organized by them. It was for this reason that the target of three years took thirteen years for the completion of its construction. The Cellular Jail was thus completed in 1906 and the number of prisoners it housed had swelled to 14086! Situated on the sea coast in the north-eastern portion of Port Blair, the Cellular Jail was the first hair-raising sight for the deported prisoners arriving in ships coming to Port Blair.

Like an octopus having eight arms to catch its prey, the Cellular Jail had seven protruding arms or wings from the central watchtower. The Jail was constructed with seven wings, spreading out like a seven-petal flower. In its centre it had a tower with a turret. Connected to this were the three storey high seven wings with 698 isolated cells. That is why it was called the Cellular Jail.

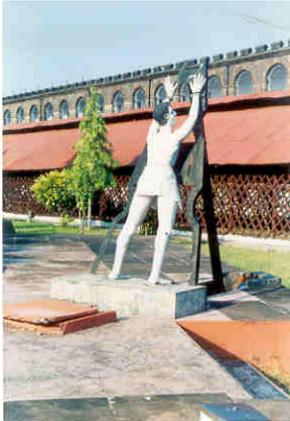


Each wing had three floors with 698 cells. Each cell measured 4.1 by 1.9 metres, just enough for one convict. These small cells gave the Cellular Jail its name. All the seven wings of the Cellular Jail had a meeting point at the central watchtower for entry and exit. Each cell had separate iron bolts and locking devices outside, beyond the reach of the prisoner's hand. Though there was no chance of an escape, there was constant vigil by 21 wardens; seven on each floor facing their respective wings. There were sentries in the central watchtower.

The prisoners would be made to walk through the well guarded first iron-bar entrance. As the gate would be unlocked and pulled, it would make a terrible sound like the jaws of death ready to swallow a new arrival. After this first gate was a second one. Between the two gates was a thick wall. It was covered with gruesome

instruments nailed to the wall. These were the terrible instruments of punishment and torture. Some of these instruments were as follows:

1. Handcuffs - to be used on the wrists in front or behind; the prisoners would also be made to remain standing for hours at a stretch with their hands tied to handcuffs hooked to a wall above his height (standing handcuffs punishment). The prisoners were kept in this position from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 12 noon to 5 p.m. They were not allowed to answer nature's call while undergoing this punishment. Many would pass urine and stools when it became impossible to control their urge. They would then be punished for soiling their clothes and the prison!



2. Link fetters- composed of a chain and ankle rings; the length of the chain being two feet and the total weight being 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.
3. Cross bar fetters - composed of single bar for the purpose of keeping the legs apart and ankle rings; length of the bar being 16 inches and the total weight being two and a half pounds. Under this

sentence, 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!

4. Canes, thick and long



5. Bayonets
6. Rifles
7. Shackles
8. Thick long ropes
9. Leather whips fastened to a stiff handle
10. Oil mill or *kolu*; the prisoners would be yoked like bullocks to the metal bar and made to push it around in a circle so that

kept in a central receptacle would get crushed and oil would drip; total oil required to be thus extracted would be thirty pounds.



To minimize the chances of communication between the convicts and to isolate them from each other, the construction of the Cellular Jail was made such that the front portion of each wing faced the back side of the other wing at a sufficient distance. There were no dormitories in the Cellular Jail. On arrival in the

Cellular Jail, convicts would be placed in solitary confinement for six months. This helped to tone down their vigour and vitality and demoralize them. Thus the Cellular Jail was a prison within a prison!

From the early period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, jails in India were packed with young revolutionaries. The most feared among them were sent for *Kaala paani* to the Cellular Jail. Among those who served time here were revolutionaries of:

- The Alipore Bomb Case
- The Chittagong Armoury Case
- The Nashik Conspiracy Case
- The Lahore Conspiracy Case
- The Nadia Conspiracy Case
- The Gadar Party heroes
- The Khulna Conspiracy Case
- The Rumpa Peasants' Revolt

Most of them were charged under section 121 of the Indian Penal Code (1860), namely "waging of War against the King of the British Empire".

The 1941 earthquake caused considerable damage to the Cellular Jail. During the Japanese occupation, further damage was caused to the building which resulted in demolition of four wings of the Cellular Jail. Presently, there are only three wings that stand as a silent monument to those unheard and unlisted heroes who perished in its soil and made the land fertile for the freedom of our motherland!

After Independence, there was a proposal by Pandit Nehru to turn the Cellular Jail into a hospital. One suspects that Nehru had a deep-seated animus against the revolutionaries. His daughter Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi however proved worthy in this regard. When a proposal to beautify the Cellular jail reached her, she made the following observation, "The main point of the preservation of the Jail is to maintain its gaunt severity. This should be the most effective and poignant memorial of all. New memorials, statues, gardens and youth camps will detract from the atmosphere of the original Jail, which we seek to preserve, and will obviously have an artificial look. These proposals should therefore be dropped. Instead of all this paraphernalia, roll call of freedom-fighters, inscribed on metal plaques might be put up at an appropriate place. We are in no position to incur the additional expenditure which the expert team's recommendations would necessitate. The matter should be re-examined so that construction of new buildings is avoided" (Letter no. 30/130/69, ANL dated 12 December 1971).

From 1896 the construction of Cellular Jail was started and it was completed in 1906. It was in such a fearsome Jail that Babarao now found himself.

### **5.3 Hard labour**

Babarao was locked up in a solitary cell. This cell was located in a building that housed political prisoners. These included the ten Bengali revolutionaries who were implicated in the Maniktola conspiracy. A few days later, Wamanrao Joshi who was

implicated in the Jackson murder trial joined them. Shri Nandgopal, editor of the 'Swarajya' periodical from Prayag (Allahabad) who was accused of treason also joined them. These political prisoners would do hard labour together. In a few days, Babarao was assigned the task of chopping of dry coconut shell, separating the husk and weaving it into ropes. However Babarao's body had become frail. The skin on his hands would peel and hands would bleed. Sitting for long hours at a stretch was backbreaking. At times, he would groan in pain. Nevertheless, Babarao would manfully try to complete the task assigned to him. This would evoke both admiration and pity amongst the other political prisoners. They would weave bundles of the coconut husk and throw it towards Babarao so as to lighten his burden. In helping Babarao, the other prisoners were risking punishment by the jail warden. In fact, the warden would rain blows on them if he happened to catch them in the act. Babarao would feel awkward and refuse help from his fellow prisoners.

#### 5.4 Yoked to the oil-mill

This backbreaking labour continued for a two-three months. But this was just the beginning of Babarao's suffering. A police officer from Calcutta came on inspection. He was incensed to see all the political prisoners doing work in a group. He ordered Barrie to separate them and subject them to worse treatment. Barrie was only too glad to follow these orders. He locked the political prisoners in separate cells. He had an oil-mill installed in each cell. In the center of each oil-mill was a receptacle to keep pieces of dry coconuts. The prisoners were rudely woken up early in the morning. Like bullocks, they were yoked to a long rod attached to the receptacle. They were required to push the rod in a circle so that the pieces of dried coconuts or mustard seeds in the center would get crushed and oil would drip out in a vessel kept outside the cell. This contraption was the infamous '*kolu*' of the Cellular Jail. Moving the *kolu* required intense physical effort. Even when Babarao applied all his strength, the *kolu* would barely move halfway. Utterly exhausted, Babarao literally hung to the *kolu* and barely managed to complete one revolution. When it was ten in the morning, the prisoners were given food. They had barely sat down and started to eat when the prison guard asked them to stand. He warned them that in case they failed to extract the requisite amount of oil by evening, they would be beaten and severely punished. Babarao kept aside the plate of food and resumed the hard labour. His whole body was streaming with perspiration. He tried to eat even as he pushed the *kolu*. His throat was parched. He had already finished drinking water from the small tumbler given to him. When he asked for more water, the guard barked at him. Prisoners were to be given only two tumblers of water and not a drop more! Babarao was hungry, thirsty and exhausted. He developed severe cramps in his legs; his chest seemed to burst at its seams; his head whirled. But there was no respite. The *kolu* continued mercilessly till five in the evening. The prisoners were then required to carry the buckets of the oil extracted so that it could be weighed. Each prisoner was required to extract thirty pounds of oil daily! Babarao could not complete the job. Barrie threatened that he would cane him if he did not complete the assigned task. Babarao went back to his cell and dropped half-dead on a sheet of cloth. Barrie would flout the prison rules and make the prisoners move the *kolu* till nine at night so that their job was completed. Barrie would sit watching the prisoners, threatening and beating them if they faltered.

## 5.5 Attacks of migraine:

This backbreaking routine became a daily feature. To add to Babarao's woes, he started getting bouts of migraine. In utter desperation, Babarao would bang his head on the prison walls. His forehead would start bleeding. When he complained of headache, the guards would shrug him off. If a doctor chanced to see him, he would pronounce that Babarao was feigning, as there was no fever recorded. Barrie would show no pity. He would make Babarao move the *kolu* in spite of the splitting headache.

## 5.6 Bloody diarrhoea!

As per the prison rules, the *kolu* routine was to be done for two months followed by removing the dry coconut husk for one month. This cycle would be repeated over and over again. So horrible was the *kolu* that compared to it, even the hard work of removing coconut husk seemed welcome to the prisoners. The prisoners would look forward to the day when the work on the *kolu* would be suspended for one month. However, Babarao could not experience even this small mercy. For no sooner did one cycle of *kolu* get over, he started getting severe diarrhoea. The terrible food started taking its toll. He started passing mucus and blood in his stools. To compound his woes, he was not allowed to use the toilet when he so desired. Once the food was served to him, the door of the cell would not open for hours together. The first mouthful of food would start a bout of severe abdominal cramps. Babarao would resist the urge to pass motions. But at times, he could no longer control himself. Out of sheer desperation, he would relieve himself on the coconut husk in the cell. There was a small pitcher provided to collect urine. Once that was full, Babarao was forced to urinate on the walls of the cell. Babarao would then work in that stench for hours at a stretch. The nights seemed never-ending. Once the cell was locked, the door would not open till next morning. The abdominal cramps would become unbearable at night. Babarao would feel he would burst at any moment. His cultured and pure mind would be repelled in shame. But what could he do? Prisoners in the Cellular Jail were treated worse than animals! To add insult to injury, he would be produced before Barrie on the morrow and asked to explain why he had soiled the cell. The prison warden would then hit him with a baton. Sometimes, as punishment, Barrie would order that he be yoked to the *kolu* for one day. After a few days, Babarao adapted to the stench around him. His mind would dwell on the teachings of the *Bhagwadgita*, *Yogavasishtha* or those of Vivekananda or Ramtirtha. He would be oblivious of his surroundings while his mind meditated for hours on lofty philosophical ideas.

## 5.7 Motions whilst standing:

Babarao would often be given the punishment of 'standing handcuffs'. He would be hooked to handcuffs in the standing position. This atrocity would continue for four to five hours at a stretch. At times, he would be seized by abdominal cramps while standing. He would pass bloody motions in the standing position itself. The stench would become unbearable. Flies would swarm all around him. Yet his punishment

would continue. Life was one never-ending hell!

### **5.8 The first strike by prisoners:**

The atrocities committed by the jailor, jail wardens and petty officers on the prisoners were in flagrant violation of the prison manual. The editor of '*Swarajya*' periodical, Nandgopal had been sentenced to Transportation for life in the Andamans on the charge of treason. He refused to work in excess of what was prescribed by the prison regulations. He would have his meals at a leisurely pace and rest thereafter. When confronted by the prison officials, he would point to the prison rules. His defiant stand left them nonplussed. It also gave courage to the other prisoners. They decided to retaliate against the injustice being meted out to them. They struck work. They would return abuse for abuse and started to retaliate physically against beatings. Babarao took the lead in this first ever strike. Barrie now singled out Nandgopal, Babarao and other leaders of this strike for illegal punishments such as cross bar fetters, standing handcuffs for a week at a stretch. They were given nothing to eat for twelve days except for thin gruel. When they continued to be defiant, they were made to drink quinine. The consumption of this bitter medicine would cause severe abdominal cramps and immense anguish to the prisoners. But even this could not cow down the leaders of the strike. However, these punishments had the effect of striking terror in the hearts of some of the inmates. They now begged Barrie for mercy. To win his favours, they started maligning these leaders with the aim of demoralizing them. Babarao launched a scathing attack on them. He remained unmoved by their taunts. This had a salutary effect on the other prisoners. The defectors were rendered ineffective. The strike went on for several days. In the end, it was Barrie who had to relent. He agreed to stop the *kolu* punishment, give light work and send the political prisoners outside the Cellular Jail to do work, as was the case with other prisoners. The strike was called off. However, Babarao was not sent outside the Cellular Jail as promised. Though he was spared of the *kolu*, he was confined to the four walls of the Cellular Jail and made to break dry coconuts.

### **5.9 Tatyrao arrives:**

While this wave of strike and illegal punishments was going on, a murmur was doing the rounds among the prisoners. The British government had apparently arrested some Indian barrister as he was trying to escape from the ship carrying him prisoner by jumping into the ocean. This barrister had been sentenced to Transportation for Life in the Cellular Jail. Babarao's worst suspicions were proved true. This barrister was none other than his beloved younger brother Tatyrao. He had arrived in the Cellular Jail on 04 July 1911. Babarao was dismayed. He tried to get more information about Tatyrao's whereabouts in the Cellular Jail. But the prison officials stonewalled his queries in this regard. The news that Tatyrao was also lodged in the Cellular Jail was broken to Babarao by Wamanrao Joshi who had been sentenced to Transportation for Life in the Jackson murder case.

### **5.10 The two brothers meet:**

Meanwhile, Tatyrao was also making efforts to somehow meet his elder brother. After much pleading with the warder, his efforts met with success. The prisoners would be herded into batches in the central watch tower of the Cellular Jail at the end of the day. Their work would be evaluated. The second batch of prisoners would arrive before the first batch had dispersed. Taking advantage of this, Tatyrao finally succeeded in meeting Babarao. The brothers had last met in 1906 when Tatyrao was ready to depart from Mumbai harbour to go to England to become a barrister. They were now meeting in 1911 under totally different circumstances. Seeing his younger brother in the garb of a prisoner, Babarao exclaimed in dismay, "Tatyrao, how did you land here?" Before Tatyrao could reply, the petty officer and warder separated the two. Thus ended their meeting!

### **5.11 Correspondence between the brothers:**

Babarao somehow succeeded in sending a note to Tatyrao. The note read, "I had hopes that you would work for our motherland and taste success. This hope had made my own Transportation bearable. I thought that you would carry on the work for which I had to sacrifice myself. How did you get arrested when you were in Paris? What will happen to our labours?...All your efforts have been reduced to naught! And who will look after our Bal? I cannot still believe my eyes? How did you land here?" It was with great difficulty that Tatyrao could answer. For he not only had to conceal his own pain but also console his 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!*

Tatyrao's reply lifted Babarao's spirits.

### **5.12 Punished for killing a snake:**

Babarao and Tatyrao would now meet clandestinely. This did not escape the attention of certain political prisoners who acted as Barrie's informants. When Barrie came to know of this development, he issued orders prohibiting "Ganeshbabu (Babarao) and Badebabu (Tatyrao)" from coming to the central watchtower. The

central watchtower had buildings arising from it. Some buildings had staircases leading from their upper stories towards the central watchtower. Once, a snake was seen coiled up on the grill of one of these staircases. A commotion followed. Unmindful of Barrie's order, Babarao rushed to the central watchtower, grabbed the stick of an overseer, climbed on the staircase and dealt a severe blow to the snake. The other prisoners followed suit and killed the snake. The overseer was filled with admiration for Babarao and reported the matter to Barrie. But instead of congratulating Babarao for saving the lives of other inmates, Barrie ordered that Babarao be punished for entering the central watchtower and thus violating his orders. Babarao was punished with handcuffs for seven days!

### **5.13 Communication amongst the prisoners:**

The arrival of Tatyrao proved to be a morale-booster for the prisoners. He was a source of inspiration for them. Each cell had a crevice at the bottom of the wall. One side of the cell faced the courtyard. Soon, the prisoners started pressing their mouths to the crevices and secretly conversing with those prisoners who had been let out in the courtyard. Each cell also had a window at a height of around twelve feet that opened into the courtyard. This was also used by the prisoners for communication. The prisoners would use wooden planks given for them to sleep on. They would place them upright and stand on them. They would then hang from the window grill and communicate with the prisoner standing outside in the courtyard. The cells of the prisoners would be changed each month. The prisoners would take advantage of this and communicate with each other during the change of cells. Tatyrao hit upon a novel idea. He would write messages on the walls of the cell with thorns. Often these messages would contain principles of economic and political theory. When a new prisoner entered such a cell, he would read the writing on the walls.

### **5.14 Babarao's interactions with fellow inmates:**

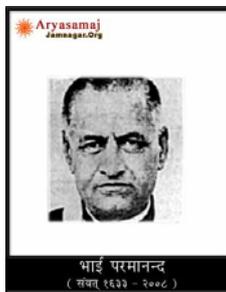
Babarao also started interacting with his fellow inmates. Babarao had a religious and philosophical bent of mind. Naturally, he struck a chord with those with a similar mindset. He would engage in philosophical discussions with like-minded inmates. These discussions would centre on past and future life, existence of God, non-dualism, worship of *Omkar* (\*primordial sound) and *yoga*. Babarao would climb on the wooden plank provided to him and then hang from the window grill. He would then give a discourse to some prisoner on the other side. The conversation would be interrupted by the coughing of an approaching warden. Babarao would then let go of the window grill and fall to the ground. The 'student' on the other side would also flee. The eminent revolutionary Baba Prithvi Singh Azad was one of those who were thus drawn to Babarao. (\* Prithvi Singh Azad was one of the founder members of the Gadar Party. He was sentenced to death in the Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1915. This was later commuted to life imprisonment. He was deported to Cellular

jail- Andamans. He was later repatriated to the mainland and while on transit to Nagpur Central Jail escaped from police custody from a running mail train on 29 November 1922. He led an underground life for sixteen years. In 1938, he voluntarily surrendered to Gandhi. He was again arrested by the British Government but was released with the outbreak of the World War 2 in 1939).



Baba Prithvi Singh Azad looked upon Babarao as his spiritual *guru*.

Towards the end of 1915, Bhai Paramananda was sentenced to Transportation in the Cellular Jail.



He too would engage in philosophical discussions with Babarao. Babarao would use thorns to jot down fine points in philosophy. Once he got hold of books by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. He promptly wrote down his queries on the walls. When Barrie saw Babarao 'defacing' the walls, he gave him a week's punishment of 'standing handcuffs'. Unmindful of the physical pain, Babarao's mind would dwell on the teachings of Ramatirtha (\* 1873- 1906; a great ascetic and an enlightened mystic; spread the message of Vedanta both in India and abroad especially in Japan and the United States) and Vivekananda. Babarao would also look forward to his clandestine meetings with Tatyarao when the prisoners would exchange cells.

## 5.15 Coronation of King George V:



The coronation of King George V and Queen May (or Queen Mary as she was later called) took place at Westminster Abbey on 22 June 1911. Later that year, the King and Queen travelled to India for the Delhi Durbar on 12 December, where they were presented to an assembled audience of Indian dignitaries and princes as the Emperor and Empress of India. George wore the newly-created Imperial Crown of India at the ceremony. A wild rumour spread in the Cellular Jail that the British government would release all political prisoners as a goodwill gesture. Some prisoners started working hard to get into the good books of the prison wardens, hoping that they would thus secure a recommendation for release. The prison wardens took advantage of the situation and made the prisoners work harder knowing fully well that they would not refuse. The news of the coronation gave a faint glimmer of hope to Babarao. Even if he, Babarao was not released, surely Tatyarao would be more fortunate, thought Babarao. Someone brought the news that Tatyarao's release was imminent. An inmate even tugged at Tatyarao's jail ticket (prison badge) in a fit of joy. The inscribed metal piece that carried his convict number and duration of imprisonment

gave way and fell down. Everyone thought it was a good omen. Babarao was certain that Tatyrao would be released. Finally, the day when the prison terms of prisoners were to be commuted dawned. All the prisoners were lined up. Barrie and the jail superintendent marched in. Each prisoner was called and the extent of commutation of his sentence was announced. Babarao's turn came. One month was reduced from each year of his jail sentence. Babarao was eagerly waiting for Tatyrao's name to be announced. But Tatyrao's name was not called. In fact, he was not even lined up with the other prisoners. There was not the slightest commutation of his jail sentence! Babarao was dismayed. Dejected, he went back to his cell.

### **5.16 Suicide and insanity:**

The British now permitted more prisoners to leave the confines of the Cellular Jail and work outside its precincts. However, far from giving them light work, they were subjected to the most grueling labour. The tasks assigned to these unfortunate prisoners were so brutal that many prisoners lost the will to live. One such prisoner was Indu Bhushan Ray. He was an accused in the Alipore Bomb Case. He was convicted to 10 years rigorous imprisonment for hurling a bomb at M.Tardival, Mayor of Chandan Nagar. (Narendra Goswami was his companion in this action while Narendra Bandopadhyaya of Chandan Nagar was the mastermind).

This youngster got so disheartened that he refused to work outside the Cellular Jail and was brought inside. But the jail officials were determined to break him. He was yoked to the oil-mill and punished brutally. The sadistic torture turned him into a physical and mental wreck. Finally on 29 April 1912, Indubhushan ended his life by hanging himself!

Another unfortunate youngster was Ullaskar Dutta. Son of the late Dwijadas Dutta, he was a degree holder in Agriculture from London University and a student of Presidency College, Calcutta (now Kolkata).

There, he had thrashed Professor Russell for uttering derogatory remarks on the Bengalis and was hence expelled from College. He was an expert in the manufacture of explosives. He was arrested in the Alipore bomb case and sentenced to death. On appeal, this sentence was commuted to Transportation for life. He was deported to the Cellular Jail. Initially, he was made to carry wet bricks. Then he was made to haul water up a hill. Fed up with this back-breaking routine, Ullaskar refused to work. He was promptly sent back to the Cellular Jail and yoked to the oil-mill. But Ullaskar would not work. He was given the punishment of standing handcuffs for a week. His body hung from the handcuffs. He developed fever of 107 ° F. But his pitiable condition failed to move the prison officials. They heartlessly made him stand in the blazing sun. Ullaskar became semi-conscious. The jail officials now seized his limp body and started kicking and beating him mercilessly. Ullaskar lost his sanity due to the extreme torture. Even as Ullaskar screamed and begged for mercy, the wardens dragged him to the hospital. There he was administered electric shocks to make sure he was not feigning insanity. The waves of electric current sent Ullaskar's fragile body into a convulsive spasm. He remained unconscious for three days (\* Ullaskar was later repatriated and released in 1920. He was rearrested in 1931 for violating Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code and awarded 18 months' imprisonment).

### **5.17 Dejection and despair:**

These events had a deep impact on Babarao's mind. Indubhushan's suicide made him think on similar lines. Should he similarly end his life one day and free himself from the daily torture? However, reason would eventually dawn on him. Surely, his sick and fragile body would one day ignite the flames of patriotism. Ullaskar's insane cries of anguish disturbed Babarao tremendously. He would recall the cheerful prankster that Ullaskar had once been. Ullaskar was an excellent mimic and ventriloquist. He would mimic the cries of different birds and entertain the other prisoners. Babarao recalled how Ullaskar had once mimicked the voice of a jail warden and called out his name. Even as Babarao looked perplexed, Ullaskar had burst into peals of laughter. And this was the lad who had now turned insane due to inhuman torture. Babarao's despair knew no bounds.

### **5.18 The second strike:**

Indubhushan's suicide and Ullaskar's insanity infuriated the prisoners. They now demanded that their sentences be commuted at regular intervals and that they be given light work and be sent outside the Cellular Jail to do work as per the prison rules. In October-November 1912, they went on strike. Babarao participated in the strike with fervour. The striking prisoners were subjected to harsh punishments such as bar fetters, cross bar fetters, standing handcuffs, back handcuffs and solitary confinement. However, these punishments could not break their spirit. The strike was successful. The prison officials agreed to give the prisoners light work and send them out of the four walls of the Cellular Jail for work. The prisoners called off their strike. Babarao was one of the leaders of the striking prisoners. The prison officials extracted their revenge. While other prisoners were sent out of the Cellular Jail to do work, their leaders such as Babarao, Wamanrao Joshi, Nanigopal and Tatyrao were denied this leniency.

### **5.19 Third strike:**

Some prisoners who were sent out of the Cellular Jail started doing clandestine political propaganda. News of this propaganda reached the ears of the Commissioner in a highly exaggerated and distorted fashion. He was led to believe that the political prisoners were planning to escape from the Andamans with the use of bombs. He promptly arrested all prisoners on the island and packed them off to the Cellular Jail. In November 1913, Sir Reginald Henry Craddock, a member of the Viceroy's Council toured the Andamans. The political prisoners narrated their harrowing plight to him but to no avail. This set the stage for the third strike. As

with the previous two strikes, this strike too met with success. As before, the prisoners refused to do work and were meted out severe and even illegal punishments. Some of the striking prisoners were produced before the magistrate and even had their prison terms extended by four to six months. The unity of the striking prisoners remained invincible. Tatyrao even developed a code language among the prisoners by using the clinking of the handcuffs for communication. The code language developed by Tatyrao represented English words. Babarao modified it to represent native words and made possible its widespread use. Barrie would get surprised at the coordination of the prisoners. Finally the British Government of India bowed down to the demands of the striking prisoners. Leaving aside those who were sentenced to Transportation for Life, a few other political prisoners were sent to various prisons in mainland India. Those who were serving life terms were provided with facilities for writing. The quality of food provided to them improved. Thus the political prisoners succeeded in improving prison conditions by their relentless struggle. It must however be remembered that it took the prisoners around 5-6 years (1909-1914) to bring about this change. Babarao was in the forefront of these agitations even though they did not bring him any significant personal benefit. He was content that his participation had in some way alleviated the conditions of his fellow inmates.

## **5.20 Pathetic food:**

Food served to prisoners in the Cellular jail was simply pathetic. It was either half cooked or burnt. The cooks often suffered from serious sexually transmitted diseases. The food would often contain their sweat. The gruel often contained kerosene. The water was contaminated. Soon after his arrival in the Cellular Jail, Babarao made strenuous protests against the poor quality of food. He would refuse to eat the food and would instigate others to do the same. If the gruel smelt of kerosene, he would throw it away. Throwing away food by prisoners was considered to be a grave offence. Prisoners would be forced to eat the thrown food. Babarao would stand his ground firmly and resolutely refuse to eat the food thrown away by him. His defiance would infuriate Barrie who would threaten him of dire consequences. But Babarao would not budge. Often, matters would reach the Jail superintendent. Babarao's perseverance in this regard finally bore fruit. Around 1915, the quality of the prison food somewhat improved.

## **5.21 Struggle for books:**

Good books were scarce at the Cellular Jail. After the arrival of Babarao and Tatyrao in the Cellular Jail, a jail warden would do a weekly round of the Jail carrying a bundle of books. Each prisoner was given to read one book at a time if he so desired. The prisoners were not expected to exchange books. If they did so, they were punished. Barrie would keep a close watch on the selection of books. He was not well educated himself. To him, any book on philosophy or sociology was "trash and nonsense." Any book that contained the words "nation" or "country" was

to him seditious. To him, theosophy was a subject that led the youth astray so books on the same were forbidden. Thus, the books provided to the prisoners were third-rate. Further, if any prisoner made notes, he was punished. It was primarily Tatyrao who launched an agitation for access to good books. Gradually, the collection of books in the Jail was expanded to include books that the prisoners secured from their homes. One of the prisoners was appointed to look after the upkeep of the books. Of course, this reform was made only after Barrie completed his tenure and when his brother-in-law took over.

## **5.22 Contemplation:**

Babarao made full use of the books provided to him. He read books on yoga, philosophy, dharma, medicine and history. He would pace up and down his cell and contemplate on their contents for hours together at night. This practice continued for many years. Thus Babarao used his prison term to widen the horizons of his knowledge. The seeds of many of his later writings are to be found in his reading in the Cellular Jail.

***Wounded while doing shuddhi (\* bringing back to the Hindu fold those who had been converted to other religions usually by force, fraud, fear or allurements):***

Tatyrao had launched a campaign for *shuddhi* while in the Cellular Jail. From the warden to the clerk, most of the jail officers in the Cellular Jail were Muslims. They would collude with Barrie and prove their loyalty to him by committing atrocities on the prisoners. They would induce the prisoners to embrace Islam by threatening them with punishment or luring them with tobacco. On an average, two or three Hindu prisoners would get converted in every one or two months. Such converted prisoners would no longer dine with their fellow Hindu prisoners but would dine with Muslim prisoners. Once this happened, the Hindu prisoners themselves refused to dine with them. This reinforced their conversion to Islam. When Tatyrao realized this, he launched a campaign against conversion and for *shuddhi* of the converted prisoners. Babarao whole-heartedly took part in this campaign. Later, Hotilal Varma (\* editor, *Swarajya*, Urdu weekly; he was arrested and sentenced for 10 years and deported to Andamans), some Arya Samaji prisoners and even ordinary convicts joined the campaign. The process of *shuddhi* was simple; swallowing a *tulsi* leaf and reciting a *shloka* from the Bhagwad Gita was all that was needed! The Muslims were enraged by the *shuddhi* campaign. They decided to get back at Tatyrao and Babarao. Usually, the Muslim wardens would coerce or allure recent convicts. Babarao kept a close watch on their activities. He would meet such convicts and save them from the clutches of the Muslim wardens. Around 1920, a fearsome Muslim convict had developed friendship with a Gujarati Hindu convict and was planning to convert him. The Muslim convict used to satisfy his lust with the latter. When Babarao learnt this, he contacted a clerk and had the Gujarati Hindu transferred to another cell. The Muslim thug was enraged. Babarao had deprived him of a place in paradise by preventing conversion. Once when Babarao had finished bathing, the thug came forward and hit Babarao on the head with his

tumbler. Babarao started bleeding and fell down. Instead of punishing the thug, Barrie praised him for teaching a lesson to Babarao. However, as things turned out, the thug later received caning for other offences. He soon became a shadow of his former self.

### **5.23 Activities of informants:**

Some of the political prisoners had become informants for the British. When Babarao arrived in the Cellular Jail, one such informant tried to ensnare Babarao. He would try to sweet-talk Babarao into revealing information about his revolutionary comrades in Maharashtra. But Babarao was made of sterner stuff. He told the man, "I actually belong to the radical group in the Congress party. I know nothing about revolutionaries. I am imprisoned merely for publishing two poems." The informant was frustrated. Later, Hemchandra Das Kanungo listed all the informants to Babarao. During the first strike by the political prisoners, the informants among them broke the strike. Babarao would openly call them 'traitors'. No wonder then that these informants detested Babarao. Some of them even went to the extent of making false complaints against Babarao and Tatyrao and ensuring that they got punished by Barrie.

### **5.24 Accusation of murder:**

One of the chief informants amongst the convicts was one 'Ainewala Babu' (*i/t*: the bespectacled gentleman; he was so called because he wore spectacles). Once he accused Babarao of plotting to murder a prison guard. One Gajadhar, a convict from the United Provinces was a disciple of Babarao. Ainewala Babu falsely told Gajadhar that he should assemble a sickle-like weapon and bury it in Babarao's cell as per Babarao's instructions. As Gajadhar was given work in the iron workshop, he could assemble the said weapon on the sly. Ainewala Babu then went to Barrie and told him that Babarao was plotting to kill him and had buried a weapon for that purpose. Barrie stormed into Babarao's cell and thoroughly searched it but in vain. By a stroke of luck, Babarao had met Gajadhar in the interim period. When Gajadhar told him about the said weapon, Babarao became alert and asked Gajadhar to bury the weapon elsewhere. Barrie's search was thus in vain. He was furious with Ainewala Babu.

### **5.25 Attempt to poison Tatyrao:**

Babarao kept a close watch on Ainewala Baba. He would intercept and read notes written and circulated by him. On one occasion, Babarao intercepted a note written by Ainewala Baba. It was in code language. Babarao racked his brains. He finally

cracked the code. To his horror, he realized that Ainewala Baba had asked for some poison with which he planned to kill Tatyrao. He showed the note to Wamanrao Joshi who was imprisoned for his role in the Nashik conspiracy case. Babarao gave firm instructions to Tatyrao that he should not eat food or drink water offered by anyone. After a few days, a small pot of poison was smuggled into the Cellular Jail with the connivance of a warden. As the warden was carrying the pot, he noticed the jail superintendent approaching him. Alarmed, he quickly placed the pot in the cell closest to him. As luck would have it, the cell belonged to Tatyrao. Tatyrao quietly threw away the poison. In this way, there was a constant battle of wits between the informants and the other political prisoners. Babarao displayed his qualities of courage and vigilance even in those hard times.

### **5.26 Death at the doorstep:**

Till 1915, Babarao somehow put up with the hard labour. Thereafter, his physical condition deteriorated considerably. He spent the next 5-6 years in extreme debility. Diarrhea and migraine raised their ugly heads with increasing frequency. He was never treated properly for his diarrhea. The food served to him was so pathetic that he could no longer digest anything. He was then given milk but his digestive system was such that he could not tolerate it. In his heyday, Babarao had a sturdy build. He was now reduced to a mere shadow of his former self. By August 1918, his weight had dropped down to a mere 106 pounds. To make matters worse, his gall bladder started giving trouble. The pain was so unbearable that Babarao had to double up and drag himself. He would literally crawl towards the jail hospital. But the heartless doctor there would merely stomp his boots and accuse Babarao of feigning illness. Humiliated, Babarao would walk back to his cell. A spasm of cough would overtake him. Sometimes, the spasm would be so severe that it seemed Babarao would die coughing. The scene of Babarao dragging his frail and bent frame would evoke pity in the hearts of the other political prisoners. Soon, their worst fears came true. Towards the end of 1919, the jail superintendent sent Babarao's sputum for examination. The doctors diagnosed tuberculosis. Initially, political prisoners would not be sent to hospital. Due to sustained agitation by the political prisoners, the jail officials gradually started sending sick political prisoners to hospital. Even Tatyrao was kept in hospital for one year when he fell ill. But Babarao was not so fortunate. Neither did he receive any medicines nor was he sent to hospital. Even when he had fever of 100 to 102 ° F, diarrhea and cough, he was made to do hard labour.

In September 1920, Tatyrao was given clerical work in the oil-godown. In November 1920, Tatyrao was appointed 'foreman' there. Around this time, Babarao and Tatyrao got permission to converse and move around in their area of work. However, more often than not, their conversation would be interrupted by agonizing spasms of cough that would overtake Babarao. He would remain short of breath for about half an hour or so. During such moments, Tatyrao would helplessly watch his elder brother and wonder if he would ever get out alive from jail.

## 5.27 Meetings with Narayanrao:

While Babarao was thus hovering between life and death, Narayanrao visited the Andamans twice. The first visit took place in May 1919 while the second one took place in November 1920. During both the visits, it was Tatyrao who did most of the talking. Babarao largely remained silent. Perhaps, he could not believe that he was actually seeing his youngest brother. As per the prison rules, each convict received a 'ticket' after completing five years in the Cellular jail. This 'ticket' enabled the convict to settle in the Andaman Islands with his family, if he so desired. But this basic facility was denied to both Babarao and Tatyrao.

## 5.28 Narayanrao's efforts:

Narayanrao made earnest efforts to secure the release of Babarao and Tatyrao. Babarao's first letter from the Andamans reached Narayanrao in July 1912. From that time, Narayanrao had started his efforts. In those days, canvassing for the release of political prisoners was considered a risky venture. But Narayanrao courageously undertook this task. Narayanrao was pursuing his education in Calcutta (now Kolkata) at that time. He first met the famous leader Surendranath Bannerji and received valuable assistance from him. Bannerji forcefully put forth the issue of freedom of political prisoners through his periodical '*Bengali*'. Motilal Varma who was sentenced to Transportation in the Andamans managed to smuggle a cogent description of life in the Cellular Jail through a convict who had been released. The write-up bore Verma's signature and cell number. The released convict met Surendranath Bannerji. Bannerji published Verma's article in his 'Bengali' periodical dated 04 September 1912. He even wrote an editorial on the same. Surendranath Bannerji was a member of the Central Council. On 18 March 1913, Bannerji asked a question regarding the report of Surgeon-General Sir CP Lucas who had visited the Andamans to inspect the plight of the convicts there. He was a great support to Narayanrao in those difficult times. Through the good offices of Bannerji, Narayanrao met Motilal Ghosh, Bhupendranath Barti, Shyamsunder Chakravarti of the '*Amrit Bazaar Patrika*' and got the plight of his brothers publicized through that newspaper. Ramananda Chatterji, editor of '*Modern Review*' would make it a point to write about the plight of deported political prisoners and give issues of his periodical to Narayanrao so that he could send them to the Andamans(\* Ramananda Chatterji later became President of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha). In Maharashtra too, efforts were on to secure the release of Babarao and Tatyrao. Narayanrao met Horniman, the editor of '*Bombay Chronicle*'. Horniman and after him Brelvi put forth the plight of deported political prisoners. Achyutrao Kolhatkar wrote anonymous articles demanding the release of the Savarkar brothers in his '*Sandesh*' and '*Chronicle*' periodicals. Noted litterateur NC Kelkar also championed the cause in '*Kesari*'. The work of coordinating these efforts was done by Narayanrao. In spite of meager resources and constant police surveillance, Narayanrao bravely carried on his efforts. After completing his education in 1916, Narayanrao plunged into active politics. Narayanrao carried on his campaign through the medium of the 'National Union' in Mumbai.

### 5.29 Intensified efforts for release:

On 27 October 1919, the Managing Committee of the National Union in a resolution demanded that the Government transfer Tatyrao to a jail in the mainland. At a meeting of the 'Sarvajanik Sabha' (*lit.*: Public Meeting) held in Pune on 11 November 1919, SM Paranjpe, editor of *Kaal* demanded the release of Tatyrao. On 04 December 1919, The Government of India in a note to the Bombay Government sought its opinion on its plan to pardon imprisoned political prisoners and lift the ban on certain periodicals and public meetings with few exceptions. In its letter no. 1413 dated 08 December 1919, the Bombay Government opined that it did not think that such clemency would improve the political climate but that it would comply with any policy decision taken by the Government of India. On 18 December, the Bombay Government recommended the names of six political prisoners including Chandwadkar and Brahmagiribuwa who were both accused in the Nashik Conspiracy Case for clemency.

On 24 December 1919, the Bombay Government said that it was willing to consider the proposal for clemency in case of all political prisoners except the Savarkar brothers! In a telegram dated 30 December 1919, the Government of India seconded the opinion that the Savarkar brothers be excluded from general clemency. This raised a storm of protest among the periodicals in Maharashtra. Dattopant Belvi raised a question in the Bombay legislative Council but the Bombay Government remained adamant. In 1920, Vithalbai Patel tabled a resolution in the Council of States demanding the release of Tatyrao Savarkar. Dadasaheb Khaparde supported the resolution but the Government refused to budge. In February 1920, Tilak himself wrote directly to Montague demanding that Tatyrao be freed. In a memorandum dated 30 March 1920, Savarkar listed various reasons why Babarao and he should be released. The Bombay Government remained unmoved. In 1920, the National Union presented a memorandum to the government demanding the release of the Savarkar brothers. The memorandum had 70000 signatures. The moving spirit behind this massive exercise was Narayanrao. He was ably assisted by Dr. Motiram Balkrishna Velankar, Rambhau Mandlik, VM Bhat, Wamanshastri Datar. Anant Hari Gadre in Mumbai and Senapati Bapat in Pune also collected signatures. In February 1920 the Government refused to accept this petition on the flimsy grounds that it was not addressed to the Cabinet Minister for India. In an article entitled *Savarkar brothers* written in *Young India* dated 26 May 1920, Gandhi supported the demand for their release. His article however lacked grace. He did not forget to write that the 'cult of violence' has no supporters in the country. It seems however that the British Government knew the true worth of the Savarkar brothers. Even as late as 29 February 1921; the Bombay Government wrote to the Government of India that it did not favour the transfer of the Savarkar brothers to another jail. The British were forced to release several political prisoners including Bhai Parmananada after World War I.

### 5.30 Release from Cellular Jail:

Around May 1921, Babarao and Tatyrao were asked to pack their belongings. The message was clear. Though the Savarkar brothers were to continue to serve their prison term, they were to be released from the Cellular Jail. There was happiness all around. All the convicts started meeting them. Many cried with joy, some brought flowers, others gave gifts. The brothers were moved. In his farewell address, Tatyrao gave a message to those present:

*"Ek dev, ek desh, ek aashaa,  
Ek jaati, ek jeev, ek bhaashaa"*

("One god, one country, one aspiration,  
One community, one life, one language")

On 02 May 1921, the guard told them that a posse of guards had arrived to accompany them to the mainland. Both Babarao and Tatyrao were made to stand near the gates of the Cellular Jail. They were handed over to their new guards. The guard said that it was not necessary to bind them in fetters. Babarao had entered these gates in 1910; Tatyrao had followed him in 1911. At that time, they had prepared for the worst. The possibility of their corpses coming out of the Cellular Jail had seemed real at that time. As they prepared to leave now for one last time, a prisoner came running to Tatyrao and with tears in his eyes, he affectionately placed a garland of *champa* flowers around Tatyrao's neck. It was Babarao who had entered the Cellular Jail before Tatyrao. It was Babarao again who suffered greater physical torture compared to Tatyrao. Again, it was Babarao who had lost his wife and was left childless. However, the sight of Tatyrao being singled out for honour brought only tears of joy in his eyes. Babarao had resolved that his beloved Tatyrao was to be the crowning glory of the freedom struggle; he, Babarao, was content to remain a mere stone in its edifice. Such was the self-effacing nature of Babarao! It was a truly moving farewell. The two brothers started walking towards the sea. They embarked on S.S. Maharaja for transfer to the jail in Bombay Presidency.

## 6 PRISON LIFE AFTER THE ANDAMANS

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### 6.1 Glimpse of the motherland:

It seems that fate had willed that the joy of the Savarkar brothers at being released from the Cellular Jail was to be short-lived. As they embarked on the ship, they were locked up in a cage at its bottom. The cage was stuffed with dangerous criminals or plainly insane men who had been chained. These men freely hurled the vilest abuses at each other; a few others wailed loudly, some others were violent, yet some others were vomiting or defecating. The atmosphere was suffocating. It was in such a humiliating manner that the British were now transporting two of India's foremost freedom-fighters. However, the two brothers were happy to be together once again. They narrated their past experiences. However, the suffocating atmosphere exacerbated Babarao's cough. Tatyrao too had started developing asthmatic attacks from his London days. When they complained repeatedly about the suffocation, the authorities condescended to allow a draught of air below from a contraption that hung from the top deck. Later, they were allowed to sit on the top deck for half an hour each. It was only on the fourth or the fifth day that Babarao and Tatyrao were taken to the top deck to breathe fresh air. It was then that both had the first glimpse of the mainland. Seeing her coastline, Tatyrao exclaimed to Babarao, "Baba, look at *Bharatmata* (\*Mother India)! See her feet being washed by the blue waters of the sea!" A wave of thrill passed through both the brothers. Both stood up and folded their hands in reverence. "*Swatantryalakshmi ki jai! Vande Mataram!!* (\*Hail to the Goddess of Liberty! Hail to the Motherland!!) "

### 6.2 In Bijapur jail:

After landing in Calcutta, the two brothers were kept for fifteen days in Alipore jail. On 26 May 1921, they were separated. Babarao was escorted by two British guards and led away. Babarao had doubled up with gall bladder pain. He could barely carry his belongings. He was dragging himself and coughing incessantly at the same time. Seeing his bent and frail figure, Tatyrao wondered if this was the last time he was seeing his brother alive. Babarao too was pained at the separation. He turned back to have one last glimpse of his brother. He was rudely interrupted by the guards. They ordered him to walk away quickly. Babarao was put in a train. The train moved from station to station. Babarao had no clue where he was being taken. The guards kept mum. After two days, he was made to alight. He was brought before the gates of a prison. Years ago, he had stood before the gates of the Cellular Jail wondering whether he would ever get out alive. Here was another jail. He wondered if he would ever get out of this one. He was searched and his 'charge' was given. It was then that he was told that this was Bijapur jail.

### **6.3 Solitary confinement:**

Two guards led Babarao through a narrow tunnel. He was led through one door and then through another. Babarao entered inside. The door closed behind him. Babarao heard the door being locked and the fading voices of the guards behind him as they walked away. Babarao looked around. This was a large, desolate and grim cell. The floor was rough. Heaps of dirty mud covered with bird droppings lay around. The atmosphere was oppressive and suffocating. When he turned to the right, he saw three cells in a row. These were meant to house prisoners on the death row. Huge locks covered with layers of dust hung from their doors. Babarao looked upwards. He saw a narrow beam of sunlight streaming from a small window above. Thinking that he could probably see the sky through the window, Babarao went near and tried to peer outside. Alas, a huge stone wall blocked his view. Babarao looked behind to see if there was any opening there. But all he could see heaps of damp wood piled up there. All in all, he was confined in an intensely suffocating environment. As Babarao sat down on the ground with dismay, the metal plate and tumbler placed near him clinked sending a dismal echo across the solitary cell. As the sun gradually set, the cell was enveloped in a depressing twilight. A solitary lantern tied to a broken pole flickered. Swarms and swarms of mosquitoes came out from the piles of wet wood and started humming around and biting him. A solitary insect crawled. Otherwise, it seemed to Babarao that the entire world had come to a standstill in that lifeless cell!

### **6.4 The first lonely night:**

The Cellular Jail, terrible though it undoubtedly was, at least had life. This was a veritable grave. In desperation, Babarao shook the prison bars as if attempting to break them. But they did not budge. Babarao's frail body fell on the ground exhausted. His head started throbbing with pain. He lay on the bedding provided to him. But mosquitoes and bugs would not let him sleep. Babarao paced up and down the cell. When his legs started aching, he tried to sleep again. But sleep eluded him. He stared at the lantern. The entire night was thus spent in restlessness. As the first rays of the sun streamed from the tiny window above, Babarao felt better. Sleep overtook him. He lay in deep slumber. It was only when the petty warden came to wake him that Babarao returned to life. He reminded himself that he was in solitary confinement. The petty warden thrust a wheat grinder and 35 pounds of wheat into the cell. "That is your punishment. If you do not grind this wheat by evening, you shall receive further punished", he barked ominously and went away. Babarao tried to grind the wheat into flour. But he became breathless in three-four minutes. Exhausted, he threw his body on the floor. For the last twelve years, Babarao had been subjected to the worst torture. Diarrhoea, migraine, cough and tuberculosis were all slowly eating away his body. But Babarao's spirit was uncommon. With an extraordinary effort, he lifted himself and started doing the task of grinding wheat. At nine in the morning, the jailor and the jail superintendent arrived. They hardly seemed to notice him. To them, he was but an object. They soon left away leaving Babarao with his solitude. Babarao continued to grind away. At ten in the morning, the door opened and he was given

lunch. The door closed again. Babarao's routine continued. The door again opened in the evening. The petty warden took away the flour and gave him some dinner. One day was over. Night began. The same nightmare now repeated itself.

### **6.5 No human contact:**

For one or two days, Babarao's solitude would be broken by the arrival of the petty warden. Now, the petty warden started keeping his meals outside the door of his cell. Babarao was required to keep the flour outside the door of his cell. Other than a solitary visit by the jailor and the jail superintendent at nine in the morning, Babarao was now deprived of all human contact. This continued for week after week. Earlier, Babarao looked upon the jailor's visit as a mere formality. Now that he was deprived human contact, he would look forward to this one interaction with a human being. Gradually, even these visits seemed similar to the visitations of the mosquitoes at night. His mind became numb. He seemed to be hurtling in an endless void. Babarao tried to keep his sanity by thinking of his happy childhood. He would remind himself that beyond the four walls of the cell were the four walls of the prison and still beyond them were the borders of his motherland. His motherland had become one large prison. In a sense, all his countrymen and women were prisoners like him.

### **6.6 On the border of insanity:**

Gradually the emptiness of the cell began to gnaw away at Babarao's mind. For five or six days, a mason and a servant came to build a small platform. Their very presence was a welcome distraction. But they soon left leaving Babarao all alone. To worsen matters, the work of grinding flour now seemed an impossible task. Spasms of pain would engulf his bosom. His arms which had become mere sticks could no longer do the work. Bloody diarrhea continued to dog him. Mosquitoes and bugs deprived him of sleep for weeks together. He would pace up and down the cell throughout the night. In June, the rains arrived. To protect himself from the growing cold, Babarao would fold his knees to his chest. He would remain in this position for hours together. Soon his knees started hurting him. Arthritis was to dog Babarao throughout his life. Babarao could barely walk. He would lose balance. Sleep deprivation upset his mental balance. He felt he was losing his sanity.

### **6.7 Chirping of the sparrows:**

One day, Babarao was sitting exhausted with his head leaning on the grinder. Suddenly, he heard a chirping sound. He looked up to find a sparrow prancing around and carrying a few grains of wheat in its beak. The sparrow flew away only to return after some time with its mate and two young ones. The chirping of the sparrows infused the lonely cell with life. Babarao felt that the family of sparrows had come to visit him. He held out his hand and offered the sparrows some wheat. To his delight, one sparrow hopped forward and lifted the grains in its beak. Gradually, Babarao developed friendship with this family of sparrows. The birds would sit on his shoulders and play around. Babarao would occasionally sing in happiness. One day as Babarao was singing with a sparrow perched on his shoulder, the jail superintendent walked in. He was incensed to find Babarao singing. He barked at the guard, "From where did the sparrows come here?" "There must be a nest somewhere, sir," replied the guard meekly. "Remove the nest, put a net on the window" ordered the superintendent. Babarao requested the superintendent to spare the sparrows but to no avail. "You are not supposed to have any company with you" remarked the superintendent and walked out. Babarao's heart sank. His only solace had been taken away from him.

### **6.8 A living death:**

Months after months passed by in solitude. Initially Babarao would somehow bear the solitude by engaging his mind in flights of fancy. But soon, an eerie numbness seized his mind. It was as if his whole being was frozen. He became oblivious to any feelings. Often, he felt he was a corpse. He would make sure he was alive by shouting, laughing and crying loudly in the dead of the night. He would pinch and bite his own self to remind himself that he was alive.

### **6.9 Canework:**

The hard labour of grinding thirty pounds of grain daily was now proving to be physically impossible for Babarao. He would invariably fall short of the target. The jail superintendent would reprimand him but Babarao could barely complete ten or fifteen pounds. One day, the jail superintendent came to Babarao and promised to relieve him of this hard labour if he managed to complete the assigned task the next day. The next day, Babarao summoned all his physical and mental strength and started grinding the grain. He did not pause for meals. He put a piece of dry *bhakri* into his mouth while working away at the grinder. He ate lunch and ground the grain simultaneously. As the afternoon heat became intense, streams of perspiration flowed from his forehead. His head started whirling. Babarao thought his chest would surely burst. Babarao almost wished that his heart should stop. That would put an end to this endless torture. Like a man possessed, Babarao continued to grind the grain. By evening, he had completed the assigned task. His whole body was smeared with flour and aching. Babarao dropped to the ground exhausted. From the next day, he was spared of the grinder and instead given cane work. This task was relatively lighter and gave some respite to Babarao. But even this proved exhausting to him. Months of bloody diarrhea had made him weak and anemic.

Deprived of sleep for months together, his eyes had become sunken and lifeless. His head was numb and he could not bear any sound. If only he could get sleep for two days!!

### **6.10 Remedy for mosquitoes and bugs:**

Necessity is the mother of invention. One day, Babarao hit upon an idea to protect himself from the mosquitoes and bugs that caused him to remain awake in the night. He took the two blankets provided to him and sewed them on three sides with pieces of cane given to him. He positioned himself between the two blankets and started breathing through a hole through the upper blanket. His whole body became wet with perspiration. When the sweat dried, his body became cool. Before Babarao could realize it, he had fallen asleep. He slept for 5-6 hours before the bugs entered the blankets. It was around dawn when he woke up. This was the first undisturbed sleep that he had enjoyed in months. Babarao started pacing up and down the cell, ruminating on some proverb to kill time. As he was thus walking, his eyes fell on the kerosene lantern that hung from a pole in the cell. Another idea struck Babarao. He tilted the lantern a bit and secured some kerosene. He applied the kerosene on his body to protect himself from the mosquitoes and bugs. From then on, he started getting some sleep. After a few days passed, the superintendent became curious to know why Babarao was no longer complaining of mosquitoes and bugs. When he probed Babarao, the latter told him the truth in all innocence. But he had not bargained for the stone-heartedness of the jailor. The jailor now hoisted the lantern well above Babarao's reach. But after a few days, Babarao managed to climb up the pole and reach the lantern. He would somehow protect himself to some extent from the mosquitoes and bugs.

### **6.11 Stung by a scorpion!**

At around midnight one day, Babarao was stung by a large black scorpion. Babarao's body was engulfed in pain. He wanted to hunt for the scorpion but could not reach the lantern. He banged on the door but his cell was so isolated that it took a long time before his cries and banging reached the ears of the guard. Babarao appealed for medical help. By the time the news reached the superintendent, two hours had elapsed. Instead of giving medical aid, the superintendent barked, "You are feigning. What proof do you have that you have been stung by a scorpion? You should be ashamed of troubling others at such an odd time!" Babarao insisted that they look for the scorpion. Finally, the scorpion was found and killed. But the superintendent remained unmoved. He insisted that the scorpion had been found all right but it had not stung Babarao.

## 6.12 Meeting with Narayanrao at the doorstep of death:

The first four-five months in Bijapur were spent in severe physical and mental strain. But now, it was nearly impossible for Babarao to stand the strain. Poor health dogged him. He would lie motionless, moving only to breathe. The period from November 1921 to January 1922 was spent at the doorstep of death. It was in the beginning of December 1921 that Narayanrao finally got permission to meet Babarao. Around that time Gandhi had launched his non-cooperation movement. Narayanrao did not agree with all of Gandhi's views. Thinking that he should participate in the freedom struggle, Narayanrao took part in the non-cooperation movement. He had even started donning khadi and the Gandhi cap. When he went to meet Babarao in jail in this dress, the warden rudely told him, "Take off your Gandhi cap. You cannot see him that way." Infuriated by this insult, Narayanrao turned back without meeting Babarao. He raised his voice against the unjust order. He shot off telegrams to the Viceroy, District Magistrate and the newspapers. The Government had to relent. Narayanrao had his way. He defiantly went to meet Babarao with his Gandhi cap. Narayanrao was shocked to see his brother. The Babarao he had seen in the Cellular Jail, Andamans was a sickly and haggard man. But what Narayanrao now saw before him was almost a living corpse. Babarao would become breathless even after uttering a few sentences. He was seeing sunlight after several months. The light seemed to hurt his eyes. Narayanrao's heart sank. He thought that death would now surely take away his elder brother.

## 6.13 The defamatory article in Capital:

After spending some moments in silence, Narayanrao proceeded to tell Babarao about the defamatory article that appeared in the *Capital* periodical of Calcutta (now Kolkata). The *Capital* was an influential periodical run by Anglo-Indians in Calcutta. On the very day i.e. 26 May 1921 when the Savarkar brothers had reached Alipore, the *Capital* had run an article in a column called 'Ditcher's Diary'. The writer of this article had alleged that Babarao had won the confidence of the jail officials in the Andamans and managed to gain expertise on the wireless network there. He further alleged that when the World War I broke out, Babarao had established contact with the German wireless network in the Sumatra islands and had conspired to get the Andaman Islands bombarded. The writer had also supported the Government's refusal to release the Savarkar brothers. He had concluded his article thus, "What a bunch of romance could be written from these materials which I have set before my readers to convince them that the Government of India are by no means unreasonable in refusing to release the Savarkar brothers, who Mr. Gandhi himself confesses are frank revolutionaries!" The entire article was a figment of the writer's wild imagination. But it only served to complicate the efforts to secure the release of the Savarkar brothers.

Narayanrao had decided to drag the slanderous periodical to Court. Through his solicitors *Manilal and Kher*, Narayanrao served notices to the editor, publisher and manager of the *Capital*. The notice demanded the unconditional public withdrawal of the defamatory statements and an apology. The notice made it clear that should the *Capital* comply, Savarkar would not be interested to pursue the matter further. After much dilly-dallying, the *Capital* published the following statement in its issue dated 28 July 1921, "The Editor and the Publisher of the *Capital* deeply regret having published the defamatory remarks which appeared in 'The Ditcher's Diary' in the

issue of the *Capital*, dated 26 May 1921 and hereby tender 'an unconditional apology.' The Editor and the Publisher withdraw the remarks in respect of both the Savarkar brothers and deeply regret that they should have been published, however innocently. Narayanrao gave a detailed account of the *Capital* case and also informed Babarao about the well being of the Savarkar family. Babarao barely spoke. He however mentioned the rigours of solitary confinement and the sleep deprivation due to mosquitoes and bugs. When Narayanrao questioned the jailor about the solitary confinement, the latter coolly replied, "Oh! Baba has misunderstood me! I have kept him separately away from those buggers (meaning other prisoners)." Narayanrao was infuriated at the jailor's reply but kept quiet. It was futile to argue with the man.

#### **6.14 Narayanrao's efforts and shifting out from Bijapur Jail:**

When Narayanrao reached Mumbai, he publicized the harrowing treatment being meted out to Babarao with the assistance of Horniman of *Bombay Chronicle*. This had the desired effect. Towards the end of January 1922, Babarao was shifted out of Bijapur Jail. He was promptly lodged in the Sabarmati Jail. Thus, Babarao spent the period from May 1921 to January 1922 in Bijapur Jail. These eight months of solitary confinement were even more terrible than the years in the Cellular Jail. It was a mercy that he managed to retain his sanity. In fact, another political prisoner who followed Babarao in the Bijapur Jail actually lost his sanity thereafter.

#### **6.15 In Sabarmati Jail:**

In January 1922, Babarao entered the Sabarmati Jail. Initially, he was kept in solitary confinement. However, there were some mitigating factors here unlike the Bijapur Jail. Every day, the warden would take him out for a walk at five in the evening. The sight of the setting sun and the lengthening shadows of the trees would exhilarate Babarao. A brief conversation with the jail warden would invigorate his mind. At that time, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, the pan-Islamic leader was also undergoing solitary confinement in Sabarmati Jail.



The warden would take the Maulana for the evening walk along with Babarao. The two would then exchange ideas. Babarao would look forward to this interaction with the Maulana.

## 7 THE SINISTER GANDHI- AMANULLAH PACT

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Babarao got the first inkling of the prevalent political situation from his discussion with Maulana Mohani. The Maulana was a leading light of the Khilafat movement that was stirring up pan-Islamist sentiment in the country, aided and abetted by Gandhi and his followers.

### 7.1 The Khilafat Movement:

It would not be out of place to give a brief background of the Khilafat movement here (\*the word Khilafat means 'office of the Khalifa'; the word Khalifa or Caliph literally means 'successor' and refers to rulers of the Islamic world who traced their authority backwards to the Prophet Muhammad). Here the word Khilafat or Caliphate refers to the Caliphate of the Ottoman Dynasty of Turkey (\* the word Ottoman is a corruption of the word Uthman or Usman; the Ottoman Empire got its name from Ottoman I or Osman I who founded the Osmanli dynasty). The Ottoman Empire existed from 1281 to 1923; from Constantinople (now Istanbul), the Ottomans ruled over an empire that, at its peak, covered Anatolia, most of the Middle East, North Africa, the Caucasus, and extended deep into Eastern Europe.

The Ottoman Emperor Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) had launched a Pan-Islamic programme to use his position as the Sultan-Khalifa of the global Muslim community with a view to saving his disintegrating empire from foreign attacks and to crush the nationalistic democratic movement at home. The defeat of Turkey in the First World War and the division of its territories under the Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) among European powers caused apprehensions in India over the Khalifa's custodianship of the Holy places of Islam. Religious fundamentalists like Ali brothers - Mohammed and Shaukat, Abul Kalam Azad, Hasrat Mohani, with the patronage of Gandhi and the Congress started a movement for the restoration of the Khilafat. This led to the creation of new wave of unrest in the country, which had no impact on the Turkish polity but changed the history of India.

Accordingly, the Khilafat Movement was launched in September 1919 as an orthodox communal movement to protect the Turkish Khalifa and save his empire from dismemberment by Great Britain and other European powers. The Khilafat movement began in 1919 and 27 October was observed as Khilafat Day. The first Khilafat conference was held at Delhi on 23 November 1919 and was attended by Gandhi.

In a bid to get Hindus to support Khilafat, a large number of Hindu leaders had been invited to this conference. In this conference Gandhi advised the Muslim leaders to start non-cooperation with the British to force them to re-establish Khilafat. His message to the Hindus was, "We talk of Hindu-Muslim unity. What are these utterances worth if at a time when Muslims are in distress, we Hindus try to save our skin? Some say that Hindus should offer conditional help to the Muslims but unconditional help alone is the real help." The second Khilafat conference was held at Allahabad in June 1920. A joint meeting of Hindus and Muslims held on that occasion was attended by Motilal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Annie Besant but none of them supported the movement. Gandhi, however, not only supported it but took over the leadership. On 09 June, the working committee was elected and had Gandhi as the sole Hindu member. A communication was addressed to the Viceroy

within a fortnight after this meeting declaring that if a favourable decision on the Khilafat issue was not taken by 01 August 1920, a movement will be launched. On 01 August, Gandhi himself served on the government a notice of the proposed movement and between 01 and 31 August he toured throughout the country with Ali brothers. The agitation was launched with effect from 01 September 1920. The Congress session was held at Calcutta four days later and adopted the resolution moved by Gandhi and non-cooperation against the government was launched. At the behest of Maulana Shaukat Ali, Gandhi himself had drafted this resolution during the journey and it was passed with 1886 votes in favour and 884 votes against it. Dr. BR Ambedkar has mentioned in his book *Thoughts on Pakistan* that "taxi drivers of Calcutta were enrolled as delegates". At the very beginning of Khilafat movement, Ali brothers declared that India under the British rule is *Dar-ul-Harab* (Abode of War) for the Muslims, as a result of which thousands of Muslims committed *Hijrat* and migrated to Afghanistan. This move was blessed by Gandhi who always blessed every move of the Ali brothers. They invited the Amir of Afghanistan to convert this *Dar-ul-Harab* (Abode of War) into *Dar-ul-Islam* (Abode of Islam) and Gandhi supported this move also.

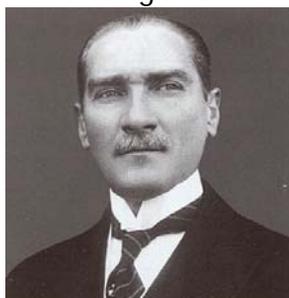
As soon as the British declared war on the Amir of Afghanistan, Mohammed Ali started issuing directions to Indian Muslims. In the All India Khilafat conference held at Karachi in August 1921, a resolution was adopted that "British service by any Muslim under the present circumstances is against the religious edicts". When he was proceeded against in the court of justice at Karachi for sedition, he pleaded innocence and took shelter under the edicts of Quran. He said that he could be pronounced guilty if and only if he had strayed from the path ordained by Quran. He referred to the Ayats (Verses) of Quran and discussed briefly about *Dar-ul-Harab* and *Dar-ul-Islam*. He re-emphasized his view that any land that does not belong to Muslims is a theatre of war and Quran has directed Muslims to commit *Hijrat* (Flight/ Migration) or *Jihad* (Holy War involving merciless slaughter of infidels among other things).

At the Khilafat Conference at Nagpur, the Ayats of Quran recited by the Maulanas contained frequent references to Jihad and killing of the Kafirs. When Swami Shradhanand pointed out this to Gandhi, the latter smiled and said, "They are alluding to the British Bureaucracy." Swamiji observed that it was all subversive of the idea of non-violence and when the reversion of feeling came the Mohammedan Maulanas would not refrain from using these verses against the Hindus.

Among others, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Annie Besant, Dr. Moonje, Savarkar and Dr. Ambedkar opposed the movement. B.R. Ambedkar's views on the issue were, "The Mohammedans started the Khilafat movement in 1919. The objective of the movement was two-fold; to preserve the Khilafat and to maintain the integrity of the Turkish Empire. Both these objectives were unsupportable. The Khilafat could not be saved simply because the Turks, in whose interest this agitation was carried on, did not want the Sultan. They wanted a republic and it was quite unjustifiable to compel the Turks to keep Turkey a monarchy when they wanted to convert it into a republic. It was not open to insist upon the integrity of the Turkish Empire because it meant the perpetual subjection of the different nationalities to the Turkish rule and particularly of the Arabs, especially when it was agreed on all hands that the doctrine of self-determination should be made the basis of peace settlement."

The extra-territorial loyalty of Khilafat leaders received a final and deadly blow from the Turks themselves. The charismatic Turkish nationalist leader Mustafa Kemal

Ataturk's startling secular renaissance, his victories over invading Greek forces culminating in the abolition of the Sultanate in November 1922, and the transformation of Turkey into a Republic in October 1923. On the initiative of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the National Assembly of Turkey abolished the Caliphate on 03 March 1924. Sultan Abdul Mejid was sent into exile along with the remaining members of the Ottoman House, marking the official end of the "Ottoman Caliphate". This development took the Khilafatists unaware. Their movement became irrelevant and met its end. One of the lesser known but darker aspect of the Khilafat Movement was the Gandhi-Muslim conspiracy or the Gandhi-Amanullah Pact.



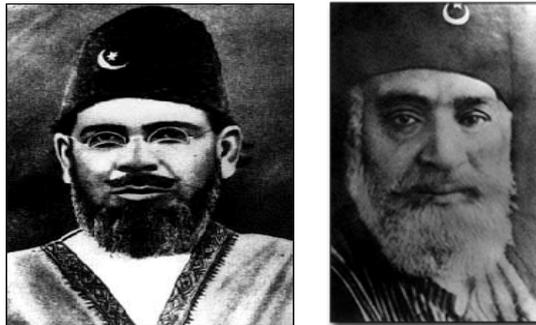
## 7.2 Gandhi- Amanullah pact:

As per the Gandhi-Amanullah Pact, Amir Amanullah of Afghanistan was to invade Hindusthan; the Muslims were to engage in arson and loot while the Hindus were to bring government to a standstill by leaving their jobs and boycotting schools and colleges. Thus, the two communities were to overthrow British rule in a spirit of 'cooperation'. The activities of both Hindu and Muslim leaders were taking place in that direction. The Amir was sending envoys to Indian leaders and instigating Indian newspapers to prepare the ground for his invasion by painting a picture of a nation in unrest in need of a saviour. At a speech made in Madras (now Chennai) in 1921, Maulana Muhammad Ali declared, "If the Amir of Afghanistan were to invade India, not aggressively but for the liberation of the country from an infidel yoke, it would be the duty of all Muslims to assist him actively." Other Muslim leaders were singing a similar tune. After the conclusion of the third Afghan War in August 1919, Afghanistan was to enter into a truce with British India. Indian Muslim leaders wanted the Amir to continue fighting and conquer Hindusthan. In a statement issued on 19 May 1920, Maulana Shaukat Ali threatened the British Government that the Muslims would withdraw their loyalty if the Government failed to give due concessions to the Ottoman Turkish Empire. While the Muslim leaders were thus preparing the ground for an Afghan invasion, Congress leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru were not lagging behind! In an article in *Young India*, Gandhi said, "I would in a sense, certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan if he waged war against the British government." In May 1921, there were again public rumours that the Ali Brothers would be arrested by the British government for conspiring with the Amir of Afghanistan to invade India. Mahatma Gandhi's conscience was quickened by this public rumour and he poured out his compassionate Muslim-loving heart to the Ali Brothers. At a public meeting in Allahabad on 10 May, 1921, with tears in his eyes, Mahatma Gandhi said, "I cannot understand why the Ali Brothers are going to be arrested as the rumour goes, and why I am to remain free. They had done nothing which I would not do." Writing in *Young India* in May 1921, Mahatma Gandhi declared with Jehadic piety, "I would, in a sense certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan if he waged a war against the British government." Mahatma Gandhi's public posture and attitude towards the treasonable acts of Ali Brothers were severely criticized by prominent public personalities of the day like V S Srinivasa Sastri, C Y Chintamani, Editor of *Leader*, Allahabad and C F Andrews, Gandhi's confidant. All of them including Annie Besant told him in categorical terms that his

speeches and writings were unmistakably such as to justify the treasonable act of Mohammed Ali's invitation to the Amir of Afghanistan to launch an invasion against India. Muhammad Ali complained to the Arya Samaj leader Swami Shraddhananda about Congress leaders for taking him to task. When the Swami also criticized him, Muhammad Ali took him aside and gave him the hand-written draft of a telegram supporting him. Swami Shraddhananda writes, "What was my astonishment when I saw the draft of the self-same telegram in the peculiar handwriting of the father of the non-violent non-cooperation movement!" To this charge however, Gandhi replied that he did not remember to have done so" (Ref: Swami Shraddhananda, *Inside Congress*, p 126).

### 7.3 Exchange between Babarao and Maulana Hasrat Mohani:

The pan-Islamist Maulana Hasrat Mohani was involved in the Khilafat and the Non-cooperation Movements. One day, the discussion veered towards independence for the British colonies. It was then that the Babarao came to know about the conspiracy to invite Amir Amanullah of Afghanistan to invade Hindusthan. As mentioned above, in 1921, Muhammad Ali (of the Ali brothers fame) had addressed a



letter to Amanullah, the Amir of Afghanistan, inviting him to invade Hindusthan. This was the background of the apparently innocuous question that the pan-Islamist Maulana now threw at Babarao. The Maulana was himself involved in inviting the Amir of Afghanistan to invade Hindusthan. The Maulana now asked Babarao, "Savarkar, you look upon 'Dominion Status' as a step towards absolute independence. Then why do you insist 'Dominion Status' under King George? Suppose you were to get 'Dominion Status' under another ruler, would you accept it or not?" But Babarao immediately smelt a rat in the Maulana's question. He resolved to get at the bottom of this conspiracy. He framed his questions accordingly. Babarao said, "Maulanaji, let us first know who is willing to grant us 'Dominion Status'. This Baba is willing to eat sweets but let him at least know who is feeding him!" The Maulana now became confused. He tried to brush aside the question. When Babarao realized that the Maulana was obfuscating, he asked him directly, "Don't beat about the bush. Come out clean. How can I give an opinion without the facts? Who is the ruler who is willing to grant us 'Dominion Status'? The Maulana answered, "Babaji, you are the leaders of the revolutionaries. If you support us, we shall achieve victory. I must tell you the details." With these opening sentences, the Maulana launched into a longish introduction and finally came to the point.

What he divulged to Babarao was simply shocking! The Maulana had provided him the full details of the Gandhi-Amanullah pact. Babarao thought to himself, "History

will surely repeat itself. Once upon a time, Jaychand had also invited Muhammad Ghori to invade Hindusthan. The consequences had been disastrous. Assuming the Amir will invade Hindusthan and overthrow the British, who will overthrow the Amir himself?" He voiced his apprehension to Maulana Hasrat Mohani, "Maulanaji, You say that you have invited the Amir to invade Hindusthan to overthrow the British. But what if the Amir himself usurps Hindusthan thereafter?" At this, the wily Maulana replied, "But he will not do so. There is no clause to that effect in our Pact with him." At this Babarao said sharply, "It is impossible that the Amir will easily give up a Hindusthan that you have presented on a platter. What is the guarantee that he will abide by the Pact? The history of Hindusthan over the last 1000 years is one of treachery and deceit. It will be naïve and suicidal for our country to rely on the Amir!" For a while, the Maulana was nonplussed by Babarao's argument. But he was not one to give in so easily. He said, "If the Amir seizes power, we shall procure arms and overthrow him. Babarao retorted, "If you can procure arms later, why not use them now and overthrow the British?" The Maulana had met more than his match. He dared not expose his pan-Islamist sympathies. So he changed track and said, "Tilakji had given his consent to our plan. He had advised us to wait and watch." Babarao was not to be taken in. He said, "We are in agreement with Tilak. But we shall never join you." The Maulana walked away defeated.

#### **7.4 Sizing up the situation:**

Babarao now started ruminating on the information provided by Maulana Hasrat Mohani. He had heard of the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements. He recalled Tatyrao's classic comment that "this is not *Khilafat* but *aafat* (calamity). Now Babarao had learnt of yet another dangerous dimension of this calamity. He thought, "The atmosphere in the country has changed for the worse. It is said that when a great person passes away, misfortunes and calamities follow in its wake. After the demise of Tilak, the dark clouds of Khilafat have gathered. In 1908, the Muslim issue was not significant in the nation's polity. With the Khilafat movement, the Muslim issue has occupied centre-stage in the polity. Indian Muslims are filled with pan-Islamic sentiment. They look upon Arabia and Turkey as their Holy land and Hindusthan as a theatre of war. The Muslims are looking upon this country as alien and hence leaving it. What is even more alarming is the attitude of the national leadership! The separatist mindset of Muslims is another shackle in the feet of our nation. Unfortunately, I am undergoing Transportation for Life. If I am fortunate enough to be freed, I shall break this shackle. I do not mind if I have to face another Transportation or worse still, go to the gallows in the process." Babarao now set upon unearthing more details of the Gandhi-Amanullah Pact. One of his erstwhile colleagues in the *Abhinav Bharat* was acting as an emissary between Gandhi's followers and the Amir's acolytes. With great difficulty, Babarao wriggled out the shocking details of the Pact. How he wished he was free! He would have toured the length and breadth of the country and woken the people to the dangers of this Pact. Babarao's spirit was strong as ever. But his physical disabilities again raised their ugly head. He became so weak that the jail authorities thought he would surely die and hospitalized him. There he came in contact with many Congress leaders who were undergoing imprisonment for participating in the Non Co-operation Movement. The Sindhi leader Jairamdas Daulatram and the Gandhian leader Jaikrishna Bhansali were two such leaders with whom Babarao developed

friendship while in hospital. Through them, he could size up this new phenomenon of Gandhism.

## **7.5 Non-violence; a cardinal feature of Gandhism and bugs:**

(\* Non-violence = Ahimsa)

Babarao became familiar with Gandhism through several instructive incidents. The Sabarmati jail was full of bugs. These bugs bothered the jail inmates to no end. But the Gandhian prisoners found themselves in a pitiable condition due to the bugs. Their philosophy forbade them from killing the bugs and indulging in violence. Once, Babarao found a Gandhian inmate collecting bugs in a plate and keeping it in sunlight. The following interesting conversation ensued.

Babarao: What are you doing?

Gandhian: These bugs bothered me the whole night.

Babarao: Then why don't you kill them. You will get rid of your troubles.

Gandhian (horrified): What! Kill these bugs. You revolutionaries are incorrigible. Does not killing bugs amount to violence?

Babarao: But will you avert violence by keeping them in the sun?

Gandhian: Certainly. As we do not kill the bugs with our bare hands, we do not indulge in violence. They will die due to heat.

Babarao: What an argument! Your theory of non-violence allows you to ensure that the bugs die due to heat but does not permit you to kill them with your bare hands. Actually, if you crush the bugs with your bare hands, they die quickly. When you allow them to die in sunlight, you are subjecting them to a slow and painful death. You are indulging in greater violence. And suppose the bugs escape and enter another cell, will they not bother another inmate? Then that inmate will surely crush them. So there will be twice as much violence - the second inmate will be bitten and the bugs will also get crushed. So your non-violence finally results in more violence. Discard these notions of violence and non-violence and crush these bugs with your bare hands.

The poor Gandhian had no reply. He could not bring himself to crush the bugs. He was caught in a Hamlet-like situation. He would now collect all the bugs in a plate and bring the plate to Babarao. "Babaji, you kill them. I cannot do this job."

Babarao would kill the bugs for him. This went on for four to five days. Finally, Babarao told the man, "My good man, asking me to crush the bugs does not solve your dilemma. You are not avoiding violence in this manner. Further, by causing me to do violence, you are inviting sin. Your hesitance to kill the bugs is a sign of mental weakness. Get rid of this weakness and your dilemma will be solved!"

## **7.6 Gandhian notion of 'truth'**

(\* Gandhian notion of 'truth' - another allegedly cardinal feature of Gandhism!)

From the incident of the bugs, Babarao realized that what passes as Gandhism was nothing but humbuggery. Another incident opened his eyes to the peculiar Gandhian notion of truth. The prisoners would receive several newspapers. They would

hungrily read them and get information of the prevailing political situation outside. Each section of the prison would get different newspapers. Prisoners from one section would exchange newspapers with those of another section. There was only a toilet between the two sections. The prisoners would meet in the toilet and clandestinely exchange newspapers. Some jail officials would turn a blind eye to their clandestine activities. They would even pass the newspapers from one section to another. There was a Gandhian from Dharwad (Karnataka) who was imprisoned for participating in the Non-Cooperation Movement. One day, he was reading a newspaper that was provided to him by an obliging warden. As luck would have it, the jail superintendent came just then for his rounds. Fearing for his job, the warden signaled to the Gandhian that he should hide the newspaper. However, the pious man flatly refused saying that such an action would violate the cardinal Gandhian principle of truth. It was only the warden's luck that the jail superintendent turned the other way. His job was saved. The furious warden told this incident to Babarao and asked him to stop sending newspapers to the Gandhian from Dharwad. The Gandhian started blaming Babarao and threatened that he would report the clandestine exchange of newspapers to the jail superintendent. In fact, he was true to his word. Babarao was sickened by the hypocrisy of the Gandhian. So long as he was clandestinely reading newspapers, the notion of truth did not seem to trouble his conscience. It was only when he was deprived of them that his commitment to truth flared up. To prove his point, the selfish Gandhian did not mind betraying the nationalists.

### **7.7 A past experience with the Gandhian notion of truth:**

Babarao now recalled his first experience with the Gandhian notion of truth during the closing part of his tenure in the Cellular Jail. Two political prisoners from Punjab had been sentenced to Transportation. They had been accused in the riots in Punjab and an arrest warrant had been issued against them. They had successfully evaded arrest and were working underground. They could have easily continued in this fashion. One day, they went to meet a prominent Gandhian leader who was working in the Non-Cooperation Movement. They narrated their plight to him. On hearing that the two were evading arrest, this self-styled pillar of Gandhian truth was incensed. "Evading arrest is sheer cowardice. I do not approve of such falsehood. Present yourself before a Magistrate and get arrested" he chastized them. Actually, presenting oneself before a British Magistrate constituted Cooperation. Evading arrest by an alien and unjust regime was not cowardice but patriotism and truth. So it was the height of foolishness to call them cowards. When the two tried to explain their stand, the pious Gandhian brushed away their objections and said, "Nothing doing! Go and present yourself before a Magistrate." The two spent money and went to the North and to present themselves before the Magistrate. They were promptly arrested and sentenced to Transportation for Life for armed rebellion. They could only curse their own plight. That had been Babarao's first brush with Gandhism. At that time, he had thought that this incident was an isolated instance of distortion of a great philosophy. He was aware that each great man had over-enthusiastic but misguided followers. But Babarao came across several instances that illustrated misplaced notions of truth and non-violence. He now began to question this 'philosophy' itself! Slowly he became convinced that the fault lay not with the followers but with the leader. Babarao started critically analyzing Gandhism.

## 7.8 Dissecting Gandhism:

Babarao now started dissecting Gandhism. Gandhi was apparently trying to imbue 'spirituality' into politics. He swore by the principle of '*shatham prati satyam*' (truth in retaliation to deceit; in short, turning the other cheek). To Babarao, there was no place for such woolly-headedness in politics. Politics required hard-headed realists who followed the principle '*shatham prati shaathyam*' (Wile in retaliation to deceit; in short, tit for tat). The original Sanskrit proverb is '*shatham prati shatham*' and occurs in the *Samayochitpadyamaalika* as follows:

Shatham prati shatham brooyaadaadaramprati chaadaram,

Tatra dosho na bhavati dushte dushtam samaacharet

(Speak cunningly to a deceitful individual, speak respectfully to a polite individual; there is nothing wrong in that. Behave wickedly with a wicked person)

Babarao felt that false and misplaced notions of truth and non-violence only hampered the nationalist cause. Self-imposed shackles of 'truth' and 'non-violence' rendered secret revolutionary activities unethical while the opponent was free to perform any actions. Further, it was naïve to believe that self-flagellation by the natives would move the British to abandon their rule in Hindusthan. For, if such had been the case, they would have packed their bags and left Hindusthan long ago. The hybrid creature of misplaced spirituality and politics was doomed to fail according to Babarao. Babarao also disagreed with Gandhi's views on Hindu-Muslim relations. Gandhi contented that self-rule was not possible without Hindu-Muslim unity. Indeed, Gandhi went so far as to say that he did not want self-rule without first achieving Hindu-Muslim unity. To attain this mirage of Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhi was ready to go to any lengths to appease the unending demands of Muslims. Babarao felt that the Muslims would be emboldened to raise their demands as a price for Hindu-Muslim unity. To meet these demands, the Hindu leaders did not hesitate to sacrifice the just rights of the Hindus. The British could always outbid the Hindus and keep the Muslims on their side. Babarao felt that Hindu-Muslim unity was impossible and if that was considered a pre-condition for attaining self-rule, it too would be impossible to achieve.

Babarao not only sharply disagreed with Gandhian philosophy but also its practice. He considered the *charkha* (\*spinning wheel), filling up of prisons, non-cooperation, boycotting schools and such measures as evidence of woolly-headedness. While Babarao appreciated the spirit of self-reliance behind the use of the *charkha*, he wholly disapproved of its implicit rejection of the machine age. Babarao could understand someone being imprisoned while fighting for the country. But he disapproved of the growing tendency to equate going to jail with patriotism. He felt that it was ethical, if the need arose, to escape from prison and fight for the nation. On the other hand, Gandhi frowned upon attempts to escape from prison. To Babarao, any act that served the interests of the nation was ethical. To Gandhi, the end was secondary to the means. As far as Non-Cooperation also was concerned, Babarao was clear in his mind. To him, Non-Cooperation or Cooperation were policies to be used according to the prevailing circumstance. For example, blindly following the policy of Non-Cooperation would prevent the enactment of legislative reforms that could further national interests. Nationalists would forego important positions of power which could be used in national interest. Rather than blindly following Cooperation or Non-Cooperation, what was needed was a policy of Responsive Cooperation. While Babarao was thus dissecting Gandhism, a resolve was slowly building up in his mind. If he was ever released from prison, he would certainly rouse the Hindus and warn them against the dangers of Gandhism. Calling

oneself a Hindu was considered shameful in the Gandhian dispensation. Babarao vowed to fight this perversion that was creeping in the nation's psyche.

### **7.9 Rescue from the clutches of Sufi Islam:**

As mentioned before, Babarao was in the jail hospital for some time. But he did not remain idle there. It was while in hospital that Babarao found that a certain Sufi 'mystic' was trying to sweet-talk a Hindu political prisoner into converting to Islam. The Sufi would talk for hours about the alleged mysticism in Sufi Islam and its so-called similarity to Vedanta. The gullible Hindu was so impressed by this wily Sufi that he was on the verge of conversion. When Babarao learnt of this, he took the Hindu aside and educated him about the reality of the Quranic teachings and how they completely differed from the lofty teachings of the Vedas and the Gita. Babarao's efforts had the desired effect. The conversion was averted. The Sufi was furious with Babarao!

### **7.10 Treating Jairam Bhansali:**

Babarao's quest for knowledge continued unabated even in hospital. Around this time, he read considerably on the practice of hypnotism. He tried this on his co-prisoner, the Gandhian Jairam Bhansali who was also in hospital. Bhansali's bed was next to that of Babarao. Bhansali would get fever and his body temperature would occasionally touch 105 ° F. The doctors had virtually given up hope. Their medicines seemed to have no effect on Bhansali. Babarao thought that he might try his knowledge of hypnotism on Bhansali as a last resort. For over an hour, Babarao practiced hypnotism on Bhansali. Coincidentally or otherwise, Bhansali staged an astonishing recovery.

### **7.11 Deathbed:**

As things turned out, Babarao himself developed fever even as Bhansali staged a recovery. Babarao became so weak that he thought that he would surely die. He would feel disappointed that he could not now live longer to carry out his future plans and serve the country. On such occasions, he would console himself by meditating on the teachings of the Gita. He would take birth again and complete his unfinished task, he would think. His weakness was so extreme that it would be virtually impossible for him to even move his limbs. But his faith in yoga was so great that even in that condition; he would assume the *padmasana* (lotus posture). He would meditate on the *Om* (primeval sound) and wait for death to come. The other prisoners, particularly Bhansali were astounded at his single-mindedness. It was now Bhansali's turn to nurse Babarao. He served Babarao with uncommon devotion. There was not a thing that he did not do for Babarao. He would remain awake the whole night, massage Babarao, feed him, and clean his bedpan. Bhansali literally moved heaven and earth to bring Babarao on the road to recovery. But his efforts seemed to have no effect. The other inmates were convinced that Babarao would not recover this time around. The Sindhi leader Jairamdas Daulatram could not bear to see Babarao's pitiable condition. He felt that Babarao should at the very

least, get the satisfaction of dying on his younger brother's lap. He wrote a report on Babarao's condition with the intention of sending it to Narayanrao.

### **7.12 Outrageous experiment with 'truth':**

The next task was to send Jairamdas' letter beyond the walls of the Sabarmati Jail. It was with great difficulty that one of prison officials agreed to smuggle it out of prison. He took the letter and went straight to the Gandhi *ashram* in Sabarmati. He met a Maharashtrian Gandhian named Kakarnamak and asked him to post the letter from Karnavati (now Ahmedabad). This precaution was taken just in case the letter was found and the sender was traced. The prison official explained to Kakarnamak that Babarao Savarkar, the great revolutionary was counting his last moments in Sabarmati Jail and that this letter written to his younger brother would give Babarao the satisfaction of dying on his brother's lap. The prison official told Kakarnamak that he (prison official) would be obliged if Kakarnamak did this task. Kakarnamak was caught in a quandary. A secret letter and that too concerning a revolutionary! How could he, Kakarnamak, a Gandhian to the core and an unflinching champion of truth and non-violence commit this sin? Kakarnamak told the prison official that he would think over the matter and inform his decision the next day. The next day, the prison official met Kakarnamak. That true Gandhian replied, "I am a follower of Gandhi and a firm believer in truth and non-violence. Doing clandestine activities is against our philosophy and hence tantamount to sin. Forgive me. I shall not be able to comply with your request." The prison official was dumb-struck at the Gandhian's attitude. Is this man made of flesh and blood or is he made of stone, he thought. He turned back without a word, gave money to a stranger and asked him to post the letter at Karnavati.

### **7.13 Released on a stretcher:**

The letter reached Narayanrao. On reading its contents, Narayanrao started running from pillar to post to arrange for Babarao's well-being. He immediately wrote to the Administrator of the Province, "I have definite information that my elder brother is in a critical condition. I may be allowed to meet with him along with our family doctor." The Administrator wrote back, "You need not worry as the prison has medical facilities." However, the Administrator must have written to the Civil Surgeon, Karnavati. For on the fourth or the fifth day, the Civil Surgeon landed in Sabarmati Jail to examine Babarao. The Civil Surgeon examined Babarao from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm. He opined that Babarao may live for another 1-2 days at the most. He conveyed his opinion to the Administrator. Fearing that the Government would be answerable if Babarao were to die within the four walls of the prison, the Administrator promptly issued orders for Babarao's release. He also wrote to Narayanrao, "Your brother has been released. Make arrangements to take him from Sabarmati Jail."

It was only after the Government was convinced that Babarao would surely die that he was finally released. He was brought out of jail on a stretcher. As he was being taken out, Bhansali could not bear the thought of separation from Babarao. He embraced Babarao and began sobbing like a child. Tears welled up in Babarao's eyes. The scene moved one and all. Finally, the Superintendent comforted Bhansali. Babarao finally emerged out of jail on a stretcher. He had entered jail in June 1909.

It was in September 1922 that he was finally released. Babarao thus spent over thirteen years in prison under the most harrowing conditions. This mountain of a man had become a virtual corpse. Seeing his brother being released in this condition, Narayanrao did not know whether to laugh or cry.

## 8 BABARAO'S WRITINGS

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Babaroo was released in a critical condition. Death awaited him. But Fate had willed otherwise. Babaroo defied logic and death. He miraculously survived. He was destined to live for another twenty-three years. A new phase in Babaroo's life started. This was the phase as thinker, writer and organizer. Babaroo now devoted himself to the Herculean task of awakening Hindu society. He launched a scathing attack on anti-national/ anti-Hindu forces. Babaroo's monumental achievements in the face of continuing ill-health are truly mind-boggling. One cannot but bow before his single-minded resolve.

Mention has been made of the fact that Babaroo had a modest education. He was not even a matriculate. He had sacrificed his own education for his family commitments. But his thirst for knowledge was remarkable. He had studied *Ayurveda*. He looked upon *Vaajikaran* (\* one of the eight branches of *Ayurveda* that deals with methods of ensuring a better progeny) as a means of creating powerful future generations. In addition to *Ayurveda*, Babaroo had also studied *Saamudrika Shastra* (\*refers to knowledge of body features in the Vedic tradition; its main interest is in *hasta samudrikam* which is study of the palm lines), various aspects of astrology and the science of *mantras*. He had also made a deep study of *Yoga* and *Vedanta*. Babaroo was fond of vocal and instrumental music from an early age. In later years, he had expanded his study of music. Babaroo would occasionally sing 'songs of freedom'. He was good at playing the *tabla* and the *sitar*. Babaroo also read books on history, politics, linguistics and military manoeuvres. He would make notes of whatever he read and maintained a diary. Though he was a person of modest means, he had managed to make a decent collection of books. One of Babaroo's diaries mentions 1119 books. Of these, 227 related to *dharma* and philosophy, 203 to history and politics, 221 biographies, 267 to organization, art and the like, 29 to linguistics and 29 to military manoeuvres. These are books mentioned in a single diary. Babaroo probably had five to seven such diaries. In addition, he had a huge collection of banned literature and newspaper cuttings.

However, it must be remembered that the single aim of reading this vast array of literature was to put it in the service of the motherland. Babaroo did not use his knowledge of *Ayurveda* to make a living. His sole aim in studying *Ayurveda* was to probe whether it could be used in producing virile generations in the future. His aim in studying *Yoga*, *Mantras* and the like was also motivated by its possible applications in the service of the nation.

Likewise, Babaroo wielded his pen in the service of the nation. Before being deported to the Andamans, Babaroo had not written a word. He had merely propagated the writings of his younger brother Tatyaroo and the poet Govind. Is it not surprising that such a person wrote several books in his later years in spite of suffering indifferent health? The answer to this question may be found in Babaroo's pristine nationalism and the ominous ideologies that threatened to cloud it. Before his Transportation, the whole nation was behind Tilak. The revolutionaries aimed to accelerate the political movement led by Tilak. But at the time of Babaroo's release from Sabarmati Jail, the national leadership had passed into the hands of Gandhi. Woolly-headed ideas of truth, non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity had emasculated the Hindu psyche. It was to instil new vigour and vitality among the Hindus that Babaroo now resolved to keep arms aside and wield his pen. He wrote book after book with this singular aim in mind.

Rashtramimansa va Hindusthanche rashtraswaroop (May be translated as "Analysis of the concept of 'nation' and the nature of Hindusthan's nationhood"):

Babarao wrote the book *Rashtramimansa va Hindusthanche rashtraswaroop* in 1931 when he was in Kashi. This is widely regarded as his best work. While in Kashi, Babarao would discuss the name of the 'Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh' (RSS, literally 'National Volunteer Union') with his friends. Babarao felt that the *Tarun Hindu Sabha* (an organization started by him; literally 'Young Hindu Conference') should merge into the RSS and workers of the *Tarun Hindu Sabha* should wholeheartedly work for the RSS. The question arose regarding the propriety of the RSS, an organization restricted to Hindus, calling itself 'national'. Should not an organization restricted to Hindus be dubbed 'communal' rather than 'national', was the question posed to Babarao. Babarao's answer in this regard was unambiguous and prompt. Babarao held that Hindus alone qualify as nationals in Hindusthan. As such, an organization restricted to Hindus was fully justified in calling itself 'national'. When this argument failed to impress everyone. It was then that Babarao decided to write a book in this regard and completed it in about six to eight weeks. Babarao consulted several books in the well-equipped library of the Kashi Hindu Vishwavidyalaya (Banaras Hindu University) and had a discussion with many scholars in Kashi before writing this book. The book was published by Vaidyaratna Vishnu Ganesh Kelkar in Nashik in 1934. However, as Babarao's movements were restricted from 1931 to 1934, Babarao wrote it under the pseudonym *Durgatanay* (literally, he who has arisen from the body of Durga or Parvati, that is Ganesh; this was Babarao's name).

The first part of the book contains a detailed theoretical discussion on the concept of 'nation'. After quoting the definition of 'nation' from Webster's Dictionary, Babarao cites various Western authorities such as Holcombe, Burges, Bluntley, Getel. Babarao then gives the views of Hindu seers on 'nationhood'. He then concludes that land, community, *dharma*, civilization and language are the important and essential components of nationhood. A nation arises if these bonds are present; a nation fades away if these bonds are weakened. Babarao buttresses his argument by citing various resolutions of the League of Nations on the minority question. The first part of the book concludes by quoting the examples of England, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Russia, Poland, Estonia to support the author's views on the components of nationhood.

The second part of the book deals with the nationhood of Hindusthan. This nation belongs to the Hindus and as such they are the nationals of Hindusthan. However, the concept of nationhood was diluted and distorted by Britishers such as Hume and Wederburn when they formed the Indian National Congress in 1886. These individuals held that that the nation was a motley mix of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and Jews. This resulted in Hindus diverting all their energies in trying to forge unity among these different communities instead of channeling them towards winning freedom for the country. The British rulers subsequently created a wedge among different Hindu sects. Thus, for example, the Akali Sikhs started claiming that they had an identity distinct from the Hindus. In Maharashtra, the Brahmins and non-Brahmins were pitted against each other. In Madras Presidency, the so-called Depressed Classes stood against the Caste Hindus. In addition, the British rulers spent millions of rupees to establish Christian missions and indulge in conversion of the Hindus with a view to weaken Hindu society. The rulers further tarnished the names of such revered Hindu heroes such as Chhatrapati Shivaji, Chhatrapati Sambhaji, Chhatrapati Shahu, Nanasahab Peshwa and Bhausahab Peshwa. They corrupted the names of Hindusthan, Kashi, Mathura. Unfortunately, the Hindus fell prey to such evil machinations of the British rulers. They composed

songs affirming that the nation belongs to all those who reside in it. Under the influence of false notions of *dharmā*, Hindus refused to welcome back into their fold all those who had been converted by force or fraud. When the Hindu Empire of the Marathas was collapsing, the Shindes, Holkars, Gaikwads and Peshwas were waging their own battles and lost as a result. The same unfortunate turn of events happened in the case of the Sikhs. When the entire nation had risen against the British in 1857, the Marathas, Sikhs and Gurkhas remained passive. The same distorted view of nationhood prompted the Congress to accept the Communal Award. After thus describing the fallouts of a distorted view of Hindusthan's nationhood, Babarao has then presented the pristine nature of Hindusthan's nationhood. Babarao has put forth the view that Hindus alone constitute a nation in Hindusthan. The Hindus meet all the criteria of nationhood. This nation has been blessed by the natural borders of the Himalayas and the Ocean on three sides. The Hindus have their own *dharmic* tenets that lead to glory in this world and in the Hereafter. They have inherited a common history and civilization that dates back to antiquity. All their languages have sprung from a scientific and rich language such as Sanskrit. Thus, the Hindus constitute not merely a community but a nation unto themselves. After thus cogently discussing the nature of Hindusthan's nationhood, Babarao ends his book by appealing to the Hindus thus: " O Hindu readers! This is your identity. Arise and exert to protect this identity. Like Kaunteya (Arjuna) in the Mahabharata, be firm in your resolve and arise! Do not shirk back. There is no selfish motive involved. Your Hindu Dharma should survive for the welfare of humanity. Your race must survive for the survival of Hindu Dharma. The Hindu Nation should stand tall and united with its identity intact for the sake of your race. In your identity lies your essence! In your 'selfishness' lies the greater good and welfare of others. If you live, the world shall survive. If your Nation survives, humanity shall survive. Proclaim loudly - *Hindu Rashtra Bhagavan ki jai! Aum swasti... samudraparyantayaa ekraat!*"

Babarao's book on nationhood is thought-provoking and well-researched. The book was well received by thinkers and other pro-Hindu sections. LB Bhopatkar, who became President of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha said, "The book is so valuable that any one who wishes to study the politics of Hindusthan should carefully read the book. I heartily congratulate 'Durgatanay' for bringing out such a splendid and useful book at a time when there is a clamour of different ideas. I recommend every thinking Hindu to definitely keep it in his collection." Loknayak Madhav Shrihari Aney said, "The method of explaining the concept of 'nation' is highly rational and scientific. I have not come across any Marathi, indeed any English book that expounds the concepts of nation, nationhood and nationalism in such a lucid and evidence-based manner." The *Kesari* commented, "This book explains the nature of Hindusthan's nationhood in an excellent manner. This book should be read by all Indians." The *Ramdasi* of Dhule went so far as to say that the book was one of its kind. Prof. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, who later became *Sarsanghchalak* of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* was so enamoured by the book that he virtually translated this book and wrote '*We or Our Nationhood Defined*' in



English. Babarao's *Rashtramimansa* was translated into Hindi in 1945. Shri Golwalkar Guruji wrote the foreword to the Hindi translation. In writing this book, Babarao underlined the

theoretical basis of organizations such as the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* and the Hindu Mahasabha.

## 8.1 Hindu Nation- past, present and future

(\* Hindu Rashtra- poorvi, aataa aani pudhe – Marathi)

This is Babarao's second book in order of importance. Unlike *Rashtramimansa*, this book does not contain any theoretical discussion. However, it narrates the history of the Hindu Nation. The historical narrative is so important that the book has become a reference book for pro-Hindu sections. The first section of the book that deals with the history of Hindusthan outlines the social organization, polity, valour, literature, martial exploits, architecture, sculpture, metallurgy, weaving, art and philosophy of ancient Hindusthan. To preempt the charge that the narrative is self-congratulatory, Babarao has quoted several Western authorities to make his point. Babarao's erudition is evident to any one who reads this section.

The second section throws light on the situation in contemporary Hindusthan. It exposes the sordid nature of the Muslim problem. It traces the origin of the problem to the intolerant and aggressive teachings of the Islamic scriptures. Little wonder then that the history of Islam is blood-soaked. There is no indication that contemporary Muslims shall turn their backs on the Quran and start afresh. Babarao quotes several contemporary examples to back up his argument. In 1892, the Muslims had formed the 'Mohammedan Anglo Oriental Defence Association'. They rejected Hindi as the national language and exerted to have Urdu in its place; they espoused pan-Islamic causes and invited the Amir of Afghanistan to invade Hindusthan and incessantly worked towards converting Hindus over to Islam by force or fraud. Babarao has exposed the true face of so-called nationalist Muslim leaders. He has not spared Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Ali Bahadur Khan, Dr. Ansari, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Maulana Azad Sobhani, Barrister Asaf Ali, Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, Abdul Qayoom, Maulana Abdul Bari, Sir Akbar Haidari in this process. He then deals with the activities of various Muslim organizations such as the Khudai Khidmatgar and the Khaksars and persuasively argues that the Muslim problem is becoming acute by the day.

Babarao then turns his spotlight on the anti-national antics of the Hindu Congress leaders. He lists the Gandhi-Amanullah Pact, Gandhi's treachery against the revolutionaries, Gandhi's efforts to crown the Nizam as the sovereign of a future sovereign Hindusthan and the appeasement policies pursued by the Congress leaders. Babarao has exposed the cussedness of Sarojini Naidu, the Nehru father-son duo, Rajagopalachari and Gobind Ballabh Pant. The second section is thus unsparing in its treatment of the Congress and Muslim leadership.

The third section of the book suggests future direction to the polity of Hindusthan. Babarao pronounces the pursuit of strength as the cure for the ills afflicting Hindusthan. The Hindus should organize themselves on a massive scale on militant lines. They should produce experts in various fields. They should discard futile notions of truth and non-violence and consider anything that is in national interests to be ethical.

Babarao had spent several years in the preparation of this book. The bibliography given by Babarao at the beginning of this book includes 29 books and 14 newspapers. The book was published in the 'Hindu Rashtra Granthamaalaa' on 01 June 1942. The book caught the attention of the Government. On 04 September, a well-wisher wrote to Babarao, "Baba, there is reliable information that your book shall be proscribed in one or two days. Take care." These apprehensions were proved to be true. Babarao's book was banned.

## 8.2 The great leap of Chhatrapati Shivaji on Agra

(\* Shri Shivarayaanchi aagryaavaril garudjhep - Marathi)

This was Babarao's third book. Babarao has provided new insight into history. Several historians wondered why Chhatrapati Shivaji took great personal risk and go to Aurangzeb's court in Agra. Justice Madhav Govind Ranade, historians Deshpande and Sardesai, James Douglas, Sidney Owen and others have given varying explanations but none seemed complete and convincing to Babarao. The historian Rajwade has given an answer to this imponderable question but his explanation was more of an intelligent argument and lacked hard evidence. It was Babarao who provided the hard evidence to Rajwade's argument.

Babarao felt that a shrewd man like Chhatrapati Shivaji could not have possibly gone to Agra merely to see Aurangzeb's court as some historians contended. There must have been some bigger game plan in Shivaji's move. Babarao decided to hunt for evidence in this direction. Rajwade's neighbour Kale informed Babarao about Rajwade's view in this regard as expressed in the Mahikawati papers. Babarao built his argument using Rajwade's view. He started working on this book in 1928 and finally completed it in 1939. The book was published by Raghunath Dhondo Ghanekar. SD Pendse wrote a foreword to the book.

Babarao proposed that Shivaji went to Agra to dethrone and possibly kill Aurangzeb and establish a nation-wide Hindu kingdom. To Babarao, the sequence of events at that time pointed to this conclusion. Shivaji's letter to Mirza Jai Singh, his acceptance of certain humiliating conditions even though he was undefeated in battle, his so-called quarrel with his lieutenant Netaji Palkar, Mirza Jai Singh's last minute decision to stay in the Deccan ostensibly to look after Shivaji's kingdom in his absence, Shivaji's dramatic suicide attempt in Aurangzeb's court by asking Ram Singh for a dagger seemed significant to Babarao. Shivaji had demanded that he be given a place of honour at Aurangzeb's court. To Babarao, this seemed to be a ploy to get close to Aurangzeb and kill him and follow it with the capture of Delhi with the 5000 strong army of Netaji Palkar and the assistance of Rajputs. However, the wily Aurangzeb had Shivaji disarmed before being brought to his court and even then made him stand at a considerable distance. Shivaji's plan could not be executed. Further, Ram Singh did not understand Shivaji's true motive in asking for a dagger and hence this opportunity too was lost. Shivaji had planned to kill Aurangzeb in a one to one meeting but Aurangzeb did not turn up. Lastly, Shivaji had planned a coordinated uprising but the presence of mind of the *kotwal* of Agra saved the day for Aurangzeb. Thus, Babarao contended that Shivaji had gone to Agra with the express purpose of killing Aurangzeb and install Hindu rule over Hindusthan. One can only admire Shivaji's daring and planning in this regard!

Babarao's book caused many people to sit up and look at history with a different view. One such person was the historian GS Sardesai who was a scholar and author of Maratha history. In a letter written to Babarao on 19 October 1042, Sardesai wrote, "I read entirely your new book that you were so kind enough to send me. It was like entering a novel area of thought. A splendid new literature, novel imagination and unprecedented thought process are evident everywhere in the book...Compiling all available evidence, you have put forth a novel viewpoint with great expertise...I wish you a long and healthy life and express the hope that your luminous speech gives forth such novel ideas..."

### **8.3 A basket of heroic gems**

(\* Veeraa-Ratna- Manjusha - Marathi)

This was Babarao's fourth book. Babarao has focused on womanhood in this book. On the question of women, Babarao's views were as follows, "Hindu women should definitely serve the nation. If required, they should emulate the Rani of Jhansi and fight on the battlefield for the sake of protecting their nation and *dharma*. However, the exclusive and holy ideal of women is motherhood. Their heroism and service to the nation and *dharma* lies in giving birth to and rearing heroic offspring. Rather than imitating men, they should abide by *stree-dharma*. The Western society has laid importance to serving the wife with the result that women have become materialistic. In contrast, Hindu ethos has laid stress on worshipping the mother principle. The first exhortation of this civilization has been 'Maatr devo bhava' (\*Consider the mother as god). If women abide by this, future generations shall become heroic and scholarly. Like mother, like children! Rather than becoming materialistic, women should forever be ready to show restraint, bravery and a spirit of sacrifice. Such mothers will certainly produce world-conquering offspring!"

Babarao wrote this book to propagate his views on womanhood. In this, he has sung the glories of Rajput women such as Maharani Pushpavati, Tara, Randurgaa Jawaahirbai, the two daughters of Daahir, Shreekarmadevi, Padmini, mother of Raja Hamir, Pannaadaai. Babarao's style is such that any young girl cannot but be inspired by these glorious life-stories.

### **8.4 An introduction to Christ or the Hindutva of Christ**

(\* Christaparichay arthaat christaache Hindutva – Marathi)

This is another of Babarao's books. After centuries of enslavement, the Hindu mind had developed an inferiority complex. They had come to regard Hinduism and Hindu civilization to be inferior to Christianity and so-called Christian civilization. Through this book, Babarao proposed that Jesus Christ was a Hindu and hence the Hindus need not feel inferior to present day Christian rulers.

Babarao had been collecting evidence for this book from 1905. Around this time, Babarao came across the book *In the Words of Realization*, printed in three volumes. This was based on some lectures given by Swami Rama Teertha wherein he had mentioned certain facts about Jesus. According to this theory, Jesus had come to Kashmir in the last phase of his life. Babarao could not pursue the subject for some time due to his involvement in the revolutionary movement. However, while in prison, he read whatever material was made available to him about Jesus. During 1924-25, Babarao was in Dhantoli (Nagpur) to recuperate from illness. There, he met a scholar from Andhra Pradesh who had a treasure of information on Jesus. The scholar mentioned to Babarao that Ramaswamy Iyer, a resident of Madras (now Chennai) had done some research and almost proved that Jesus was a Hindu. Babarao later corresponded directly with Ramaswamy Iyer till the latter's death. Iyer provided him with a lot of information. Babarao also records his indebtedness to Russian scholar Notowich who authored the book '*The Unknown Life of Christ*'. Babarao was also influenced by the book '*By an Eye Witness*' written by a member of the Essen cult for circulation to its followers. Babarao continued to collect material for this book till 1940 and completed the book in Sangli on 22 December 1942. The book has been translated into English under the title 'Jesus the Christ was a Hindu' by PV Vartak and published by Indian Foundation for Vedic Science and Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana in 2003.

As evidence to show that Christ came to Hindusthan, Babarao mentions books such as *Naatha-Naamaavali*, *Tarikh-i-Ajam*, *Ikmaba Udadin* and *Barlan the Josephet*. Babarao concludes that Jesus was a Hindu. Babarao avers that the present bible does not belong to Christ and that the present Christian religion cannot be recognized as a *Dharma* or a *Panth*. He exhorts the Christians in Hindusthan to accept the fact that they are not different from the Hindus but members of a cult established by a Hindu philosopher and devotees of a Hindu Guru. He reminds the Christian world that they have snatched away Christ's Hinduness. They should repay the debt of Christ to Hindus by unfurling the flag of Hinduism beyond Hindusthan.

## 8.5 Why have Dharma?

(\* Dharma havaa kashaalaa? - Marathi)

This is Babarao's fifth book. Babarao had discussed *dharma* as a requisite for nationhood. In this book, he discusses the need for *dharma* itself. Babarao denounces the materialistic view that life is a result of chemical union. He argues that there has to be an Omniscient Principle. To say that life is at first non-existent, that it then takes on a bodily form and finally dies is unscientific and illogical according to Babarao. Nothingness cannot give rise to something. The Living Principle must be immanent and immortal. Once this is accepted, the theory of re-incarnation must also be accepted to be true. The absence of memory of past lives does not discount their existence for memory is not the sole test of existence. Several imponderables can be solved only if we accept the theory of re-incarnation. The Living Principle takes on a bodily form and incessantly strives to reach a Higher Principle. That which facilitates the attainment of the higher Principle by the living Principle is *dharma*. As this attainment is impossible without recourse to *dharma*, hence it follows that *dharma* is essential.

Babarao has relied on several arguments to support his view. He has critiqued the views of Charvaak, Brihaspati, Hegel, Dalton, Tyndall and Darwin. He has taken note of the views of Einstein, JBS Haldane, Sir Arthur Eddington, Curtley, Mather, Arthur Compton, Robert Milliken, Sayyad Mehdi Imam, William James, AM Freeman and others. He has furnished evidences of re-incarnation. Babarao's stupendous efforts in writing this book evoked admiration from his younger brother Tatyrao. This book was published in 1938 by '*Hindu Sanskriti Grantha Sampadak*, Nagpur. Loknayak Madhav Shrihari Aney wrote the foreword. Therein he writes, "This book is a pot of nectar that has resulted from the churning of the ancient and modern *shastras* (branches of knowledge). When I read the book, I would invariably picture Babarao as a doctor who insists that every youngster should drink unto this nectar."

In addition to the aforementioned books, 'Moplyanche band' (\*The Moplah rebellion) was another book that carried Babarao's name as author. However, the book was actually written by Tatyrao but due to the latter's internment at Ratnagiri and the prohibition on his political activities, the book carried Babarao's name. 'Veer Bairaagi' is another of Babarao's book. The original Hindi book was translated into English and published by 'Ganesh Mahadev and Co.' in 1930. The English translation carries Babarao's preface and concludes with Tatyrao's poem on Bandaa Bairaagi.

## 8.6 Publication of books:

In addition to writing, Babarao also published some books. These include '*Nepali aandolanaachaa upakram* (\*The activity of the Nepali movement), '*Sanghatan sanjeevani*' (\*Life-giving organization) and '*Bhayasoochak ghanta*' (\*The fearsome tolling of bells). The first book (published 1931) is a compilation of articles on Nepal that were published in *Swatantrya*, *Kesari*, *Mahratta* and *Shraddhanand* periodicals. The second book (published 1928) is a compilation of articles on Hindu consolidation published in *Shraddhanand* periodical. The third book (published 1927) is Tungaar's translation of Khwaja Hasan Nizami's pernicious Urdu book titled 'Daaiye Islam' (\*Invitation to Islam). During the All Indian Congress session in Calcutta in 1929, Babarao sent two volunteers in disguise to attend a secret meeting of Muslim leaders held at 'Muslim Tarun Sahitya Mandir' at Mirzapur Street. The two volunteers sent a report on the secret deliberations. The report was published in booklet form under the title 'An Eye-Opener' by Mansingh Verma at the Surat session of the Hindu Mahasabha. It was Babarao who played a major role in its publication. The report exposes the plan of Muslim leaders to increase the Muslim percentage in Bengal from 56 to 90 and to infiltrate various institutions and spread Islam. The booklet was cited by Barrister Jayakar in his witness before the Fact Finding Committee constituted during the Mumbai riots.

## 8.7 Miscellaneous writings:

In addition to books, Babarao wrote several articles for periodicals such as *Kesari* (Pune), *Lokamanya* (Mumbai), *Maharashtra* (Nagpur), *Sakaal* (Mumbai), *Aadesh* (Nagpur), *Vande Mataram* (Mumbai), *Mahratta* (Pune), *Shraddhanand* (Mumbai), *Prajapaksha* (Akola) and *Vikram* (Sangli). These articles are characterized by clear thinking and evidence-based presentation. The articles cover a whole range of

issues such as Hindi yaane Hindustani, Communal Award, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Amir of Afghanistan's sinister ploy to invade Hindusthan, The question of minorities, The future of Hindus, Pakistan, Khaksars, The true nature of the nation, The aggression of Urdu over Hindi, Hindu Dharma, Winds of War, Nepal, The treachery of Gandhi and Company, Andhra Veer Sri Rama Raju and others.

### **8.8 Mind-boggling intellectual activity:**

Babarao carried out his incessant reading, thinking and writing in the face of extremely poor health. Further, he was also busy in day to day organizational work such as meeting youngsters, attending conferences and meetings and touring the country. Organizational work would take up 12- 13 hours of his daily routine. But his spirit was so indomitable that he would painstakingly write thereafter in spite of being exhausted. Many of his books were written when he was supposed to take rest and recuperate. For example, his book '*Rashtramimaansa*' was written in Kashi when he had gone there to take rest. But such was Babarao's single-minded devotion to Hindutva that he used to forget that he was ill. He would continue to write till the wee hours of the morning. His host Bhaurao Damle would admonish him for over-exerting himself and would beseech him to go to sleep. Not wanting to hurt his sentiments, Babarao would put off the light and pretend to go to sleep. Then making sure that Bhaurao had gone to his room to sleep, he would put on the lights and resume writing. Once, Bhaurao happened to get up in the middle of the night. He was surprised to find Babarao working away in utter disregard of his health. He would now remove the light bulb and force Babarao to go to sleep. Unlike his brother Tatyrao, Babarao cannot be called a born writer. His writings seem to be ill-structured and loose at times. It must be remembered that he wrote his books under immense physical and mental strain. His straightforward style bereft of any flair is notable for his deep commitment to the subject matter. The fact that Babarao wrote this inspiring literature after spending several horrendous years in prison cannot but evoke the highest respect of even an impartial observer!

What is even more awesome is Babarao's career as an organizer of Hindus.

## 9 BABARAO, RSS AND HINDU CONSOLIDATION

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### 9.1 A memorable incident:

The year was 1923. Mamarao Joglekar, the eminent Hindu leader from Akola (Maharashtra) was traveling from Kalyan to Nashik by train. Seated opposite to him was Professor Damodar Ganesh Padhye from Nashik. As the train halted at a station, Padhye alighted from the train for some work. He kept his *pugree* (traditional Maharashtrian headgear) and umbrella on his seat and left his place. As soon as he alighted, a burly Pathan threw away his belongings and sat there in his place. When Padhye came back, he was surprised to see the Pathan there. Padhye pleaded with the Pathan to allow him to occupy his rightful place. However, the arrogant Pathan started abusing Padhye. No sooner had he uttered two or three abuses, a sickly passenger who was sitting two places away got up and leaped on the Pathan. He brought down the Pathan and sitting on the Pathan's chest, started raining blows on the Pathan. Next, he tugged so hard at the Pathan's beard that a handful of hair came off. The Pathan started howling in pain. Terrified, the Pathan beat a hasty retreat. Shouting "Tobaa, Tobaa, Ya Allah", the Pathan went to another compartment. Mamarao Joglekar who was a witness to this remarkable incident asked the sickly passenger his name. "My name is Baba Savarkar" was the reply!

The incident is representative of the nature of Babarao's activities after 1922. The Muslims were trampling on the legitimate rights of Hindus. In spite of his indifferent health, Babarao came to the rescue of Hindu society. He dealt a heavy blow to the enemies of Hindu society. Babarao took upon the rejuvenation and consolidation of Hindu society as his life mission. He broadly carried out these activities from 1922 to 1945. He devoted his physical, mental and meager financial energies to this end. Indeed, he sacrificed his remaining life for the Hindu cause. The following narrative deals with his phase as an organizer of Hindus.

### 9.2 Exposing Gandhi's much touted sainthood:

Soon after his release from prison, Babarao launched a frontal assault on Gandhi's carefully cultivated image as a political saint. Gandhi had conspired with the Amir of Afghanistan and invited him to invade Hindusthan. With his warped notions of truth and non-violence, Gandhi had emasculated the Hindus and placed the millstone of Hindu-Muslim unity around their neck. Babarao would severely criticize Gandhi on these and other points. He would characterize him as a treacherous man and a humbug to boot. He would deride those who called Gandhi a Mahatma. When Babarao would criticize Gandhi thus, his listeners would be taken aback. They would politely tell Babarao that while they did not doubt his sincerity and patriotism, they could not believe his criticism of Gandhi. At this, Babarao would control his emotions and retort that he was not in the habit of hurling accusations without proof. Babarao's well-wishers would then warn him that he would lose popularity and be shunned by the people at large and Congressmen in particular if he continued to

criticize Gandhi. Babarao would calmly reply that he had forsaken his home and hearth for the sake of his motherland. He would continue to expose Gandhi's anti-Hindu activities even if that meant inviting contempt and ridicule. Babarao had sent details of the Gandhi-Amanullah Conspiracy to several important leaders. These included Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Dr. Moonje, Dr. Hedgewar, Shankaracharya Dr. Kurtakoti, Ramaswamy Ayyar and Padmaraj Jain among others. Swami Shraddhananda had mentioned the telegram sent by Gandhi to Amanullah in an issue of 'Liberator' periodical. Babarao would keep copies of this issue handy. He would show this issue to any one who came to meet him. No meeting of Babarao would be complete without a reference to the infamous Gandhi-Amanullah Conspiracy. Such were the strong feelings of Babarao towards Gandhi.

### 9.3 Gandhi-Muslim conspiracy:

Babarao wished to make the general public aware of the Gandhi-Amanullah Pact. It was his fervent wish to commit the facts of the case to writing and publicize them. This wish was fulfilled by noted scholar from Pune, Anant Janardan Karandikar. Babarao gave the issues of 'Liberator' and other reference material to Karandikar. Karandikar gained access to more material and started a series of articles in *Kesari*. Babarao and Karandikar were in constant correspondence during the publication of these articles and would discuss the finer points. These articles were published in 1939 and created a storm in the political circles of Maharashtra. However, Babarao wanted people outside Maharashtra to know these facts. He now persistently asked Karandikar to translate these articles into English and publish them in a book format. The articles caught the attention of Dr. Moonje. In a letter dated 20 August 1939, Moonje wrote to JS Karandikar, editor of



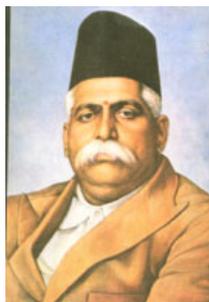
*Kesari* and father of AJ Karandikar, "I received the cuttings of *Kesari*. The article is splendid...Please get the article translated by someone in the *Kesari* who knows English and send a typed copy of the translation to me immediately. I shall send it to all newspapers in Hindusthan. It will be then easier to translate it into Hindi. Such is the importance of this article."

#### 9.4 Tarun Hindu Sabha:

The anti-Gandhi aspect of Babarao's activity was aimed solely to make the Hindus alive to the dangers of falling prey to Gandhi's ideology. However, Babarao knew that the Hindus would have to be presented with a constructive alternative. He plunged into the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha. Babarao knew that for any ideology to take firm roots, it must capture the hearts and minds of the youth. To enlist the support of the youth into the Mahasabha, Babarao founded a separate 'Tarun Hindu Sabha (\*Young Hindus' Conference) in 1923-24. For the next 4-5 years, Babarao traveled extensively to start branches of the Tarun Hindu Sabha. He would correspond extensively and give encouragement to youngsters to keep up the activities of the Tarun Hindu Sabha. In 4-5 years, Babarao could start 25-30 branches of the Tarun Hindu Sabha and enlist some 500 youths under its banner. The Tarun Hindu Sabha was open to any Hindu male from 16 to 40 years of age irrespective of his caste and sect. The members would celebrate festivals such as the coronation day of Chhatrapati Shivaji, Vijayadashmi and Makar Sankraman. The members would meet once a week and deliberate on issues facing the Hindus. They would prevent Hindu girls from falling prey to the machinations of Muslim youth. They would receive training in *lathis* and march-past. The members would start professions and businesses wherein non-Hindus had entrenched themselves. They would participate in *shuddhi* and abolition of caste discrimination. The members would contribute eight *annas* (roughly fifty paise or half an Indian rupee) on a yearly basis and thus take care of the finances. Babarao paid attention to minute details in the working of the Tarun Hindu Sabha. Several volunteers of the Tarun Hindu Sabha attended the annual Hindu Mahasabha session held in Surat in 1929. It was Babarao's first attempt to give an impetus to the Tarun Hindu Sabha. This attempt met with mixed success. In the same year in April, Babarao made a similar attempt at a conference of the Hindu Mahasabha was held in Akola. This attempt met with considerable success and the Tarun Hindu Sabha received a fillip.

The Conference in Akola was marked by successful sub-conferences of the Berar Provincial Hindu Sabha, Akhil Maharashtra Tarun Parishad, Shuddhi Parishad and Asprushyoddhaar Parishad (\*Conference for Upliftment of Untouchables). Babarao had stationed himself at Akola for several days before the Conference. While he would guide the workers of the different sub-conferences, his real interest lay in the 'Akhil Maharashtra Tarun Parishad'. He made strenuous efforts for its success. The Conference of the 'Akhil Maharashtra Tarun Parishad' was held on 20 April 1929 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Narayanrao Savarkar. Leaders such as Dr. Hedgewar, Dr. Moonje, Masurkar Maharaj, Loknaya MS Aney, Swami Shivanand, Panchlegaonkar Maharaj, Dr. Shivajirao Patwardhan, Brijlal Biyani attended the Conference. Dr. Savarkar delivered a brilliant speech. To channelize the enthusiasm generated by the Conference, a working committee was formed. Babarao was the moving spirit of the Conference. However, such was his self-effacing nature that he saw to it that his name did not figure anywhere among the luminaries.

## 9.5 Tarun Sabha, RSS and Babarao:



Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, a former member of the revolutionary organization Anushilan Samiti, had completed his medical education at the National Medical College, Calcutta (now Kolkata) and returned to Nagpur in 1914. Instead of starting medical practice, he had decided to devote himself wholly to the motherland. In 1919, Dr. Hedgewar started an organization of youngsters called 'National Union'. After two years, he merged this organization into Dr. Moonje's party. In 1920, Dr. Hedgewar worked as 'Officer Commanding' at the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress. In 1922, Dr. Hedgewar played a major role in the 'Officers' Training Camp' that was held preparatory to starting the volunteer wing of the Indian National Congress. In 1923, as secretary of the Nagpur Hindu Sabha, Dr. Hedgewar was in the forefront of a satyagraha launched to demand the removal of a mosque that had been erected to stall the Ganesh immersion procession in the Ganesh Peth area of Nagpur. However, Dr. Hedgewar had started getting the feeling that all these efforts were isolated and disjointed. He resolved to start a nation-wide, well-oiled volunteer organization of the Hindus.

Towards the end of 1924, Babarao arrived in Nagpur. He was put up at the residence of Advocate Vishwanathrao Kelkar who was his distant relative and Dr. Hedgewar's close friend. Babarao used to attract youngsters wherever he went. His stay in Nagpur saw several youngsters visiting him and discussing the state of the Hindu society. Among these youngsters was Dr. Hedgewar. He used to attend these meetings with Babarao for hours together but would speak rarely. Babarao had now created a group of committed Hindu youngsters. He started a branch of the Tarun Hindu Sabha in Nagpur. When the time came for Babarao to leave Nagpur, he decided to entrust the responsibility of the Tarun Hindu Sabha to a suitable person. On discussing the matter with Kelkar, Babarao became convinced that there was no one more suitable than Dr. Hedgewar to carry forward the activities of the Tarun Hindu Sabha. It was with a sense of great satisfaction that Babarao entrusted the Tarun Hindu Sabha to Dr. Hedgewar when he left Nagpur.

Dr. Hedgewar translated his long cherished dream into reality on Vijaydashmi day in 1925. A *shakha* (branch) of Hindu teenagers and youngsters was started by Dr. Hedgewar in the ruins of Salubai Mohite's *wada* in Mahal area of Nagpur. This was the beginning of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The organization received its name after it was actually founded. Babarao Savarkar was present in Nagpur on this momentous day. He was happy to know that a new organization of Hindus had started. He would engage in frequent discussions with Dr. Hedgewar regarding the RSS. Babarao felt great affection towards the RSS. From his sickbed, he would think constantly of its progress.

Dr. Hedgewar in turn had the highest respect for Babarao. He requested Babarao to prepare the RSS flag with his own hands. The *Bhagwa* (saffron) flag that was prepared was the age-old symbol of the Hindu nation. Dr. Hedgewar also asked Babarao to prepare the RSS pledge. Babarao had earlier prepared the pledge of the Abhinav Bharat and the Tarun Hindu Sabha. Dr. Hedgewar made some minor changes in Babarao's draft. Thus the RSS pledge was prepared. The RSS pledge

mentioned the words 'Hindu Rashtra'. This had deep significance. For the first time ever, the words 'Hindu Rashtra' were officially accepted on an organizational basis. One cannot but marvel at the vision of both Babarao and Dr. Hedgewar.

## 9.6 Merging of the Tarun Hindu Sabha and the Sangh:

The Tarun Hindu Sabha and the Sangh had similar aims and objectives. Their methodology of functioning was also similar. The only difference was that the Sangh *shakha* was organized on a daily basis whereas the members of the Tarun Hindu Sabha worked on a weekly basis. Usually, two organizations that work towards the same goal develop differences and clash of egos. However, this never took place in the case of these two organizations. The principal reason for this was the deep affection and respect that both Babarao and Dr. Hedgewar felt towards each other. Dr. Hedgewar would refrain from starting *shakhas* in places that had a functioning Tarun Hindu Sabha branch. Babarao would reciprocate likewise. This continued till 1931.

Babarao's health continued to be indifferent. He did not have the strength to tour the country which was a requirement for expanding his organization. In Dr. Hedgewar, he was seeing a young man with exceptional organizational abilities. Babarao felt that it was unnecessary for two organizations with similar goals and methodology to function separately. He was now slowly veering towards the thought of merging his Tarun Hindu Sabha in the Sangh.

In 1931, Babarao had gone to Kashi for medical treatment. During his stay in Kashi, the town was rocked by Muslim riots. Due to his poor health, Babarao could not do much to protect the Hindus. His mind was restless. Babarao naturally thought of Dr. Hedgewar as one who could stand by the Hindus in this hour of crisis. As was his habit, Babarao sent an urgent telegram to Dr. Hedgewar and urged him to come to Kashi forthwith. Dr. Hedgewar was fully conversant with Babarao's nature. On receiving this telegram, he jocularly replied, "Wait, watch, pray and hope!" After a couple of days on 11 March, Dr. Hedgewar left for Kashi. He had already informed his travel schedule to the Hindu workers in Kashi. The workers went to receive him at the station and promptly took him to the residence of Bhaurao Damle where Babarao was staying. Babarao was waiting eagerly for Doctorji. As soon as he saw Doctorji alighting from the car, he decided to tease his dear friend. He closed the door of his room from within. When Doctorji knocked and asked Babarao to open the door, Babarao replied from within, "Wait, watch, pray and hope!" One can only imagine the laughter and banter that followed between the two friends! Doctorji strengthened the morale of the local Hindus. He advised them to build resistance at the local level and stand up to the bullying by Muslims. Doctorji was in Kashi till 01 April. During this time, he nursed Babarao with all his heart. One day, Babarao told Doctorji, "Doctor, I have dissolved my Tarun Sabha today. Please allow it to be merged in your Sangh. I shall henceforth use all my goodwill for the sake of the Sangh work. I bless the Sangh and wish it immortality and success!" Babarao promptly wrote to all the branches of the Tarun Hindu Sabha asking them to dissolve themselves and merge into the Sangh. The Tarun Hindu Sabha and the Sangh became one. The meeting of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers occurs in Kashi. The mingling of these two organizations occurred in the same sacred town. In merging his organization into the Sangh, Babarao again showed his self-effacing nature.

## 9.7 Touring for the Sangh:

After merging his organization into the Sangh, Babarao plunged into Sangh work. In 1932, Babarao planned a tour of Maharashtra for the expansion of the Sangh work. On 17 July 1932, Babarao wrote a letter to Dr. Hedgewar inviting him to tour Western Maharashtra. Bowing to Babarao's wish, Doctorji left Nagpur on 05 August and reached Mumbai. The two then undertook a joint tour to expand the Sangh work. They toured Pune, Satara, Karad, Sangli, Kolhapur, Ratnagiri, Thane and Kalyan and started Sangh *shakhas* at different places. At Babarao's instance, his younger brother Dr. Narayanrao became Sanghachalak (local Sangh head) of Mumbai. In fact, the first Sangh *shakha* in Mumbai started in Dr. Narayanrao's clinic. In April 1932, Babarao wrote to Doctorji and urged him to attend the Akhil Bharatiya Tarun Hindu Parishad that was to be held in Karachi in May. Doctorji was always on the lookout for opportunities to meet youngsters. However, Doctorji was busy with the Officers' Training Camp that was to be held in Nagpur at the same time. The question of the expenses involved in going to Karachi also bothered him. He apprised Babarao of his difficulties. Like Doctorji, Babarao also had no funds to go to Karachi. The correspondence that followed not only indicates the fondness between these two stalwarts but also underscores the difficult circumstances in which they were working.

Being aware of Babarao's meager financial resources, Bhai Parmananda offered to bear Babarao's traveling expenses. Babarao typically wrote to Doctorji, "...We shall share the available funds between the two of us and lighten the burden." Such was the warmth between the two. On Doctorji's suggestion that Babarao should speak to the assembled youth regarding the Sangh, Babarao modestly replied, "Though I have totally devoted myself to the Sangh, I do not as yet consider myself fully equipped to propagate the Sangh. You should come. Bhaji has asked me regarding you and desires that you should attend." Another letter dated 20 April is in the same vein. Babarao writes to Doctorji, "...Though I am whole-heartedly in the Sangh, I am not fully clear in my mind as to the method of putting forth its aims, definite answers to various queries, complete knowledge of its functioning...Hence, you should attend the Conference. When you answer various queries and expound fundamentally on functioning and methodology of the Sangh in my presence, I shall be able to understand these things fully..."

The plan to attend the Conference in Karachi finally took shape. On 02 May, Doctorji left Nagpur for Mumbai. From there, both Babarao and Doctorji left by the night train on 03 May. Both of them were in Karachi for six days.

Babarao brought many prominent individuals into the Sangh. For example, Bhaurao Damle at whose residence Babarao stayed in Kashi took on the responsibility of Sanghachalak of Kashi at Babarao's instance. In 1931, when the Tarun Hindu Sabha merged into the Sangh, Doctorji spent around 15-20 days persuading Bhaurao to take up responsibility as the first Sanghachalak of Kashi. But Bhaurao would not agree. Finally, Babarao requested Bhaurao to accede to the proposal. Babarao spoke with such fervour that tears welled up in his eyes. Bhaurao could not now refuse the responsibility.

Babarao used his good offices in the Hindu Mahasabha to further the Sangh work. It was through Babarao's efforts that resolutions commending the Sangh were passed at the 14<sup>th</sup> (1932, Delhi, presidentship of NC Kelkar), 15<sup>th</sup> (Ajmer) and 19<sup>th</sup> (Karnavati, presidentship of Tatyrao Savarkar) sessions of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha. As a result, the fledgling Sangh drew nation-wide attention. Hindu Mahasabha workers across the country started joining the Sangh. Leaders such as Babu Padmaraj Jain became acquainted with the Sangh due to the resolutions passed in the Hindu Mahasabha sessions.

## 9.8 Shielding the Sangh:

On one occasion, the issue of the Sangh cropped up at a meeting of the Hindu Sabha in Delhi. Babarao was chairing the meeting. Speaking at the meeting, Babu Jagat Narain remarked that the Sangh should play second fiddle to the Hindu Mahasabha. Babarao immediately opposed this sentiment. In a speech marked by tremendous insight and clarity of thought, Babarao said, "The Sangh and the Sabha are two organizations with different method of functioning. One is styled on military lines while the other is civilian in nature. As the Hindu Sabha is civilian in nature and hence subject to public opinion, its leaders will constantly change. The Hindu Sabha has to be guided by fickle public opinion. Hence one cannot give a guarantee that its leaders will always be the best. Under these circumstances, if an organization like the Sangh is run by the Sabha, its work cannot continue unhindered and will be ruined. Hence, the Sangh should exist separately and remain *ekachaalakanuvarti* (run by a single leader). It should not come under the control of the Sabha." Babarao's argument failed to convince those present. However, Meher Chand Khanna, a delegate from the Frontier provinces got up and said, "Babaji's stand is one hundred percent correct." Khanna's support turned the tide and Babarao's original resolution supporting the Sangh was approved!

Babarao stood by the Sangh once again in 1939. The Bhaaganagar (\*Hyderabad) Unarmed Resistance movement was in full swing. The Sangh was under fire from pro-Hindu quarters for not participating in the movement as an organization. GG Adhikari, the pro-Hindu editor of the 'Vande Mataram' weekly from Mumbai criticized the Sangh. When Babarao read Adhikari's article, he wrote a counter article defending the stand taken by the Sangh. The article entitled '*Sanghaachya aadnyechi khoti sabab*' (\*the false excuse of the Sangh's command) was published in the issue of 'Vande Mataram' dated 21 June 1939. Babarao wrote, "Those individuals whose minds have been fired by love and pride of Hindutva through the teachings of the Sangh have never shirked from their duty towards Hindutva in times of need. They have discharged their duty diligently. The number of such individuals may be less or more than expected but there is no doubt that it is there." Babarao thus gallantly defended the Sangh. Babarao implied that true Sangh workers participated in the Bhaaganagar movement out of their innate pride in Hindutva without waiting for a formal command from the Sangh. Those Sangh workers who worked half-heartedly remained aloof. There was no merit in the argument that the Sangh does not command its workers to participate in a particular movement. Once Babarao's article appeared, the columns of the 'Vande Mataram' weekly fell silent in their criticism of the Sangh.

## 9.9 Strengthening the Sangh:

Babarao did not rest content with merging his own Tarun Hindu Sabha into the Sangh. He inspired others to merge their organizations into the Sangh as well. Once such organization was the 'Mukteshwar Dal' formed in 1922-1923 under the leadership of Sant Pachlegaonkar Maharaj. The Dal had the overall welfare of the Hindu nation as its aim. It had taken roots in the Bombay Presidency and Provinces such as Central Provinces and Berar and Khandesh. It had over 100 branches in places such as Pune, Junnar, Nagar, Khed, Sinnar, Nashik, Sangamner, Rahuri, Kopargaon, Belapur, Ambol, Yavatmal, Khamgaon, Yawal and Yewle. Thousands of Hindu youth had rallied under its banner. LB Bhopatkar, Ganpatrao Nalawade, Nanarao Saptarshi counted among its leaders. The programmes of the Dal were organized on a daily basis and included training in *lathi*, marchpast and *shuddhi*. After doing laudable work for 5-7 years, the Dal was banned by the Government. Babarao urged Pachlegaonkar Maharaj to merge his Dal into the Sangh. Babarao told him that instead of having small organizations working locally, they should have a large nation-wide organization. Initially, Pachlegaonkar Maharaj refused to accede to Babarao's suggestion. He feared that if the Dal was dissolved, the work of consolidation and *shuddhi* would stop. Babarao then asked Doctorji to promise Pachlegaonkar Maharaj that the Sangh would continue the work of Hindu consolidation in an effective manner. Pachlegaonkar Maharaj finally relented and merged the Dal into the Sangh. At Babarao's instance, Pachlegaonkar Maharaj himself took the Sangh pledge and toured Bhandara, Wardha and Chandrapur with Doctorji for the expansion of the Sangh work. The fledgling Sangh received a boost due to Babarao's efforts.

## 9.10 Babarao and Dr. Hedgewar:

Dr. Hedgewar had the highest respect for Babarao. He had great regard for Babarao's selfless service to the motherland. He was also fully aware of Babarao's deep affection for the Sangh. Doctorji would speak of Babarao in glowing terms. He would address Babarao with the greatest respect in his letters. "I am arriving as per your command", "I shall spend the month of August in your service" would be the tenor of Doctorji's language while addressing Babarao. Doctorji would invite Babarao to attend every Officers' Training Camp that would be held in Pune. He would make special arrangements to make Babarao's stay comfortable. Once, there was an Officers' Training Camp in Pune. Babarao happened to be in Pune at that time. However, instead of staying at the Camp, he had put himself up in a guest-house. When Doctorji came to know this, he promptly hired a *tonga* (\*horse-carriage) and rushed to meet Babarao. Doctorji said, "Baba, when our Sangh Camp is being held in town, it is not proper that you should stay elsewhere. Come, I have brought a *tonga* to escort you to the Camp. Babarao replied, "Doctor, I would have stayed at the camp but what can I do? My legs ache. I can hardly stand. I have increasing difficulty in passing urine. I have to sit for at least half an hour to pass urine. If come to the Camp, I shall only put others to inconvenience. I require a separate room that is close to the toilet. Hence I do not wish to come. I shall stay here." But Doctorji would have none of it. He lovingly urged Babarao to come with him. Babarao could not refuse Doctorji's pure affection. Doctorji put Babarao in the *tonga*

and took him to Bhave School (now Garware High School) where the Camp was underway. The Camp was crowded with trainees. Even Doctorji had difficulty in finding a room for himself. But as soon as Babarao arrived, he asked one room to be kept exclusively for Babarao. He treated Babarao like a king. Such was the boundless love and respect that Doctorji had for Babarao! It was this affection that prompted Doctorji to once personally nurse Babarao in his illness. This was in 1925 when Babarao had gone to Calcutta (now Kolkata) at the residence of Babu Padmaraj Jain to recuperate from illness. Doctorji had stayed with Babarao throughout his stay in Calcutta and had nursed him. The feelings of affection and respect between Babarao and Doctorji were mutual. When Doctorji passed away in 1940, Babarao was deeply shocked. He deeply mourned the passing away of his dear and personal friend as an irreparable loss to the Hindu Nation.

With Doctorji's passing away, Babarao felt deep concern for the future of the Sangh. He prepared a plan for the future functioning of the Sangh and sent it to Advocate Vishwanathrao Kelkar in Nagpur. Babarao had proposed that the reins of the Sangh should pass into the hands of Madhavrao Golwalkar (Guruji) and an advisory committee consisting of Babasaheb Ghatate, Ramchandra Narayan (Babasaheb) Padhye, Vishwanathrao Kelkar and others be formed with Abaji Hedgewar (Doctorji's uncle) as its head. Babarao sent his proposal to Nagpur but events were moving in a different direction. Golwalkar Guruji became *Sarsanghchalak* (RSS Chief) in tune with Babarao's proposal. The only difference was that no advisory committee was formed. However, the Sangh continued to expand even after Doctorji's death. Babarao was happy to note these developments. He was not displeased to see his proposal not being implemented in toto. His only desire was that the Sangh should grow by leaps and bounds. Personal ego meant nothing to him.

Even after Doctorji's death, Babarao continued to work for the Sangh. He knew hundreds of Sangh *swayamsevaks* (\*volunteers) personally. Many *swayamsevaks* would look up to him and seek his guidance. Babarao too would answer their queries. Though ill-health prevented Babarao from attending the Sangh *shakha*, it can be unambiguously said that he was a true and devoted Sangh *swayamsevak*.

### **9.11 Babarao's thoughts on the Sangh:**

Babarao's devotion to the Sangh cause was not blind. In his book 'Hindu Rashtra-poorvi, aataa aani pudhe' (\* Hindu Nation- past, present and future), Babarao has penned the following thoughts on the Sangh, "The birth of the Sangh and the fact that it has taken upon itself the task of securing freedom for the country is an event that signifies the future glory of the Hindu Nation. The Sangh has brought many people together and has organized millions and millions of orderly *swayamsevaks* in military-like discipline. This contribution of the Sangh is truly remarkable. Future historians will have to record this contribution in letters of gold. The contribution of the Sangh in keeping Hindutva alive is likewise incomparable. It cannot be matched. But henceforth, an organization such as the Sangh cannot remain satisfied with mere numbers of disciplined individuals. The Sangh should gradually find occasions to test its strength. It should create experts in every aspect of the polity so that freedom may be won and maintained. The Sangh followers have taken a pledge to protect 'jati-dharma-samskriti'. To make this pledge meaningful and to serve society and gain its support, the Sangh should protect people from riots and foreign aggression.

Only if this happens will the Sangh progress and expand. Else, the Sangh will shrink and the hopes of the Hindu society will be dashed!" Babarao would never shrink from expressing his views. However, he never crossed the limits of discipline while articulating his views. He never made irresponsible suggestions. His suggestions were those of a sincere and selfless worker.

### **9.12 Concern about the Sangh even on deathbed:**

Babarao's selfless concern for the Sangh continued even when he was on his deathbed. In August 1944, he developed severe anemia and was shifted from Sangli to Mumbai for blood transfusion. The thought of the Sangh would not leave him even as he was counting his last moments. When Sarsanghchalak Golwalkar Guruji came to visit him, Babarao had a one-to-one meeting with him and requested him to continue the work of the Sangh in full earnest. He literally pleaded with Guruji to take steps to end the growing rift that was developing between the Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha. Babarao said, "Guruji, I am going. I am seeing the next horizon of life. Before leaving this mortal world, I shall tell you whatever I feel about the Sangh. The Sangh has done a lot till now but there is much that remains to be done to achieve our goal. We cannot forever do the same things. Numerical strength is undoubtedly important but it is not everything. Numerical strength should be backed by expertise. Unless we have experts in economics, education, armed forces, politics, linguistics, intelligence and other fields with us, we shall not be able to attain our goal. I have planted the seed of several *shakhas* with my own hands. The Sangh is mine and hence I am making these suggestions with great affection. Accept them; the interests of the Sangh and the nation lie in that. There is dissension developing between the Sangh and the Sabha. This is not a good sign. This is disorganization developing during the process of consolidation. Guruji, pay attention to these things. I am lying on my deathbed. I cannot set right these things. You rectify them. Give this one assurance to this traveller who is on his last journey! My journey shall become easier on the strength of this one assurance!" As he was speaking thus, Babarao's eyes filled with tears. Guruji too was overwhelmed. Seeing Babarao's sense of oneness with the Sangh, Guruji's tender heart was moved. He clasped Babarao's frail hand and said, "Baba, be rest assured, I am fully alive to these things. Do not worry." Guruji left. Babarao passed away, a contented man. Babarao died but the relations between Babarao and the Sangh are immortal!

### **9.13 Shraddhanand:**

The 'Shraddhanand' weekly did yeoman service to the Hindu cause. Dr. Narayanrao Savarkar was its editor. However, Babarao played a major role in its publication. The first issue of the weekly was published on *Makar Sankraman* day, 10 January 1927. In the first year, the ownership of the weekly was vested in Shinkar of '*Saaraswat Mudrak aani Prakashak Mandal*'. Dr Narayanrao Savarkar was editor. In the second year, the 'Shri Shraddhanand Mudrak Prakashak Mandali' was formed. It bought the ownership rights of the weekly from Shinkar. It was after this that

Babarao started taking active interest in the affairs of the weekly. He traveled to different places and used his good offices to sell shares of the Mandali so that it may become self-sufficient. During one such tour in Akola, Babarao suffered a heat stroke and fell unconscious at the doorstep of a potential donor. Through his tireless efforts, he managed to collect Rs. 25-30000. The Shradhdhanand weekly managed to survive for a few years.

#### **9.14 Chitale's invaluable support:**

The famous Law Reporter of Nagpur, Advocate Waman Vasudev Chitale gave invaluable support to Babarao. Once when Babarao was staying at the house of Vishwanathrao Kelkar in Nagpur, this gentleman came to visit Babarao. There was a group of people around Babarao. He did not utter a word throughout the discussion. When the others left, he came to Babarao and said quietly, "Baba, do you recognize me? You had administered the pledge of our secret society on the sands of the Ganga (Godavari) in 1908. I am the same Waman Vasudeo Chitale. I took the pledge but could not achieve much. But I now wish to serve you to some extent. I have a body (*tan*) but it has become frail; I have a mind (*man*) but it is not strong enough to withstand the rigours of patriotism; however I have managed to collect some money (*dhan*). Tell me what I should do!" As Chitale was speaking, Babarao's mind raced through the tumultuous years of his revolutionary phase. Babarao spoke nothing. That day, Chitale invited Babarao over to his house for lunch. After the meal, Chitale again asked Babarao, "How much money should I give you?" This was the first time someone was asking this question to Babarao. Babarao was clueless. Finally, he said, "Wamanrao, give according to your capacity and inclination." Wamanrao said, "Okay, the money shall reach you." Babarao left. At around 4.30 pm, a servant came from Wamanrao's house. He handed a sealed envelope to Babarao. It contained two thousand rupees! After two or three days, Wamanrao again visited Babarao. Seeing Babarao's physical condition, he said, "Baba, do not travel in this state. What if something untoward happens? Take rest. I cannot bear to see your ordeal!" Babarao replied, "Wamanrao, this body has to go some day. But the work should be done. I shall not die till I collect another four thousand rupees." Wamanrao left. In the evening, Babarao received a further four thousand rupees. The accompanying note read, "Baba, at least now, please take rest for my sake." When the Hindi edition of 'Shradhdhanand' started, Wamanrao came to Mumbai and gave a further ten thousand rupees to Babarao!

#### **9.15 Babarao's sense of gratitude:**

Actually, Chitale was known to easily give away money. But anyone who saw the frail, sick Babarao moving heaven and earth to complete his mission could not but be moved. When Babarao would ask for financial help for a public cause, a potential donor would say to himself, "This sick and tortured patriot has come calling to your house, he has blessed your house by visiting you and you do not give him anything? Then what right do you have to remain alive in the first place?" This would prompt the donor to give some money to Babarao. Babarao's sense of gratitude was such that he remembered such assistance till the end. Two months prior to his death, Babarao wrote to Chitale, "I am writing to you after at least 4-5 years. This is my

first and probably my last letter to you in all these years. I am on my deathbed. As it is my fervent desire to write to you personally, I am doing so in this condition...You have given me invaluable support from time to time solely in the spirit of duty. Unfortunately or otherwise...the thousands of rupees you and others gave me went down the drain...such a lot of your money went waste but you never faulted me directly or indirectly with a word. You never accused me directly or indirectly of misappropriation or selfish motives. For this, I thank the Almighty and yourself. I sincerely felt that I should some day express all these feelings to you. I am doing that through this letter. I will feel better if I know that you have accepted my words of gratitude. My health will give way any moment. I will not survive for many days." Such was Babarao's magnanimity. It was natural that people should come forward to help him in his noble cause.

### 9.16 Shradddhanand's contribution:

The first issue of 'Shradddhanand' was published on 10 January 1927. The last issue was published on 10 May 1930. Though it lasted for less than four years, its contribution to the Hindu cause has become legendary. The second half of Tatyrao's '*Maajhi janmathep*' (\*My Transportation for Life) was published first in the 'Shradddhanand'. Tatyrao's articles poking fun at Gandhism were published by 'Shradddhanand' in a series entitled 'Solapuri gamagaram chivda' (\*literally, the pungent hot *chivda* or savoury from Solapur). Tatyrao's campaign for purification of language was primarily carried through the columns of 'Shradddhanand'. The 'Shradddhanand' would use pure words coined by Tatyrao. This greatly helped to popularize them. The 'Shradddhanand' also printed one column in every issue using the reformed Devnagari script suggested by Tatyrao. The 'Shradddhanand' also blew the bugle of *shuddhi*. With lead articles such as 'The Hindus alone can attain self-rule', 'O Muslims, come with us if you so wish and not to oblige us', 'He who is defiled by a glimpse is no god', 'Numbers constitute strength', the atmosphere in Maharashtra became charged. The 'Shradddhanand' was the first to carry the news of the *shuddhi* of the Gawdas of Gomantak (Goa). It was the 'Shradddhanand' that carried news of Tatyrao's social reform movement in Ratnagiri far and wide. It was the 'Shradddhanand' again that reported fearlessly on the Muslim riots in Nagpur, Kanpur, Nizam territory, Janjira, Kashmir and other places. The 'Shradddhanand' propagated Tatyrao's definition of 'Hindu', the pan-Hindu flag, the Nepali Movement among other things. It launched scathing attacks on Gandhi's notions of non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity. It published biographies of revolutionaries such as Vishnu Ganesh Pingale, Pandit Shyamji Krishnavarma, Senapati Avaari, Andhra Veer ram Raju, Bhagat Singh, Batukeshwar Dutt and the revolutionaries in the Kakori Conspiracy under in a series entitled 'Jalत्याa chitetil thingyaa' (\*Sparks from the burning pyre)!

The contribution of 'Shradddhanand' had no contemporary parallel in Marathi journalism. Such was the popularity of the 'Shradddhanand' that in April 1928, a Hindi edition was started. Seceral articles from the 'Shradddhanand' were translated into Sindhi, Punjabi, Hindi, Gorkhali and other languages. The bugle of 'Shradddhanand' reverberated in the hills of Nepal and the mountains of Kashmir. As editor, Dr. Savarkar wielded his pen with a flourish.

The financial affairs of 'Shradddhanand' were managed by Babarao to a large extent. Not only did he sell its shares but he also worked as its managing agent for a year and a half. He also wrote series of articles such as 'Yuddhaache vaare aani

Hindusthan' (\*The winds of war and Hindusthan). However, towards the end of 1929, the 'Shraddhanand' came under severe financial strain. On 30 April 1930, Dr. Savarkar was arrested for taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The 'Shraddhanand' published one last issue thereafter and closed shop.

### **9.17 Nepali movement:**

Babarao's activities did not come to a standstill with the closure of 'Shraddhanand'. Babarao continued to propagate the causes espoused by the 'Shraddhanand'. One such cause was the Nepali Movement. This movement was initiated by the three Savarkar brothers around 1924. According to Savarkar, he whose fatherland and holyland is Hindusthan was a Hindu. Naturally, Nepal was a part of this ancient Hindu Nation. The Savarkars propounded that the question of Nepal concerned the entire Hindu Nation. Further, Nepal was the only sovereign Hindu State on the face of the earth. Naturally, Nepal was the pride of the Hindu World. When the Muslims raised the banner of pan-Islam, invited Amir Amanullah and espoused the cause of the Khilafat, the Savarkar brothers gave a fitting reply. They advocated a pan-Hindu-Buddhist league comprising of Hindusthan, China and Japan. They invoked the King of Nepal in this pan-Hindu cause. The Gorkhas are fierce Hindus with a martial spirit. When Muslim rioters barged into the Kali Mandir in Bengal, it was a Gorkha who without waiting for his superior's orders bashed up the marauding Muslims to pulp. The Gorkhas had likewise protected the hearths and homes of riot-stricken Hindus of Malabar during the Moplah Muslim riots. The Nepali Movement aimed to bring the Gorkhas into the ambit of Hindu consolidation. To this end, the Savarkar brothers propagated the Nepali cause in periodicals such as 'Swatantrya' (Nagpur), 'Kesari' (Pune), 'Maharatta' (Pune), 'Shraddhanand' (Mumbai), 'Prajapaksha' (Akola).

### **9.18 Babarao's contacts with Nepal:**

Babarao wrote several articles espousing the Nepali cause. He published a compilation of these articles in 1931 under the title 'Hindusanghtanaatmak Nepali Aandolanaachaa upakram' (\*The programme of the Hindu consolidating Nepali Movement). Babarao added a preface and narrated the history of the Nepali Movement to date. The book was modestly priced at eleven *annas* (around sixty-six paise) and Babarao propagated it at a personal financial loss.

Babarao met a senior officer in the Nepali government in Mumbai. In short, Babarao informed him of the sinister plot to invite the Amir of Afghanistan to rule over Hindusthan. Babarao told the Nepali officer that if any king had a natural right to rule over Hindusthan, it was the King of Nepal.

Babarao also went to the United Provinces and tried to establish contact with Nepal through a Buddhist monk. After much hesitation the monk established Babarao's contact with Nepal. Babarao's letters to the King of Nepal would be delivered by a *zamindar* (landlord). Through these letters, Babarao proposed several plans for the welfare and progress of Nepal. These plans would deal with industrialization, constitutional matters, eradication of superstitions and such matters. Babarao would first get these plans whetted by experts in the field and send them for the King's consideration.

It is believed that the then Prime Minister Maharaja Yuddha Samsher Jung Bahadur Rana took steps to implement some of Babarao's proposals. Babarao's efforts to build friendly relations with Nepal have few parallels in the history of Hindusthan.

### **9.19 The pan-Hindu flag:**

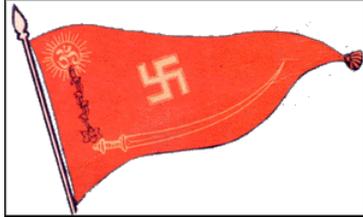
The idea of a pan-Hindu flag first struck Tatyrao. In his articles in 'Shraddhanand' dated 02 August 1928, 11 August 1928, 16 August 1928, 08 March 1930 and 15 March 1930, Tatyrao put forth the concept of a pan-Hindu flag. Tatyrao's pan-Hindu flag was Bhagwa (saffron) and had the 'Om' symbol with the *kundalini* on one side and the *kripan* (dagger) next to it. The *kundalini* signified '*nishshreyas*' (other-worldly matters) while the *kripan* signified '*abhyudaya*' (material glory). Babarao heartily upheld Tatyrao's concept and asked an artist to draw up a flag as suggested by Tatyrao. He got such a flag prepared for the 1929 session of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha that was to be held in Surat. The President of the session, the venerable Ramanand Chatterjee unfurled the pan-Hindu flag for the first time to the prolonged applause of the delegates. Babarao deliberately gave wide publicity to this event and made efforts to popularize the flag. It was mainly through Babarao's efforts that the flag was unfurled at the 1931 Akola and 1932 Delhi sessions of the Hindu Mahasabha. When the Moshi taluka (tehsil) Hindu Parishad (Conference) was held in July 1929 at Varud under the Chairmanship of MS Aney, five thousand delegates sang the Hindu Unity Song composed by Tatyrao under the shade of this flag. When the CP and Berar Provincial Hindu Sabha session was held in 1929 under the Chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, thousands of delegates led by Pandit Malaviya, Dr. Moonje, Pachlegaonkar Maharaj, MS Aney saluted this flag. Through Babarao's efforts, the pan-Hindu flag became a regular feature at Hindu gatherings.

### **9.20 Pan-Hindu flag gets official sanction:**

During the 1933 Ajmer session of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha held under the Chairmanship of Bhai Parmananda, a Flag Committee was constituted to decide the official flag of the Hindu Mahasabha. Babu Padmaraj Jain was the President and Kunwar Chand Kiran Sarada, Sri Anandpriyaji, Babu Narendra Nath Das, Babu Jagat Narain Lal and Babarao were members of this Committee. Babarao had seen to it that the Committee would not have members who would oppose the pan-Hindu flag. For one year before the Committee started its work, Babarao propagated the pan-Hindu flag through letters, pamphlets and articles. He gauged public opinion. No one opposed the pan-Hindu flag. However, some individuals proposed that the image of a cow or some deity should find a place in the flag.

Finally, the Committee met to finalize the flag. As Babarao had expected, only two members namely Kunwar Chand Kiran Sarada and Babu Jagat Narain Lal were

present. Sardar wanted a symbol of the Vedas on the flag while Jagat Narain wanted a picture of the cow. As there was no unanimity, the final decision was left to President Babu Padmaraj Jain. Jain was in full agreement with Babarao. In his Presidential capacity, he had Babarao's pamphlets printed and publicized on a large scale.



During the 1936 Lahore session of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, the flag approved by the Committee was accepted to the loud applause from delegates. However, at the last moment, Jugal Kishore Birla insisted that the 'swastik' symbol be incorporated into the flag. Babarao and Babu Padmaraj Jain accepted this suggestion. Finally, the flag was accepted as the official Hindu flag. It is a triangular saffron flag with symbols of 'Om' and 'Swastik' together with the kripan-kundalini. The flag now started being unfurled at every Hindu Mahasabha session as the flag of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha.

### **9.21 Message of aggression during Muslim riots:**

A regular feature of riots in Hindusthan has been that the Muslims start the riots and attack Hindus. The Hindus either defend themselves or succumb to aggression. Babarao strongly felt that the dagger raised by the Muslims should be resisted and struck back at them. Babarao averred that only this would make the Muslims think twice before attacking the Hindus again.

In 1923, the Muslims of Nagpur sought to create hurdles in the Ganesh immersion procession by raising a mosque in the Ganesh Peth area. The Hindus decided that come what may, they would exercise their right to take out a procession. Raje Laxmanrao Bhonsale, Dr. Moonje and Dr. Hedgewar provided fearless leadership to the Hindus. Babarao was staying at the residence of Vishwanathrao Kelkar at that time. He was recovering from illness and was bedridden. All the members of the Kelkar family had gone to attend the procession. In view of Babarao's frail health, Kelkar had warned him not to attend the procession. He had asked Bhaiyarao Dani and Annarao Gaikwad to keep a watch on Babarao lest he give them a slip and attend the procession. The procession was a massive show of Hindu consolidation. Back at the Kelkar residence, Babarao could not bear to remain in bed while the Hindus were fighting a battle outside. He was becoming restless. He sent Bhaiyarao Dani away on the pretext of getting some sweet lime. He then somehow persuaded Annarao Gaikwad to take him to the venue of the procession. With the aid of a walking stick, Babarao then slowly made his way to the venue. As a precautionary measure, he even carried a dagger in his pocket. Dr. Hedgewar's attention immediately went to Babarao. He made arrangements for Babarao to sit on a chair and kept a volunteer to attend to him.

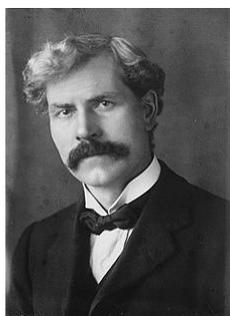
## 9.22 Attack on Aurangzeb's mosque:

In 1931, Muslim riots broke out in Kashi. An inebriated Muslim shopkeeper called Aga Muhammad made a pass at a Hindu girl. In retaliation, an unidentified person shot and killed Aga Muhammad. This provoked the riots. There were no signs of the riots abating even after a week. The riots claimed 20 Muslim and 6 Hindu lives; 17 Muslims and 20 Hindus were grievously injured while a total of 226 persons received minor injuries. During this time, Babarao was recuperating in Kashi. The news of the riots gave a boost to his innate fearlessness. He gathered some youngsters and told them, "An Islamic mosque has been standing at the site of the holy Vishweshwar mandir for so many years. Brothers, till now, we have never sought revenge. Now the time has come to wreak revenge. Show the Muslims that aggression will be met by aggression! By today evening, the mosque of the vile Aurangzeb should not remain intact." The youngsters took inspiration and attacked the mosque with spades. A part of the mosque was demolished. However, a police party arrived and the youth had to disperse. But for the police, the entire mosque would have crumbled on that day. Babarao asked the broken mosque to be photographed by a government official. When Babarao saw the photograph, his happiness knew no bounds. He said, "The world should realize that the Hindus too can be aggressive in the face of injustice."

In 1930, the Muslims of Kashmir started riots. Babarao went to Kashmir as part of a Hindu Mahasabha delegation. He met many Kashmiri Hindu leaders and asked them to consolidate the Hindus. For several years thereafter, Babarao kept up his correspondence with these leaders.

On 26 April 1937, an All Faiths' Conference was held at Dhule. Accompanied by Shankaracharya Dr. Kurtakoti, Babarao left Nashik for Dhule to attend the Conference. Around that time, the Muslims of Pune had objected to the ringing of the bell at the Sonya Maruti Temple saying it disturbed their *namaaz*. The government officials sided with the Muslims on this issue. The Hindus of Pune had launched the Sonya Maruti *satyagraha* to press for their rights. The All Faiths' Conference was attended by Muslims as well. Their leaders were waxing eloquent on the 'tolerant and peaceful' nature of Islam. Babarao seized this opportunity to get a resolution passed condemning the adamant attitude of the Muslims of Pune.

## 9.23 Agitation against the Communal Award:



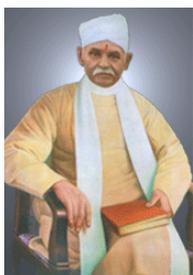
The British organized three Round Table Conferences from 1930 to 1932. At the end of the Second Round Table Conference (September – December 1931), Labour Party leader and Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald who was then heading a National Government dominated by Conservatives undertook to produce a Communal Award for minority representation, with the provision that any free agreement between the parties could be substituted for his award. The Communal Award was announced on 16 August 1932. Among other things, it provided for continuation of separate electorates or special safeguards for Muslims or other minorities at both the central and the provincial level. After the Third Round Table Conference, a White Paper was brought out in March 1933. This confirmed the Communal Award. Dr. Moonje (together with Barrister Jayakar) was the Hindu Mahasabha representative at the Round Table Conferences. Babarao kept a close watch on the proceedings of the Round Table Conferences and the provisions of the Communal Award. He proposed

that the minorities be given representation in proportion to their population (proportional representation) and given safeguards as per the League of Nations guidelines. Other than that, they should not be given special privileges. Babarao organized meetings to propagate this stand and overturn the Award. He got the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha to pass resolutions condemning the Communal Award. In 1933, the session of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha was held in Ajmer under the Chairmanship of Bhai Parmanand. Babarao suggested that Radhakumud Mookerji who was an expert in constitutional matters be asked to draft a resolution regarding the Communal Award. Accordingly, both Mookerji and Babarao prepared the draft. The resolution called upon the Government to apply the principles laid down by the League of Nations in respect of minorities and abolish separate electorates and reserved seats for minorities in the legislature.

### **9.24 To the rescue of Bengal:**

At the time of the Third Round Table Conference, a Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference was being held at Prayag (Allahabad) under the leadership of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. The Conference started on 03 November 1932 and continued till 24 December 1932. Pandit Malaviya wanted to arrive at a consensus regarding the future Constitution. However, differences persisted regarding Separate Electorates, Partition of Sind from the Bombay Presidency and representation to Muslims in Bengal and Punjab. Finally, the Conference compromised on the just rights of the Hindus and appeased the Muslims for the sake of Hindu-Muslim Unity. The Conference proposed that Sind be partitioned but become economically self-reliant and that Muslims be given 51% representation in the Provincial legislatures of Bengal and Punjab and 32% representation from these provinces in the Central Legislature. If these proposals had been accepted, the Muslims would have got a majority in the Bengal Legislature and Bengal would have come under the vice-like grip of Islam. Babarao inspired the people of Bengal to fight this proposal. The Hindus of Bengal organized conferences on 10 and 11 November 1932 and fiercely opposed the proposal. The Chairman of the Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference Vijayaraghavachariar and Dr. Moonje spoke to Bengali representatives. But the Bengali Hindu leaders stoutly opposed the proposal. Bengal was thus saved!

### **9.25 Man of principles:**



Babarao had high regard for Pandit Malaviya. But he did not hesitate to criticize Malaviya for his role in the Hindu-Muslim Unity effort. Once when the Unity Conference was underway, Malaviya happened to come to Kashi. Babarao was in Kashi at that time. As Babarao was extremely ill, he sent for Malaviya and requested a meeting with him. Accordingly, Malaviya came to the Jamkhindikar Wada where Babarao was

put up at Bhaurao Damle's residence. Both had a heated argument. Babarao said, "You are setting Hindusthan on fire." Malaviya said, "No, if I get five more years to

live, I shall show that (Hindu society) profited (from this Hindu-Muslim Unity effort).” Babarao countered, “I hope the Almighty grants you more life. I hope I am proved wrong. But I do not think this will happen.”

Babarao did not allow his personal regard for Malaviya to come in the way of his principles. He continued to criticize the efforts of the Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference. His views on the subject appeared in the issue of the ‘Bombay Chronicle’ dated 21 November 1932, “Mr. GD Savarkar, a prominent member of the working committee of the Hindu Mahasabha, in an interview with the ‘Associated Press’ says, ‘My impression of the present communal unity effort at Allahabad is that the Hindu Intelligentsia is playing into the hands of ‘Pan-Islamic Spirit’ and implanting thereby the rank communalism in the political field of Hindusthan which, I fear, will make the atmosphere dangerously suffocating for healthy nationalism to thrive.’”

Later events vindicated Babarao’s stand. During the Conference itself, Maulana Shaukat Ali left for America. The President Vijayaraghavachariar also left before the Conference could conclude. Malaviya finally brought the Conference to a close on 24 December 1932. Muslim-majority Sind was later carved out of the Bombay Presidency and this later paved the way for Pakistan. The Muslims were given greater number of setas in Sind than had been promised by the Unity Conference. Verily, Hindusthan was set on fire.

## **9.26 Support for Sanskritised Hindi:**

Babarao championed Sanskritised Hindi as the national language. The aims and objectives of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (\*Hindi Literary Conference) clearly state that efforts should be made to popularize Hindi as national language and Devnagari as national script to facilitate nation-wide activities and functions.” When Gandhi became President of the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held at Indore, he defined Hindi as a motley mix of Arabic, Persian, Urdu, English and Sanskrit words to be written either in Devnagari or Urdu scripts. It is noteworthy that Gandhi placed Sanskrit after Arabic, Persian and Urdu in order of importance. He called this motley language ‘Hindustani’. Words such as ‘Badshah Ram’ and ‘Begum Sita’ started doing the rounds as a result of Gandhi’s perversity. Babarao was not one to take things lying down. In 1939, when Babarao was in Kashi, he sent two trusted lieutenants at the session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and saw to it that they reiterated Sanskritised Hindi as national language and Devnagari as the national script. In 1940, the session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan was to be held at Pune. MT Kulkarni was the moving spirit behind the session. He started writing articles in various newspapers. Babarao read these articles and established contact with him. Thereafter, the two saw to it that the majority of members in the Reception Committee were staunch Hindus. Babarao wrote three articles in the ‘Kesari’ dated 02 February, 16 April and 26 April 1940 espousing the cause of Sanskritised Hindi and how the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan itself was harming the cause of Hindi. The articles had a salutary effect. MT Kulkarni himself said, “It was because of Baba’s writings that the Hindi Sammelan could be held in Maharashtra.” Babarao gave various suggestions to the organizers regarding resolutions, working, finances and venue of the conference. As a result, an influential group consisting of SD Chitale, GR Vaishampayan, MT Kulkarni kept the supporters of Hindustani at bay. They managed to pass a resolution opposing Hindustani. This Pune resolution was later firmed up at the session at Abohar (Punjab) where ‘pure, Sanskritised Hindi’ was unequivocally declared to be the national language.

In 1944, the session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan was held in the Jaipur Princely State. The session was to be inaugurated by Sir Mirza Ismail who was the Dewan (Chief Minister). Though Hindi was the language of the Jaipur Princely State, Mirza Ismail propagated Urdu. Naturally, Babarao felt that the sacred venue of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan would be polluted by Mirza Ismail. Babarao corresponded with some Maharashtrian members of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan and arranged for a protest to be registered at the inaugural ceremony itself. He also arranged for a resolution condemning the propagation of Urdu in the Princely State when the language of the common man was Hindi.

Babarao made all-round efforts to further the cause of Hindi. The Wardha Samiti tried to popularize Hindustani by publishing children's literature in Hindustani. Babarao would try to get supporters of Sanskritised Hindi into the Wardha Samiti. When Datto Waman Potdar and Balasaheb Kher stood for elections to the Wardha Samiti as representatives of Maharashtra, Babarao saw that they were trounced because they stood for Hindustani. He guided SD Chitale, a supporter of Hindi to victory. Babarao wrote articles explaining how Hindustani with its mix of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words was incomprehensible to the vast majority. Babarao was so committed to the cause of Hindi that a mere eight days before his death, he heard the report of the Jaipur session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan from MT Kulkarni and gave him valuable suggestions for the future.

Babarao's was a lone voice in support of Hindi in 1939. Through the efforts of like-minded people, Babarao's stand ultimately prevailed. The Hindi Sahitya Sammelan remained the bastion of Sanskritised Hindi. Gandhi had to leave the Sammelan. He started 'Hindustani Prachar Sabha' to popularize the perversion that was Hindustani.

### 9.27 Purification of language, script and individuals:

Babarao was a stickler for purity of language. He worked hard to popularize native Marathi or Sanskrit words instead of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words that had crept into Marathi. The word 'dinaank' was coined by Babarao instead of 'taarikh' for 'date'.

Babarao would write in the reformed Devnagari script as suggested by Tatyrao. Babarao would always be on the look out for individuals who could be brought back into the Hindu fold. When Shrimant Tukojirao Holkar of the Indore dynasty married Miis Miller, the latter was brought to the Hindu fold by Shankaracharya Dr. Kurtakoti on 13 March 1928 at a function in Nashik. Babarao had met the Shankaracharya in this regard.



Similarly, the *shuddhi* of a European lady Miss Aroha Moana Hardcastle was organized by the Hindu Mahasabha on 02 October 1937. Shankaracharya Dr. Kurtakoti gave his blessings on this occasion. The arrangements for this function were made by Babarao.

Babarao desired to bring Nawab Ali Bahadur of Banda, a descendant of Peshwa Bajirao I to the Hindu fold. He had met several *zamindars* and princes in this regard. He wanted to organize this function on a grand scale at the Shaniwarwada in Pune. But the plan did not succeed due to lack of funds.

## 9.28 Change in the objective of Hindu Mahasabha:

Till 1933, the constitution of the Hindu Mahasabha merely stated 'Hindu Sangathan' (\*Consolidation of Hindus) as its aim and objective. Babarao was far-sighted. In 1933, he proposed an amendment to the constitution. Babarao's amendment included the word 'Hindu Rashtra'. He prevailed over dissenting voices and had the amendment approved. Now the aims and objectives of the Hindu Mahasabha read, "the aim and objective of the Hindu Mahasabha is to protect and propagate Hindu *sanskriti* (\*culture) and Hindu *sabhyata* (\*civilization) while preserving it for the upliftment and the glory of the Hindu Rashtra."

To Babarao goes the credit of incorporating the words 'Hindu Rashtra' in the working of two major Hindu organizations. Earlier he had included these words in the RSS pledge. Now he got them incorporated in the constitution of the Hindu Mahasabha. In getting his amendment to the Hindu Mahasabha constitution approved, Babarao had set into motion another significant change. In writing the words, 'glory of the Hindu Rashtra', Babarao had taken a significant change in getting the Mahasabha to agree to include freedom for the nation as its goal. For a nation that was enslaved could not attain glory. In 1937 when Tatyarao became President of the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha in Karnavati, he unambiguously declared 'absolute political freedom' as the aim of the Hindu Mahasabha. Tatyarao's job had been made easier by Babarao through his amendment.

## 9.29 Source of inspiration:

Babarao's contacts were spread far and wide. He would correspond with them on a regular basis. He would write more than a hundred letters each month. These letters were addressed to people as far as Kashmir, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Rameshwaram and Bengal. If some Muslim reportedly entered a temple in Rameshwaram, Babarao would promptly write to his friend in Trichinapally and get the details. Such was the extent of his tireless efforts!



Babarao inspired several prominent people to take up the cause of Hindutva. One such luminary was Sant Pachlegaonkar Maharaj. Once, Babarao sat in a tonga and paid a visit to Sant Pachlegaonkar Maharaj while he was in Nagpur. He had a one-to-one discussion with the Sant regarding the state of the Hindu society. He impressed upon the Sant the need for Hindu consolidation. The result was that a Sant with uncommon abilities decided to take active part in the Hindu cause. Babarao gave a list of books for Sant Pachlegaonkar Maharaj to read. Babarao became almost an elder brother, indeed a *guru* to Sant Pachlegaonkar Maharaj. In a letter written to Babarao's biographer DN Gokhale, Sant Pachlegaonkar Maharaj wrote, "I performed a massive collective *yagna* in Kamanuri. Millions of people would partake of food in the *yagna* on a daily basis. On the concluding day of the *yagna*, Swami Shradhanand attained martyrdom for the sake of the nation. Thereafter I met Revered Baba. It was due to him that I attained the effluent insight (*divya chakshu*) of Hindu Consolidation... Revered Baba and I exchanged vows and our relation of elder and younger brother was cemented

permanently for the cause. Among the literature Revered Baba gave me were Paranjpe's *Kaal*, *Bhaalaa* and *Vihari* (periodicals). To inculcate the attitude of constant studiousness, Revered Baba gave me other inspirational literature to read and study. My innate devotion to the Almighty thus gradually evolved into the wider cause of Hindu Consolidation. All this happened due to Revered Baba's blessings. His memories are permanently engraved on my heart! I consider it my great fortune that this great effluent revolutionary was my elder brother."

Likewise, Babarao also played the role of a guide to renowned scholar Anant Janardan Karandikar. After Babarao passed away, Karandikar wrote an obituary entitled 'Maajhe maargadarshak: Deshbhakta Babarao Savarkar' (\*My guide: The patriot Babarao Savarkar) in the daily 'Agrani'. He wrote, "It would be appropriate to bid farewell to Baba with the following words of the poet Bhaarvi- I understood the weak points of the enemy only due to you."

## 10 REVOLUTIONARY TO THE END

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Babarao's contact with revolutionaries continued even after his release from prison. Babarao used to stay in the Khar area of Mumbai in 1926. Shivram Hari Rajguru would clandestinely leave Pune and come to Mumbai. He would then meet Babarao and the two would remain engaged in discussion for hours together. Babarao played a major role in introducing Rajguru to Bhagat Singh's 'Hindustan Republican Army'. While at Nagpur, Rajguru had stayed at the house of Babarao's acquaintance. Rajguru used to attend the RSS *shakha* and even worked as a functionary of the Sangh for some time.



On 17 September 1928, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru shot dead police officer JP Saunders at Ferozpur to take revenge for the death of veteran leader Lala Lajpat Rai who died due to excessive police beating. On 07 October 1930, the Special Tribunal gave its verdict and sentenced Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru to be hanged to death. Till 23 March 1931, Babarao made gallant efforts to get this sentence commuted. He kept aside his well-known differences with Gandhi and met him at Wardha in an effort to get a reprieve for the three revolutionaries. Before giving details of the meeting, it is worthwhile mentioning the personal equations between Babarao and Gandhi.

Babarao was of the firm opinion that as one who had invited Amir Amanullah to invade Hindusthan, Gandhi was a traitor and sinner. He despised Gandhi so much that he could not countenance anyone calling him 'Mahatma' (\*Great Soul). Gandhi too for all his much touted magnanimity disliked Babarao. Once, Babarao had gone to meet Gandhi along with Bhai Parmananda in Mumbai. Bhai Parmananda bowed respectfully before Gandhi. But Babarao merely greeted Gandhi civilly. Gandhi too did not display any special regard for Babarao. When Bhai Parmananda introduced Babarao as Tatyrao's elder brother, Gandhi paid no attention. He pointedly ignored Babarao throughout the meeting. However, for the sake of the three revolutionaries, Babarao put aside his personal dislike for Gandhi and went to meet him.

On 14 February 1931, Gandhi had written to Viceroy Lord Irwin asking for a meeting. The meeting between Gandhi and Irwin was scheduled on 16 February 1931. On the previous day, that is 15 February 1931, Babarao went to the Gandhi Ashram in Wardha and sent a note asking for a meeting with Gandhi. The following conversation took place between Babarao and Gandhi:

Babarao: You are going to Delhi tomorrow. When you reach there, you will speak to the Viceroy regarding halting the Civil Disobedience Movement. There will no doubt be a Pact between the two of you. Such pacts have the release of political prisoners as their first pre-condition. I have come to request you to put such a pre-condition before signing any pact.

Gandhi: Fine, but why do you request? I am going to ask for the release of political prisoners. It is my duty!

Babarao: But there should be no distinction amongst political prisoners as militants and non-militants (*atyachaari* and *anatyachaari*). My special request is that the pre-condition should cover all political prisoners. Nowhere in the world is a distinction made amongst political prisoners as militant and non-militant. But I fear that you may make such an artificial and unjust distinction.

Gandhi: Look Savarkar, we shall leave aside the question of whether it is proper or not to make such a distinction. My policy is to ask the other party only to the extent that they can possibly give. I do not desire to put hurdles in any agreement. So if it is certain that the Government will not release the militants, what is the use of asking for their release?

Babarao: I do not think that your policy of asking only what the other party can give to be correct. For if such a policy is correct, how can we ask for *swaraj* (self-rule)?

The British are not going to grant it. It means that we should ask for petty rights!

Gandhi kept silent for a moment on hearing Babarao's argument. He then changed the subject and spoke.

Gandhi: Look! It is mean to ask for the release of militants. I shall not do that.

How can I go against my ideal of non-violence?

Babarao: You feel that asking for the release of militants is a mean thing! When Abdul Rashid murdered Swami Shradhanand, how come you told the Hindu society and Swami Shradhanand's son to "forgive brother Abdul Rashid"? Was that not mean of you? Can you not display the same meanness for these armed militants?

Gandhi was speechless. But shrewd that he was, he pretended as if someone was calling him. He got up saying, "I am coming" and walked away. He never met Babarao again in his life!

### **10.1 Gandhi's somersault:**

Later, Babarao sent Gandhi a detailed letter by registered post and reiterated his demand for the release of Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries. Gandhi answered back saying, "I consider it mean to ask for the release of militants."

After this meeting, Gandhi met Lord Irwin in Delhi on 17 February 1931. During the negotiations, Gandhi did ask for the commutation of the sentences served on Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries. But he was unsuccessful. It is an open question whether Gandhi made all-out sincere efforts towards this end. In Karachi, Gandhi said, "If I had an opportunity to speak to Bhagat Singh and his comrades, I should have told them that the way they pursued was wrong and futile. We cannot win Swaraj for our famishing millions by sword. The way of violence can only lead to disaster, perdition..." Thus, Gandhi apparently sought reprieve for Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries due to mounting public opinion rather than any conviction of mind.

### **10.2 The Lamington Road Case:**

On 08 October 1930 at about midnight, Prithvi Singh, Swami Rao, Sukhdev Raj, Durga Bhabhi (wife of late revolutionary Bhagwati Charan Varma) and another person (driver) drove in a car to the residence of Malcom Hailey in Mumbai, in an obvious attempt to kill him. But they found the place heavily guarded by the Punjab Police. They then drove the car straight to Lamington Road Police station. Durga Bhabhi and Sukhdevraj started firing heavily at the Police Station as soon as they found some

white sergeants coming out from inside the Police Station. Sergeant Taylor and his wife were injured. The assailants' car was driven away and was later found abandoned at Andheri. The driver of the car was later found and gave a confession. However the case collapsed and resulted in the acquittal of all the accused namely Shankar Narayan Moghe, Shivram Vithal Deodhar, Purushottam Hari Barve and Ganesh Raghunath Vaishampayan. During these tumultuous events, Durga Bhabi's eight year old son Hari was sleeping peacefully at Babarao's house in Khar. When the police started making arrests on 09 October, Babarao knew that he would come under the police scanner and that his house would no longer be safe for young Hari. So he took the boy to the house of Ganesh Raghunath Vaishampayan and handed him over to Vaishampayan.

### 10.3 Babarao and Chandrashekhar Azad:



Chandrashekhar Azad was one of the foremost revolutionaries. He was involved in Kakori Train Robbery (1926), the attempt to blow up the Viceroy's train (1926), and the shooting of John Poyantz Saunders at Lahore (1928) to avenge the killing of Lala Lajpat Rai. He formed Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. He was the guru for revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Batukeshwar Dutt, and Rajguru.

He received his first punishment at the age of fifteen. Chandra Shekhar was caught while indulging in revolutionary activities. When the magistrate asked him his name, he said "Azad"

(meaning free). Chandrashekhar Azad was sentenced to fifteen lashes. With each stroke of the whip the young Chandrasekhar shouted "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" ("Hail The Motherland!").

Chandrashekhar Azad was massively built. He was a terror to the British. They announced a prize of ten thousand rupees on his head. It is believed that Azad met Babarao exactly forty-eight hours before his death. Babarao was in Kashi at that time. On 25 February 1931, Babarao went to a small house in a nondescript street in Kashi. The house belonged to a Panda (priest). At the appointed time, a massively built, ferocious looking man arrived to meet Babarao. The family members of the Panda knew that there was something unusual about this man. Both Babarao and this man were closetted for about two and a half hours. Their voices could not be heard outside the room. When their conversation ended, Babarao called the Panda and told him, "Pandaji, this gentleman who sits before you is a great man. Your house has been blessed by his feet. Today, he is in difficulty. It is our duty to help him." The Panda went inside and without saying a word placed a hundred rupee note in the man's hand. He even gave his son's dhoti which was drying in the sun. The stranger thanked him and went away. This man was none other than Chandrashekhar Azad. This incident was told by the Panda himself to Babarao's biographer DN Gokhale.



On February 27, 1931 Chandrashekhar Azad met two of his comrades at the Alfred Park, Prayag. He was betrayed by an informer who had informed the British police. The police surrounded the park and ordered Chandrashekhar Azad to surrender. Chandrashekhar Azad fought alone valiantly and killed three policemen. He got shot in the thigh. Later seeing no means

of escape he shot himself with his last bullet. Thus he kept his pledge of not being caught alive.

Babarao heard of Azad's death from nana Damle, son of Bhaurao Damle at whose house Babarao was staying. In an article written in Keasri dated 07 March 1931, Bhaurao Damle recalled, "Nana brought Chandrashekhar's news and on hearing it, Babarao clutched his head and sat down speechless for some time! He did not get up. We could not make head or tail of his action."

#### 10.4 Babarao and Vasudeo Balwant Gogate:



On 22 July 1931, Hotson, the Home member, was fired at by Vasudeo Balwant Gogate in the Fergusson College Library, Pune. When asked as to why he had done so he quietly answered, "As a protest against your tyrannical administration". As he was being arrested, up came the shouts from the students around him, "*Gogate Zindabad! Vande Mataram!*" (Long live Gogate! Hail the Motherland).

Gogate was deeply inspired by the Savarkar brothers. Gogate first met Babarao in Sangli in 1922. Gogate was originally from nearby Miraj while Babarao was in Sangli to recuperate from illness. As a teenager, Gogate had read Ranade's biography of Tatyrao Savarkar. The book had mesmerized him completely. He resolved to emulate Tatyrao. He came from Miraj to Sangli and met Babarao through the mediation of his friend Bidesh Tukaram Kulkarni. Their meetings increased in frequency. Babarao made a deep impression on young Gogate's mind.

In 1929, Gogate came to study at the Fergusson College, Pune. Babarao used to meet him regularly during his trips to Pune. Through Babarao's efforts, a group of revolutionary youth was formed. These youth were drawn from different colleges. Babarao taught them to worship arms and inspired them to read revolutionary literature. He brought them around to the Hindu cause. Babarao would give them small tasks that required fearlessness and daring. The youth would also collect money clandestinely for the revolutionary cause and give it to Babarao. Some of them even collected upto two thousand rupees and gave them to Babarao. Babarao could not use this money openly. It is believed that Babarao used this money to fund the trial of two revolutionaries.

In May 1930, Gogate went to Bhaagaanagar (Hyderabad) to visit his elder brother. At that time, there was no arms regulation in Bhaagaanagar and it was possible to buy pistols openly. Gogate bought two pistols and started practicing to shoot. Later he came to Pune.

On Wednesday, 22 July 1931, Gogate shot at Hotson. On the previous night, Babarao had left Dharmaveer Vishwasrao Dawre's house in Bhavani Peth to visit Gogate who used to stay in the Vaidikashram area of Pune. As usual, both of them spoke of various matters. Gogate did not give Babarao any inkling of what he planned to do the next day. However, Babarao probably guessed that Gogate planned to do something big very soon.

The next day, Sir Ernest Hotson, acting Governor of Bombay Presidency was scheduled to visit the Fergusson College Library. Gogate shot at Hotson. Hotson was taken aback. The bullets hit his chest. However, he was wearing a bullet-proof vest. Further, some of the bullets merely grazed him. As a result, Hotson survived. He immediately attacked Gogate. His bodyguard Peto hit Gogate on the wrist. Gogate was arrested.

In his statement, Gogate fearlessly told the police that he wanted to avenge the imposition of Martial Law in Solapur. Also, Hotson had become Governor by depriving a Hindu aspirant of that post.

It was around noon time that Gogate shot at Hotson. Babarao was patiently waiting for news regarding the outcome. Around one in the afternoon, an aide told Babarao that Gogate had been unsuccessful in his attempt. Babarao immediately left for Mumbai to ward off any suspicion that might befall him.

Even in jail, Gogate would be overwhelmed at the mere thought of Babarao. He feared that Babarao could be implicated. Speaking to Babarao's biographer DN Gokhale many years later, Gogate recalled, "I wept one day that I lost the company of Baba." Such were the tender relations between Babarao and Gogate.

### **10.5 Under the official scanner once again:**

Though Babarao maintained contacts with revolutionaries after his release, it was sheer luck that he was not arrested. Babarao was briefly arrested on 06 January 1932 but this was not in relation to any revolutionary activity. Several individuals were routinely arrested during the Civil Disobedience Movement and Babarao was one of them. He was released after a few days. However, one incident put him under the official scanner and nearly ruined him. In the early part of 1933, a bomb exploded in the 'Empire Theatre' in Mumbai. Some youngsters were rounded up in this connection. A search of one of them yielded a pamphlet that explained bomb-making. When queried about the source of the pamphlet, the young man pointed his finger at another and the second youth likewise pointed his finger at a third person. This person told the police that Babarao Savarkar had left a trunk containing some belongings at his house and that he had stolen the pamphlet from that trunk and that after making a copy, he had kept the original back into the trunk. The police traced Babarao and raided his house in the Khar area of Mumbai. Babarao was implicated.

During the trial, Babarao said, "I hardly know this young man. He used to come to me two or three years ago to note some songs that could be sung on festive occasions. Other than that, I have no relation with him. So why should I keep my trunk with some one with whom I have a passing acquaintance." The young man also corroborated Babarao's narrative. The court acquitted Babarao for lack of firm evidence.

However, the police would not let go of Babarao so easily. As he walked out of the court room, they arrested Babarao under a Special Ordinance. Babarao was

imprisoned for two months. Of these, the first three weeks were spent in Byculla Jail in Mumbai while the remaining five weeks were spent in Nashik Jail. He was finally released on 17 June 1933.

However, Babarao was prohibited from leaving the Nashik Municipal limits. He was asked not to take part in any political activity either directly or indirectly or participate in any public meeting. Initially, this prohibition was imposed for a period of one month but it was periodically extended so that finally, this prohibition lasted for a full four years! In May 1937, this prohibition was lifted at the same time that similar prohibitions on Tatyrao were lifted. Thus, a seemingly insignificant incident threatened to ruin Babarao's freedom once again.

## 11 LAST DAYS

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Ill health dogged Babarao for the better part of his life. His years in the Cellular Jail had made him a physical wreck. When an attack of migraine seized him, he would bang a stone on his head for hours together. His stay in the Bijapur Jail left him with painful knees for the rest of his life. Thereafter, he could walk with great difficulty. His legs would be constantly covered with socks. He had contracted tuberculosis of the lungs during his Transportation in the Cellular Jail. The spasms of cough would dog him for the rest of his life. As if this was not enough, he developed tuberculosis of the intestines and the bone later in his life. These woes were compounded by intermittent fever, anemia, heart problems and bloody diarrhoea. In short, Babarao never experienced good health from 1922 to 1945. He went to various places such as Mumbai, Yewle, Nagpur, Akola, Calcutta, Kashi, Jamkhindi and Sangli to recuperate from illness.

After his release from Sabarmati Jail on a stretcher, he first went to Mumbai. With the help of doctors such as RV Sathe, Athavale, Bhadkamkar, Dr. Narayanrao Savarkar had rescued him from the jaws of death. After he had somewhat recovered, Babarao went to Sangli at the invitation of Vaidya Biniwale. In Sangli, Biniwale, Khedekar, Jog and others looked after him with affection. After this, Babarao was in Yewle for some time at the home of his maternal cousin and colleague in Abhinav Bharat, VM or Bhaurao Bhat. At other times, he stayed with Advocate Vishwanathrao Kelkar in Nagpur, with Mamarao Joglekar in Akola, with Babu Padmaraj Jain in Calcutta and with Bhaurao Damle in Kashi. Vaidyabhushan Wamanshastri Datar in Yewle and Dr. NN Sarkar in Calcutta gave him medical treatment. After Dr. Narayanrao Savarkar was himself recuperating after a surgery, his family had stayed at the home of the Phadkes of Jamkhindi. Babarao had accompanied Narayanrao at that time. Such was the welcome accorded by the Phadkes that they vacated their own home for the Savarkars and went to live elsewhere!

After thus moving from place to place to recuperate from illness, Babarao finally came to Sangli in May-June 1943. He stayed at the home of the Gundwades in the Shivajinagar area of Sangli. He was bedridden. Narayanrao Savarkar's entire family came to Sangli to nurse Babarao. Babarao continued to champion the Hindu cause even on his deathbed. It was during his last days that he completed his book of the Hinduness of Christ. Babarao would meet scores of visitors throughout the day. People of all ages would flock to him for advice. Hindu workers would come to discuss politics with him. Sangh *swayamsevaks* of all ages looked upon him as their dear and respected friend. They would love to hear his reminiscences. Shopkeepers would come ask him to suggest appropriate and pure Marathi words for their enterprise. Babarao too would guide people of different persuasions on the path of Hindutva. He would ask women to conduct haldi-kumkum gatherings in Harijan localities. He would preach the use of *swadeshi* (indigenous) goods. To someone going for honeymoon to a faraway place, he would suggest that they observe the condition of Hindus there. To a vaidya (\*Ayurvedic doctor), he would suggest research in the neglected area of *vajikaran*. To a young girl, he would tell the recipe of a spicy *chivda* (savoury). In short, Babarao would become one with the listener. No wonder, he established personal contacts with hundreds of people during his stay in Sangli.

However, Babarao's health had now reached breaking point. In July 1944, his anemia became so severe that he would get excruciating cramps in his calves. At these times, he would tie a rope around his calves to get some relief. Around 01 July, his lower body suddenly turned cold while his head and chest were bathed in sweat. He could no longer digest solid food. Dr. Joshi and Dr. Bapat selflessly nursed him to no avail. Finally, towards the end of July 1944, Babarao was shifted to Mumbai to undergo blood transfusion. The procedure was carried out in Dr. Phadke's Colony Nursing Home in the Hindu Colony area in Dadar, Mumbai. Dr. Phadke and Dr. Sathe together with Dr. Narayanrao were looking after his health. Tatyrao would occasionally come to visit his elder brother. His failing health was a source of concern to the Hindu world. Sarsanghachalak Golwalkar Guruji paid him a visit. On 31 July 1944, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, then President of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha together with the secretary of the Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha Manoranjan Choudhary came to visit Babarao. The daily 'Agrani' dated 02 August 1944 reported this visit as follows, 'As soon as Shyam babu entered the room, Babarao called out to him in a choked voice, his eyes filled with tears. Clasping Shyam Babu's hand, Babarao said, "My end is near. The journey of my life is drawing to a close. I now have to enter the land of liberated souls. Before that, I am handing over the flag of the Bharatiya revolutionary battle to you!

"I want to give you a word of warning regarding Gandhi. Under the spell of misguided nationalism, he is eager to hand over the sovereignty of Hindustan to Jinnah. Gandhi has decided to cover himself with greatness at the cost of the welfare of Hindusthan. This is the first stage in this sinful tradition. Gandhi has done his utmost to destroy the revolutionary movement in Bengal and Maharashtra. But I want to tell you that the rights secured by the Act of 1935 were a result of the sacrifices of the revolutionaries and not because of non-violent agitation! I have documentary evidence that Gandhi had hatched an anti-national conspiracy to hand over Hindusthan to the Muslims way back in 1920. In these terrible times, I am handing over the lamp of Hindutva and the freedom of Hindusthan to you."

### **11.1 Back to Sangli:**

The blood transfusion infused some life into Babarao. On 01 October 1944, he left Mumbai for Sangli. However, in four to five days, his health deteriorated again. There were no facilities for storage of donated blood in Sangli. Volunteers who would donate fresh blood were acutely needed. Scores of volunteers from Sangli, Miraj, Kolhapur and other places came forward to donate their blood to this uncommon son of Hindusthan. They would insist on donating blood even if doctors refused them on the grounds of mild infection. They felt blessed to be able to donate blood for Babarao's sake.

In the last week of November 1944, Babarao was discharged from the State Hospital, Sangli. He stayed at the Paranjpe residence in the Radhakrishna area of Sangli. In an article written in 'Vikram' weekly, Babarao issued his final statement:

"Invoking the glorious memory of the Almighty, revered ancestors and Shri Shivrai, I pledge that I shall work ceaselessly with all my body, mind and money for the freedom of my nation- when I had taken this pledge, I should have plunged immediately into the struggle. But due to the mental anguish caused by certain family problems and my own indecision regarding giving priority to the Nation or God, I did not become active for a considerable length of time. It was not that I did not try at all. My efforts would get a boost during different festivals, meetings, processions and other inspirational programmes. However, certain lethargy of efforts had become a characteristic feature of my nature at that time. This lethargy decreased during the Partition of Bengal in 1905. In 1906, my younger brother Swatantryaveer Tatyrao Savarkar went to England and from that time, I unexpectedly started feeling that I should shoulder the responsibility of the *Mitra Mela* or *Abhinav Bharat*. Since then, I tried to do whatever was possible to the best of my limited physical and mental abilities. From that time, the Almighty has been instrumental in making me ceaselessly observe my pledge in moments of joy and sorrow, favourable and unfavourable circumstances, without regard to difficulties. During this time, the conflict between 'Nation' and 'God' had resolved. While battling with family problems, my mind became hardened enough not to allow mental unease to come in the way of abiding by my pledge. I experienced the contentment of serving the nation till 1909. From 1909 onwards, I was caught in the storm of political crises and thrown into the Andaman Jail. In 1922, I was released due to impending death. After my release and partial recovery from ill-health, I have tried to serve the nation to the extent possible through physical, mental, intellectual and other means. However, now I am engulfed by physical, mental and to a certain extent by intellectual disability. Henceforth, I shall be unable to perform activities such as correspondence, suggestions and providing information. My friends and well-wishers should not expect these things from me. If I happen to live longer, I shall continue my work as before due to my nature. But I do not feel that this will be the case.

"While abiding by the pledge, I would be content that I was doing right in what I did. Now, I shall be unable to get this feeling of contentment. Words fail me when I wish to thank those who helped me to perform my duty. In 1922, when I was released from prison, death seemed a certainty. But my younger brother Dr. Narayanrao alias Balwantrao who personifies all the tender feelings of a mother, father, brother and friend strove day and night and brought me back from the jaws of death. The credit for whatever service to the country that I could render in my later life goes only to him. Without his affection, my later life would have come to nought. Like him, two or four other individuals gave me selfless and invaluable support in the observance of my duty. The credit for the small service I could render to the country goes to them. I take this opportunity to publicly express my heartfelt gratitude to these individuals.

"I must have had many deficiencies; I may have committed many mistakes in my personal and public life and I may have hurt many individuals and opposed them. All these individuals should forgive me for the unavoidable deficiencies in my life.

"I am offering this overview of my service to the *Rashtradevataa* along the course of the observance of my duty, at her feet. I tasted success in very few of the different fields of national progress, failure came my way in most of the things I attempted. These failures are proofs of my attempts. Through this statement, I am offering the garlands of both my broken and incomplete failures and my unbroken and complete

successes at the feet of the *Rashtradevataa*. I shall continue to do the same in future given the strength. Those I invoked while taking the pledge are capable of extracting its observance from me. The leisurely time I have ahead of me may be short, or may even become permanent. So at this moment, may my salutation reach the feet of the *Rashtradevataa*.

A humble servant of the nation,  
Ganesh Damodar Savarkar

## **11.2 Gratitude towards associates:**

Babarao's heart was filled with gratitude towards his associates. He used to say that his service to the nation was a result of the service that others had rendered to him. With great feeling, he would say that but for Dr. Narayanrao, his wife Shantabai (Tai) and Babu Padmaraj Jain, his life would have no meaning.

Babarao's own family life had been ruined. But Narayanrao took care of Babarao with tender love and affection. He would spare no expense or hardship to keep Babarao happy. He often disregarded his own profession to be at Babarao's beck and call.

Dr. Narayanrao's wife Shantabai (maiden names Laxmi and Haridini) served Babarao selflessly as a sister would her elder brother. She would clean his spittoon and bed pan and nurse him even as he lay in anguish on his sickbed. When Babarao would embark on his nationwide tours, it was Shantabai who looked after his correspondence and books. She exactly knew where Babarao kept his papers. She was almost like a secretary to him.

Babu Padmaraj Jain was a large-hearted associate. He would provide Babarao with expenses for his travels and secret activities. He did this without a murmur. While giving this money, he had but two conditions. Babarao was not to maintain any accounts of the money given and Babarao was never to express his thanks to him. Such was the true love and affection that Babu Padmaraj Jain had for Babarao!

People like Seth Narayanlal Pittie, Vasudeo Waman and his wife Yesubai Panchakshari and several unknown and unsung individuals gave constant support to Babarao. These individuals felt blessed to be of assistance to Babarao.

## **11.3 Last meeting with Tatyrao:**

On 08 February 1945, Tatyrao came from Mumbai to Sangli to meet his elder brother. As the issue of 'Vikram' dated 10 February 1945 notes, "Immediately on arriving in Sangli, Tatyrao eagerly inquired about Babarao's health and rushed to his elder brother's sickbed. When Babarao was informed that Tatyrao had come to

visit him, a wave of anticipation, contentment and happiness passed over Babarao's face. He started telling those around to do this and that and to make Taty comfortable. Just then, Tatyrao entered the room. He cast an inquiring glance at the frail body of his elder brother lying on the sickbed and went straight to his bedside. Suggesting to Babarao that he should not take the trouble of speaking, Tatyrao clasped Babarao's hands and feeling his feeble pulse, he remained lost in thought. The onlookers were watching this scene of brotherly affection as if in a trance. Babarao was lost in a happy semi-conscious state while Tatyrao was recalling their mutual life-history and touching Babarao's feeble body again and again. After some moments had thus passed, Tatyrao got up on Babarao's instructions. After lunch, Tatyrao conversed a little with Babarao."

Tatyrao left for Mumbai on the same day. Tatyrao's visit gave deep contentment to Babarao. He felt he had met his idol. The news that Tatyrao had come to meet Babarao splashed in the newspapers. People were convinced that Babarao's end was imminent. They came from far and wide to have a final glimpse of Babarao.

#### **11.4 Lifeblood of Hindutva:**

Babarao was now counting his last moments. His voice had become barely audible. His body would periodically go into painful spasms. He could not bear the touch of clothes. Drinking fluids had become a difficult task for him. He could barely swallow drops of water. Glucose infusions were keeping him barely alive. His urine would stop flowing on occasion. On 10 March 1945, his hands and feet became terribly swollen. He now lapsed occasionally into unconsciousness.

Around this time, news was published that a conspiracy had been hatched to overthrow the King of Nepal. When Panditrao Dandekar, a Hindu Sabha worker from Sangli informed this news to the semi-conscious Babarao, he seemed to be struck with lightning. Babarao got up in a trice and said, "Who has hatched this conspiracy? Scoundre!!..." This effort was too much and Babarao collapsed again. He seemed to be restless even in a semi-comatose state. After he became lucid, he dictated some letters to be sent to Kashi. The letters contained instructions to crush the conspiracy to oust the King of Nepal. Babarao's love and pride for Hindutva was not dimmed even at the doorstep of death!

#### **11.5 The end:**

Babarao started his last journey on 10 March 1945. He bid farewell to the surrounding people. He kept Narayanrao's hand on his own forehead and gave a weak smile. A garlanded picture of Gopal Krishna (\*Krishna, the Cowherd) was kept in front of him. On 14 March, he lost the ability to speak. He could barely breathe. His whole body swelled. When he was shifted from his sickbed, hundreds of red ants were found around him. The attending doctors gave up hope. On 16 March, Babarao's sense of pain vanished. At around noon, his breathing stopped intermittently. Life seemed to ebb away from his eyes. His pulse could now be barely felt. At around two in the afternoon, the nature of breathing changed. The

final death rattle sounded. Babarao's face became contorted. He shed his mortal coil peacefully at around 2.15 pm.

'The 'Vikram' issued a special number in his memory and the news of Babarao's passing away spread far and wide. Telegrams were sent to various places. Hordes of people started pouring from different villages and towns. By 6.30 pm, around six to seven thousand people had gathered. The massive funeral procession started. People showered flowers at different places. The Bhagwa flag of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was lowered at half-mast and the Sangh prayer was sung. All the assembled swayamsevaks lead by Kashinathpant Limaye, Prant Sanghachalak (Provincial Chief) and editor of 'Vikram' joined the funeral procession. The funeral procession concluded at 8.15 pm and reached Gangadharpant Dikshit's plot of land



on the banks of the Krishna river.

People watched the proceedings as if in a trance. A few speeches were made. Then Dr. Narayanrao Savarkar lit the pyre and the flames engulfed Babarao's lifeless body. Keeping the funeral pyre as witness, hundreds of people vowed to carry on the sacred life mission of Babarao.



### **11.6 Tatyrao's tribute:**

Babarao passed away. How can one adequately pay tributes to this great soul? This is not the job of mere mortals. It would be hence fitting to conclude by quoting the tribute paid by Tatyrao to his elder brother. This is a letter written by Tatyrao to Babarao days before the latter's death. The letter had been read aloud to Babarao. The letter was made public on 21 March 1945 after Babarao had passed away. Here is the English translation of this immortal heart-rending letter:

"Baba, we three brothers had a common life-mission. We have repayed our ancestors in our generation. When the history of Bharat is written, a chapter will have to be necessarily written in letters of gold. Detractors have called it 'Savarkar yuga' (the Savarkar epoch).

"I had written regarding duty in yesterday's letter. But I had not spoken about the fruit because of the sentiment of 'maa phaleshu kadaachan' (\* expect not the fruit as per the Bhagwad Gita). But if one were to speak relatively, we along with our associates have twice changed the course of our national life from the adverse to the favourable. The first revolutionary slogan 'Swatantryalakshmi ki Jai' (Hail the Goddess of Liberty) was ours and the second slogan of 'Hindusthan Hinduonkaa, nahi kisike baap kaa' (Hindusthan belongs to the Hindus, not to anybody's father) that complemented it was also ours!



We have twice brought about a revolution in the nation's thought and actions.

"People may remember those warriors who fought and gave their lives in this battle for a few days. As for others, their names will remain unknown. But both deserve credit in equal measure. If at all a statue is to be erected, it should be of selfless yogis (karmayogis) like you!

"The first thing is that the death that is holding your hand is not an enemy but a friend. Our life is fulfilled. We never gave up the childhood pledge of freedom. Hellish torture, sorrow! - and likewise joy as well. On one side was the Andamans, on the other side was the flag of victory that was unfurled on the peaks of the Himalayas, in Kashmir, Hardwar and Assam to the thunderous cries of millions of our own people! But the revolutionary flag of freedom of the Hindus did not once fall in the face of joy and sorrow. We fought a lifelong battle to the extent possible for any individual. We stood at the hangman's noose while under thirty but continued fighting. What contentment in doing this! 'Karmanyevaadhikaraste' (Work for the action per se according to the Bhagwad Gita), hence I do not speak of the fruit.

"The yagna of freedom that we first lit has engulfed the whole nation. When the body of a brave warrior such as yourself who has been fighting for sixty years falls, it will not be a mere mortal body but a great and effluent offering!

"It is a matter of such great contentment that with the conclusion of your personal life an effluent offering of a body that has attained fulfillment is being made! Let us welcome death that has come visiting as a friend. 'Yogaaschittvrittinirodhahaa'

(\*Yoga is control of the mind) is the guiding principle. A warrior steeped only in his duty without regard to fame, one who has spent a lifetime in the service of the people has the right to contentedly pass into *Yoganidraa* (Yogic sleep) by controlling the mind in a spirit of 'aapule maran paahile myaa dolaa' (I saw my own death).

"Hitherto, death had knocked in our twenties, thirties and forties but that was more in the nature of a challenge.

"The spirit at that time was 'Come if you will, who is scared?' What is termed as happiness and fulfillment in today's world is also scattered around you. You met your near and dear ones once again. The work that was interrupted in the confines of the prison is now at peace after drinking from the water of all the sacred rivers throughout this land of Bharata, from the Sindhu-Ganga-Yamuna to the Southern Ocean. Our children are laughing and playing in our homes and outside. Now it is not death that has come but the time has come to set off for the Great journey. Hence, hold the hand of death as one would that of a dear friend! Not in a spirit of challenge but in happiness! In that void where nothing from the past or future remains, where all thirst is quenched, where only silence prevails after all worldly events, greed, anger, relations are quelled, where the Self also vanishes, into such a void, O Karmaveer, merge yourself with a sense of complete fulfillment.

*Om Shantih! Shantih!! Shantihi!!!"*