Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (28 May 1883 – 26 February 1966)

Context

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Veer Savarkar on his jayanti on May 28th.

"On his Jayanti, I bow to the courageous Veer Savarkar. We remember him for his bravery, motivating several others to join the freedom struggle and emphasis on social reform", the Prime Minister said.

About Vinayak Damodar Savarkar

Cause of Death: Fasting (Sallekhana Prayopavesa)

- He was commonly known as Veer Savarkar (“brave” in his native Marathi language)
- An Indian independence activist, politician, lawyer, writer, and the formulator of the Hindutva philosophy
- Championed atheism and rationality and also disapproved orthodox Hindu belief. In fact, he even dismissed cow worship as superstitious.
- Savarkar was a radical and his Hindutva too was a radical break in the Hindu thought: anti-caste, reformist, modernist and futuristic. It was a modern Hindu response to the modern world
- Organised a youth group named ‘Mitra Mela’
- In London, Veer Savarkar inspired his fellow Indian students and formed an organisation ‘Free India Society’ to fight against Britishers for freedom.
- Was against foreign goods and propagated the idea of Swadeshi. In 1905, he burnt all the foreign goods in a bonfire on Dussehra.
- Provided legal defence to Madan Lal Dingingha, who was accused in a murder case of a British Indian army officer named Sir William Hutt Curzon Wylie.
- Veer Savarkar also founded the two-nation theory in his book ‘Hindutva’ calling Hindus and Muslims two separate nations. In 1937, Hindu Mahasabha passed it as a resolution. In 1937, he also became the president of ‘Hindu Mahasabha’.
- A fierce critic of the Indian National Congress (INC) and Mahatma Gandhi; opposed the ‘Quit India Movement’ and later objected to INC’s acceptance of Indian partition. He proposed the co-existence of two nations in one country.

Hindutva

- The main challenge thrown by the British rule and colonial modernity under the pale of capitalism was for Hindus to justify their existence as a society. Who were they? Could Hindus survive in a modern world dominated by the expansionist organised religions, nations and nation-state?
- Savarkar responded to these challenges. The coming together of various pagan traditions as Hinduism to meet the challenge of the Abrahamic monotheism is a centuries-old process.
- Savarkar consolidated it under a new ideological construct. He wielded it into a coherent political construct, Hindutva that aimed to answer the challenges of the modern world, especially the charge of the colonialists that India is not a nation and
hence unworthy of self-rule.

- For **India to be able to resist imperialism**, a nation had to be born. For Savarkar, that nation was a **Hindu Rashtra**.
- Only a Hindu nation transcending caste, regional and linguistic barriers was capable of resisting imperialism.

50 years of imprisonment – Kaala Paani

- Savarkar wrote a book titled **“The History of the War of Indian Independence”** wrote about the guerilla warfare tricks used in 1857 Sepoy Mutiny.
- While the book was banned by Britishers, **Madama Bhikaji Cama published the book in Netherlands, Germany and France**, which eventually reached many Indian revolutionaries.
- Savarkar was arrested in 1909 on charges of plotting an armed revolt against the Morley-Minto reform. He also tried to escape by diving in the water but was arrested. He was sentenced to **two life sentences i.e. 50 years in the cellular jail** of Andamans, also known as **Kala Pani**, in 1911.
- Death – 1964: Savarkar declared his wish to attain Samadhi and started hunger-strike on February 1, 1966 and passed away on February 26, 1966. He believed that his purpose of life is solved as India has gained Independence.
- In 2002, **Port Blair airport at Andaman and Nicobar’s Island** was renamed after **Veer Savarkar International Airport**.