

Chapter-7

Reading with understanding

Worksheet



A) Read the following passage on Veer Savarkar and answer the following questions:

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was one of the fervent freedom fighters of India. But, he was not just a freedom fighter. He was a bold warrior, good orator, prolific writer, a poet, a historian, a philosopher, a social worker, a cautious leader, a bard and a staunch supporter of freedom and much more.

He was born in Bhagur, district, Nashik on 28th May, 1883. He spent his youth in fighting against the British Raj. As an extremely brilliant, outspoken and confident school boy, he was famous amongst his teachers and friends. In 1898, when Chaphekar brothers were hanged for assassinating a British Officer—Savarkar was just 15 years old. But, Chaphekar's martyrdom impressed him and he decided the freedom of the country as his foremost aim.

After matriculation in 1901, he took admission in Fergusson College of Poona. He was, however, more interested in India's freedom from the British rule. The young college students in Poona were influenced by the speeches by the patriots and political leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bhopatkar and others. The newspapers in Poona were also actively participating in creating anti-British atmosphere in to society and appealing society's feelings of Nationalism. Savarkar was the uncrowned leader of the youth in this movement. He organized a Vanarsena (Monkey Brigade) of kids when he was just eleven. A fearless individual, he wanted everybody around him to become physically strong and able to face any disasters—natural or man-made. He conducted long tours, hiking, swimming and mountaineering around Nasik, his birthplace in Maharashtra. During his High School days, he used to organize Shivaji Utsav and Ganesh Utsav, started by Tilak (whom Savarkar considered as his Guru) and used these occasions to put up plays on nationalistic themes. He started writing poems, essays, plays, etc to inspire people which he had developed as a passion. In 1905, he burnt the imported cloth as a token of India's protest against imported cloth. In May 1904, he established an International Revolution Institute named 'Abhinav Bharat'. His instigating patriotic speeches and activities irritated the British Government. As a result his BA degree was withdrawn by the Government. In June 1906, he left for London to become a Barrister. However, in London, he united and inflamed the Indian students in England against the British. He believed in use of arms against the foreign rulers and created a network of Indians in England, equipped with weapons. Although he passed Barrister Examination in England, yet because of his anti-government activities, he was denied the degree.

Savarkar greatly nurtured the idea of bringing out an authentic informative researched work on the Great Indian Revolt, which the British termed as ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ of 1857. Since, India Office Library was the only place which contained all records and documents, he was determined to undertake a detailed study, but was cautious enough not to make his intentions known. Hence, after landing in London, he wrote a biography of Giuseppe Mazzini, the great revolutionary and leader of modern Italy who inspired his countrymen to overthrow the Austrian Empire’s yoke. Written in Marathi, the manuscript was smuggled out with great care which was published by his brother Baba. The book created a wave 2000 copies sold out secretly read and reread. By the British estimates, each copy was read by at least 30 people. Some could reproduce page after page in their voice. His brother, however, was imprisoned for printing the book.

At London, Savarkar undertook the mission of his life, to create awareness about the first Armed National Revolt in India in 1857. Through friends, he could get access to all much needed first hand information to prove that earlier countrywide effort, was a sincere one on the part of the leaders, princes, soldiers and commoners to drive away the British. It was the first national effort towards getting political independence and he rightly called his book “The Indian War of Independences”. He wrote in Marathi and could not get it printed in Europe. Though, the manuscript found its way to India; due to the British vigilance, all printing presses were raided and in the nick of time, the manuscript had to be taken out due to a friendly police officer’s information before seizure. It went back to Europe and unfortunately got lost.

But, the English version became a necessity. Savarkar was helped in this venture by the other revolutionaries who had come to study Law and for Civil Service. But, printing it in Britain was out of question, so also in France, as the British and the French spies were working together to face the imperial Germany which was becoming a great threat. Ultimately, the book was published in Holland by Madam Cama without a cover or name. The cover pages of popular classics like ‘Don Quixote’, ‘Oliver Twist’, etc were used for the book and successfully smuggled to India. One box with false bottom was used to take books at great risk by a Muslim friend who later became Chief Minister of Punjab. The book reached the right people through secret sympathizers in Ireland, France, Russia, USA, Egypt, Germany and Brazil.

During his stay in London, Savarkar organized festivals like Rakshabandhan and Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti and tried to create awareness among Indian students but the activity was banned. The slogan Savarkar coined for Indian festivals became a unifying factor.

“One Country, One God

One Caste, One Mind

Brothers all of us

Without Difference

Without Doubt”

It was during this period that Savarkar helped to design the first Indian National Flag which Madam Bhikaji Cama unfurled at the World Socialist Conference at Stuttgart, Germany.

The Scotland Yard Police noose was tightening on Savarkar. Finally, he was arrested and ordered to be sent back to India. In India, punishments were very harsh, tortuous and the greatest crime of the land was that of sedition which could easily send one to the gallows. He was sent on a ship ‘Morena’ which was to halt briefly at Marseilles.

Savarkar and his friends then attempted a brave escape which has since become a legendary story. Savarkar was to jump from a sailing ship, swim the sea waters and his friends were supposed to pick him there and lead to freedom. Savarkar was under a strict watch. There was no way out. With constable waiting outside, he entered the toilet, broke the window, wriggled out somehow and

jumped into the ocean to swim his way to Marseilles port. Unfortunately the rescue party was late by a few minutes and the French Police on guard returned the prisoner to the British cops.

After a formal trial, Savarkar was charged with serious offences of illegal transportation of weapons, provocative speeches and sedition and was sentenced to 50 years of jail and deported to the Blackwaters (kalapani) at Andaman cellular jail.

Conditions in jail were inhuman as there were tortuous job of stone breaking, rope making and milling. Quite often the prisoners had to grind copra in the mill, tied like oxen. Each had to grind out 30 pounds of oil every day. Some died of sheer exhaustion and inhuman treatment of beating and whipping. Bad food, insanitary conditions, stone beds and cold weather in winter used to take their toll.

The political prisoners were treated like hardened criminals. They had no access to ‘luxury’ like pen and paper. The poet in Savarkar was restless and uneasy. Finally, he found a nail and wrote (itched) his epic “Kamala” consisting thousands of lines on the plastered mud wall of his cell in the darkness. A Hindi journalist friend who was taught Marathi by Savarkar came to his cell when Savarkar was removed all of a sudden to another remote cell. The friend learnt the entire poem by heart and later when he was released, put it on paper and sent it to Savarkar’s relatives. After spending 16 years in Andamans, Savarkar was transferred to the Ratnagiri jail and then kept under a house arrest. He was reunited with his wife. (He had married before leaving for England, it was a long separation). A daughter and later a son were born.

Now, he was known for his book on 1857, (War of Independence) throughout the world. Two generations of Indians were influenced by his magnum opus. The second edition was printed in the USA by Savarkar’s revolutionary friends. Third edition was brought out by Bhagat Singh and its Punjabi and Urdu translations followed and were widely read in India and Far East. Even in the Indian National Army of Subhash Chandra Bose, Tamil translation of this work was read out like a Bible by the South Indian soldiers in Singapore, though nobody knows till date as to who had translated it into Tamil.

Savarkar stood by what he wrote till his last, and never compromised with ‘adjustments,’ ‘reforms’ and peaceful solution which, according to him meant, nothing. As a great scholar full of originality and independent views he coined several new technical terms of Parliamentary usage and of Indian parlance such as Chhayachitra (Photography), Sansad (Senate), Vyangyachitra (Cartoons) etc. He earnestly believed that Indian Independence was a reality not because of a few individuals, leaders or sections of society but it was possible because of the participation of the commoners who prayed to their family deitnel everyday and the youngsters who went to gallows to see their motherland free.

Savarkar passed away in 1966, his reported involvement in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse. He was a living ‘Sthitapradnya’ as described in ‘Bhatwat Gita’ and used to live as per the philosophy of ‘Bhatwat Gita’. His house in Bhagur, 9 kilometers away from Nashik, is being preserved as National Monument by the Government of India. He breathed his last at the age of 83, on Saturday, 26th February, 1966. ‘Prayopveshana’, meaning fast till death, was what he observed and refused any intake of food. His death was like a true warrior. Death did not grab him; he approached death voluntarily with erect head

Answer the following questions;

- When was Savarkar born?
- Explain any 5 traits of Savarkar.
- How did Savarkar contribute towards Indian freedom struggle?
- How and why did Savarkar inspire his country men?

- “During his stay in London, Savarkar organized festivals like Rakshabandhan and Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti.” What was the aim behind organising and celebrating these festivals.
- Why did Savarkar burn all the foreign goods and clothes?
- “Savarkar was a revolutionary.” Comment on this statement in lieu to the text mentioned above.
- What was Savarkar’s idea of Indian Freedom?
- Choose a suitable title for the text.

B) Read the following extract and answer the following questions:

Swami Vivekanand was born in Calcutta on 12 January 1863 to a lawyer family. He was called Narendranath in his childhood. He was brilliant in his studies from his childhood. He was disciple of Guru Ramkrishna Paramhansa. He had a significant role in the spread of Hinduism and Hindu culture worldwide. His speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago on Hinduism had stunned the entire audience. Vivekanand advocated that man of all religions must assimilate the spirit of others and yet preserve his own individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. Vivekanand made an in-depth study of both Indian and Western philosophy and had a command of them. He established the Ramkrishna Mission with an objective to refine and spread Hindu culture. Through this mission the weaknesses of Hindu religion were severely criticised. He even travelled the entire country on foot for his objective. On 4 July 1902 he met his death.

- When was Swami Vivekanand born?
- What was his speech in the parliament about?
- What was the objective of the Radhakrishna Mission?
- Was Swami Vivekanand a traveller? Comment on the statement with reference to the text given above.

C) Look at the picture given below and describe it in about 200 words.

