

VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR'S POEM:

ATMABAL: STRENGTH OF THE SOUL

TRANSLATION BY ANURUPA CINAR

On July 8, 1910, Savarkar made his historic escape by leaping into the ocean when the S. S. *Morea*, the ship extraditing him to Bombay, was docked in Marseilles, France. Now willing to relinquish their "prize" his guards, breaking the International Law of Jurisdiction, kidnapped him back to the ship.

From then on he was largely handcuffed and confined to his cabin. He was restrained by two guards even when he was brought out for a short while to breathe fresh air. His cabin was kept well lit throughout the night. Light would be continuously shone on his face. This robbed him of any peace and privacy. One night, the guards vacated the portion of the ship where he was housed. Savarkar sensed that the guards were planning to attack him. Even as he was lost in a trance, Savarkar saw a pistol hanging out from the pocket of a guard's trouser as it lay hanging on the wall opposite him. Should they attack him, he would use the pistol to finish his attackers and then take his own life, thought Savarkar.

In this despondent situation, Savarkar composed the following Marathi poem. This invigorated him.

अनादि मी अनंत मी, अवध्य मी भला,
मारिल रिपु जगतिं असा कवण जन्माला ॥ धृ ॥

Without beginning nor end am I, inviolable am I.
Vanquish me? In this world no such enemy is born!

अट्टहास करित जई धर्मधारणीं
मृत्युसीच गाठ घालु मी घुसे रणीं
अग्नि जाळि मजसी न खड्ग छेदितो
भिडनि मला भ्याड मृत्यु पळत सूटतो
खुळा रिपू । तया स्वयें
मृत्युच्याचि भीतिने भिववु मजसि ये ॥ १ ॥

Resolutely, as the Upholder of Dharma,
Challenging very Death, into the battlefield charge I.
A sword cannot slice me nor can fire burn me,
Craven Death itself shall flee in fear of me, aye!

And yet, O Foolish Foe,
By fear of Death you dare to scare *me*!

लोटि हिंस्त्र सिंहाच्या पंजरी मला
नम्र दाससम चाटिल तो पदांगुला
कल्लोळीं ज्वालांच्या फेकिशी जरी
हट्टुनि भंवति रचिल शीत सुप्रभावली

Pushed into the cage of a ferocious lion
Reduce him to a cowering servility, I will!
Flung into the blaze of a roaring inferno
Reduce it to a gentle halo of brilliance, I will!

आण तुझ्या तोफांना क्रूर सैन्य तें
यंत्र तंत्र शस्त्र अस्त्र आग ओकते
हलाहल । त्रिनेत्र तो
मी तुम्हांसि तैसाची गिळुनि जिरवतो ॥ २ ॥

Bring on your mighty, skilled armed Legion,
Your weapons and missiles that deadly fire spill!
Ha! Like Lord Shiva consuming the poison Halahal,
Gulp down and digest all, I will!