

Author's Notes

Incredible as it may seem, this is a true story. *All* facts, incidents, and situations in this novel—whether directly given or referred to in conversations—are true and documented. I have taken particular care in researching the freedom movement of India from many viewpoints to separate the wheat from the chaff. Finding my way through the politics of India between 1942 and 1948 was a challenge! Many times I was taken over by a distinct feeling of being given the runaround by the various accounts. V. P. Menon's book, *The Transfer of Power in India*, was of invaluable help in getting to the kernel of truth.

Funnily enough, the easiest to research was material on Gandhi. *Vast* amount of it is written in a sycophant style—glossing over pertinent facts in its efforts at eulogizing Gandhi—but fortunately, plenty is still available factually written with no bias either way. Dhananjay Keer's biography on Gandhi is one such masterpiece. Indeed, it reveals many *shocking* things I have not been able to include in my novel.

Sometimes it took *months* to get to the bottom of things, such as the facts in the case of the ₹550 million owed to Pakistan and the sequence of events of the violence in Punjab in 1947, to name but two examples. The Moplah riots, too, are not widely publicized. Fortunately, there is a contemporary eyewitness account that is extant. I also found documents of the British government communications which were very helpful.

The words written between quotes in a different font throughout the novel are an actual quote (or its translation) of the person mentioned in connection with it. A comprehensive list of the major books I have researched from can be found at the end of the book. The scenes in connection with my fictional hero Keshu and his family are based on real incidents.

I have avoided giving citations as I consider them inappropriate in a novel. I do intend to post them, at least the critical ones, on my website, www.anurupacinar.com. Occasionally, I have taken the liberty of taking things out of their real-time sequence or adding something fictional (Keshu's romance, some characters, or a conversation here and there). I point it out in the notes below.

I read my first biography on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (May 28, 1883-February 26, 1966) written by Mr. J. D. Joglekar at the end of December 2008. Savarkar's intellect and personality, his unwavering principles, and his ability to face adversity and move on fascinated me. But most of all, being a deep believer in the Bhagavad Gita, I was captivated by the realization that he was a foremost exponent of the Karmayoga.¹ I scoured the Internet, read everything I could find on him or that was written by him, and bought his books. I was shocked—*shocked*—to find that there seemed to be an active anti-propaganda campaign against him, a willful misrepresentation of his words and actions. Was it not enough that he was victimized, over and over, in his lifetime? Must his memory be besmirched so? The need to do something about it was eating into me. But what could I do? How was my voice to be heard? Who would listen?

And so the dream was born. I woke up one morning with the certainty that I would write a novel to showcase Savarkar as he was to the whole world. It was ridiculous, really, for I had never written anything past the schoolgirl essays that my teacher, Mrs. Kutti (St. Columba High School, Mumbai), used to love. Upon that flimsy foundation I took the plunge! The next day, I had my plot clear in my head. Out of the vast amount of material to choose from, I zeroed in on the events I considered essential for this novel. Very regretfully, I had to put aside two important phases of Savarkar's life—Savarkar in London and Savarkar in Ratnagiri. These are stories in themselves. I intend to write books on them in the future; at present, I am writing a book presenting documentation and analysis of the Hague Arbitration of the "Savarkar Case" (1910–11), including the details of Savarkar's heroic, incredible escape and the circumstances surrounding it.

For this novel, I needed a fictional character who could be with Savarkar throughout, and who also had links to both Pune—because I love it—and the Calicut area, where the Moplah riots took place. I wanted to show the world how and why the youth of India, coming from comfortable, educated backgrounds with secure and brilliant futures ahead of them, still chose to sacrifice all for the freedom and love of their motherland. I also wanted to touch upon the pathos of the plight of widows. And so Keshu was conceived. Every factor that

¹ A precept of the Bhagavad Gita, one of the sacred books of the Hindus, of acting in accordance with one's duty (dharma) without consideration of personal desires, other influences, or any attachment to the fruits of one's deeds.

went into developing his character, no matter how arbitrary it may seem, is rooted in something relevant. I had a lot of mental adventures working out his story, but those explanations belong to the prequel—Keshu’s story.

For the purpose of simplicity in writing and not overloading the reader, I have limited the characters and scope of my novel; several people who deserve to be mentioned are either omitted or only briefly touched upon. One such is Appa Kasar, Savarkar’s devoted bodyguard. He was my inspiration for Keshu’s role as Savarkar’s bodyguard—including the torture—and so I couldn’t very well have him as a character in my novel. I do regret that very much.

The website, www.savarkar.org, is a wonderful website for comprehensive material on Savarkar. My write-up on the architecture of the Cellular Jail—which I was fortunate enough to visit—and my translation of Savarkar’s poems are uploaded there.

The following notes can be read before or after the main novel at the discretion of the reader; they do reveal key parts of the story.

Chapters 1–7

- I have used Savarkar’s own words recorded in his *My Transportation for Life* to develop his dialogues.
- The dates of the events in the Cellular Jail are not always accurate, as they were unavailable. The events occurred somewhere within the time frame.
- Keshu’s experiences in jail are taken from the true-life experiences of the political prisoners. The electric shocks were applied to Babarao.
- Vishrambaug Wada was not being used as a prison at the time.
- The jail disciplinary system was made up of tindals, jamadars, petty officers, and warders, but I have used only warders for simplicity.
- Molestation of young convicts was a regular occurrence in the Cellular Jail, and Savarkar was vigilant in saving those he could.

His first instance of saving a young boy from molestation was in 1913. Based on this fact I determined the whole of Keshu’s character, age, his story etc. so that he could be brought to the Cellular Jail in 1913. I considered it a most effective entrance for Savarkar and a way of forming an immediate bond—so essential to my novel—between Savarkar and Keshu. The actual description of the scene itself is fictional and I developed the whole scenario from Savarkar’s accounts of Barrie and of such situations.

- Dara, Sarfaraz Khan, Bhaskar, Bimal Ganguly, Raghu, Dhondupant, and Mrs. Mary Scott are not real characters, but characters I have made up to illustrate life as it was in the Andaman Penal Colony.
- Dr. Ayer, Mangaram, and Parikh are fictional names I have given to real characters.
- The conversation about “two life sentences” had taken place earlier in a mainland jail between Savarkar and another jailer.
- Barrie’s conversation of “night and day” was in reality not with Nanigopal but with someone else.
- Sir Reginald Craddock was knighted in 1923.
- The attempted poisoning of Savarkar is a true event; that the poisoners came from the Malabar area is fictional.
- The Keshu–Mirza confrontation, Savarkar seeing the peacock, and the Keshu–Mrs. Mary Scott scene are fictional incidents.
- Lala Lajpat Rai’s article was actually written in June 1916.
- The episodes with the Chinese convict, the credulous one, and Parikh happened later in Indian mainland jails.
- Gandhi’s comment on the Armenian Genocide being a rumor is a fact, that Savarkar mentions it to Babarao is my fiction. I made it a *point* to hunt out a Gandhi-quote on it since I wanted to mention the Armenian Genocide as a tribute to my husband, Kapriel Vahan Cinar, who passed away on October 4, 2002. Recognition of the Armenian Genocide was a subject close to his heart.

Chapter 8

- Pongur is a fictional village.

- Details of the Moplah riots are true to the accounts of it.
- The correct sound of a properly wielded sharp sword would be “HIS-S-S-SHT” and not “SWOO-O-O-SH.”

Chapter 9

- Keshu-Lakshmi romance is fiction.
- The temple in Aundh is extant.
- Savarkar did have his secret meetings on the Hanuman Tekdi and the surrounding hills.
- The temple atop Hanuman Tekdi did not have a bell.
- Vijaydurg is my granduncle’s home.
- My great-grandfather, Ramchandra Sathe (himself a widower), married a thirty-five-year-old widow, Venutai Namjoshi, in 1917. He took this bold step in the teeth of severe opposition by society when even the great reformers advocated remarriage of child-widows only. I take much pride in this! Venutai lived in Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve’s Mahilashram for widows and orphan girls in Hingne. A wing has been dedicated to her memory there.

Chapter 10

- The full names of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League are: Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha and All India Muslim League respectively.
- Shera is not the real name of the hit man sent to kill Savarkar.
- The change of plans on Acharya Atre’s say-so happened at an earlier date.
- The Jodhpur Palace incident actually took place in 1956. Jadhav and Bahadur are fictional characters. The palace description is imaginary.
- Savarkar’s speech is an amalgamation of his various speeches.

Chapter 11

- Vishwasrao has noted their problems in school in his memoirs; possibly the school concerned was in Ratnagiri and not Bombay.
- Mai used to call Shantabai Lakshmi, not Shante.
- The family dinner incident actually happened, but the reason why Savarkar did puja for Shantabai is my interpretation.
- The scene in the car with Bapat occurred at a later date.
- Mohite and Kampli are fictional, but such conversations with Babarao were a frequent occurrence. He always carried the article in his pocket and showed it to people as proof.

Chapter 12

- The jail scene is an amalgamation of a few real accounts. All the characters were participants but were not necessarily there in the same jail or at the same time.
- Moghe is fictional.

Chapter 14-15

- There is a great paucity of material regarding Savarkar’s breakdown and recovery. While the bare facts are available and true, the conversations and thoughts that I have attributed to the various characters are a product of my imagination and my own personal experiences.
- The actual date of Savarkar’s suspected heart attack is January 20, 1946.
- The description of Seth Gulabchand’s home is imaginary.

Chapter 16

- Dutt in Noakhali is fictional. The incident is coined from accounts available.
- Mountbatten and Gandhi’s conversation actually took place on June 4, 1947. Mountbatten had gotten an urgent message that morning from the Congress members saying that they feared Gandhi would

denounce the Plan and its acceptance. Mountbatten immediately asked for a meeting with Gandhi and the conversation took place.

Chapter 17-18

- The conversations between Savarkar and Nathuram Godse are developed from available sources, especially Nathuram's statement in court.
- The Keshu-Nathuram meeting on January 16 is a mere fictional scenario I am presenting of what *could* have happened when Nathuram visited Savarkar Sadan, as given in the time line in Manohar Malgonkar's book.
- The conversation following it between Savarkar, Keshu, and Gajanan is also fictional.
- I am not sure which jail Gajanan Damle was actually taken to; from Savarkar Sadan he was taken to the Police Commissioner's office near Crawford Market.

Chapter 19

Gadre and Sakharam are fictional.