Preface to the Second Edition

I take great delight in presenting this revised and complete biography of Veer Savarkar which, on its first publication in May 1950, was well received by leading Indian Newspapers and eminent men of learning in India and in foreign countries.

The title of the original biography was Savarkar And His Times. I have deleted the expression ‘And His Times’ since a life always has around its central figure an elaborate historical background. I have added seven chapters to the original book, keeping its last chapter as Chapter XXV in the new edition. The valuable new information and new facts I could get through research and through a plethora of material which was kindly made available to me by Savarkar himself and through his kind interviews, were inserted at their proper places in historical sequence.

There are no serious changes made in the content of the original book although on a retrospective of the events of the last thirty years I have modulated some of the statements, phrases and expressions to help the correct appraisal; but I have kept to the spirit.

There are sometimes two types of great men working for the good of society at one and the same time. The first type prefers to be pained for the welfare of society while the second whips it to betterment. Gandhi typifies the first and Savarkar represents the second. Savarkar had the light of a man of mission, the insight of a statesman and the foresight of a political prophet. His life removes the wrong impression created in the minds of non-Indians that the Indian Freedom Movement started with Gandhi and Nehru. If posterity closely studies the events that took place during the incarceration and internment of Savarkar (1910 to 1937) it might regard Savarkar’s emphasis on Hindu nationalism as a historical necessity for which he would not be held solely responsible.

A life is a story of a man working and as I believe that biography is both art and history, I have tried to depict vividly, though with sensitive detachment, Savarkar as he was. I agree
with Carl L. Becker that complete detachment would produce few histories and none worthwhile. A biographer must sympathise with the hero, should identify with his aims and motivations but at the same time must show detachment enough to judge him freely. As usual I have done my utmost to achieve it.

I acknowledge my deep debt of gratitude to all the authors, journals and publishers from whose books, journals and publications I have drawn excerpts.

I am deeply indebted to Bhide Guruji for closely reading the manuscript and the proofs of the new edition and to Vishwasrao Patil for reading with great interest the manuscript. My grateful thanks are due to Chandrakant Sinkar and Sharad Potnis for typing the new pages and to my brother Vinayak for preparing the index. There are several persons who help me with encouragement and many others who appreciate my work and promote it. To them I owe a debt of gratitude. My publisher's friendly and keen interest has played no mean part in the completion and production of this new edition. To the printers I express my appreciation of their co-operation.

77 Bhageshwar Bhuvan
Lady Hardinge Road
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23 October 1966

Dhananjay Keer
Preface to the First Edition

Swatantryaveer Savarkar needs no introduction to the Indian public, neither does his biography. Long ago, Asaf Ali described Savarkar as the spirit of Shivaji and the late Srinivas Sastri said of him that "he was a great and fearless patriot and volumes could be written about his yeoman services in the cause of Indian Freedom". This is, however, too small a volume to describe that spirit and those services adequately.

Savarkar's life has already appeared in almost all Indian languages, and in his twenties it has appeared in almost all European languages. But excepting the great Marathi biography by S. L. Karandikar, who wrote it about seven years ago, no book has dealt exhaustively with the various facets of his life. Hence this is a humble attempt to give in detail the myriad sides of Savarkar's life in its proper historic perspective. This book provides a fuller survey of Savarkar's revolutionary, literary, political and social activities and movements. It also deals with his personal life, and covers his life upto the present moment.

I have made a faithful attempt to present a true and correct picture of the various events and incidents that occurred in the life of Savarkar, and also the trends of thoughts and opinions entertained in those times. Most of them do not necessarily reflect my personal views. But they are narrated to record matters of mere history. To quote Sir Edmund Gosse, I have attempted 'to give a faithful portrait of a soul in its adventures through life'.

Savarkar's life is romantic, epic and volcanic and so it is full of flashes and flames. Bharat has just shed her revolutionary shell, and entered an evolutionary phase. And a revolutionary realist, as he is, Savarkar now in Free India naturally insists on the adoption of peaceful, constitutional and democratic means by the people for attaining their objectives. This was only a logical corollary to Savarkar's ideal as proclaimed in his historic work on '1857'.

My earnest appeal, therefore, to all lovers of Indian Freedom and true democracy is that they should go through this book
dispassionately and in a rationalistic manner and know exactly the real Savarkar. And if the book helps them know the real Savarkar, I shall feel glad that the object of writing this book is fulfilled.

My debt of gratitude is gladly acknowledged to all those who read and scrutinised the manuscript and made valuable suggestions, and particularly to those who constantly encouraged me, but whose names I omit for obvious reasons. I also gratefully acknowledge my debt to the various authors, journals and publications from whom I have drawn excerpts. Lastly, my special thanks are due to Messrs. India Printing Works, for their prompt execution and exquisite printing of this work.

D. K.