

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4178
TO BE ANSWERED ON 23.03.2020**

Construction of Veer Savarkar Memorial at France

4718. SHRI HIBI EDEN

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a book named Penal Settlement in Andamans was published by the Department of Culture, Government of India;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) if so, the copy of the pages or extract of the pages which contains “Petition from V.D.Savarkar (Convict No.32778) to the Home Member of the Government of India, dated the 14th November, 1913”;
- (d) whether it is a fact that the mercy petitions written by Savarkar to the British were displayed at the Cellular Jail Museum and now removed from there dramatically;
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (f) whether the Ministry of Culture proposes to construct a memorial after Vir Savarkar at Marseilles in France and if so, the details thereof including the timeframe for its construction?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE (I/C) FOR CULTURE & TOURISM
(SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL)**

- (a) & (b) Yes, Sir. The book ‘Penal Settlement in Andamans’ written by Shri R.C.Majumdar was published by Gazetteers Unit, the then Department of Culture, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare.
- (c) Copies of the pages (page numbers 211 to 214) of the book containing ‘Petition from V.D.Savarkar (Convict No.32778) to the Home Member of the Government of India, dated 14.11.1913, are attached.
- (d) & (e) As per the information received from Andaman & Nicobar (Directorate of Art and Culture), such Mercy Petitions are not displayed at Cellular Jail since no record is available with the Department of Art and Culture, Andaman & Nicobar Administration.
- (f) No such proposal is under consideration in Ministry of Culture.

The past experience of more than three years leads me to think that our future life in jail shall be the life of misery and unhappiness. The short period of little more than four years has made one of us to commit suicide, while another got insanity and the third died of fever. I can say, what shall be the fate of remaining of us who have to pass from the same suffering, same troubles and torture. After passing more than two years I was released from Jail. During my sojourn in jail at this time, I got some 15 months separate confinements, 63 days standing hand cuffs, 5 months bar fetters, 10 days cross barfetters and 24 days penal diet and some twenty days Hospital treatment. Hospital treatment is the punishment unknown in the record of Jail administration. It means a healthy man is made to starve from one week to two weeks because he refused to do what jail authority want him to do which he is quite unable. Fortunately this method of torture was never tried during the time of Captain Murray. Every one who belongs to my case has got more or less these punishments, and none of us can remain without being cased and punishment. It proves that all of my casemen were lacking in proper behaviour and obeying thoroughly the discipline of jail code. After two years I was released from jail, but none of my casemen who were outside at that time (whose number was 19) were blamed for ill behaviour. On the other hand all District Officers, Sub-Divisional Officers and Overseers were pleased with us, and we were doing our task honestly. Can we not request the Home Government, in the name of Humanity, in the name of Supreme Being who is Lord both of the rulers and the ruled, the Christian and the Pagan, the white and black, to administer justice to the unfortunate and poor prisoners who belong to the most abominable section in their eyes—I mean sedition.

I am extremely sorry to see that some of the best men of ruling class—I mean officers of the British Government—many times display hatred and grudge against us because we belonged to the section which is most detestable in their eyes. They forget perhaps that their own Lord Christ and St. Paul were crucified and persecuted by the Jews for the same offence. The same fate attended the best men of our race including Gotam Budha and Lord Shankaracharya, etc. I request the officers of the most powerful Government of the world and to the Indian Government specially not to render our condition wretched and miserable in order to kill the germs of sedition within us. If the religious martyrdom practised by the enemies of Christianity against Christianity has not destroyed Christianity from the face of Globes, surely, political martyrdom shall not extirpate the Indian nationalism from the Holy soil of Bharatavarsha.

Please put my petition for the kind consideration of the Viceroy of India and oblige.

Petition from V. D. Sarvarkar (Convict No. 32778) to the Home Member of the Government of India, dated the 14th November, 1913.

I beg to submit the following points for your kind consideration:

(1) When I came here in 1911 June, I was along with the rest of the convicts of my party taken to the office of the Chief Commissioner. There I was classed as "D" meaning dangerous prisoner ; the rest of the convicts were not classed as "D". Then I had to pass full 6 months in solitary confinement. The other convicts had not. During that time I was put on the coir pounding though my hands were bleeding. Then I was put on the oil-mill—the hardest labour in the jail. Although my conduct during all the time was exceptionally good still at the end of these six months I was not sent out of the jail ; though the other convicts who came with me were. From that time to this day I have tried to keep my behaviour as good as possible.

(2) When I petitioned for promotion I was told I was a special class prisoner and so could not be promoted. When any of us asked for better food or any special treatment we were told "You are only ordinary convicts and must eat what the rest do". Thus, Sir, Your Honour would see that only for special disadvantages we are classed as special prisoners.

(3) When the majority of the casemen were sent outside I requested for my release. But, although I had been cased (caned?) hardly twice or thrice and some of those who were released, for a dozen and more times, still I was not released with them because I was their casemen. But when after all, the order for my release was given and when just then some of the political prisoners outside were brought into the troubles I was locked in with them because I was their casemen.

(4) If I was in Indian jails I would have by this time earned much remission, could have sent more letters home, got visits. If I was a transportee pure and simple I would have by this time been released, from this jail and would have been looking forward for ticket-leave, etc. But as it is, I have neither the advantages of the Indian jail nor of this convict colony regulation ; though had to undergo the disadvantages of both.

(5) Therefore will your honour be pleased to put an end to this anomalous situation in which I have been placed, by either sending me to Indian jails or by treating me as a transportee just like any other prisoner. I am not asking for any preferential treatment, though I believe as a political prisoner even that could have been expected in any civilized administration in the Independent nations of the world; but only for the concessions and favour that are shown even to the most depraved of convicts and habitual criminals? This present plan of shutting me up in this jail permanently makes me quite hopeless of any possibility of sustaining life and hope. For those who are term convicts the thing is different, but, Sir, I have 50 years staring me in the face! How can I pull up moral energy enough to pass them in close

confinement when even those concessions which the vilest of convicts can claim to smoothen their life are denied to me? Either please to send me to Indian jail for there I would earn (a) remission; (b) would have a visit from my people come every four months for those who had unfortunately been in jail know what a blessing it is to have a sight of one's nearest and dearest every now and then! (c) and above all a moral—though not a legal—right of being entitled to release in 14 years; (d) also more letters and other little advantages. Or if I cannot be sent to India I should be released and sent outside with a hope, like any other convicts, to visits after 5 years, getting my ticket leave and calling over my family here. If this is granted then only one grievance remains and that is that I should be held responsible only for my own faults and not of others. It is a pity that I have to ask for this—it is such a fundamental right of every human being! For as there are on the one hand, some 20 political prisoners—young, active and restless, and on the other the regulations of a convict colony, by the very nature of them reducing the liberties of thought and expression to lowest minimum possible; it is but inevitable that every now and then some one of them will be found to have contravened a regulation or two and if all be held responsible for that, as now it is actually done—very little chance of being left outside remains for me.

In the end may I remind your honour to be so good as to go through the petition for clemency, that I had sent in 1911, and to sanction if for being forwarded to the Indian Government? The latest development of the Indian politics and the conciliating policy of the Government have thrown open the constitutional line once more. Now no man having the good of India and Humanity at heart will blindly step on the thorny paths which in the excited and hopeless situation of India in 1906-1907 beguiled us from the path of peace and progress. Therefore if the Government in their manifold beneficence and mercy release me I for one cannot but be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English Government which is the foremost condition of that progress. As long as we are in jails there cannot be real happiness and joy in hundreds and thousands of homes of His Majesty's loyal subjects in India, for blood is thicker than water; but if we be released the people will instinctively raise a shout of joy and gratitude to the Government, who knows how to forgive and correct, more than how to chastise and avenge. Moreover my conversion to the constitutional line would bring back all those misled young men in India and abroad who were once looking up to me as their guide. I am ready to serve the Government in any capacity they like, for as my conversion is conscientious so I hope my future conduct would be. By keeping me in jail nothing can be got in comparison to what would be otherwise. The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and therefore where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the Government?

Hoping your Honour will kindly take into notion these points.

Petition from Sudhir Kumar Sarcar (Prisoner No. 31597), to His Excellency the Viceroy of India through the Home Member of the Government of India

That the humble petitioner begs to inform to Your Exalted Honour the following of his grievances for due consideration and which expecting fervently to be redressed.

That the petitioner was convicted for 7 years' transportation with the Alipore Bomb Conspirators for suspecting to be a member of the conspiracy and was proved to have had connection with the seditious newspaper "Jugantar," a weekly vernacular organ published in Calcutta. And that I joined the Society in their literary branch to be a missionary of the propaganda without any knowledge whatsoever about the existence of their anarchical movement and thus joined their College class as student partly with the intention to serve my country and partly the momentous stimulation of the then existent agitation, which matters are best known to the Criminal Investigation Department. The time and at the age in which I joined was 19 years only, was overflowed by the agitation and so a youthful emotional mind became a victim of the superfluous and obnoxious agitation and suffered much for the penalty and paid the cost with great compensation.

That Your Honour will come to know that I have passed 4 years and 9 months and including the under-trial terms it is almost 6 years. During the time I passed at Port Blair I had to undergo hardest work, i.e., oil mill (pressing 30 lbs. of oil) incessantly after six months of my existence here about which the jail authorities and my history sheet are evidences respectively. After doing repeatedly for five times in the oil mill of which four times remained for more than a month and did my work most obediently and after that I was obliged to refuse my task of oil pressing as I was lamentably coming down in my weight. This refusal of task accompanied by the irrational treatment of the former Superintendent Mr. Barker (Captain) who when I was in the light labour gang (for suffering dysentery) fell short much in my weight asked me to finish my one month mill task from which I was removed for dysentery and posted to dysentery gang. When I was in the light labour gang and could not cover the former weight, he asked me to join the mill again and finish my month. The above is still bearing witness in my history ticket. These matters and of the similar other treatment brought me or rather obliged to refuse totally and fall death by suffering worst rather than undergo by the method he intended to inflict upon.

When I was released to outside work about two years of confine-