

# Swami Dayanand as a Social Reformer and a Sculptor of Humanity : A Study with Special Reference to Arya Samaj and Its Principles

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## ABSTRACT

When educated youth of India were imitating the shallow facets of European civilization and were agitating to plant the growing seeds of England in Indian soil, irrespective of the talent and culture of the Indian people, Swami Dayanand, the biggest apostles of Indo-Aryan civilization remained as a legendary figure of the most advanced ideas in socio-political spheres in India. His incarnation on the earth remained fruitful because he eradicated many evil rituals, rites, practices and traditions which were prevalent in India at that time. Swami Dayanand raised his voice against idol worshipping, fatalism, caste system, ritualism, intoxication, sati tradition, child marriage and many more. Keeping in view the domination of the Vedas and the Hindus, he raised his voice against the degraded practices of Islam and Christianity also and further took the side of the Sandhi Movement to reorganize other sects of the Hindu sect. Swami Dayanand expressed political views about the principles of the state, the form of the governments, functions, rules of law, etc. The special emphasis of this paper is to evaluate and to do justice with his ideology. Further, it seeks to peep into Swami Dayanand's personal life and know him closely as a man of Sacred Vedic Dharma. He brought radical changes in the society but he had to sacrifice his life for it.

**Keywords :** Swami Dayanand, Arya Samaj, Sati Tradition, Hypocrisy, Brahminism, the Vedas.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati was born in Tankara village in Gujarat on February 12, 1824. His father's name was Lalji Tiwari and his mother's name was Yashodabai. His life can be better understood from three stages of his life: childhood in home (1824-45), as a disciple, student and reader (1846-69) and (from 1870 to 1883 till his death). His childhood name was Mool Shankar because he was born in the Mool Nakshtra. He was born in a Brahmin family and his father was a follower of Lord Shiva. This family was deeply attached with the Hindu religious notions and as is in common practice in a Brahmin family, he was told to observe fast and pray to Lord Shiva.

His father always told the importance of God to him. When he was eight years old his Upanayana Sanskar

was performed and it can be called his formal entry in the field of education. He was told to observe fast and worship Lord Shiva.

He learnt Sanskrit from his father who had profound knowledge of the Vedas. He was merely fourteen years at the time when he had observed the fast on the day of Shiv Ratri. At night, the other members of the family who were doing fast, went to sleep but Moolshankar wanted to know the worth of this fast.

Suddenly a mouse comes there and it starts eating the Prasad or offerings and Moolshankar observed that the Lord Shiva is not doing anything to ward off the mouse. He came to the conclusion that there is no power in the idol, and he is merely wasting his time.

He thought that Lord Shiva does not have power to do anything and he thought how can Lord Shiva protect the entire world when he cannot protect his offerings from a mouse? After this incidence, he became against the idol worshipping.

Moolshankar's younger sister died when he was merely sixteen-year-old. He was much attached with his sister and this death breaks him. Unfortunately, his uncle died due to Cholera after some time and Swami Dayanand was immensely disturbed at the loss of his near and dear ones. He had never known that death is the ultimate reality of life. These two incidents had great impact on mind of a young Moolshankar.

He started asking questions about death and why it happens. His questions put his parents in problem and they thought that they should marry him so that he may entangle in the worldly life. He was engaged soon but his mind was elsewhere. By now he has made up his mind that he would know the cause of death and he would do something so that he may get rid of birth and death. This thinking did not keep him at home and finally he left for sanyas at the age of twenty-one. He went to the Himalayas where he tried to get questions from the other saints but he remained unsatisfied from the answers. Ultimately he reached Mathura where he met Swami Virajanand Dandeasha.

Swami Virajanand was a very strict Teacher and he wanted to make his Disciples a perfect spiritual person. Moolshankar told the purpose of his life to his spiritual guru that he wanted to attain spiritual enlightenment. His quest to attain supreme knowledge impressed his Guru and in a short span of time Moolshankar became his most beloved disciple. There is an interesting story regarding both. One day Swami Vrijanand beat Moolshankar very badly with his hand but Moolshankar remained silent and suffered this pain very silently and solemnly. When Swami Virajanand stopped beating Moolshankar, the latter told his guru that his hand might have suffered

pain due to the beating and he is now feeling sorry for it. Swami Vrijanand was surprised to get this type of response from Moolshankar. He just thought that it was not easy for a person to tolerate this pain silently. On another occasion Virajananda told Moolshankar that he was a fool and if he did not want to work hard, he must quit the path of spiritualism. But Then his another disciple told him that he should not scold Moolshankar like this because Moolshankar is a very intelligent boy and he will definitely bring good results soon. Swami Virajananda realised his mistake and he assured Moolshankar that he will get good respect in future and such kind of disrespectful treatment will not be shown towards him. Swami Virajanand.

Moolshankar in a short span of time attained knowledge and was bestowed upon the new name "Swami Dayanand Saraswati". As Gurudakshina, Virjanand extracted a promise from Dayanand that he would devote his life for the revival of Hinduism. He would work to spread "arsha" literature and knowledge of Vedas in the country. Swami Dayanand soon started preaching about the Vedas and his fame spread throughout the country. Swami Dayanand then, in order to give a organized and systematic structure to his teachings formed Arya Samaj on April 7, 1875 at Bombay. Swami Dayanand formed ten tenants of the Arya Samaj. He also formed different rules and devised many principles for the Samaj. Most important Principle was that God is blissful, omniscient, omnipotent and holy. He alone is worthy of being worshipped.

Truth and Dharma are two important thing according to Swami Dayanand. He also told that universal goodness should be the main motive of human beings. Our conduct should be filled with justice, righteousness and love. Our motive should be to promote education and to dispel ignorance from the world. One should not be selfish and the good of the society should be the motive of every human being. The welfare of the society is so important that it should be our prime motive.

At that time, it was very difficult for a person to fight with so many evils. Swami Dayanand found that by initiating educational reforms society can be reformed in a true sense. Swami Dayanand found that the present education system had failed to create an ideal human being. An educated person must be a man of good character and humility should be in his words and behaviour. On 22 October, 1869, there was a great debate with him in which 27 scholars, 12 pundits and this debate was conducted in front of fifty thousand people. He told the people that lack of knowledge always remains the root cause of many problem and education was the key to eradicate evils from the society and to usher in the new epoch of Knowledge . He believed that the Gurukul education was best suited for the overall development of a child and that's why establishment of Gurukuls was necessary to infuse new life into decadent Hindu Society. Swami Dayanand had views that the Gurukuls should be located at a distance from the cities so that the students or Brahmcharis may get calm and peaceful environment of the Gurukul. A number of Gurukuls were later established by Swamiji and his followers. DAV institutions are also the products of his mind. After his death in 1883, his followers and disciples established Dayanand Anglo College Trust. After three years of his death the first DAV school was established in 1886 in Lahore and Lala Hans Raj was its Headmaster. Swami Dayanand also emphasized on the women's education and Arya Kanya Mahavidyalayas were opened up later by his followers. Swami Dayanand was not against the western education system. He opined for adoption of rational and scientific knowledge from western education. But at the same time he laid emphasis on Education based on moral values. The moral values are important part of a good human being and education should emphasize imparting these values to human beings.

Swami Dayanand read many religious books of all religions and he not only found fault with the Hindu religion, he told that some chapters of the Bible and the Quran were also not good. Likewise, there were

scope for improvement in Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Swami Dayanand found that Hindu religion was gripped in many social evils such as idolatry, animal sacrifice, pilgrimages, caste discrimination, meat eating, gender discrimination, sati tradition, priest crafting and temple offerings, etc.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati's philosophy and knowledge can be deciphered from his three books which he published which were *Satyarth Prakash*, *Veda Bhasya Bhumika* and *Veda Bhasya*. He was the editor of one journal *Arya Patrika*.

According to Swami Dayanand, a man should respect his teachers, elders, parents, guests and he should always follow the path of righteousness, equality and justice.

Politically, Swami Dayanand believed that India should be politically independent and for this he used the word Swaraj i.e. "Self Rule". He wanted that Indians should be self dependent and they should try to strengthen the indigenous economy. He urged people to use the indigenous things manufactured in India and discard foreign things.

He was also against the use of English in all official works and he advocated for the promotion of Hindi as a national language. He told the people that there is a huge difference between a good government and self government. He wanted that India should be free from the British Empire. He famously gave the slogan of "India for Indians." It is not a coincidence that a number of great freedom fighters of India were strident followers of Arya Samaj. Some example are- Lala Lajpat Rai, Pundit Gurudutt etc. Swami Dayanand had seen the poverty, blind-beliefs and degraded conditions of rural Indians. He wanted the upliftment of the rural areas and the welfare of the general public. Swami Dayanand told the people to follow the ancient principles mentioned in Hindu scriptures. Sukhjit Kaur observes about it:

He wanted the Indians to follow the principle of Vedas. He also motivated Indians to take part in politics. He followed the western style for modernization in India. When Hindus were shifting their religion to Christianity, Swami Dayanand preached them about their culture. Many Sikhs also joined Arya Samaj and promoted it. (56)

Swami Dayanand wanted that the Hindus must not convert to other religions and they should not forget the rich ancient Hindu civilization and its benefits. Swami Dayanand was a kind-hearted yogi who would feel sad to see the sufferings of human beings. He thought that to love the God's creation is the true love to God. Swami Dayanand wanted to open the eyes of those people whose eyes were shut due to ego, power, ignorance, money or post. Swami Dayanand wanted that the women should always get equal rights. Their condition was pathetic because they were deprived of education and they were not given equal status. The true essence of Hinduism can be seen in his writings and thoughts.

Maharishi Dayanand was against untouchability, caste discrimination, child marriage and convent education.. Swami Dayanand wanted that the Hindus should come out of their narrow mentality and they should not forget that castes and classes are made by men and all human beings are equal in the eyes of God. There should not be any discrimination between a son of a king and the son of a pauper. Both the students are equal in the eyes of a guru in Gurukul and they must do all the tasks which are assigned to them.

Swami Dayanand was a staunch critique of child marriages. He mockingly described the Hindus as "Child of Children" to make them aware about the negative aspects of Child marriages. He also supported Widow Remarriages. In order to give equal status to women Swami Dayanand made it a rule that women will be equal participants in yajnas done at Arya Samaj Mandirs. Even today, women performing yajnas in Arya Samaj mandir are a common sight.

Swami Dayanand worked relentlessly for the benefit of the society. He wanted to make the world an Aryan world where 'Aryans' means the good people in all respect. He wanted to create a society that is free from all evils. Our former president Dr. S. Radhakrishnan called him the "maker of modern India" and this statement is absolutely right also. He worked for the society, lived for the society and finally suffered for the society.

Swami Dayanand also invited the rage of many pundits, priests and other professionals who were earning good amount before the arrival of Swami Dayanand. People tries different tactics to kill him but he was saved every time. He was given poison several times but being a yogi, he would either digest or vomit this poison. People were suffering huge losses in their business and they had now planned to put him away at any cost.

One day, Jaswant Singh II, the Maharaja of Jodhpur invited Swami Dayanand in his palace to seek his blessings. Swami Dayanand went there and he told the king to forsake the court dancer and adopt the path of Dharma and morality. Swami Dayanand remained a celibate and he was a strong advocator of celibacy. When he offended the court dancer whom the king loved also, the dancer conspired with the cook and Swami Dayanand was given lead in his milk. Swami Dayanand tried to vomit it when he realized excruciating pain in his abdomen, but this time the lead had already started cutting his bowels.

Swami Dayanand realized that his end was near. He called the cook and on being asked, the cook revealed him the whole story. Swami Dayanand's greatness can be judged by his last decision also. He gave some money to the cook so that he may run away otherwise when the King of Udaipur will know the truth, he will kill him. Thus, the great people always take strong decisions in their life and they have the capability not to kill but to forgive their enemies. Thus Swami Dayanand can be called a man who sacrificed his life for the welfare of others. India

should feel proud on such great luminary. But it is a disappointing thing that all the great men who worked for the humanity were killed by some anti-social people. Dr. C. Subramanian also aptly observes in this context:

Like Socrates, Saraswati was also punished maneuvering for his stand regarding Hindu religion and ritual practices. The basic ideals of this philosopher cum reformer created a stir among orthodox Hindus. This prolific writer in his major works viz., Satyarth Prakash, Veda Bhashya Bhumika, Veda Bhashya and as well as in the edited journal, Arya Patrika exemplified his varied thinking to wipe out Social imbalances in India. (126)

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