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CONTRIBUTION OF ARYA SAMAJ IN INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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Introduction:

Social Reform Movement in the 19th Century in India. The same set of circumstances the impact of modern education, rational humanitarian and scientific approach to life which ushered in both in acting and reaction – reform movements, in religion were largely responsible for social movements in 19th and 20th centuries. Ram Mohan Roy, a pioneer in Modern religious Reform Movements in India, was also the morning star of Modern Social Reform Movement in the country. Social Reform became an integral part of religious Reform in India and this was equally true of Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj and Satya – Shodak Samaj etc. Swami Dayanand Saraswati was a typical fearless social and religious reformer in the 19th century. Through his life and career he preached Indians to imbibe courage, fortitude, moral, soundness, power, strength of body and mind and such other virtues as would make them independent and possessors, of sovereign imperial sway. He claimed India for Indians.¹

Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883)² His early life:

Swami Dayanand was the founder of Arya Samaj his childhood name was Mool Shankar. He was born in a small town Tankara in Gujarat in a conservative Brahmin family in 1824. He came into conflict with his father when he was barely fourteen years of age for rejecting idol worship. He renounced his home in order to escape the entanglement of marriage and to seek to pacify the turmoil and commotion of his soul. For 15 years he led the life of a wandering scholar in search of the knowledge which removed all doubts. His search took him into the hidden glades of the Mountain ranges of the Himalayas the Vindhyas and the Aravalis and across the valleys and along the banks of the Ganga, Jamuna and Narmada Rivers. He acquired a mastery of the Sanskrit language, its grammar, and philosophy and religious literature.³ Then at Mathura he spent two and a half years as a disciple of the blind Virjananda, a profound master of ancient learning, an erudite teacher and a rational thinker, who hated idol worship superstitious practices, and philosophic

¹ Raj Kumar (ed), Essays on Modern India, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi, 2003, p.62.

² Chhaju Singh Bawa, The Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, New Delhi, 1971 & Vidya Dhar Mahajan, Leaders of The Nationalist Movement, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 7-21.

³ See for detail Jamuna Nag, Social Reform Movements in Nineteenth Century India, RBSA Publishers Jaipur, 1998, pp. 139-144.

interpretation of the Vedas and then charged him with the mission to purge Hinduism of all its ugly accretions and abbreviations. In 1863, began his apostolic career which ended only with his death in 1883.

These twenty year were a period of the most strenuous labour touring over India, holding polemical discussion, preaching his gospel, organizing the "Arya Samaj" writing books and propagating social reform.

The first Arya Samaj was established at Rajkot in Saurashtra in 1875, which was dissolved in a short time. Another Arya Samaj was started in Ahmedbad and the in Bombay.⁴ He established the Arya Samaj at Bombay in 1875. The Ten Rules ultimately adopted after much thought and discussion became the fundamental tenets of Arya Samaj and all the Aryas were enjoined upon to conform to them strictly in their daily life.⁵

Contribution of Arya Samaj to Indian National Movement: ⁶

Infallibility of Vedas:

Swami Dayanand gave the call "Back to the Vedas". He believed that the priests had corrupted the Hindu religion with the help of *Puranas*, which were full of false teachings. He asked people to rely only on Vedas which they wrote "Satyarth Prakash" in Hindi⁷, in which he elaborated the main principle of Vedic religion and culture.

Ideals of Social and Religion Reform:

The Arya Samaj provided useful service to Hindu Society as well by making onslaught on its social evils. It opposed Child – Marriage Polygamy, Purdah, Casteism, the practice of Sati, etc, it incessantly worked for the education of the females, abolition of casteism and upliftment of the depressed classes. Inter Caste Marriages and Inter dining was practiced by the members of the Arya Samaj in their routine life.

Spirit of Nationalism:

Dayanand was a Nationalist. He remained Indians of their glorious past and spoke of "Swarajya, Swabhasha and Swadharama". He gave the popular slogan "India for Indians".⁸

⁴ Ibid, p.143.

⁵ R.S.Chauasia, History of Modern India, 1707-2000A.D., Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2002, pp.319-320.

⁶ Tara Chand, History of Freedom Movement in India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, New Delhi, 1990, pp.421-474.

⁷ Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Satyarthprakash, Shri Gudmal Prahaladkumar Arya Dharmarth Nyas, Rajasthan, 2009, p115-145. (Hindi).

⁸ Heimsath, C.H. Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, Princeton, New Jersey, 1964. pp. 30.

Shuddi Movement:⁹

It started to take back the converted Muslims and the Christians into Hindu fold after purifying them. It was called Shuddi Movement. Many Hindus were converted to Christianity in ignorance. The Christian Missionaries had drawn large number of converts from among the uneducated, poor and depressed classes of the Hindus. They could not be taken back within the fold of Hinduism even if they desired it. The Arya Samaj opened the gates of Hinduism to them and defended its action on the basis of the Dharma of the Vedas. By its efforts, a large number of people were restored to the Hindu fold.

Establishment of Arya Samaj:

He was established branches of Arya Samaj all over the country. It gained great popularity in Punjab. The Arya Samaj center in Lahore became famous for its activities. The Lahore Arya Samaj was established in 1877 and this led to the opening of Arya Samaj s in Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Rawalpindi, Multan, Meerut , Delhi, Roorkee, Kanpur and Lucknow.

Propagation of Education:

Dayanand had realized that the strength of the West lay in their advanced knowledge. Thus, he wanted to spread education among the Indian masses. He also gave importance to female education. Soon the leaders of Arya Samaj started chains of schools and colleges in India.

Arya Samaj produced National leaders:

Arya Samaj produced great leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Swami Shradhananda and Mahatma Hansraj. In Lahore, Mahatma Hansraj established the D.A.V. College which opened a number of schools and colleges in India. Its Educational Institutions – Colleges of higher learning schools for Secondary Education Institutions for the education for women, and institutions to impart education according to ancient Indian methods.

Cow Protection:

Another plank in the programme of the Arya Samaj which led to serious troubles was the protection of the Cow. In 1882, a Cow Protection Association was formed, preachers were appointed for propaganda, and funds were collected to save cows from slaughter.¹⁰ The cause had much to commend itself as the cow is a great economic asset and its preservation has enlisted the deep sentimental attachment of the Hindus. **Emancipation of Women:** The Arya Samaj stood for equal rights of man and woman in social educational matters. This was a distinct democratic

⁹ V.S.Kshirsagar, translated by V.V.Kularni Social Reformers in Maharashtra and Great Indian Thinkers, Aniruddha Publishing House, 239-243.

¹⁰ Tara Chand, History of Freedom Movement in India, op.cit., p.423.

conception. It however, opposed co-education. Since in the Vedic Period Co – education did not exist.

Upliftment of Dalits:

The Arya Samaj opposed to the hereditary caste system. It stood, however, for the four castes, division of society to be determined by merit and not by birth. Since the Vedas laid down such a division and not by birth. Since the Vedas could not err, the Arya Samaj could not proclaim the death of the caste system itself.

The Arya Samaj member's activity in such social work as Famine relief running orphanages and widows' homes.

Gandhi's Movement:

Gandhi's principle of Satyagraha though supported by Swami Shradhananda, was vigorously opposed by Lala Hansa Raj. The Samajists also decried Indian National Congress support of the Khilafat Movement as also the two- nation theory and the demand for a separate Muslim home land. In the wake of Hindu-Muslim disturbances (1947), the Samajists (along with the Vedic Volunteers) to protect Hindu Property and Temples.

Role of Arya Samaj in Hyderabad Mukti Sangram :

Swami Dayanand Saraswati established Arya Samaj on 10th April 1875 in Bombay. Later its center established in Marathwada in 1880 at Beed. There were many leaders contributed to it. Among them Kundan prasadji, Gokul Prasadji, Pandit Bhagavati Prasad, Ramanand Bhai, Maganlaji, Babhuraoji, Manikpradaji, Bansilalji Tiwari. Later on Arya samaj center shifted to Sultan Bazar in Hyderabad. Its president was Barrister Vinayakrao Koratkar. Arya Samaj's centers were established in Aurangabad, Latur, Beed, Osmanabad, Udgir, Ahmadpur, Hingoli, Parabhani, Solapur and Jalna. Through these centers Arya samaji propagated Arya samaj principles and nationalism among the people. Through press Arya samaj also propagated against Nizam rule. Even it had done a major role in Hyderabad freedom struggle.¹¹

Promote Hindi:

Dayanand had a fervent love for Hindi (Devanagari) Indian's own language. He directed his followers to spread and promote Hindi.

However, as mentioned the Arya Samaj played a progressive role in the earlier stages of Indian nationalism. However, when the national awakening broadened and deepened. When the national movement reached greater and greater secular heights, it became a hindrance to the growth of Indian Nationalism by

¹¹ Ramesh Parve (ed), Contribution of Marathwada in the Hyderabad Freedom Struggle, Social Science Reporter, Latur, 2015, pp.169-171.

contributing though unconsciously to the creation of a belligerent religious – communal atmosphere.¹²

Humanity:

Throughout his life Dayanand endeavoured to purge the humanity of the prevalent social and religious evils. He was a visionary who looked far ahead of his times and visualized a society based on social justice, equality of opportunity and political freedom. He was the view that character of the nation was the real foundation on which the superstructure of political uplift could be built.¹³

Conclusion:

Swami Dayanands attitude towards social reform was more rational than his attitude towards religious faith. He spoke against hereditary caste system, polygamy, child marriage, and supported women's equality with men. He highlighted the necessity to give compulsory education to children and that it should be taken up by the State. He made it clear he could not tolerate persecution of untouchables. The Arya Samaj occupies the most important place in the history of social and religious reforms in India. The principle purpose of this Samaj is to do good to the world – spiritual, physical and social. Most of the Arya Samaj followers adopt principles in their life till today. Thus Arya Samaj gave a new life and Vigour to Hinduism

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¹² A.R.Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism , Popular Prakashan Bombay,1946, p.293.

¹³ Raj Kumar (ed), Essays on Modern India, Discovery publishing House, New Delhi, 2003, pp.65

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