



# Revisiting The Legacy Of Swami Dayanand Saraswati: Reform, Resistance, And Religious Revival In Colonial India

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## Introduction

The 18th-century conquest of India by the British East India Company led to significant socio-economic changes and geographical expansion. During their rule, the British initially adopted an imperialist stance before transitioning to a reformist approach, interfering with Hindu social customs while claiming to support moral advancement. Numerous revivalist and reformist organizations emerged in response, devoted to preserving and transforming Hindu customs.

Founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in the 19th century, the Arya Samaj emerged as a prominent revivalist organisation. The Arya Samaj extended its influence across northern India, focusing on social reform and Vedic principles. Past research on the Arya Samaj has explored various facets of its socio-religious reforms. For instance, Indu Bala examines the socio-religious reform efforts of the Arya Samaj, particularly their impact on marginalized populations and women's issues. She highlights Arya Samaj's activities in Lahore and Punjab while analysing Swami Dayanand Saraswati's views on women's rights and status in Hindu culture.<sup>1</sup> However, her research is limited to the Punjab and Lahore regions.

K. Gangaiah (2010–2011) explores the collaboration between the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj in combating caste prejudice against Harijans. Gangaiah also details Arya Samaj's activities in Andhra Pradesh, including the "Shuddhi Movement" and its anti-untouchability campaigns. Additionally, she examines the role played by local zamindars in securing freedom for Harijans in various Andhra districts.

The socio-religious movement of the Arya Samaj in colonial Punjab is studied by Richa Raj, who highlights the group's contribution to the Swadeshi movement within a broader Hindu nationalist and cultural framework. She draws attention to the help provided by Arya Samaj in the areas of technical and industrial education, famine relief, and the construction of widows' homes and orphanages in Punjab, Rajputana, Hissar, and the Central Provinces.<sup>2</sup> Lala Lajpat Rai's noteworthy involvement in Punjab's Arya Samaj activities is also highlighted in the article. She ignores the Arya Samaj's initiatives for women's advancement, nevertheless.

**Keywords :** Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Religious reform movements Vedic revivalism.

## Early Life and Social Welfare

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who awakened nationalistic consciousness in modern India, was born in 1824 in the city of Gujarat. His original name was Shankar. The boy Mool Shankar was born into a religious family. His father held a high position in the kingdom of Morvi, and his mother was a devout liberal. Mool Shankar began his education at the age of five under the supervision of his father. Under the guidance of his father, Mool Shankar studied ethics, literature, and grammar etc. At the tender age of 14, he had compiled the entire *Yajurveda Samhita*.<sup>3</sup>

Dayanand was a man of thoughtful nature. Born into a religious family, it was natural for him to participate in idol worship and related practices. Once, on the occasion of Mahashivratri, along with other family members, he observed the Shankar vrat and participated in the night vigil at the Shiva temple. Gradually, all the devotees fell asleep, but Mool Shankar remained awake. An incident occurred that profoundly impacted Mool Shankar's mind and eroded his faith in traditional religious rituals such as fasting and idol worship. In the temple, a rat

<sup>1</sup> Bala, *The Women Question and Arya Samaj*, Proceeding of Indian History congress, Vol. 63, 2002, pp. 918-925.

<sup>2</sup> Raj, *Of Swadesh, Self Reliance and Self-Help: A Study of Arya Samaj in Colonial Punjab 1890-1920*, Moving the Social, 2019, 51-72.

<sup>3</sup> Singh, *The Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati*, part I, Addison Press, Lahore, 1903, p 3.

was seen jumping on the statue of Shiva and eating fruits, flowers, and other offerings placed before the idol with great reverence by the worshipers, who considered it to be God. A question arose in Mool Shankar's thoughtful mind: how could this idol be a God if it could not protect itself from the terror of a rat? Out of curiosity, he immediately woke his father and expressed his doubts about the incident. However, his father could not provide a satisfactory answer. This had a deep impact on the tender mind of the child Mool Shankar due to which he became disinterested in idol worship.<sup>4</sup>

Due to two other events that happened in the family, firstly the death of his sister and secondly the death of his uncle, Mool Shankar's young mind sank into deep sorrow and he started getting engaged in solving complex questions of life and death. Mool Shankar became detached from worldly activities. It started arising and their mind was wondering where God was and how it could be achieved. Why are there so many troubles in the world? How can they be eliminated? What are the solutions to get rid of them? He got lost in thinking about such questions. Dayanand's father became worried due to this newly generated state of mind of Dayanand.<sup>5</sup> He thought that Mool Shankar should be married, so that Mool Shankar would start taking interest in worldly activities again and started getting attracted towards worldly activities, but Mool Shankar was completely ready to get tied in worldly bonds. A few days before the date of marriage fixed by his father, Mool Shankar left home and became a monk and named himself Dayanand Saraswati.

Dayanand began traveling in search of a guru capable of imparting true knowledge. Upon meeting Swami Virjanand, Dayanand felt he had found the spiritual teacher he had been seeking. Under Virjanand's discipleship, Dayanand refined his understanding of the Vedas, confirming their eternal truths. Motivated to spread this knowledge, Dayanand launched a nationwide campaign to propagate Vedic teachings. In this context, he arrived in Bombay, where he founded the Arya Samaj on April 19, 1875. After this, Arya Samaj was established in various places of the country from 1877.<sup>6</sup>

The Arya Samaj also took part in important social welfare projects. For instance, in 1895, they established the Dayanand Orphanage in Ajmer. The Arya Samaj handled the administration of this orphanage, which housed 107 people. The only benevolent orphanage run by Dayanand Saraswati accepted all destitute orphans and disenfranchised people from all over India. Without regard to caste, it provided clothing, food, education, and other necessities to promote independence. Hundreds of children from various areas, including as Punjab, Bengal, Madras, Malwa, Rajputana, and Gujarat, were supported by the ashram, which gave them daily meals, clothes, and education.<sup>7</sup> Through collegiate-level education and vocational training in skills like sewing, cutting, and weaving, the goal was to equip orphans with the aptitudes they would need to become contributing members of society. To support this noble goal, it was believed that it was the noble duty of every educated Indian to identify these vulnerable children and send them to an ashram. Due to inadequate rainfall, a famine occurred in 1899, nearly four years after an orphanage was set up in some parts of Rajputana.

The Rajputana famine of 1899 provided yet another platform for the Arya Samaj to reaffirm its dedication to public welfare. In response, the Lahore branch of the Arya Samaj sent Lala Chand Chaddha to several severely affected areas—including Jodhpur, Kishangarh, Ajmer, Beawar, and Pali—to support famine relief work and assist orphaned children. Representatives from the Lahore Arya Samaj also held discussions with the local ruler to understand the gravity of the situation and to seek cooperation in mitigating the crisis.

A further demonstration of their humanitarian vision emerged in 1910 when the Arya Samaj established a "Widows' Home" in Jodhpur in memory of King Edward VII. This institution was designed to provide shelter and support to widows across different castes and communities. These initiatives not only addressed pressing social needs but also strengthened the organisation's foothold in Rajasthan by promoting Dayanand Saraswati's principles of service and unity.

The *Paropkarini Sabha* served as a vital institution for preserving Dayanand Saraswati's ideological legacy and addressing both structural and doctrinal challenges confronting society. Its establishment of orphanages during the famine not only offered immediate relief but also revitalized the Arya Samaj's humanitarian commitment and strengthened its organisational participation. Through relief work, assistance to women, and care for destitute children, the Arya Samaj substantially furthered its mission of social reform.

Dayanand Saraswati's philosophical outlook is primarily reflected in his major works—*Satyarth Prakash*, *Veda Bhāshya Bhūmikā*, and *Veda Bhāshya*. In addition, the journal *Arya Patrika*, which he edited, also provides insight into his thoughts. In *Satyarth Prakash*, chapters 2 and 3 are dedicated to outlining his views on the education of children and youth. These writings not only highlight his literary brilliance but also underscore his contributions as an educational thinker and a religious reformer.

Swami Dayanand was sharply critical of the contemporary education system, arguing that it had failed to produce individuals of strong moral character. In his view, truly educated persons should display humility, discipline, and virtuous conduct. They should exercise control over their thoughts and speech, embody energy

<sup>4</sup> *The Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati*. p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *The Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>6</sup> Sharda, *Life of Dayanand Saraswati: World Treacher*, Ajmer, 1946, pp. 335-336.

<sup>7</sup> Bates (ed.), *Beyond representation: colonial and postcolonial constructions of Indian identity*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 43-61.

and sincerity, show respect toward parents, teachers, elders, and guests, walk on the path of righteousness, avoid immoral behaviour, seek the company of learned individuals, and practice generosity.

In his booklet *Vyavahārabhānu*, he further elaborated on this ideal by describing the qualities of a competent teacher and contrasting them with those of an ignorant person who should never be entrusted with the education of children.

Swami Dayanand's writings span an exceptionally wide range of subjects, including grammar, Vedic literature, the Upanishads, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and Ayurveda. His scholarship did not rest on a superficial familiarity with a few selected disciplines; instead, he explored diverse fields such as health sciences, *Dhanurveda*, *Gandharva Veda*, *Arthaveda*, military science, geology, astronomy, algebra, arithmetic, and various forms of vocational knowledge. He viewed knowledge and culture as interconnected yet distinct realms. To ensure that his ideas reached ordinary people, Dayanand deliberately chose to write in what he termed the "Aryan language," meaning an Indian vernacular accessible to the masses. For him, language served as the most effective vehicle for spreading intellectual, ethical, and spiritual principles. Though he valued cultural advancement, he did not endorse the dominance of English education and instead placed strong emphasis on promoting one's mother tongue.

His reformist outlook aimed to revitalise the moral and intellectual strength of Hindu society. One of his most enduring contributions was the founding of Gurukuls and the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) schools and colleges. Through these initiatives, Dayanand attempted to liberate Indians from excessive dependence on Western educational models. His influence extended beyond pedagogy: he played a crucial role in nurturing democratic ideals and stimulating national consciousness. He is often credited as being among the earliest thinkers to speak of *Swaraj* or self-rule, a concept that would later become central to India's freedom movement.

As the guiding force of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand emerged as one of the most impactful reformers and spiritual leaders in modern India. The dynamism of the Arya Samaj movement testifies to his vision, inspiring its members in both thought and action. The organisation's contributions to education are particularly significant, laying a strong foundation for social transformation and cultural regeneration, especially in northern and eastern India. The establishment of institutions such as the Gurukul Kangri in Haridwar captured the deep desire among many reformers to revive the ancient ideals of Hindu learning.

At a time when educated Indian youth were increasingly imitating the external features of Western civilisation and demanding the adoption of Western political systems—often ignoring the strengths of India's own cultural heritage—Dayanand firmly challenged this mindset. He was distressed by the growing social, cultural, and political influence of the West. As one of India's foremost advocates of progressive political ideas, he also strengthened the foundations of Indo-Aryan cultural identity. His message of nationalism and liberalism penetrated deep into rural India, inspiring communities long held back by superstition and lack of knowledge. Like a skilled physician, he diagnosed the underlying weaknesses of Indian society and proposed remedies that, if sincerely applied, could restore its vitality and self-confidence.

Dayanand's educational philosophy reflects his profound, holistic, and creative vision. He held that genuine social progress was possible only through education. According to him, true dignity arises when individuals become aware of their inner selves; this spiritual awakening, he believed, was the ultimate goal of learning. He sought to integrate India's timeless cultural values with the new ideas emerging from scientific and technological progress. For Dayanand, education was a means of moral and spiritual transformation—an instrument for eradicating social evils. Drawing from India's philosophical traditions, he offered solutions for both contemporary societal problems and wider global challenges. His educational model emphasised the ethical and spiritual upliftment of humanity, transcending all distinctions of caste, religion, nationality, and historical period.

On the social front, Swami Dayanand firmly opposed idol worship, rigid caste distinctions, elaborate rituals, fatalistic beliefs, moral decline, and exploitative customs like the commercialisation of marriage through the sale of grooms. He championed women's rights and worked for the upliftment of marginalized groups. While affirming the authority of the Vedas and the essential principles of Hinduism, he rejected the teachings of Islam and Christianity and encouraged the Shuddhi movement to bring back individuals who had moved away from the Hindu fold.

Dayanand Saraswati believed deeply that true social progress in India could be achieved only through the dissemination of Vedic education. His establishment of Gurukuls, women's Gurukuls, and the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) institutions stands among his most lasting contributions. These educational efforts helped liberate Indian learners from the dominance of Western educational systems. Beyond education, he also played a vital role in nurturing democratic ideals and awakening national consciousness. Political freedom was central to his thinking, and he is widely acknowledged as the earliest figure to use the term *Swaraj* (self-rule). He also encouraged Indians to adopt indigenous goods and reject foreign products, anticipating later calls for economic self-sufficiency. Moreover, he was among the first to identify Hindi as a unifying national language.

A committed believer in democracy and self-governance, Dayanand famously stated that "self-government is better than good government," stressing the importance of autonomy over benevolent rule. He placed special emphasis on the development of rural India, promoting self-reliance and education as the keys to improving rural life. In many respects, Dayanand's ideas foreshadowed Mahatma Gandhi's constructive programme. The Arya Samaj itself functioned as a democratically structured organisation built from the grassroots upward.

Swami Dayanand thus marked a transitional era, laying the groundwork for the transformation of Hindu society through education and providing a visionary foundation for future national development.

Dayanand established the first Arya Samaj in Bombay in 1857, followed by another major centre in Lahore in 1877. The Arya Samaj became the organisational expression of his ideas and principles. Its remarkable success stemmed from its active participation in social upliftment and educational reform. The movement aimed to revive the neglected ideals of ancient Aryan civilisation, instill pride in India's cultural past, and restore the nation's glory by confronting both internal weaknesses and external pressures. Members of the Arya Samaj followed its "Ten Principles," the foremost of which stressed the centrality of the Vedas and the importance of understanding their true meaning. The remaining principles urged individuals to lead ethical, virtuous, and disciplined lives.

Followers of the Arya Samaj believed in one Supreme, eternal, omnipotent Creator. Swami Dayanand insisted on devotion to God alone and warned against confusing outward symbols with spiritual truth. The organisation placed strong emphasis on expanding educational opportunities and eliminating illiteracy. Its members were committed to action (*karma*), rejected caste distinctions, and challenged many orthodox customs upheld by conservative Brahmins, promoting instead a rational, egalitarian interpretation of Hinduism. Dayanand's commitment to social reform encompassed women's empowerment, the upliftment of oppressed communities, and the spread of education.

A major objective of the Arya Samaj was to prevent the conversion of Hindus to other faiths and to bring back those who had already converted to Islam or Christianity through the peaceful ritual of *Shuddhi*. Through its wide-ranging programmes, the Arya Samaj undermined the influence of rigid traditionalism and made a deeper impact on national awakening than even the Brahmo Samaj.

In assessing India's cultural heritage, the Arya Samaj stands as a testament to Dayanand's extensive writings and his many-sided personality—combining the qualities of a saint, philosopher, reformer, organiser, scholar, and visionary thinker. His spiritual ideals radiated through the movement he founded. Without doubt, Dayanand's legacy continues to shape human thought and will exert an increasingly significant influence on the religious and cultural history of India and beyond.<sup>8</sup>

Although an ascetic, Dayananda had a sensitive and compassionate disposition that melted at suffering. 'To love God's creation is to love God' - so he taught people. To awaken the people from lethargy, Swami Jaa travelled throughout India, wherever he went, he condemned the caste system, idol worship, child marriage and other harmful customs and traditions. He preached that women should have equal rights with men and emphasized on pure conduct in life. This created a stir among the people.<sup>9</sup>

Over time, various practices and beliefs became absorbed into Hindu society, many of which overshadowed the essence of the original tradition. As a result, the true spirit and grandeur of Hinduism gradually faded. It was Swami Dayanand who restored the authentic Vedic message and re-illuminated the foundation of Hindu thought. His teachings drew back thousands of young Indians who had been influenced by Western culture and were on the verge of embracing Christianity, inspiring them instead to return to the Vedic faith.

Eventually, many Hindus who had converted to other religions wished to rejoin their ancestral tradition, but orthodox Hindu society refused to accept them. Swami Dayanand challenged this exclusion by conducting purification (*shuddhi*) ceremonies to welcome back Christians and Muslims into Hinduism. His work revealed the deep social decline in India, where certain communities were denied education and deliberately kept in ignorance. Women, too, were trapped in oppressive customs such as purdah and widowhood rituals, making progress impossible. Dayanand emphasized that women, like men, should have the freedom to pursue their aspirations. He admired Sita and Savitri not for ritualistic reasons but for their integrity, strength, and virtue. Dayanand denounced untouchability as a grave social evil. He argued, "Untouchability is a dreadful curse. Every human being possesses a soul worthy of love and respect. Anyone who fails to understand this cannot comprehend the true essence of the Vedas."

He firmly believed that social upliftment depended on the spread of education. Every girl, he insisted, must be sent to a Gurukul to study under qualified teachers, and separate Gurukuls should exist for boys and girls. In these institutions, the son of a king and the son of a farmer should be treated equally, sharing the same duties and responsibilities. Gurukuls, according to Dayanand, must be situated away from urban distractions, in peaceful surroundings conducive to learning. Students should be taught the rich cultural heritage of India and introduced to the wisdom of the Vedas.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the British East India Company colonized India, influencing its social-religious, political, and economic aspects. India has long been home to many different cultures, religions, and social customs, all of which are observed differently by different communities. Western academics were often sceptical of these activities, often criticizing Indian traditions and customs and occasionally stepping in when it served their colonial interests. In response, a wide range of groups and movements emerged to protect these religious practices, with the Arya Samaj playing a significant role in this fight. The Arya Samaj had a major

<sup>8</sup> *A Handbook of Arya Samaj*, pp. 62-66.

<sup>9</sup> *A Handbook of Arya Samaj*, pp. 77. & *The Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati*, pp. 244-246, 330.

impact on India's social and political climate throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Notwithstanding resistance from orthodox elements in Hindu culture, it became a significant oppositional force and a reform movement that had a significant influence on Northern India's political and cultural identity. India had a wide variety of religious practices throughout the 1800s. Many other faiths and sects were present in society, including Hinduism, Shaivism, Shakta, Bhagwat, Vaishnavism, and Leftism. These included Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Parsi, and Hindu. Every religion has rituals that are intended to strengthen the group. Travelers from abroad exploited this vulnerability to their advantage. Mutual hostility and divides were created in the name of religion, which also served as a vehicle for the growth of religion.<sup>10</sup> After reading several theological texts from all major faiths, Swami Dayananda not only criticized Hinduism but also argued that some passages in the Bible and the Quran were flawed. In the same way, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism could all use some development. Vedic religion is present in his lectures and debates, as well as in his arguments with Islamic religious authorities. He also educated people about the benefits of Vedic religion, pointing out that it is the source of all religions, free from superstitions and hypocrisy, and based on Karma. Therefore, we should accept Vedic religion by eschewing all other religions, since it releases us from all mantras through Vedic monotheism. A common thread may bind the country together and can be liberated from superstitions that undermine civilization and reduce humanity to a mindless routine. Not only did Swami Ji declare the Vedic religion to be the finest, but it also accomplished success.<sup>11</sup>

The Arya Samaj movement was established in 1875 by the Hindu hermit and social reformer Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883). By eliminating customs and ideas that he perceived as perverting the ancient Vedic heritage, he sought to revitalize and reform Hinduism via his writings and lectures. Dayanand's ideas on improving Indian society during British colonial control are described in *Swaraj Darshan*, which was published in 1882. Swami Dayananda discovered that the Hindu faith was rife with several societal ills, including idolatry, animal sacrifice, pilgrimages, discrimination based on caste, meat consumption, gender, sati customs, priests making offerings at temples, etc. The philosophy and expertise of Swami Dayanand Saraswati may be gleaned from his three published writings, *Satyarth Prakash*, *Veda Bhasya Bhumika*, and *Veda Bhasya*. He served as the editor of the *Arya Patrika* magazine. According to Swami Dayanand, a man should constantly walk the road of morality, equality, and fairness and show respect to his parents, instructors, elders, and visitors.

The Vedic religion is Karma yogi and can guide humanity on the road of progress. departing from the orthodoxy and the pervasive ills of the dominant faiths and sects in that ignorant culture of the time. Motivated to resist the enslavement of Pir, Fakir, and Pundits as Maya, Swami Ji founded the "Shuddhi Movement" to help individuals who had converted to other religions or ignorant groups revert to their original faith.<sup>12</sup> raised awareness while paving the path for national unification. One of the greatest religious figures of the previous century was Maharishi Dayananda. He established the Vedas as the foundation of his activities and declared them to be the wellspring of all Ashar and Aryan thought. He also bases all of his own beliefs on 'desh' and Veda. Rather than merely declaring the Vedas to be a sacred book, he mandated that every Arya read them. When Lala Lajpat Rai speaks about the Shuddhi movement, he says that while it was originally a cleansing movement, the involvement of the Arya Samaj completely transformed its nature into one of reclamation and conversion. A few customs were introduced, such as the requirement that the person—referred to as the "Arya"—live alone and consume only milk for fifteen days. Following this, the individual would publicly announce that they had undergone a homa and declared their conversion. Dayananda Saraswati provided the general public with an explanation of the true meaning of the Vedas in order to spark a popular revolution in Indian civilization based on the Vedas. In reference to the Shuddhi movement, Dayanand argued that Hindus who had been converted to Islam or Christianity may do so through Shuddhi activities and return to their own religion.<sup>13</sup>

Dayanand Saraswati states that if a Brahmin, Vaishya, or anyone from any caste converts to Islam or Christianity without understanding the true nature, beliefs, and impact of Hinduism, and even participates in Muslim or Christian festivals or ceremonies, and later regrets their actions and wishes to return to their original religion, they should be welcomed back by their community. Swami Dayanand aimed to uplift the oppressed and marginalized classes who were often targeted by Muslims and Christians for conversion. He also appeared to reject the significance of the jati system and accepted an invitation from the Mahar and Chamar communities for preaching. Lajpat Rai also asserts that Arya Samaj sought to elevate the status of untouchables to that of touchable.<sup>14</sup> To support his beliefs, Dayanand visited Haridwar on the anniversary of Gurukul Kangari Vidyalaya and delivered a speech on humanitarian values and expressed concerns about Aryavarta's decline in the face of other communities and classes. Dayanand also comments on the speech he made in Karachi, stating that "the cause of the depressed class encompasses the best of religion, humanity, and nationalism."

<sup>10</sup> *Communalism in Punjab: The Arya Samaj Contributions*, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Zavos, "The Arya Samaj and the Antecedents of Hindu Nationalism," *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 30 No. 01 (April 1999), pp. 58-59.

<sup>12</sup> Jordens, *Swami Dayanand Saraswati: His Life and Ideas*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 145.

<sup>25</sup> Mimanshak, *Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan*, Vol. 2, p. 998.

<sup>14</sup> 7 Rai, *Arya Samaj*, pp. 223.

Devkinandan Sharma authored an essay on Dayanand's death and detailed his efforts to abolish the caste system and untouchability. He argues that Dayanand aimed to unite all sections of society and rejected the idea of caste and sub-caste. Devkinandan emphasizes that if the caste structure collapses, untouchability will automatically disappear from society. Dayanand's goal was to strengthen Aryavarta through the establishment of Sanskar-vidhi, the introduction of sandhya, and providing *yagopvita* (sacred thread) for the Aryas. Devkinandan contends that Dayanand sought to unite Aryavarta through these endeavours.<sup>15</sup>

A letter originating from Bombay inquired about the remarriage of Hindu widows and requested Swami Dayanand to prioritize Arya Dharma and advocate for remarriage.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, on November 28, 1874, Swami Dayanand Saraswati visited Bombay and delivered a discourse on Arya Dharma and Hindu remarriage.<sup>17</sup> In a particular instance, the conversion of a widow by a Christian missionary in Rajasthan indicated Swami Dayanand's awareness of widows' status in society. In correspondence from a Brahmin, Dayanand faced criticism from the Brahman community regarding widow-related issues. The Arya Samaj of the United Provinces published a monograph urging followers of Sanatana dharma, which included a section expressing a disapproving stance on widow remarriage, deeming it strictly prohibited. However, this monograph was composed later, and prior letters from Arya Samajists urged Dayanand to address this matter in his speeches.<sup>18</sup>

Another significant societal aspect was the caste system, which was a contentious issue for marginalized communities during the nineteenth century. Social reformists such as Jyotibarao Phule and Savitribai Phule voiced their opposition to the caste system during this time. Individuals from marginalized castes, including Mahar, Mang, Chamar, and Dhor, wrote from Mominpur in the Maharashtra region, seeking permission from Swami Dayanand Saraswati to hear his teachings.<sup>19</sup> They highlighted Dayanand's assertion that Arya dharma rejected the caste system, referencing verses from the Vedas to support this notion. They also mentioned receiving special permission to hear his teachings at a school for Shudras and untouchables. Later, Swami Sahjanand, a senior Arya Samajist, faced exclusion from the Brahman gotra after dining at the house of a sweeper, adhering to the path of Dayanand Saraswati for the advancement of Arya Dharma. Additionally, a senior follower of Arya Samaj, Swami Shradhanand Saraswati, encouraged devotees of Arya Dharma to distance themselves from the shortcomings of Sanatan Dharma to foster the development and preservation of Arya culture in Aryavarta. Madhav Lal of Danapur (Patna, Bihar) wrote to Dayanand Saraswati on April 07, 1878, expressing his desire for the purification of Sanatan Dharma. He also indicated the Hindu Satya-Sabha's interest in participating in the reformation of Sanatan dharma and inquired about the regulations and worship methods of Arya Dharma.<sup>20</sup>

In the introduction to the book 'Satyarth Prakash', Swami Dayananda expresses his belief that anything truthful in any religion deserves acceptance by all, and only the false elements that have infiltrated all religions have been criticized in this book. According to him, the central doctrine of religion encompasses the worship of God through prayer, meditation, and daily Havana, with no room for idol worship, pilgrimages, or a priestly class. Swami Dayananda had a unique interpretation of the Vedas, viewing them as a reservoir of science, action, worship, and knowledge, considering each mantra as a divine memorandum.

The Delhi Darbar, a grand royal assembly organized by Lord Litton in Delhi on January 1, 1877, attracted significant figures and rulers of Indian states, along with representatives of different religions invited to promote societal upliftment through devotion to self-religion, selfculture, and self-language. Upon his arrival in Delhi on December 11, 1876, Maharishi stayed at Anarbagh of Shermal, engaging with notable individuals such as Shri Keshaw, Chandra Sen, Shri Naveen Chandra Roy, and Shri Kanhaiya Lal Akha Dhari, who appreciated Swamiji's views but were hesitant to accept the Vedas as celestial scriptures, leading to an inability to reach consensus. Upon Dayanand's presence at the Delhi Darbar, his popularity drew visitors from Iran and Arabs, talukadars of Awadh, and scholars, but only Maharaja Tukoji Holkar of Indore attended his preaching. Dayanand fervently expressed his thoughts to the Rajas, and although Tukoji Holkar pledged a receptive audience, he was unsuccessful in persuading people to listen, leading to the failure of Dayanand Saraswati's mission. The main objective of Dayanand Saraswati's participation in the Delhi Darbar was the dissemination of Vedic knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Sharma, "Ekta kePoshak Dayanand," Dayanand commemoration, Volume, ed. *Har Bilas Sharda*, Ajmer, 1930, p. 398.

<sup>28</sup> Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 3, part 1, p. 06.

<sup>17</sup> Swami Dayanand Saraswati Jivan Charit, Vol. 1, p. 289.

<sup>18</sup> Clams of the Arya Samaj on the Hindus or An Appeal to the Hindus to Help the Arya Samaj, Arya Pratanidhi Sabha United Provinces, Allahabad, 1915, pp. 14-15.

Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 3, part 1, p.11. This letter was written on July 13, 1875, and it contains nearly eight people's signature viz. Govind Tukaram from Mang Basti, Peth Junagang, Ganu Bani Babaji Chamar, Hari Bi (a lady), Gopal Chamar, MahaduSakaram Mahar, Bhau Sakaram Mang, Raghu V. Bapu Mahar.

Yudhishthir Mimanshak, Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 3, part 1, p. 28n

<sup>14</sup> *Dayanand Saraswati ka Jivan Charit*, Vol. 2, Arya Sahitya Mandal Ltd, Ajmer, Samvat 1990, p. 386.

Both Swamiji and Mahatma aimed to establish a religion transcending any single faith or religious school of thought, steering clear of differences and opposition. They sought to shift the course of Sanatan Dharma towards its true purpose, independent of any incorrect inclinations. Dayananda Saraswati was heavily reliant on the Vedas, in contrast to the spread of Buddhism, leading to Arya Dharma or Sanatan Dharma developing independently in India and other countries according to the era. Swami Dayanand held differing views from Raja Rammohan Roy on Sanatana, disagreeing with Raja Rammohan Roy's role as the founder of a new religion.<sup>22</sup> Dayanand once criticized Raja Rammohan Roy, stating that he acknowledged the unfavorable state of Sanatana dharma and Hindu lives, suggesting that Hinduism's condition could only be improved through the enhancement of Sanatana dharma and Brahmanism. Therefore, he emphasized that only Sanatana dharma and Brahminism are the primary keys for ameliorating the condition of Hindus.<sup>23</sup>

Dayanand Saraswati believes that the worship of idols, water, rivers, and stones by Hindus is the reason for their unfavorable condition, as they have forsaken Vedic rules and shastras. According to Maha Pandit Rahul Sanskrityayan, Dayananda's view differs from the belief that individuals are bound by God and rituals, as he states that true atman is free from such constraints. This perspective suggests that those who fear God and themselves are more fearless. Regardless of the number of people following Buddhism, taking refuge in this religion and Sangha was not influenced by Swami Dayananda's intention. The ideology of "VridhhaSharanamGachhami" combined with the teachings of "Dayananda SharanamGachhami" is not a new concept but is rooted in ancient educational ideology. Dayanand Saraswati strived to connect Arya dharma with the cow, advocating for the protection of cows, establishing movements, writing texts such as Gaukaruna-Nidhi, and raising awareness among the Hindu community. He also emphasized the economic and religious significance of cows by citing Vedic mantras and asserting that cows cannot be killed by the order of God. Dayanand also sought to advance the concept of Aryavarta and urged reliance on Sanatana dharma, Vedic culture, and Sanskrit education for the success and progress of the motherland. Additionally, he aimed to integrate Vedic and Arsha literature into the curriculum of Arya Sabha schools to promote Sanskrit and Vedic education among Hindus.

As per the Vedas, the chants of three immortal entities signify "**Dva Suparna, Samuja, Sakhaya**". Prakriti, Jiva, and God govern human existence as it is essential to well-being. Preserving the vitality and essence of living organisms holds immense significance. Although the Vedas' Richa Shankara refutes the thesis, it is also true that society and humanity have come to embrace Jaganmitya's teachings. Dayanand's message also makes reference to three other forms of God worship Stutui, Prarthana, and Upasana. Regarding the nature or form of worship as saguna and nirguna, he never disputed it. Additionally, he said that Upasana, or meditation, is a technique for realizing God's essence and for developing intelligence and insight. Dayanand explains the distinction between *nirguna* and *sagunastuti* in terms of the *stuti*:

The Sagun Stuti (affirmative definition) is the assertion or recital of attributes predicable of God. The Nirguna Stuti (Negative definition) is the denial of properties with the nature of Godhead. The Sagun Prarthana (positive prayer) is the supplication of God's grace for the obtainment of virtuous qualities. The Nirguna Prarthana (negative prayer) is the asking for God's power in the elimination of vicious qualities. The Sagun Upasana (positive meditation) is the unshaken belief in God's holiness. The Nirguna Upasana (negative meditation) is the total resignation of self to God's justice and providence.<sup>24</sup>

It is possible to adapt ideologies to the times, but occasionally doing so has negative effects on society and pulls people away from worshiping God and the soul. The new Vedanta claims that some defects have been discovered and that these have been eliminated from the worship of God, which is detrimental to humans, by acknowledging the oneness of the creature and the tiger among humans. There aren't many Advaita Vedanta adherents these days. God began to speak about Swara's incarnation. He began binding man in self-bondage by submitting to God's hand. He began referring to himself as God. Worship for God, self-study, austerity, faith, and Satsang began to create a detrimental influence on worship, which is a difficult task in life. Because of the challenges that humanity poses to nature, Jibo has to endure a variety of tragedies and murders, and as a result, man has begun to comprehend the existence of nature. This also represents a difficult shift, as "the spirit of Jaganmitya" and "Kandhato" convey the teachings of the Vedas that Kurvanneveh Karmani "Jijivishechhant salaah" (i.e., one should perform actions for performing one's duty for a hundred years) such as planting trees, accumulating wealth, worshiping God, etc. Conversely, truth promotes an escape-oriented mindset by misrepresenting the world. One who takes satisfaction in feeling constrained by being neutral toward the visible world and believes it to be untrue. By bringing the accomplishment of Abhyudaya and unselfish Shreyas, he collects Dharma.

In human society, view the world as a place of labor and carry out your tasks effectively there, as Geeta Saar YogahKarmasuKaushalam "Kaushalam" (demonstrating proficiency in the job of acts is yoga (Lata)) states. The author of the book Swayam Nivaran is Swami Dayananda. Dhvant Shocker challenged Vedanta in the book Vedanti. The genuine Vedic Taitaism was developed by Swami Ram Krishna. With two fewer steps than

Jaunders, "Mantras and Murtis: Fluidity in Contemporary Arya Samaj and Sanatan Sharma Practice," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Nov. 2011), pp. 56-57.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>24</sup> Dayanand Saraswati, The Belief of Dayanand Saraswati as given in his Satyarth Prakash, p. 09.

Shankaracharya, Swami Dayananda constructs the wall of pure Karmaism while proclaiming the virtues of the Vedic faith and avoiding any form of indolence. In actuality, the Vedic religion is based on the principle of knowing by action and action through knowledge. Dayanand's perspective on yoga is evident in a conversation he had with Henry Steel Olcott. Olcott also writes in her journal about her question to Dayanand about whether yoga is a metaphysical step based on Patanjali's Mahabhashya or whether it is actually genuine. In response, Swami said that yoga is a real science that is founded on knowledge and the "law of nature."<sup>25</sup> Ramanuja was also followed by a number of Vaishnava Samadacharyas, including Madhva, Vallabh, Nimbarka, and others. Commentaries are proponents of many philosophical doctrines such as Anubhashya. The worship of God in a restricted form has been replaced by one who has no shape, or one who is formless, via the practice of sadhana. In numerous incarnations, the formless God has entered human existence. The establishment of Jain and Buddhist idol worship led to people adoring these faiths' idols and becoming bound to their restricted practices, which constrained people's thinking. Jain tradition condemned the practice of murti puja, while Dayanand Saraswati contends that Jain sadhus were the originators of idolatry.<sup>26</sup>

Jain tradition condemned the practice of murti puja, while Dayanand Saraswati contends that Jain sadhus were the originators of idolatry. Dayanand asserts that adherents of Arya Dharma ought to base their ideas on the Vedas, which are divine sayings. Regarding other karma-kandai, Dayanand completely disavows any belief in idols, God's incarnation, shraddha, FGanga's purity, Shivalinga, and Shaligrama's devotion. Swami ji makes the case for the Vedas, saying that they direct our intentions toward wisdom and nature.<sup>27</sup> Dayanand relocated to Banaras, a well-known Shaivism and idolatry hub in northern India, in 1869. He even called the Muslim community's practice of taziadari derogatory and said it amounted to idolatry. Numerous publications reported on the Shastrartha that took place in Banaras during the Raja of Banaras' reign. Murti-puja was the subject of the Banaras debate, and as we all know, idolatry was forbidden in the Arya Samaj resolution. Hence, a well-known Bengali newspaper Tattva Bodhani, wrote about his visit and made the following observation: At this time Swami Dayanand, a Veda knowing pundit, going into Kashi, proclaimed that the Vedas did not enjoin idolatry. Upon this, a ground meeting of the Kashi pundits and pundits from places was held under the auspices of Ruler of Kashi, but not a single pundit could produce authority in support of idol-worship from the Vedas.<sup>28</sup>

It was deadly, in Swami Dayananda Saraswati's opinion, for the integrity and solidarity of the countrymen. They made it clear that Vedic religion is the fundamental tenet of national unity and integrity. Swami Dayananda Saraswati ji attempted to demonstrate the superiority of Vedic religion in his lectures and debates, as well as in his arguments with Islamic religious authorities. He also educated people about the benefits of Vedic religion, pointing out that it is the source of all religions, free from superstitions and hypocrisy, and based on Karma. Therefore, we should accept Vedic religion by eschewing all other religions, since it releases us from all mantras through Vedic monotheism. The country may be bound together by a common thread and can be liberated from superstitions that undermine civilisation and reduce humanity to a mindless routine. Not only did Swami Ji declare the Vedic religion to be the finest, but it also accomplished success. The Vedic religion is Karma yogi and can guide humanity on the road of progress. departing from the orthodoxy and the pervasive ills of the dominant faiths and sects in that ignorant culture of the time. Motivated to resist the enslavement of Pir, Fakir, and Pundits as Maya, Swami Ji founded the "Shuddhi Movement" to help individuals who had converted to other religions or ignorant groups revert to their original faith. raised awareness while paving the path for national unification. One of the greatest religious figures of the previous century was Maharishi Dayananda. He established the Vedas as the foundation of his activities and declared them to be the wellspring of all Ashar and Aryan thought. He also bases all of his own beliefs on 'desh' and Veda. Rather than merely declaring the Vedas to be a book, he mandated that every Arya read them.

Swami Dayananda studied the Bible, the Quran, and other sacred texts. He attempted to establish the superiority of the Hindu religion, or Aryan civilization, over other faiths such as Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and Buddhism. He traveled and preached in northern Indian towns such as Multan, Lahore, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Meerut, and Amritsar in order to achieve this goal. A prominent Sanskrit and Vedic literature scholar, Dayananda also corresponded with Shyamji Krishna Verma by mail. Shyamji Krishna decided to travel to America to pursue his goal of studying Sanskrit. As a result, upon learning of his decision, Dayananda contacted Shyamji Krishna to offer basic education in his own country.

He also advises him to handle the indigenous people with caution when they speak about Sanskrit and the Vedas, and he gives him advice on how to write letters representing the interests of Americans. However, the most significant part of this letter is that Dayanand attempted to inform Shyamji about Padris.<sup>29</sup> Another letter

Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The Only History of Theosophical Society*, The Theosophical Publishing Society, Madras, 1900, p. 215.

Tripathi, "An Evening in Sastrartha," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Vol. 98, (2017), pp. 57-65.

Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 2, part 2, p. 998-999.

<sup>28</sup> Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan p. 72

<sup>29</sup> Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 1, part 1, pp. 209-210.

from the president of the Theosophical Society of America to Dayanand demonstrates Dayanand's and Arya-dharma's popularity. For instance, August Gustam, the New York recording secretary, also wrote to Dayanand and expressed his admiration for him. In this correspondence, he further notes that A. Wilder, H.P. Blavatsky, and others had a strong fascination with Arya Samaj and Aryavarta.<sup>30</sup>

The author of this letter, Henry S. Olcott, begs Dayanand to instruct some students who had little interest in "Finding Christianity." The letter's writer referred to him as a guru and asked for religious guidance.<sup>31</sup> In a separate letter, H.C. Olcott calls for the Theosophical Society to be merged with Arya Samaj, which would be governed by Dayan and Saraswati. Madam Blavatsky also appealed in a letter to Chhedi Lal, an Arya Samajist, for the provision of several significant Swami Ji publications. She also talks about Dayanand Saraswati's Meerut Preach, in which he exhorted his followers to reject anybody who asks to join another society on the grounds that there are rules and regulations between Arya Samaj and other groups. In addition, this letter indicates that Dayanand Saraswati vehemently rejected Dayanand Saraswati's attempts to attract Arya Samajists. Madam Blavatsky also reports in this letter that a number of Arya Samaj members from Bombay and Lahore joined the Theosophical Society. Stickering on Christianity is also mentioned in Henry S. Olcott's previous letter. Many theosophical society adherents were involved in Arya Samaj throughout the fourth decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> On May 21, 1878, Hance, Madam H.C. Olcott wrote to Dayan and Saraswati to request permission to be an Arya Samajist. Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Dharma are currently quite famous outside of India. This message is sent:

Dear Brother, - I will add a few lines to our sister's letter to say I have read its contents, and its several propositions have my unqualified approval. In suggestion that our society should make itself known as a branch of Arya Samaj to Pundit Dayanand's control and myself. I am proud to acknowledge fealty to such an instruction and guide as that wise and holy man. There is much work to be done by us before we can expect very great result. As you say, let us work together in heartily co-operation and we will be able to effect wonders.<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, through the Shuddhi movement, Arya Samaj supported religious conversion in Hinduism. The correspondence between Dayanand Saraswati and other volunteers may contain such examples. For example, Dayanand is informed in a letter from Kamal Nayan Sharma of the Ajmer region that on August 26, 1883, two men from Ajmer named Pandit Bhagram and Sardar Bhagat Singh converted from Christianity to Hinduism.<sup>34</sup> The same writer describes the situation of the Arya Samaj in the Ajmer and Jodhpur regions in another letter. However, the significance of this letter lies in the fact that it offers a case study of a Christian widow's conversion. The woman, Kamal Nayan Sharma, was converted to Christianity by missionaries. Her spouse worked in Ajmer, and they had two kids. She didn't even feel ready to marry a Christian; her source of income was teaching.<sup>35</sup> Information on discrepancies between Pop and Arya Samaj adherents is also available. Dayanand Saraswati received a letter from Ishwaranand Saraswati of Panipat, Karnal area. Ishwaranand first reports a theological argument between them, and then he bases their win on Christian philosophy. In this sense, we were drawn to conversion by another example from Rajasthan. Jodhpur's Pratap Singh was greatly impressed by Christianity and desired to become a convert. However, after learning about it, Arya Samaj members wrote to Pratap Singh and persuaded him to convert to Hinduism.<sup>36</sup>

In his book *Satyarth-Prakash*, Dayanand Saraswati attempted to uphold Arya-dharma (Hindu religion) by writing a chapter on Christianity. He questioned Ibrahim, Yaqub, and Isa and referred to them as idols of ignorance.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, Dayanand requested one of his adherents to transcribe some Bible texts that were against the *purva par* (a) into the Nagri script. We discovered a letter that Dayanand Saraswati sent to Kishan Singh, an Udaipur resident. Swami Dayanand gave Kishan Singh instructions in this letter to promote Arya Dharma and make people aware of it. Additionally, Dayanand sent 1000 copies of the book "Muslim aur Isai mat Khandan," with instructions to distribute it to Brahmins, *thikanas*, and schools. Additionally, he says that such Brahmins go to bazaars and attempt to persuade people. They also participate in *shastrartha* with Christians and Muslims. Dayanand claims that Muslims and Christians downplayed the significance of tirtha, murti, and mandir. Additionally, he stated that adherents of the Vedic religion tradition had to uphold the following nine core principles: *mahatmya* (religious splendours), *vrata* (fasting), *kanthi-tilak*, *sampradayanukul*, *avtar*, *tirtha* (pilgrim), *murti* (idol), mandir (temple), and puran (old literature). He goes

<sup>32</sup> Yudhishthir Mimanshak, Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 3, part 1, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, letter no. 56. 21 May, 1878. There are several letters available which addressed to Harry Chand Chintamani and requested this to took a part with Theosophical Society and renamed it as 'The Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj of India.'

<sup>34</sup> Yudhishthir Mimanshak, Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 3, part 1, p. 896-898.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>36</sup> Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 4, part 2, p. 668.

<sup>37</sup> Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 4, part 2, p. 668.

<sup>38</sup> Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 4, part 2, p. 79.

<sup>39</sup> *Satyarth-Prakash*, p. 746.

on to say that an adherent of Araya Samaj should adopt the resolution of purity and honesty going forward in order to interact with Muslims and Christians in any shastrathita.<sup>38</sup>

Dayanand Saraswati warned his disciples not to associate with Muslims or Christians. In this regard, he addressed a letter to the Raja of Jodhpur, suggesting that the prince be educated. In the letter, Dayanand mentions that the British government was funding Christian missionaries with large sums of money, such as 2,50,000. He also urged the followers of Arya Dharma to contribute to preserving religious values and advised against the appointment of any Muslim or Christian teachers. Should this not be the case, the prince would pick up all the negative habits of Muslims and would be unable to acquire Vedic and Sanatana practices. In this letter, he also recommended that the prince study Sanskrit and Nagri literature, receive his education in both languages, and adhere to Brahmacharya until he is twenty-five years old. He went on to say that the prince should not be exposed to Muslim environments or attire, such as coats, hats, pants, and fashionable leather shoes. This advice was not just for princes. Dayanand Saraswati also lectured to the Rana of Jhalawar, who then issued an order to exclusively promote adherents of Arya Dharma to high positions and to forbid critics of the Vedas from entering his realm.

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<sup>38</sup> Rishsi Dayanand Saraswati ke Patra Aur Vigyapan, Vol. 2, part 2, p. 877-878.

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