

CHAPTER-VIII

CONCLUSION

The object of this chapter is to make a broad assessment of the contributions of Dayanand to the national movement and the socio-religious reformation in India. In the preceding chapters different aspects of his contributions have been discussed in detail and the purpose of this analysis is to sum up in nutshell his notable contributions.

From his very childhood, Dayanand possessed an inquisitive and penetrating mind. As such he questioned the validity of orthodox Hindu ritualism. One momentous incident in his childhood turned Dayanand into a man of action. On the Shivaratri night of 1834, sixteen year old Mool Sankar was asked by his father to worship the family deity, Lord Shiva. At the dead of night a mouse climbed on the image. In surprise, the boy watched the antics of the mouse. He began to doubt that the idol represented Lord Shiva. A turmoil raged inside his mind and he decided to find out the truth. So he went in search of Sadhus in different places. But nowhere his tormented soul could get satisfaction. All explanations offered by religious teachers 'had some inexplicable discrepancy'¹. He saw all-around superstitions, hollow rituals and meaningless shibboleths which corroded the vitals of Hindu society. At last Dayanand found a real guru whose teachings transformed his thinking process. His name was Swamy Virijanand, an apostle of Vedism. He had a critical approach to popular religious beliefs and could satisfy Dayanand's thirst for knowledge². Virijanand's teachings exposed the degraded superstition and venality of popular religious practices and brought to light the purity and nobility of vedic philosophy. This influenced Dayanand's later public career.

Dayanand was essentially a religious and social reformer. To remove centuries of slavery and serfdom which had undermined the very foundations of the ancient

1. K.Narendra: "Hundred Years of the Arya Samaj, Illustrated Weekly of India, Vol.XCVI, April 13,1975, p.5.

2. See C.H.Heimsath: Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, p.115.

Aryan faith and culture, he took to social and religious reform. Dayanand proposed social reform to prepare the ground for political consciousness among the people. "Social customs which were unjust to certain groups in society could impede the development of social institutions for political expression"³. On the other hand Aurobindo preferred political reform.⁴ He saw no utility in reform of social affairs and education until there was political reform in India. Economic development would be possible only when there was self-rule and the people had their own Government. Like Dayanand, Gandhiji also believed in the gradual reformation of the society and did not accept the method of violence to attain the goal of self-rule. He believed that violence would spell the doom of mankind⁵. Like Dayanand, Gandhiji had great faith in morality and truth. Satyagraha which was based on truth, he believed, could revolutionize social ideals⁶. But Gandhiji was not bitterly critical of the priestly class and other social evils like Dayanand. Dayanand not only criticised the priestly class but also criticised foreign faiths like Christianity and Islam⁷. It is true that by his rational criticism of the Bible and the Koran he offended the religious sentiments of the followers of these books, but there was no note of prejudice and malice in the attacks made by Dayanand. He also applied the same rational method of criticism against Hindu Orthodoxy. The main motto of his criticism was to establish truth and reject untruth wherever possible.⁸

Dayanand believed in vedic dharma and gave too much emphasis on vedic norms and values which inhibited him against other religious and cultures. Prof V.P.Varma

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3. See for details A.Appadorai: Indian Political Thinking, p. 22.
 4. Ibid, p. 25.
 5. V.P.Varma: Modern Indian Political Thought, p. 287.
 6. Ibid.
 7. H.D.Griswold: The Religious Quest of India, London, 1923, pp.368 - 74.
 8. See Dayanand Saraswati: Satyarth Prakash, p.4.

has observed, "The extreme Vedicism of Dayanand prevented him from appreciating the truths contained in the writings of Western Social and Political Philosophers"⁹. Aurobindo was of the opinion that the moral regeneration was a dream without political reform. 'All expectation of moral regeneration, which leaves freedom out of count, is a dream. First freedom, then regeneration'¹⁰. But like Dayanand Rabindranath Tagore denounced the idea of getting political freedom without social reformation. He pointed out that nationalists could not "build a political miracle of freedom upon the quicksand of social slavery"¹¹. Swamy Shraddhanand also did not give priority to political freedom. He emphasised the need for the development of human character¹². Like Dayanand he also worked for the removal of untouchability. Gandhiji later on started a gigantic social movement and was of the opinion that Swaraj was meaningless without the removal of the evil of untouchability¹³.

For an orthodox Hindu birth determined a man's caste for life. Dayanand revolted against this undemocratic concept. He advocated the vedic doctrine of Varna-Vyavastha. Dayanand recognised this doctrine as the criterion to determining the social position of the individual. The Varna-Vyavastha recognised the freedom of the individual to choose a particular profession according to one's personal qualities.

So a Brahamin could be demoted to the status of a Sudra and a Sudra could be promoted to the status of a Brahamin according to their standards of attainment

9. V.P.Varma: Modern Indian Political Thought, p. 50.

10. Cited in Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee: Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics, Calcutta, Firma K.L.Mukhopadhyay, 1964, pp.379-380.

11. Rabindranath Tagore: Nationalism, London Macmillan, 1917, p. 123.

12. See Munshi Ram and Ram Dev: The Arya Samaj and its Detractors, p.129.

13. B.Shivarao: India's Freedom Movement, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1972, p.55.

and performance. Though the doctrine was rational in theory its practice was very difficult. Because traditional Hindu society suffused from centuries old historical conservatism and traditionalism and it was difficult to accept the principle of social mobility based on attainments.

Dayanand's another contribution was the cow-protection movement. Although he advocated for cow-protection on the basis of economic and humanitarian grounds, a close study of his book 'Gokarunanidhi' would reveal that he was totally not free from the Hindu religious bias in this regard. He pleaded for the protection of all the animals in order to save the species. The cow-protection included the protection of the bullocks also; He advocated cow protection on the basis of compassion for all animals¹⁴. He argued that protection of cow will provide sufficient milk for the poor at a very cheaper rate¹⁵, and will increase agricultural production. It was a sin, said Dayanand, to kill innocent animals who render service to mankind¹⁶. He suggested cattle census and registration of further additions to the number of the cattle population. Dayanand himself established cow-protection societies. Other cow protection societies were established subsequently by following his example¹⁷. Inspired by his teachings Mahatma Gandhi took up the advocacy of cow protection with great vigour: "Cow slaughter and man slaughter are in my opinion the two sides of the same coin"¹⁸. The principle of cow protection has found its place in the constitution¹⁹.

In order to arouse the social consciousness Dayanand advocated national education based on vedic values. His scheme of study described in his various

14. Dayanand Saraswati: Gokarunanidhi, p.6.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid, p.7.

17. For the impact of these societies, see N.G.Barrier: The Punjab Government and Communal Politics 1870-1908, Journal of Asian Studies, No 3(May 1968), pp.528-529.

18. Young India, 29th January 1925.

19. See Prof. Shri Ram Sharma, "Swami Dayanand's Ceaseless Efforts for Cow-Protection", Jangyan New Delhi, December 1973, p. 36.

works seems to be centered round Sanskrit education. This was probably a reaction against the emphasis on English and Western culture. The British rulers were trying to convince the world that Indians were savages and they had come to India not to fleece it but to civilise, educate and modernise it. In 1823, the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, was impressed by the importance of Sanskrit studies, and thought to start a Sanskrit University in the Capital.²⁰ But Raja Ram Mohan Roy frowned upon the idea of Sanskrit University. He suggested to the Governor-General that Indians should be taught through the medium of English language. Against this background Dayanand wanted to revive the time-honoured Gurukul system of education. English was not given much importance in his scheme of education. He gave greater emphasis to morality and character building. Dayanand did not realise the benefits of English education which the Indians later derived. Through the English education Indians could come in contact with the western world. Dayanand's scheme of education is not suitable to present time as it prescribed so many subjects to be mastered. Anyway it was a bold innovation when the system of education was controlled by the British. Following the pattern of the Gurukul, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath started Gujarat Vidyapith and Shantiniketan respectively.

Dayanand also gained prominence as a vedic revivalist. He wanted to remove the orthodox elements associated with the vedic culture. Dayanand presented a picture of vedic humas in a more rationalistic and scientific manner. For the interpretation of vedic mantras Dayanand followed the ancient tradition of Patanjali, Panini and Yaskacharya. He did not give any interpretation of his own. Sayana, a medieval commentator, was of the view that the vedas were created solely for the Yagna. So he tried to correlate each mantra with some sacrificial ritual. Other medieval commentators followed Sayana. Even the European Indologists

20. K.Narendra: "Hundred Years of the Arya Samaj", The Illustrated Weekly of India, April 13, 1975.

followed Sayana. They tried to interpret according to mythological tradition. Dayanand's rationalistic interpretation of the vedas revived the faith of the people in vedic religion²¹. One may not agree with his interpretation, but has shown us the way to understand the real meaning of the vedas.

Dayanand's vedic revivalism gave rise to religious nationalism. Being influenced by western culture and civilization a new group of Hindus had sprung up in India that genuinely believed in the superiority of everything European and Christian and the inferiority of everything Indian and Hindu. The British Government also fostered this myth. At this critical juncture Dayanand advocated the idea of Swaraj. A careful study of his writings and speeches would reveal his intense desire to free the nation from British imperialism. But he did not actively participate in the struggle for freedom. Perhaps Dayanand realised the limitations of the Indians for an armed revolt. He was aware of the superiority of British organisation and its military strength. But he knew that the dawn of social and religious awareness among the Hindus will ultimately secure political freedom for the Indians from the hands of the British. The Extremist leaders were indirectly influenced by Dayanand's concept of cultural revivalism and radical teachings. Aurobindo Ghosh was considerably influenced by Dayanand's vedism. The Extremist leaders advocated complete freedom for the country and were responsible for the spread of religious nationalism. Dayanand declared that good government was no substitute for self-government. The same sentiment was echoed by Aurobindo in these words, "we of the new school would not pitch our ideal one inch lower than absolute Swaraj - self government as it exists in the United Kingdom"²².

21. See K.C.Vyas: Social Renaissance in India (Bombay, Vora and Co, 1957)p.83.

Also see Maurice Phillips: The Teachings of the Vedas, London, Longmans Green and Co, 1895,p.104.

22. Aurobindo Ghosh: Speeches, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1922, pp.173-174.

Dayanand was convinced that whatever may be the merits of a foreign government, it would not be able to provide real happiness to the people. "A foreign government perfectly free from religious prejudices, impartial towards all - the natives and the foreigners- kind, beneficent and just to natives, like their parents though it may be, can never make the people perfectly happy²³. Dayanand attributed India's mental slavery to her religious and social degeneration under the evil impacts of western civilization and Pauranic orthodoxy.

Swaraj, Swadeshi and other ideas were accepted by the Extremists as their political creed. Dayanand advocated Swadeshi in order to improve the social and economic condition of the country. Later these were used as powerful symbols in India's struggle for freedom. His ideas on Swaraj and Swadeshi served as a basic theoretical frame work for other nationalist leaders.

Thus Dayanand had contributed not only to the social, cultural and spiritual awakening of the Hindus but also to their political upsurge. Rein Court in his book has stated that "there is little doubt today that the great revolt in Bengal in 1905 was largely the indirect result of the Arya Samaj's religious nationalism and Dayanand's organisation formed the first real nucleus of political nationalism in India"²⁴. Valentine Chirol calls Dayanand as one of the earliest apostles of reaction against the West.²⁵ So Dayanand and his Arya Samaj created national consciousness in the Hindu society²⁶. His example was emulated by Shyamji Krishna Varma, Madan Lal Dhingra, Vir Savarkar, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Ajit Singh, Swamy Shradhdhanand and other nationalist leaders.

23. Quoted in Suraj Bhan: Dayanand, His Life and Work, Delhi, 1934 pp 145-146.

24. Rein Court: The Soul of India(London, 1961) p. 236.

25. Valentine Chirol: Indian Unrest, p. 109.

26. See R.N.Agarwala: National Movement and Constitutional Development in India, Metropolitan Book Co, Delhi, 1956, p. 492.

Also see Hans Kohn: A History of Nationalism in the East, London, 1964, pp.62-63.