

Study of the Role of Arya Samaj in Haryana

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Abstract – There were various organizations and leaders which brought notable social and religious reforms in pre-independence era. Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Debendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Jyotirao Govindrao Phule etc. were the great Indian Social reformers. They brought reforms in the education fields also. The Arya Smaj was such an movement started by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. It was propounded in Bombay. It has influenced all over India especially north India. It achieved a resurgence of Vedic esteems blasting religious and social shades of malice going from worshipful admiration, superstition, unbending nature of station and untouchability to polygamy, youngster marriage, abuse of dowagers, custom of Parda, and general imbalance between the genders. In the present paper, an attempt has been made to study of the role of Arya Samaj in Haryana.

Key Words: Social and Religious Reforms, Pre-Independence era and Arya Samaj

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The Arya Samaj founded by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati (1824-43) at Bombay on 7th April, 1875 played a very important role in the history of Haryana. It took up the social issues and struggled against child marriage and subjection of women to unequal status. It propagated inter-caste marriage and remarriage of widows. It gave valuable contribution during national calamities. The leaders of Arya Samaj were pioneers in the field of education. Though founded in Bomby, the Arya Amaj Became very popular in Haryana Which was a part of Punjab in those times, and later spread far and wide in the whole of North India. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati came to Haryana in 1880. He stayed in Rewari for some time to preach against superstition and illiteracy. He also established a branch of Arya Samaj in Rewari and later at Rohtak. Arya Samaj played a great role in removing backwardness in the farming community of Haryana especially the Jats. It also gained wide acceptance from the Jat Community as they were considered as backward by the upper caste Hindus since Arya Samaj criticized caste system. Today we can see the flowering of Arya Samaj Mandirs and educational institutions in almost every town of Haryana.

The Arya Samaj made determined efforts to raise the socio-religious status of agricultural communities, spread of education, removal of untouchability and raising the social status of women. It also launched a crusade against the social evils like child marriage and female infanticide. With beginning of the twentieth century Arya Samaj emerged as a vital force in Haryana for agricultural development. The objective of Arya Samaj was to make this world

noble. The word Arya means a noble human being-one who is thoughtful and charitable, who is good in thoughts and actions-he or she is an Arya. The movement had a great impact on the life and thinking of the people particularly of the Hindus. It was a revivalist movement in form and reformist in content. It drew its inspiration from the Vedas which were regarded as infallible and as a fountain of all knowledge. Thus, Swami Dayanand sought to reform Hindu religion by liberating it from the hold of ignorant priest and gave the call of going back to the Vedas. According to the official view, it was a Hindu reformed church representing the reaction of Hinduism against the Christianity, Western science and Western domination.

At Lahore,a branch of Arya Samaj was established on 24th June, 1877. Later on its branches were established in major towns of Punjab such as Jalandhar, Amritsar, Gujranwala, Layalpur, Ludhiana, Ambala etc. From the 1880s, the Arya Samaj founded new associations and organizations to enlarge its constituency among the Jats and helped them strengthen their identity as a devoted and self-controlled warrior caste, and merely as a powerful country folk. Dayanand Sarswati toured southwest Punjab (i.e. Haryana) in 1879 for the first time when he went to Ambala and Rewari to preach against superstition and illiteracy. Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Lakhpal Rai, Lala Chura Mani , Hira Lal and Chandu Lal became his followers in Haryana. During the 1880s, they intensified their activities among the Jats especially in Hissar, where LalaLajpat Rai practiced law. After

sometime, the message of Arya Samaj spread to other districts-Ambala, Karnal and Gurgaon.

During the 1880s, a branch of the Arya Samaj was established in Rohtak by Rai Sahib Sansar Chand, who succeeded in spreading Arya Samaj in the villages of Sanghi, Maham, Jhajjar, Mahra and Kilo in Rohtak. The cultural links with neighboring Rajasthan and the migration of the Jats from the Bikaner region also contributed to the propagation of the Arya Samaj in the Hissar-Rohtak tracts in the 1890s. The establishment of the Arya Samaj had many effects in the region. It was common for converts to read the Satyarth Prakash, observe Sandhya, participate in Havan and Updesh, sing bhajans and develop an interest in cow protection. Chajju Ram established gau-shalas in Bhiwani and Nawal Singh of Rohtak opened one in Haridwar. As a result of these initiatives, a way was paved for an effective gau-raksha (cow protection) movement in Haryana. The approval of karewa (widow re-marriage) by the Arya Samaj facilitated educated Jats to follow this organization.

The Arya Samaj got split into two in Punjab in 1893. One section was led by Lala Hans Raj and Lala Lajpat Rai retained the control over Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College Lahore, while the other section was under the leadership of Pandit Lekh Ram and Lala Munshi Ram, who was later known as Swami Shraddhanand, formed Punjab Arya Samaj and led Arya pratinidhi Sabha. Lala Lajpat Rai was to play a very important part in popularizing Arya Samaj in the rural areas of Haryana. Chaudhary Matu Ram and his successors were very keen on imparting education and laid a network of schools and colleges both for boys and girls. Arya Samaj played a significant role in removing backwardness in the farming community of Haryana especially the Jats.

The success of Arya Samaj among the Jats was due to Maharishi Dayanand's hostility to the Brahmins. The first Jats to join the Arya Samaj were those of Hisar and Rohtak. One of the first Jat converts to the Arya Samaj was Ramji Lal Hooda. Lala Rajpat Rai called him as the first Jat spokesman of the Arya Samaj. He spread his religion among a large number of members of his community. He organized Jat Sabhas and Mahasabhas for spreading the ideology of Arya Samaj among his fellows. In 1921, he became the President of the Arya Samaj in Hisar and contributed to the development of Shuddhi Sabhas. These associations were meant to bring back those people, who converted to Islam or Christianity long ago, to the Vedic fold. In 1923, he became the President of Shuddhi Sabha in the districts of Hisar and Rohtak. But, in fact, these Sabhas purified many Jat and lower castes even when they were Hindus in order to transform them into dvija or twice-borns.

The Arya Samaj had a great influence on the Jats. They were asked to refrain from consuming alcohol and meat, restrict their expenditure on wedding and other ceremonies, and refrain from singing cheap

songs and watching vulgar pictures during fairs. In the 20th century Arya Samaj became more popular. By the 1920s it spread to almost every town and big village of Haryana. The number of members also increased. It was a great social, religious and educational movement. Arya Samaj laid emphasis on the establishment of educational institutions and removal of the evil of untouchability. The movement created new social consciousness and spread gradually to urban areas of Haryana. It also attracted public attention on its program of anti-cow slaughter.

The Arya Samaj also took part in politics. Most of the leaders of Haryana in pre and post-independent times were ardent followers of the principles of Arya Samaj. This was owing to the inspiration from Swami Dayanand as he was the first social reformer who had made a forceful plea for the political independence of India. "The swarajya was always the best thing", he said; a foreign government could not be beneficial even when it was free from religious bias, race prejudice and was just and sympathetic. He encouraged his followers to come out in the open to form their own government for that was God's dispensation. According to Professor K.C. Yadav, "in a religious garb the statesman Sannyasi gave an open message of an all-out revolt against the British Raj."

The Jats received the Arya Samaj in different ways. They gave up their initial reservations and adapted themselves to a new mode of collective life. Undoubtedly, there were some weak protests against the emerging domination of the Arya Samaj, but these voices gradually died down. The Arya Samaj inspired the Jats through existing beliefs and cultures. This largely accounts for its success as an ideology and a movement. The diffusion of the Arya Samaj teachings had far reaching consequences beyond its direct impact on the community. First, the emerging Jat identity created tension with the Muslims. The existing culture came to an end. Secondly, it alienated colonial officials. The result was a new colonial stereotype which represented the Jats as violent and clannish by nature.

Gradually by the early twentieth century, the Jats entered public life as political actors, moral pundits, school teachers, lawyers, popular scholars and peasant sepoys. With this grew the notion of a homogeneous Jats community. The Arya Samaj played a vital role in the cultural and political mobilization of the Jats and their emergence as an assertive community. Arya Samaj movement also paved the way for upliftment of women through educational opportunities, removal of social evils like smoking, drinking, sati tradition, purdah system etc.

However, Mohinder Singh opines that the Arya Samaj and its impact did not mean the same throughout the British period. In its approach towards caste, education, women and superstition,

it underwent major changes after the World War I, once mass anti-imperialist and social change movements started. The principles of Arya Samaj also became rigid and confining, though it still performed positive role in many areas. However, it got exhausted in the wave of communalism that engulfed North India in the 1940s and 1950s. Today we can witness the strange sight of Arya Samaj followers patronizing the idolatrous practices.

The movement could not influence the orthodox Hindus and remained insignificant in eastern and western India. However, it received wide acceptance in Punjab (especially South-East Punjab) and North-Western provinces. At the time of the death of Swami Dayanand that the movement became more and more popular and also more aggressive. A good number of educational institutions are spread all over Haryana and doing marvelous work in the field of education. In summing up we can say that the Arya Samaj significantly contributed to the development of Haryana in the social, religious and educational fields.

CONCLUSION:

19th century can be considered remarkable in Indian History. Indian culture was saturated with superstitious, out of date customs and partialities. It had, pretty much; wind up plainly fossilized with a disintegrating legacy and with no stone to remain upon. There were emerged various organization aimed to bring social and religious reforms. Arya Samaj was such an organization started by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Arya Samaj achieved tremendous success in Haryana. It gave a new message to the people of this area. The worker of Arya Samaj went from village to village for popularizing Arya Samaj through speeches. It protested the child marriage and was in favour of inter-caste and re-marriage. It became more popular especially among Jats in Haryana. It has brought many reforms in the field of religion and society.

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