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**Swami Dayanand Saraswati's Ideas On Socio-religious Reform Of The Hindu Society**

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**Abstract:** *Swami Dayanand Saraswati is famous as a great scholar of Vedic scriptures, social reformer and founder of Arya Samaj. He was the first person of this era who made a law of compulsory education for all and implemented it by making a revolutionary declaration of equal right to education for all human beings. He is the first Indian who propounded the principle of equal opportunity for all and equality of all human beings in the modern era. A new era in the development of Indian nationalism begins with the religious and social reform movements of the 19th century. At this time society was polluted with evils like Sati Pratha, caste system, child marriage, idol worship, untouchability etc. At this time due to the propaganda being done by Christian missionaries, people's attention was being attracted towards Christianity and they were becoming indifferent towards Hinduism. At this time renaissance was taking place in the country and various reformers made many reforms in the social and religious condition of the country, which encouraged the creation of modern India. Swami Ji made people aware of India's glorious past and inspired the countrymen to rise above their exploited status and move towards the future. Swami Dayanand Saraswati gained more fame as a social reformer than in any other field. Swami Dayanand's first main task towards social reform was to oppose untouchability.*

**Key Words:** Equality, promotion, religion, reformer, liberal, upliftment, untouchability.

Swami Ji believed that the all-round development of any country is not possible in the absence of proper education. Swami Ji stressed the character building of the youth and taught them the lesson of true unbiased fearlessness. Swami Ji used to emphasize on the upliftment of the entire human race in his social views, he also supported the Vedic Ashram system. Swami Dayanand considered education important in the context of the unity of the country and propounded the fact that in order to bind the country in the thread of unity, it is necessary to have the prevalence of the Hindi language in the entire country. Swami Dayanand Saraswati was in favour of compulsory education. He emphasised adopting such an education system that is completely national and which creates such citizens who have a sense of duty and responsibility towards society. Swami Dayanand was not only a religious reformer, he also felt the political plight of India's subjugation. Dayanand was the first to raise his voice that foreign rule should be ended in India and that self-rule should be established. According to Swami Dayanand, Vedas are the only proof to know the truth. Whatever is according to the Vedas is true and whatever is against the Vedas is false. According to him, there cannot be many religions, because God is one, so religion is also one. Swami Dayanand believed in such a religion, which is omnipresent and whose principles are accepted by all human beings as truth. Swami Dayanand gave a liberal interpretation of religion and emphasized one God.

The 19th century has the distinction of being the Renaissance period of India. In this century, many saints, social reformers and thinkers were born in India and they gave a new direction to Indian society. In this period when there was great despair in Indian society, evil practices like casteism, untouchability, child marriage were continuously hollowing out Hinduism, and a great social reformer emerged. He created new consciousness and awakening among people of every section of society. The name of one such great soul is Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Swami ji made the countrymen aware of the glorious past of India and inspired them to rise above their exploited status and move towards the future. Swami ji not only presented the greatness of Indian culture and Vedas, but understanding the need for Hindu revivalism, he also introduced the countrymen to the dangerous intentions of the British rulers and warned them that if they came under the influence of British rule, the decline of their glorious history and culture would become inevitable. Swami Dayanand was the first Indian to propound the principle of equal opportunity and equality of all human beings in the modern era. A new era in the development of Indian nationalism begins with the religious and social reform movements of the 19th century. At this time, society was polluted by evils like Sati Pratha, the caste system, the child marriage system, idol worship and untouchability. Religion was also becoming narrow due to various ostentation. At this time, due to the propaganda being done by Christian missionaries, people's attention was being attracted towards Christianity and they were becoming indifferent towards Hinduism. At this time, renaissance was taking place in the country and various reformers made many reforms in the social and religious condition of the country,



which promoted the creation of modern India.

**Social Views of Swami Dayanand-** Swami Dayanand Saraswati got as much fame as he got in no other field as he did as a social reformer. Swami ji believed in serving the entire human race and the entire society. He said that as long as evils and superstitions prevail in Indian society, political awakening and national integration in India is not possible. Swami ji presented a plan for social reform while presenting serious views on social problems. The description of the social views of Swami Dayanand Saraswati is as follows-

**Opposition to untouchability-** Swami Dayanand's first major work towards social reform was to oppose untouchability. He was one of the early thinkers who raised a voice against the stigma of unhappiness in society. He was against any tradition in the society that prevented the untouchables from reaching a higher social status. Swami ji was of the opinion that untouchability has not been given any recognition in the Vedas. He used to say that if we promote the Hindu caste, then we will have to wash away the stigma of untouchability. Swami ji considered untouchability an inhuman act and considered it the first duty of every Arya Samaj to work against it. Swami ji also harshly criticized the scriptures of Hinduism for depriving people of education and knowledge of Vedas due to untouchability. Support for improving the status of women

Swami ji felt that today women in Hindu society do not get the appropriate place which they had in ancient times. He was very sad to see the pitiable condition of women in the 19th century. Swami Ji started the following efforts to improve the condition of women. Swami Ji supported the prohibition of child marriage. He was of the opinion that it is necessary to fix the age of boys and girls for marriage. To choose a wise life partner and to have successful and healthy children, he was of the opinion that at the time of marriage, the age of the boy should be at least 25 years and the age of the girl should be at least 16 years. Arya Samaj played an important role in giving practical form to such social ideas of Swami Dayanand Saraswati. As a result of the move of Arya Samaji Har Bilas Sharda of Ajmer, Sharda Act was passed, in which child marriage was legally banned. Har Bilas Sharda was an Arya Samaji, his ideas were inspired by the ideas of Swami Dayanand. Swami Ji considered lack of education responsible for the pitiable condition of women. Swami Ji was of the opinion that women are deprived of education, so they cannot develop themselves. Till the time women are not educated, the country cannot develop in any way, because we deprive half of the society of their rights. Swami Ji opposed the widespread movement in Hindu society. He considered the tradition of purdah to be against Hindu culture. He was of the opinion that until women are not freed from the tradition of purdah, progress cannot be expected in the country. Swami ji strongly opposed the tradition of Sati and considered it a cruel inhuman tradition. He was of the opinion that after the death of the husband, a woman staying alive with her husband's funeral pyre cannot be called a religious and social act in any way. Swami ji said that the system of remarriage of young widows is according to the scriptures and the laws of creation. Swami ji was of the opinion that the nation which does not respect women, moves towards destruction. Opposition to the caste system

In the time of Swami Dayanand, the gods had to live in an environment of humiliation and oppression in every sphere of life.

They were not accepted as independent beings or personalities in the society, they were considered only, they were not given entry in temples, nor were they considered worthy of studying the Vedas. Swami ji called it a hypocritical trap of the Pandits and Brahmins. He said that just as God has provided all natural things to every human being equally, similarly the Vedas are also revealed to everyone. Swami Ji raised his voice against the birth based caste system and presented a ray of hope for the lower class or modern class. The form of caste system prevalent in the present times is not mentioned anywhere in the ancient society. Swami Dayanand presented the ideal of equality among humans and said that no one is untouchable by birth. Opposition to idol worship Swami Ji has opposed idol worship, he has considered idol worship to be against the Vedas. Where is idol worship by Dayanand, there is no authentic and logical basis for it in the Vedas. Swami Ji was of the opinion that the idol is of physical form in terms of its size, construction elements, decoration etc. and it is impossible to achieve spiritual concentration from it. The concept of God's life being in the idol has been told. Religious ignorance increases due to idol worship. The devotee surrenders his consciousness to the idol and his intellect becomes dull. Worshipping the idol of God divides it and gives birth to brokers in the form of priests who use the dividend money from the devotees in profitable works. Views regarding education

Swami ji believed that the all-round development of any country is not possible in the absence of education. Swami ji wanted to reform the society, and with the grace of a scholar, he thought it appropriate to eliminate the cause of widespread evils in the society. There were bad things like hypocrisy and idol worship in the society, the reason for all this was superstition, which was bringing awakening in the society due to ignorance caused by illiteracy. To eliminate illiteracy, it is necessary to spread education, so that the Hindu society can get freedom from the darkness of ignorance. Swami ji did not consider education to be limited only to the school level, but according to him education builds the body, develops the senses and





develops intellectual powers. Swami ji considered Western education and the education system dangerous for Indians. He was of the opinion that the education of Indians should be limited to the school level only.

Gurukul system is the best education system for upliftment and he supported and promoted the same. While staying in Gurukul, the student should have two main duties - to follow complete celibacy and to acquire knowledge of the whole world. Swami ji has emphasized on compulsory education. He said that the mother's contribution is the biggest in the first five years of a child's life. The mother should teach the child to pronounce correctly, and after that, the child goes to school where he stays till the age of twenty-five after getting an education. Swami Dayanand emphasized that till the time men and women of every class are fully educated, the progress of the country cannot be easy. Education is the key to progress. Swami Dayanand Saraswati was in favour of compulsory education. Dayanand emphasized on adopting such an education system which is completely national and which prepares such citizens who have a sense of duty and responsibility towards the society. Swami Dayanand strongly supported the education and rights of women. At that time, due to illiteracy and ignorance in the society, women were considered inferior to men and their slaves. Regarding women, it is said in the Vedas that where women are worshipped, Gods reside there and now women were facing a painful plight in India. Arya Samaj started the work of opening girl schools and spreading women education, this is still going on. Arya Samaj started a strong movement against child marriage and dowry system with the aim of giving women a proper place in the society.

**Support of Vedic values and Ashram system-** Following the ancient Indian political philosophy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati supported the Ashram system. In this tradition, considering the age of a person to be hundred years, life was divided into four parts, Brahmacharya Ashram, Grihastha Ashram, Vanaprastha Ashram and Sanyas Ashram. According to Swami Ji, in the first period of the Vedic Ashram system, in Brahmacharya Ashram, children will be taught religious character building and their physical and mental development will be done. In Grihastha Ashram, he will live in the family, produce children, raise children and fulfill family responsibilities. In Vanaprastha Ashram, staying away from worldly pleasures, a person will chant the name of God with a concentrated mind and will remain absorbed in Brahma Sadhana. In Sanyas Ashram, he will renounce all kinds of attachments and take sanyaas to lead a life based only on education. This is the true path to attain salvation, so we should adopt it in our lives. According to Swami Dayanand Saraswati, if we make Vedic values and ideals the basis of social life, then we can build a cultured and civilized society. But this does not mean that his outlook was narrow and narrow. He also praised the qualities of western culture, he said that we should accept the qualities and goodness that are in western society. Emphasis on character building Swami ji was well aware of the fact that a good nation cannot be built without good character. That is why he laid great emphasis on the upliftment of the moral character of the citizens. For character building of the citizens and their moral and spiritual upliftment, Swami ji founded an organization called Arya Samaj. Swami ji was of the opinion that a person cannot be considered a Brahmin or a Shudra only because he is born in a Brahmin or Shudra family. If the deeds of a Brahmin are immoral and he is immoral, then he has no right to remain a Brahmin. If the deeds of a Shudra are good and he has knowledge of the Vedas, his character is good, then he will be entitled to get a high position. Swami ji was of the opinion that one cannot become a Sanyasi or a Brahmin just by wearing saffron clothes.

Swami Dayanand emphasized on the upliftment of the entire human race in his social thoughts. He was not only a Hindu social and religious guru, but he was also a world guru. His goal was not only the development of Hindus, but the development of the people of the entire world, that is, the development of the human race. In his social philosophy, he established the concept of freedom of human to develop and acquire resources according to his wish. Swami ji was of the opinion that every person has the full right to develop and progress like himself, but he should not cause trouble to others. The concept of Sarvajana Hitaya was the basis of his social thinking.

**Shuddhi movement-** Since the days of Muslim rule, Hindus were forcibly converted. After the British came to power, the Christian priests, along with showing sympathy and love, resorted to temptation and started converting Hindus to Christianity. Apart from casteism, people of lower castes were suffering from many other evils and customs born out of ignorance. They considered religious conversion to be a good way to redeem themselves. It was natural for Swami Dayanand, the protector of Arya Dharma, to pay attention to this. Swamiji realized that due to fear and greed for money, lakhs of Hindus had adopted Islam or Christianity. While this was causing the decline of Hinduism, the number of followers of Islam and Christianity was constantly increasing. The preachers of both the religions took advantage of the ignorance of the Hindus and incited them to join their religion. Swamiji, through the Shuddhi movement, had put an end to this unfair practice of both these religions.

While he opposed the religious conversion, he also worked to bring back those who had left Hinduism. The most



dangerous thing in this regard in Hindu society was that while the followers of other religions happily accepted Hindus in their society, the person who converted from another religion to Hinduism remained outcast from the society. Keeping all these things in mind, Swami Dayanand reorganized the Hindu community and started the Shuddhi movement. Swami ji purified those Hindus who had converted to Christianity or Islam through Vedic mantras and havan and introduced them into the society by teaching Hinduism. Swami ji described the Shuddhi movement as a new form of the religious tradition of ancient India.

**Opposition to social evils and superstitions-** Swami Dayanand Saraswati in his thoughts strongly refuted various social evils and superstitions prevalent in the society. In the 19th century, there were many evils and superstitions in India, due to which Indian society was going towards decline. While Swami ji opposed idol worship, he also opposed caste system, untouchability, child marriage, Sati system, polygamy, mismatched marriage, purdah system etc. He also stressed on women education, considered cow slaughter a crime and supported the restoration of Vedic traditions by leaving Hinduism through Shuddhi movement. In this way, Swami ji strongly attacked the evils and superstitions prevailing in the society.

**Establishment of Vedic social system-** Swami Dayanand supported the establishment of such an ideal social system which is based on Vedic moral values. He was of the opinion that only a person based on moral values can establish an ideal system. For this, he emphasized on the rules of Vedic tradition. According to Vedic tradition, while following celibacy life, people will follow good conduct, will try to follow truth, loyalty, non-violence, sensory restraint, physical and mental purity, devotion to God and will keep the body, mind and soul good. By doing this, a person will be able to support truth and justice in social life and will be able to oppose untruth and injustice.

**Swami Dayanand's religious views-** Swami Dayanand Saraswati was basically a religious thinker. Swami Dayanand Saraswati was a monk who wrote a new chapter of religion by setting aside religious conduct and ideology. Known as an ascetic and a great thinker, Swami Ji described the principles of karma, reincarnation, celibacy and renunciation as the four pillars of his philosophy. Along with the establishment of Arya Samaj, Swami Ji re-established the lost Vedic traditions of India and established Hinduism in the world. Whatever political, social, economic and cultural views he presented in his various writings and books, their basis was his religious thinking. Swami Ji's main religious views are as follows:

**Reinstatement of the Vedas-** Swami Ji had full faith in the Vedas, he considered the Vedas as a means of spiritual progress. According to Swami Ji, the Vedas are the only such texts whose knowledge has been given by God, that is, the Vedas are divine. If Indians behave according to the Vedas, then their inferiority complex can end. According to Swami Ji, the Vedas do not only talk about religion, the Vedic method described in them is completely scientific. Both spiritual and physical study methods are present in them. Swami ji not only re-established the Vedas, which were the center of attraction of Hindu society after thousands of years, but also interpreted them according to the universally accepted religion. Swami ji's re-establishment of the Vedas can be considered a revolutionary event in Indian history, after which a new consciousness was infused in the Hindu society. Belief in the existence of God, soul and nature Swami ji accepted the three elements of God, soul and nature as eternal truth. He believed that God is present in the entire universe. God has created the universe, by creating the universe God uses his natural creative power.

**Rational interpretation of religion-** Swami Dayanand has considered religion as Vedas in his religious views. According to Swami ji, the only basis of religion is truth and Vedas are written by God, hence Vedas are the true book. According to Swami ji, the work that God has commanded man to do in the Vedas is religion and the work that Vedas do not command is adharma. Swami Ji considered Vedas as the basis of religion, yet religious fanaticism is not seen in his thoughts. The main reason for this was that Swami Ji interpreted Vedas and the religion based on them in a logical and mature way.

**Support of universal religion-** Swami Dayanand Saraswati supported universal religion in his religious views. He did not lay the foundation of any other new faith to remove the evils in Hinduism. He encouraged the idea of a universal religion for the welfare of mankind. His universal religion was a religion that was equally acceptable in all three periods. Which was true and was accepted by all without any discrimination and philanthropy and in which emphasis was laid on following morality.

**Belief in monotheism-** Swami Ji has laid special emphasis on monotheism under his religious views. Dayanand Saraswati believed in monotheism instead of polytheism, he believed that even though the names of God are infinite, but God is basically one. He believed that complete faith in God can be developed by living a holy life. According to Swami Ji, the three elements of this world are God, soul and nature, these three are eternal and infinite, these three are truth, they are present at all times. He did not consider God to be the embodiment of the devotional path of many gods and goddesses of Hindus. God in the form of Brahma has many names, of which Om is the best, he is immortal. Swami Ji had full faith in monotheism.





**Establishment of Arya Samaj-** Swami Dayanand is world famous as a great scholar of Vedic scriptures, social reformer and founder of Arya Samaj. Swami Ji wanted to establish such a society which could propagate true religion. To fulfill this objective, he laid the foundation of Arya Samaj. The main objective of Arya Samaj was to propagate true knowledge. Vedic Samhita was translated into Hindi to propagate the teachings of Vedas among the general public. Arya Samaj spread the work of education in all sections. Arya Samaj was a pioneer in the field of education and its extensive educational work was the most important contribution to national life.

**Composition of Satyarth Prakash-** After the establishment of Arya Samaj, Swami ji published Satyarth Prakash after studying the religious texts and teachings of many religions. The main objective of this book was to accept the truth and abandon the untruth. It is not possible to gain true knowledge without the study of the Vedas. In Satyarth Prakash, the basic philosophical principles related to life have been explained in such a simple way that even an ordinary educated person can become a philosopher by reading it. Swami ji described Satyarth Prakash as the essence of all religions.

**Criticism of idol worship-** Swami ji strongly opposed idol worship, he considered idol worship to be against the Vedas. Swami Dayanand Saraswati believed in the Vedas and in the Vedas, more importance has been given to devotion than idol worship, so Dayanand Saraswati was against idol worship, he believed that idol worship is not a religious act but it is a superstition. During his religious tours, Swamiji defeated the supporters of idol worship in the scriptures and that priest became a disciple of Swamiji by immersing the idols in the Ganges. Swamiji was of the opinion that idol worship increases religious ignorance.

This creates middlemen in the form of priests between God and devotees who use the money earned from devotees in immoral activities. Swami Dayanand was of the opinion that instead of bowing our heads in front of idols, we should bow our heads and respect our parents, gurus and guests.

**Inclusion of women and Dalits in Vedic studies-** Swami Dayanand Saraswati believed that nowhere in the Vedas is it written that women and Shudras cannot do Vedic worship or study. Therefore, women and Shudras also have as much right to Vedic studies as the priest class.

**Views regarding politics-** Swamiji considered religion and politics to be interrelated. He was of the opinion that there can be no true politics without religion and politics without religion is like poison which kills the soul of the state. Swami ji was of the opinion that those thinkers who are presenting the idea that religion and politics are two different subjects, they are cheating the state.

They accept the control of religion on the state, they consider politics to be subordinate to religion. Swami ji was of the opinion that the entry of religion and spirituality in politics makes it sacred. Out of fear of God, a religious person does not do any such work which tarnishes the image of politics. Swami Dayanand criticized the idea of the West which considers politics and religion or morality to be different.

After studying the above social and religious philosophy of Swami Dayanand, we come to the conclusion that Swami ji was not only a social reformer, he was not only a religious thinker, his political outlook was also very broad. He was a supporter of the eternal power of God. Swami Dayanand soon understood the political situation of India's subjugation. Foreign rule should end and self-rule should be established in India.

Swami Dayanand was the first to raise this voice. He also propounded the principle that good governance can never replace self-rule. Swami Dayanand Saraswati has an invaluable contribution in Indian history because on one hand he tried to organize the society by criticizing the religious evils prevailing in other countries, on the other hand he protected his culture from foreign religions or western cultural influence and developed the spirit of nationalism in India. Swami ji opposed untouchability and said that it was against the Vedas. Due to his faith in the Vedas, he gave the slogan of return to the Vedas. Swami ji also included women and Dalits in Vedic studies. According to Swami Dayanand Saraswati, only education can uplift man and society. He said that education should be paramount.

Swami Dayanand strongly opposed the caste system and also opposed idol worship. Swami Dayanand wanted the upliftment of the entire human race, so he emphasized on the Shuddhi movement. He emphasized on character building and supported the Vedic Ashram system. Swami Dayanand emphasized on truth and fearlessness and opposed social evils and superstitions. He had full faith in the Vedas and he Expressed complete faith in the existence of God, soul and nature. Swami Dayanand believed in monotheism. Swami Dayanand gave a liberal interpretation of religion and supported universal religion. Swami ji strongly refuted the concept of incarnation prevalent in all religions including Hinduism.

Swami ji established Arya Samaj with the aim of propagating Vedic knowledge and also published a great book



called Satyarth Prakash. Swami ji established Arya Samaj to give concrete form to his ideas and gave full support to the ancient ashram system.

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