

Maharishi Dayananda Saraswati

A Pioneer Messenger of Absolute Revolution

Birth and Childhood - Maharishi Dayananda was born in a traditional northern Brahmana family at village Tankārā in Maurvi state now the Rajkot a district of Gujarat on **FALGUNA KRISHNA DASHAMI, MOOLA NAKSHATRA, SATURDAY, VIKRAMA SAMVAT 1881 (12 February, 1825)**. His father's name was Shri Karsan ji Lal ji Tiwari. He was the Revenue Collector in Tankārā. His mother's name was Amrta Ben. He was named as Mool Shankar but he was lovingly called as Mool ji. His another name was Dayā Rāma. At the age of five his education began at his home. His upanayana ceremony was performed at the age of eight. At the age of 14, Mool Shankar observed the fast of Śiva Ratri at the instance of his father. He went to the Śiva temple in the village with his father to have a glimpse of Lord Śiva. In the later half of the night all others slept while the child Mool Shankar kept himself awake by sprinkling water on his eyes with the desire to have glimpses of Lord Śiva. Suddenly, an event took place: Some rats started mischief on the Śivalinga and started nibbling the eatables that were offered in worship at the Sivalinga. Mool Shankar immediately woke up his father to enquire whether it was the real Siva about whom he had been speaking so highly. "He is unable to protect even himself from the rats, then how can he protect the world?" At the outset his father became angry but later calmed down and told the child that it was his idol, the real Siva is not visible in the Kaliyuga. The child was not satisfied and took his meals after returning home in the night itself. This incident created turmoil in his mind and his faith in the idol worship was shattered for ever. When he was 15, his sister died. All the members of his family were weeping but there was not a single tear in the eyes of Mool Shankar. After three years his uncle died. Swami Dayananda has decribed this incident in his own words as follows-"My uncle called me when he was dying. When he saw me near him, tears fell from his eyes. I also started weeping and my eyes were swollen. I had never wept so bitterly before this. A feeling came in my mind that I shall also die like my uncle, as this feeling became strong, I started asking my friends and learned people as to the way of becoming immortal. When they suggested to me to practise yoga, an idea came in my mind to leave the house."

Renunciation of Home - These three incidents created a feeling of detachment in Mool Shankar. He kept on pondering upon the way to find the real Siva and attain immortality. Sensing the feeling of detachment in Mool Shankar, when his father thought of tying him in the nuptial knot, he left home in 1846 and started wandering in the garb of brahmacāri naming himself as 'Suddha chaitanya (pure consciousness)." One day, in a fair of village Sidhapura, his father caught hold of him and captivated him in his house. However, finding an opportunity he again ran away and wandered in search of yogis in monasteries, temples, mountains, caves, forests and parks facing tremendous amount of discomforts.

Asceticism and Practice of Yoga - In 1847, he was initiated into asceticism by Swami Pūrṇānanda Sarasvati and he became "Swami Dayananda Sarasvati." Swami Purṇanand also introduced him to Swami Virajānanda. One day he met with two Yogis-Jvālāpurī and Sivānanda Giri who taught him how to practise Yoga. Swami ji, has written - "Mujhe ina sādhuon ne nihāla kara diya" (these saints benefited me beyond limit.)" Thus by 1855, Swami jī, while practising Yoga, visited every nook and corner of the country and surveyed the condition of the countrymen.

Participation in the First War of Independence - In 1855, he went to the fair of Kumbha in Haradvāra. From there he went to those places in the northern India where the seeds of freedom struggle were being sown. In 1856 he went to Kānpur, the city of Nānā Sāhib. This time he came in contact with Swami Virajānanda Dandi, who was actively participating in the freedom struggle. In 1857, when this struggle fizzled out, Swami Dayananda went to some unknown destination. From

1857 to 1860, nothing is mentioned of him anywhere. Swami ji himself for unspecified reasons has not mentioned anything about this period even in his autobiography.

In the Service of Guru - From 14 November 1860 to April 1863, Swami ji studied scriptures in Mathurā in the close proximity of Guru Virajānanda. On completion of his studies when he went to his Guru with a 'clove' to offer as daksinā, Swami Virajānada told him -"The world is sleeping in the slumber of ignorance. Wake it up! Make the Sun of the Veda resplendent again and thus make the world happy." This is the greatest dakṣinā for me." Dayānand gladly accepted the direction of the preceptor and devoted rest of his life in the propagation of the Vedas and upliftment of the country.

Hypocrisy Destroying Flag - In 1867 he hoisted, in the Kumbha fair at Haradvāra, the hypocrisy-destroying flag. This event marked the beginning of the forthcoming revolutionary movement launched by Swami ji for the new awakening and reforms in India. In the same year Guru Virajānanda ji died. This greatly hurt Swami ji. He launched a historical debate on religions at Kāshi in 1869. In 1872 he went to Calcutta and came in contact with Babu Keśava Candra Sen and other went to his Guru leaders of Brahma Samaj.

Foundation of Arya Samaj - On April 10, 1875, (5th day of bright half of chaitra month in the Vikrama Era 1932), he founded the Arya Samaj at Mumbai and formulated 28 rules. In June 1875, the Satyārtha Prakāśa was published from Vārāṇasi. On June 24, 1877 the Arya Samaj of Lahora was founded. It was here that the rules of the Arya Samaj were modified and ten rules and sub-rules of Arya Samaj were formulated. Swami ji formed the Paropakāriṇi Sabha (Council for the welfare of others) on February 26, 1883.

Administering of Poison - Swami ji was poisoned many a times, but he survived by vomiting out the poison through the process of Yoga. In the last, on Sept. 29, 1883 his cook gave him poison along with powdered glass mixed in milk at the time when he was retiring to bed. Swami ji slept after having taken the milk. While he was asleep, the poison spread in whole of his body. The poison could have been remedied, but this time it was a deep conspiracy. The physician Dr. Ali Mardāna who attended on Swami ji also became a party to the conspiracy. The physician gave him the substance known as kelomala-26 grains in quantity whereas the normal dose of this substance is 3-4 grains. On being asked, he said that Swami ji was hale and hearty and the small quantity could not have an effect on him. This aggravated the malady of Swami ji. Thus the improper treatment added fuel to the fire.

Liberation - The poison was oozing out of the whole body. On the day of Amāvasyā of Kārtika, Tuesday, Vikram Era 1940, accordingly on 30th October 1883 on the day of Dipāvali, Swami ji sent for a barber and got his hair cut. At 4'O clock in the after moon he asked to give two shawls and Rs. 200 to Pt. Bhimasena and Ātmānanda. Sitting on his bed, he talked to the people present there and at 5.30 ordered all the doors to be opened. He asked his followers to stand towards his back. He then enquired about the date, pakṣa and month. Pandyā Mohan Lal Viśnu Lal informed that, it was Amāvasyā of Kārtika krsna pakṣa, Tuesday of Vikram Era 1940. Hearing this, Swami ji looked towards the ceiling and window, and then recited the Veda mantras and offered prayer in Sanskrit to the God. Chanting the Gāyatri mantra he silently went into samādhi. Then he opened his eyes and said, "O! Gracious, Almighty God! Your desire is this. Let your desire be fulfilled. Oh! you have acted wonderfully." Having uttered these words, he pronounced 'Om' and let his prānas go out through the divine hole (brahma-randhra). In the last moments of Swami ji, Gurudatta, an athiest was also beside him. When he saw this yogi gladly embracing death, he became believer of God. The last rites of Swami ji were performed in Ajmer (Rajasthan). After the last rites, his bones and the ashes were buried in a garden of the king of Sāhapurā in Ajmer.

Contributions of Maharishi Dayananda - The contributions of Maharishi Dayananda to the country can be truly evaluated only by becoming aware of the contemporary political, cultural, social, economic and religious background prevailing at the time.

Political Condition - When Swami Dayananda stepped into the field of his action, the nation was slave. The slavery of hundreds of years had shattered the self-respect of the country. The economic conditions were still more appalling. Neither was there sufficient food to eat nor sufficient clothes to wear nor houses to live. The country had to face consecutive famines and epidemics as a result of which lakhs of people had fallen prey to death.

Cultural Condition - Due to the foreign conspiracy, the Indian culture was being defiled. The education of the Veda, the foundation of the Indian culture, was lost in oblivion. The Englishmen had indulged into the wishful propaganda of declaring the Vedas as the songs of shepherds. The profiles of the great personages, such as, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva etc. were stained by finding faults with their characters. In such a condition, the Indian youths were left with no alternative but to change their religion.

Social Condition - The society was divided on account of the practice of untouchability. A large group of people were humiliated by branding them as 'untouchables'. The women had no right to education. They were tortured in the society. The child-marriage was in vogue. The widows were not allowed to re-marry. That is why, their life was even worse than that of animals.

Religious Condition - Several spurious and in genuine books had taken the place of Vedas, the base of Dharma. Instead of worshipping God, people had arbitrarily started worshipping several gods and goddesses. In the name of religion, the poor girls were forced to become devadāsī (maids of God) and the religious places had become the dens of corruption. The untouchables were not allowed to go there. The animals were sacrificed in temples and liquor and goats were offered on the idols of arbitrarily conceived gods and goddesses. This tradition is still perpetuating. It is not possible here to give full details of the corruption rampant in the name of religion. It can be guessed by the simple statement that there was no sin which was not done in the name of religion. Having born at such a time, Maharishi Dayananda himself saw the condition of the country by touring all around. Relinquishing the pleasure of the meditation acquired through practice of Yoga, and the desire of liberation he devoted himself to the cause of the upliftment of the country. He started highlighting these problems very boldly in his speeches and writings. According to Swami Dayananda the cause of political slavery was the social downfall and the cause of social downfall was the elopement of the Vedic dharma. Thus, according to Swami ji, the revival of the Vedic religion was related to social and political upliftment. The social reforms would come by the revival of the Vedic religion and this would pave the way for political freedom. That is why he strived hard simultaneously for the religious and social reforms and political freedom.

Religious Reforms – Swami ji did not initiate any new religion. He stressed on what had been said in the Vedas. He eradicated the blind faith and rigid practices. In the Vedas, God has been stated as omnipresent, unborn, without having any beginning or end. In chapter 32 of the Yajurveda, it has been said, "**ne tasya pratimāsti**", i.e. no idol similar to God can be made, He is imbedded in every particle and He has no form. Therefore, instead of worshipping the idol, he laid the stress on worshipping the only God. Criticising all the schools of religions, he established the importance of the Vedic religion. He protested against the evil practices of animal-sacrifice, devdāsīs (Maids of God) indecency etc., all in the name of religion.

Social Reforms - Swami ji brought several social reforms e.g. he protested against the practice of child marriage; advocated for the widow-marriage; eradicated untouchability; established equality between men and women; protested against the caste system; supported the theory of four classes viz. Brahmaṇa, Ksatriya, Vaiśya and Sūdra on the basis of their aptitude, deeds and nature. According to him the class of a man is changed with the change in the aptitude and avocation. If a Šūdra becomes scholar by getting education, then he is a Brahmaṇa and conversely, an illiterate Brāhmaṇa is a Šūdra. He gave a revolutionary plan to purify and bring back to the Hindu fold those persons who had, due to any reason, adopted other religion. His ideas about the education were very pragmatic. He was not against the Science of the West and the English language, but he considered the Vedic culture as essentials for the upliftment of the nation. With this aim in view, he planned the Gurukula system of education based on the teachings of the Vedas.

Political Reforms - Swami Dayananda made an announcement of Indian freedom for the first time in his Satyārtha Prakāśa. Congress was not even born by that time. Seventy to ninety percent of the participants in Mahatma Gandhi's satyagraha movement belonged to the Arya Samaj. This conclusion was given by the committee of Moti Lal Nehru and Maulānā Hasarata Muhani appointed by the Congress. (See Satya Nirmaya-appendix by Jñāna Candra). Not only the participants of the Satyāgrah movement but other prominent leaders of revolutionary movements such as Lālā Lājpatā Rāi, Sardāra Bhagata Singh, Rāma Prasāda Bismila, Candra Sekar Azāda, Thākur Rośana Singh etc. belonged to the Arya Samaj. The entire family of Sardāra Bhagata Singh belonged to the Arya Samaj.

The contributions and beneficence of Swami Dayananda cannot be written here in this small article. This great man made innumerable contributions as stated by a poet:

**Gine jāyem mumakina haim saharā ke jarre¹,
Samudra ki katarem²? Falaka³ ke sitāre;
Magara e Dayānanda Swami ehasām tere,
Gine jāyem nā mumakina haim sāre ke sāre.**

1. The particles of a desert, 2. Waves, 3. Sky.