

*Arya Samaj and
Social Reform
Movement In Gujarat*

CHAPTER-4
ARYA SAMAJ AND SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENT
IN GUJARAT

In the modern period, Christianity made continuous intrusion into Hindu Society due to the many internal weaknesses of Hinduism in the form of Infant marriage, enforced widowhood, caste Vanity, and various other superstitions. The book of J.N. Farquhar: 'Modern Religious Movement in India' presented the British attitude towards Indian customs that immoral rites, such as hook-swinging, practised in the worship of deities, and the burning of the Widows were carried under British Supervision.¹⁸⁷ The British Empire's rule in India brought about significant changes in the country's economic results that had far-reaching and devastating consequences.

The new economic paradigm left India economically impoverished, leading to a vast majority of the population suffering from severe poverty. This poverty, in turn, fostered the emergence of various social evils, as people struggled to survive under these harsh conditions. Despite the emergence of several socio-religious movements, which primarily involved the elite members of society, it took a considerable amount of time for these movements to have a meaningful impact on the common people. The daily struggle to survive due to poverty absorbed most of the people's energies, hindering their ability to engage with these movements. Now the question is why does India suffer from Poverty? The answer is that during the British colonization of India, the arrival of the British had a significant impact on Swadeshi employment. The Swadeshi movement was a campaign to promote Indian goods and services, and it encouraged the growth of small businesses.

However, the arrival of the British had a detrimental effect on these small businesses, which were often based on the unique skills and artistry of individual craftsmen. The Britishers imposed their trade practices, which favoured their industries and made it difficult for Indian businesses to compete. As a result, many small businesses were forced to shut down, leading to a loss of employment opportunities for the local

¹⁸⁷ Farquhar, J.N, Modern Religious Movement in India, Munshiram Manoharlal Publication, New Delhi, First published 1914, Indian edition 1977, Pg-09.

population. Moreover, the Britishers also interfered in the agricultural sector, dictating what crops should be cultivated and how they should be grown, based on their own needs. This not only disrupted the traditional farming practices of the Indians but also created a dependence on the British for their food supply. The act of Britishers trying to destabilize India's ancient economic system had significant consequences on the nation's economy. As a result of the disruption, poverty levels rose, and the country's economic stability was greatly affected. Many social evils took birth in the society and the Caste System, Untouchability, Foreign Travel, Child Marriage enforced widowhood, and many others.

One of the evils, a rigid caste system was in vogue. The old Varna System completely broke down which was based on the nature of human work. Now, it focuses on Birth, which means that birth decides the caste of the Human. In society, the Supreme authority was under the Brahmins.¹⁸⁸ In various regions of India, individuals belonging to lower castes were viewed as a source of contamination for society. Those from higher castes believed that even the shadows of lower-caste individuals would pollute them. Swami Dayanand Saraswati noticed the caste system after wandering to the different parts of India and how the lower class people suffered from the stigma of untouchability. Brahmins' wrong interpretation of the Ancient text made their life a curse. Dayanand challenged these beliefs and was consequently excommunicated from society. The Dayanand Interpretation of the caste system became a boon for the lower caste. We see their life in the words of Swami Dayanand that the lower-caste individuals' lives were extremely difficult, and some were forced to sell their daughters at a young age to wealthy Muslims due to financial struggles.¹⁸⁹

The System of infant marriage was a deeply ingrained practice in Indian society. Parents would often marry off their daughters before they reached the age of menstruation due to various cultural beliefs. Women were highly valued in society, so parents wanted to ensure their daughters were married off early to preserve their family's honour. Unfortunately, this often resulted in young girls being married off to much older men, leading to them becoming widows at a very young age with no right to remarriage. Despite the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act being enforced, it had little

¹⁸⁸ V. Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, Macmillan and Co, London, 1910, Ch- III, Pg-32.

¹⁸⁹ Letter from C.H Campbell to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal No. 201 dated 21 Nov, 1864 Home department 1865 Public a Proceed, Pg-26-30.

effect on the situation. Even Dayanand, a prominent figure at the time, was troubled by the plight of widows in society and believed the country was cursed because of it¹⁹⁰. There were also other social issues, such as the prevalence of female infanticide among certain groups and the trade of children among Banjaras during times of famine¹⁹¹. The practice of witchcraft and other superstitions only added to the societal barriers that prevented political and social progress. Swami Dayanand observed with his own eyes that the girls were offered to Pandas by their parents¹⁹². However, in the early 19th century, many socio-religious movements began to emerge, focusing on social reform, which helped create a gap between the people and these harmful practices. Arya Samaj tries to unite the people of the elite class and the common people through the socio-religious movement. It tries to focus on Nationalism and Swadeshi, which help the people to come out from poverty. In the past, British imperialism had a detrimental effect on Indian society, introducing several harmful practices which are existed in Indian Society for a very long period. However, the Arya Samaj emerged as a strong opposition, actively fighting against these injustices. It is worth noting that ancient literature does not support these evils, and there is no mention of them. From ancient times, common people played a significant role in the economic development of the country. However, when the British entered India's economic system, it resulted in widespread poverty, leaving the common people destitute and struggling to make ends meet. With the arrival of the British in India, the country's culture lost its integrity and came under Western influence. When different parts of society are not balanced, it can lead to the erosion of culture. Consequently, there was a rise in many socio-religious movements, although most of them were limited to a specific area or aimed to reform Indian society based on Western culture. In the early 19th century, Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj to abolish the practice of Sati and advocate for widowed women's right to remarry. He also opposed the caste system.¹⁹³ The social reform movements in 19th century India mainly took place in Calcutta and Bombay. In Bombay, the Prathna Samaj, established by Mahadev Govind Ranade, worked admirably to bring

¹⁹⁰ Sarda, H.B, Life of Dayanand Saraswati World Teacher, P. Bagwan Swarup, Vedic Yantralaya, Ajmer, Pg- 216.

¹⁹¹ Letter from Assistant Secretary, Government of India to Chief Commissioner of Oudh dated 22 January, 1864, File No. 105, Home Public 1864 B. 20th Feb .

¹⁹² Rishi Dayanand and India, A pamphlet available at the Arya Samaj, Jaipur.

¹⁹³ Surendra, Nath Bannerjee, A Nation Making. Published by Oxford University, London, First Published 1925, reset and Reprinted 1963, Pg- 7.

about social change. Their efforts included promoting interdining and intermarriage among different castes. The Brahma Samaj also played a role in social reform by encouraging widow remarriage through the Society for the Encouragement of Widow-Remarriage. In opposition to these social works, orthodox Hindus established 'The Hindu Dharma Vyavasthapak Sabha'.¹⁹⁴

However, these movements were limited to the upper strata of society and had little impact on the masses. While these movements believed in the superiority of Christianity, they did not have faith in the infallibility of the Vedas. This led to the gradual decline of Indian culture and the adoption of Western culture. Thus, there arose a need for a movement that could revive the ancient Indian culture based on the Vedas and serve as a panacea for the country. As a result, there would be the rise of the Arya Samaj, which was remarkable in the history of the Modern Period.

Dr Bal Ram Jakhar said that Swami Dayanand Saraswati was not only a great sage but also a staunch nationalist and ardent champion of the rights of the downtrodden. Regionalism, sectarianism, and factionalism had no place in Swami's philosophy. He waged a relentless struggle against ignorance and social injustices. He will be remembered for his signal service to the cause of the regeneration of our society and for inspiring the Indian people to make themselves worthy of their ancient traditions and to strive to occupy their rightful place in the community of nations.¹⁹⁵

At the start, the Britishers started appreciating Indian Civilization for its uniqueness. Alexander Dow (1735-1779) Lt. Colonel in the company military service and the author of three volumes- The History of the Hindustan appreciated the Sanskrit language writing:

*'Shanscrita is amazingly copious. A very small grammar and vocabulary serve to illustrate the principle of the whole. In a treatise of few pages, the roots and primitives are all comprehended, and so uniform of the rules derivation and inflexions.'*¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Paul, K.T, The British Connection with India in 1927, Published by Great Britain by the Edin Burgh Press, 1927, Pg-36-53.

¹⁹⁵ Speaker of Lok Sabha Sep 14, 1983 words about Arya Samaj on Nirwan Satabadi celebration of Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

¹⁹⁶ Jain, Meenakshi, Sati, Evangelical, Baptist, Missionaries and Changing of the Colonial Discourses, published by Aryan Book International, 2016, Pg-6.

The great patron of Vedic studies was Warren Hastings, he was the first Governor General of Bengal. He took an interest in the Indian Civilization for sound administration. As we know that strong and long administration is necessary to understand the Indian Civilization. We know that if anyone came and criticized any person then it was not favorable to that person. The same principle Britishers follow if they at the beginning Indian culture then it will be difficult for them to rule long. So, at the start, they try to understand the Indian culture and traditions. To understand Indian Culture it is necessary to understand the Ancient text. For this, they started to translate the Ancient books. First Charles Wilkins translated the *Hitopadesa and Bhagwat Gita*.

William Macintosh, who visited India in the third quarter of the 18th century wrote '*All history points to India as the mother Science and Art. This country was anciently so renowned for knowledge and wisdom that the Philosopher of Greece did not disdain to travel thither for their improvement*'¹⁹⁷.

India was praised for its ancient science which had remarkable advancements in mathematics, medicine, and astronomy. This knowledge was later incorporated into Western civilization. However, there were some evils in Indian culture, such as child marriage, infanticide, sati, and the poor condition of widows. Though these issues were limited to certain areas, they were presented in a hyperbolic manner. The Sati system, where a widow would be burned with her husband's pyre, was presented as prevalent throughout India, with Bengal being presented as its centre. However, Meenakshi Jain (Sati; 2016) described, that in the 19th century, official documents showed that sati cases were more common in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Gujarat compared to Bengal. Bengal was only presented as the centre of the Sati system because of the rising nationalism at that time, which some wanted to weaken.

The Sati system existed in western India but was limited to the upper class. The Sanskrit language has no specific term for widow immolation, but the term Sati was coined by the Britishers in the late 18th and early 19th century. So at the start, the Britishers Praised the Indian civilization for their empire establishment. Meenakshi Jain's book 'Sati' offers an in-depth analysis of the British attitude towards India

¹⁹⁷Ibid, Pg- 59.

during the early 19th century. The book highlights the shift from Indomania by Charles Grant and James Mill to a more pragmatic approach. The Utilitarians believed in improving morals by reforming society, whereas the Evangelicals focused on improving society by reforming morals. Interestingly, the Utilitarians did not involve religion in their approach and relied on rationalization for social reform¹⁹⁸. Meenakshi Jain's (2016) insights reveal that the "History of British India" provides the theoretical basis for the British motto to emancipate India from its own culture. The book helps to shed light on the historical context of British colonialism in India and the motivations behind it.¹⁹⁹

There were many examples discussed in the book of Meenakshi Jain that during the colonial period, the British presented many Social Evils of Indian Society in a hyperbolic manner, specifically exaggerating the prevalence of sati. However, this practice was not as widespread as was made out to be and was also a result of British administration. The decision to immolate oneself rested with the woman, and many chose not to. For instance, the two queens of *Krishandevarya*, *Trimuladevi*, and *Cinnadevi*, as well as *Varda Devi*, the widow of *Acytanaya's* successor, refused to do so and instead participate in power politics. This led some to conclude that the idea of sati being a forceful creation of the Evangelical-Utilitarians alliance was a tool to justify British rule in India. Pietro Della Valla confirmed that “*this burning of women upon the death of their husband is at their own choice to do it or not, and indeed few practice it*’. Francisco Pelsaert counters this statement that Sati that “*there are hundreds, or even thousands, who do not do it.*”²⁰⁰ In 1974, William Carey described *infanticide and the customs of sacrificing female children*. As a result, in 1802 Aug British intervened to stoppage of this practice. Later on, H.H. Wilson a Sanskrit Scholar described that *infanticide was rare and very limited to a few castes in one or two districts.*²⁰¹ Francois Martin, who arrived in India in 1669 and stayed on till his death in 1706, described that *this custom was ‘not very widely practised now’.*²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Jain, Meenakshi, Sati Evangelical, Baptist, Missionaries and Changing of the Colonial Discourses. published by Aryan Book International, 2016, Pg- 111

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, Pg-108.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, Pg-214.

²⁰¹ Ibid, Pg-153.

²⁰² Ibid, Pg-214.

The British, during their colonial rule in India, made changes to the social activities in the region that were in line with their administrative requirements. Despite the numerous social issues that plagued Indian society, the British did not show a genuine interest in improving the situation. Rather, their motive was to assert Western supremacy and influence in the region.

In the early 19th century, India was going through a period of massive social change. Many movements were initiated to reform society and bring about positive changes. Some of these movements were inspired by the British reforms while others aimed to reform society based on Indian traditions. One such movement was Arya Samaj, which attempted to fight against social evils by interpreting the Vedas in a new light.

According to Arya Samaj, social evils were a result of incorrect interpretations of the Vedas. Most people did not study the Vedas themselves, so they relied on interpretations provided by the Brahmins, who used these interpretations to establish their dominance over society. Arya Samaj tried to give the validity against these social evils with the help of Vedic interpretation.

However, the British played an essential role in facilitating the understanding of Indian culture. They took the responsibility of translating the Vedas into the English Language, which became very helpful in understanding the glory of the Indian culture. Though it was not accessible to the lower class, the upper class studied it and understood the uniqueness of the Indian culture. This resulted in the upper class not only supporting the works of Arya Samaj but also providing financial aid.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati's speeches played a significant role in helping society to understand the Vedas. He broke the notion that Brahmins were next to God in society by defeating them in Shastras in front of the society. He also suggested that people should verify their doubts through their understanding instead of blindly following the Brahmins.

So, Arya Samaj and Swami Dayanand Saraswati played a revolutionary role in the reform of Indian society. They helped the people understand the importance of Vedic knowledge, and the British translation of Vedas into the English language helped society to understand the uniqueness of Indian culture.

In the past, women faced numerous social evils and were continually questioned about their existence in society and their human rights. According to the principles of Arya Samaj, the development of all humanity is essential. However, women's financial dependency is the primary reason for their poor condition. During then society believed that women had no right to 'Samanthonayana Sanskar' but there were many examples set by Arya Samaj for Society. Shri Somabhai Joytibhai's Daughter-in-law 'Samanthonayan Sanskar' was done by Pandit Mayashakar ji and Shri Asabhai. Natvarsingh Ji Solanki of Uttar Pradesh Arya Samaj works towards women's empowerment through employment. Before the Atranang Sabha, Thakur Saheb presented a constructive path to increase the power of middle-class and general-class women. Mrs. Chanchelben Patel, the head of the Women's Working Committee of Nadiad, established the *Arya Bangani Sabha*, which many women joined. The Sabha organized various economic activities such as making paper bags, *Papad*, *Vadi*, and *Mathaiya*. The women of Bhagani Sabha would take orders from marriages for food, among other things²⁰³.

Arya Kanya Vidyalaya, a group of girls under the leadership of Anandpriya ji went to foreign countries and preached the Vedic message. They spread the message of Women's education. At that time, when women were not allowed to come out of the house Arya Kanya Vidyalaya sent a group of women to foreign countries. Arya Samaj gave an example from Vedic text about the women's role in Society. The Vedic text also described the names of many renowned women were *Romsa*²⁰⁴, *Lopmudra*²⁰⁵, *Vishwavara*²⁰⁶, *Apala*²⁰⁷, *Yami*²⁰⁸, *Ghosha*²⁰⁹, *Surya*²¹⁰, *Indarani*²¹¹, *Uravashi*²¹², *Ratri*²¹³, *Saparagyi etc.*²¹⁴ On the other hand, the women who met with Swami Dayanand Saraswati were Pandit Ramabai and Maji. Pandit Rambai met to Swami in Bombay and Maji met to Swami in Uttar Pradesh whom he called Gargi because of her Knowledge about the Vedas.

²⁰³ Patel Bapubhai Kumberbhai, Varshik Hisab and Vrathanth, Published by Lakshman Singh Raval ji, Chattrotar Pradesh, Anand, 1964, Pg-4.

²⁰⁴ Romsha, Rigveda, Mandal- 1, Sukta- 26.

²⁰⁵ Lopmudra, Rigveda, Mandal-1, Sukta-179

²⁰⁶ Vishwavara, Rigveda, Mandal-5, Sukta-28

²⁰⁷ Apala, Rigveda, Mandal-8, Sukta-91

²⁰⁸ Yami, Rigveda, Mandal-10, Sukta-10

²⁰⁹ Ghosha, Rgveda, Mandal-10, Sukta- 39, 40

²¹⁰ Surya, Rigveda, Mandal-10, Sukta- 85

²¹¹ Indrani, Rigveda, Mandal-10, Sukta-86

²¹² Uravashi, Rigveda, Mandal-10, Sukta-95

²¹³ Ratri, Rigveda Mandal-10, Sukta-127.

²¹⁴ Saraswati Dikshanand Swami, Upanayan Sarvasva, Published by Samarpan Shoodh Sansthan, Sahibabad.

In the Social reform Movement, women contributed equally to the publicity work as men. In 1941, on April 21 Pandit Gayanyndarand,²¹⁵ his wife Aniladevi gave the message of Vedic teaching Narsad, Piplang, Anand, Chthroned, Navi, etc.²¹⁶

At this juncture, it is important to note on the Social works of the Arya Samaj in Gujarat during the late 19th century and in the 20th century. The social condition of Gujarat in the 19th and 20th centuries, is essential to understand.

Arya Samaj and Social Reforms

The Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movement, had limited success in promoting social reforms in Gujarat during the late 19th century. However, in the 20th century, the movement's influence grew significantly and it played a major role in shaping the region's social and cultural landscape. While the Arya Samaj had begun working towards social reforms in Gujarat during the late 19th century, the tangible results of their efforts only became apparent in the 20th century. The movement's work in Gujarat during this period included advocating for women's rights, promoting education and literacy, and fighting against social evils such as caste discrimination. Thanks to the sustained efforts of the Arya Samaj, Gujarat saw major improvements in social and economic conditions during the 20th century. The movement's emphasis on social equality and inclusion helped to create a more just and equitable society in the region.

Gujarat society's significance in the success of Arya Samaj's social reforms cannot be overstated. Gujarat has been a significant centre of trade since ancient times, due to its coastal region. As a result, it has become home to a diverse group of communities with their unique cultures, traditions, and religions. Among the many castes that live here are Bhils, Kholis, Vagela, Anavils, and many others, each with its unique way of life. As Western education was introduced, many Indians were attracted to it, seeing it as a gateway to a better life. However, during the Evangelism movement, the British actively attempted to undermine the Indian culture by presenting some negative aspects of it without acknowledging its ancient knowledge system. The British impact on Gujarat society can still be seen in a folk song sung by Fisherwomen in the coastal region of Saurashtra. This song reveals the changes that occurred in society as a result

²¹⁵ He was a great freedom fighter in the Hyderabad Movement

²¹⁶ Patel, Bapubhai, Kumberbhai, Varshik Hisab and Vrathanth, Published by Lakshman Singh Raval ji, Chattrotar Pradesh, Anand, 1964, Pg-4.

of British rule, highlighting the negative effects of their attempts to undermine Indian culture. Despite these challenges, Gujarat society remains resilient, adapting and thriving in the face of adversity. The song's rhythm was

*From far off hand came Lely
And very enthusiastically
Took over our's Kings fort
He swept aside our measuring cups
And Brought, instead his rupees
And took over our King's fort
He discarded our Mashru and Kinkhab
And replaced them with Satin
And took over our Kings Fort
He got rid of our milk and curds
And filled the pitchers with liquor
And took over Knig's Fort
In the place of the bullocks and carriage
And took over King's fort
They made their iron Vehicles
All our grain and cereals are gone
And with them our Vitality
He took over our King's fort²¹⁷*

In 19th-century Gujarat, the winds of change were blowing across the land. The rigid caste system that had held society in its grip for centuries was slowly giving way to new ideas and influences from the West. However, the archaic practice of dowry persisted in society, causing much distress to families. In the midst of this, many reforms were being introduced to improve the overall condition of society. Historian Manilal, in his analysis of the society of his time, noted that a lack of unity had

²¹⁷ Anoh, Gamini Ladaino Pavado (Ballad of the Marathas Plunder) in Manjulal Majumdar, 1963, Pg-272.

always been a problem in society due to political and religious factors. He also emphasized the importance of examining the origin of traditions and the changes they have undergone over time. Only by doing so can one understand the effectiveness of traditions in solving existing problems. Manilal also shed light on the dismal state of women's rights during this era. Women were not only oppressed but also excluded from decision-making processes. This was a result of the forces of religious tradition and the interpretation of such traditions by scholars.²¹⁸ Arya Samaj introduced several significant social reforms in Gujarat, which had a profound impact on society. These reforms aimed to eliminate social evils such as caste discrimination, child marriage, and the dowry system. The organization also promoted widow remarriage and women's education. The introduction of these reforms brought about a positive change in society and helped in uplifting the marginalized sections.

Establishment of the Ancient Caste System

As already mentioned that Gujarat also suffered from the clutch of the Caste System, which was not based on the Ancient Caste System. Arya Samaj tried to present the true interpretation of the Caste System, which is based on the Vedas. When Swami Dayanand Saraswati wandered to different parts of India, he found that Society had broken up into castes, which were based on or were being determined on account of birth. Inter-dining and inter-marring are prohibited. The Ancient Vedic Hymns held significant importance in the Indian society. However, due to their misinterpretation over the years, societal homogeneity began to erode. The caste system, which was originally meant to be a way to classify people based on their profession, was exploited and turned into a hierarchical system based on birth. This led to the division of society into different castes, resulting in discrimination against those who were considered to be of lower castes. The misinterpretation also resulted in the propagation of false beliefs and practices, further contributing to the erosion of societal homogeneity, which was prevalent in society, and caused a great loss to people, especially the Shudras who were deprived of social justice. This division among people created a wide gap between different classes and resulted in a significant impact on society. The consequences of this kind of discrimination were severe and long-lasting.

²¹⁸ Thakker, Usha, Puppets on the Periphery: Women and Social reform in 19th Century Gujarat Society, published by Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.32, No1/2, Pg-46-52.

In opposition to it, Dayanand divided the society into four parts, which are based on the Vedic Caste system. He gave validity to his caste system with the help of the right interpretation of the Vedas. According to Brahmin can become Shudhra by the nature of their work. On the other side, Shudhras can become Brahmin by their work²¹⁹.

Swami has delved into the topic of the caste system and outlined several characteristics that define each caste in his book Satyarth Prakash. He believes that a Brahmin should possess qualities such as righteousness, extensive knowledge of the Vedas, truthfulness, and a diverse range of knowledge. A Kshatriya, on the other hand, should be equipped with the virtues of protecting people, boldness, dutifulness, and fearlessness. A Vaishya caste member should invest in the advancement of knowledge, perform Yagnas, and devote some time to studying the Vedas and Shastras. Lastly, Shudhras should serve the Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaishya communities. Therefore, every individual caste member should be classified based on their qualifications, character, and accomplishments. It is important to note that the caste system introduced by Swami, was based on the Vedas, as a socio-economic institution and not a religious one. If each caste member performs their duties according to their talents, society will undoubtedly experience exponential progress.²²⁰

H.B. Sarda gave numerous examples of Swami's attitude towards untouchables. He described that Swami ate the food brought by Sadha, a member of the lower Caste. He was criticized by many people but he explained that in only two ways food became untouchable, when it was earned from unfair means and secondly when it was unclear when Sadhas procured by the hard labour then his food was acceptable.²²¹ He also accepted the food from Barber.²²²

In Calcutta when Swami met Keshab Chandra Sen he discusses on caste system and condemns the caste system.²²³ Dayanand did not believe in the caste system but believed in Ancient Varnashram according to action.²²⁴ The effect of Swami

²¹⁹ G.P, Upadhaya, Dayanand's contribution to Hindu Solidarity, 1939, Ch.X, Pg-86

²²⁰ Parsad, Durga (Tra), Sathyarth Prakash (Swami Dayanand Sraswati), Varjannand Press, Lahore, 1908, Pp-69-70.

²²¹ Sarda, H.B, Life of Dayanand Sarswati World Teacher, P.Bagwan Swarup, Vedic Yantralaya, Ajmer, Pg- 50.

²²² Mukhhopadhyaya, D.N, Life of Maharishi Dayananad Sarswati, Vedic Yantarlya, Ajmer, Pg-70

²²³ Bawa, Singh Chhajju, *Life and Teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati*, Jan Gyan Prakashan, 1957, Ch-XXIV.

²²⁴ Op. cit. Pg-90.

Dayanand Saraswati's teaching was that he was preparing the minds of the people to accept the Vedic truth.²²⁵ The '*Brahm Samachar Patra*' described that the teachings of the Vedic truth were accepted by the literate class.²²⁶

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, a prominent reformist figure in India, was known for his efforts to eradicate social injustice caused by the rigid caste barriers that existed in Indian society. He, along with the Arya Samaj, aimed to challenge the commonly held belief that the caste system did not exist in the ancient Vedic literature. It is worth noting that the Vedic literature did indeed include the Varna System, a social hierarchy based on occupation and duties. Through their efforts, Swami Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj hoped to bring about a more just and equal society.

Attempted to Remove Untouchability and uplift the Depressed Class

In the Sathyarth Prakash of the Swami Dayanand Saraswati, he described that in the caste system, there would be the existence of the untouchability Evil. Still, in the Vedic period, there is no mention about it. As already mentioned the Varna of the person can be determined by his character, association, and good Sanskars.

Truth, Self-sacrifice, Knowledge of God, and Vedas help Sudhra to enter the higher Varna on the other hand untruth, ignorance, and degrade the Higher Varna into Sudhras. He said that untouchability is related to the cleanliness.

Swami was very worried about the depressed classes because all of them were the center point of the Christian Missionary for conversation. He described Kolis and the Bhils, as depressed classes of Hindus, while the religious leaders of the Hindus are sleeping like Kumbhakaran. He taught the truth that all men are equal. He described that Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas should eat the food cooked by Shudras.²²⁷ But he could not contribute much personally to depressed classes because of his sudden demise in 1883. Later on, his institution Arya Samaj largely worked for the depressed classes and established many institutions for their social empowerment. The Arya Samaj implemented two significant approaches in their efforts to uplift the untouchables and improve their social status. One of these methods was to allow untouchables to wear the sacred thread, which was traditionally reserved for the upper

²²⁵ Indian Mirror' 22nd June 1877

²²⁶ Sarda, H.B, *Life of Dayanand Sarswati World Teacher*, P.Bagwan Swarup, Vedic Yantralaya, Ajmer, Pg-181.

²²⁷ H.B. Sarda: *Life of Dayananad Saraswati*, Pg- 240 Arya Directory Pg- 191.

castes. This gesture helped bridge the gap between the upper castes and the untouchables, and it served as a symbol of equality between the two groups. The other approach involved educating and assisting the untouchables to improve their living conditions.

The Arya Samaj believed that education was the key to emancipation, and through education, untouchables would become empowered and self-sufficient, thus breaking free from the cycle of poverty that had trapped them for generations. These efforts aimed to prove that untouchables were also human beings like the upper class, and their social status should not be determined by their birth. The Arya Samaj's initiatives were a significant contribution to the fight against caste discrimination and the upliftment of the untouchables. In Gujarat, Baroda Ruler Maharaja Sayajirao Gakward invited the Arya Samaj to spread education among the untouchables.

At Ranoli on 26th Feb 1911, he gave a speech in which he described that there would be a rise of the depressed class because of the misinterpretation of the religion. He described that depressed classes, which was a feature of Modern Hinduism absent in the Vedas teachings. Swami relied on the Vedas as infallible. He opposed the Caste distinctions. Swami opposed early marriage in favour of Widow- Remarriage and equality in the treatment of all classes.²²⁸ He described Arya Samaj as the 'active and energetic association organized somewhat along the lines of the Arya Samaj and even on those of the Christian Missions are what we want. Such an organization should penetrate every Village in the country to bring to the people this new knowledge in an attractive and force'.²²⁹

In Gujarat, the first attempt was made for the education of the untouchables in 1908 by the great contribution of the Atmaram Amritsari, Pandit Ananandpriya, and Maharajah Sayajirao. They established the '*Atanjaya Vasthigrah*' for untouchables. After some time the Arya Sang was established in Ahmedabad. It worked against the social prejudice and the caste system. For this work, they printed many pamphlets and magazines and distributed them in the nearby area. During British rule, missionaries tried to convert the Harijians due to the poor social and economic conditions.

²²⁸ Conference held at Ranoli on 26th February 1911, in which Maharajah Sayajirao delivered the opening address. Pg-273-278.

²²⁹ Speeches and Addresses of His Highness Sayajirao III Maharajah of Baroda Volume II (1911-1927), printed at the university press Cambridge 1927.

The ruler of Baroda Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda after educating them tried to employ them. 'Between' 1934-35 in Baroda State, 5000 people were in government service. After changing the social situation of the Untouchables, it can be seen from 10th April 1938, Maharajah organized a party to which state servicemen were invited. In the city Palace, untouchable servicemen were also invited and they had dinner at one place. It has been described in the book '*Aagayanjodarak Rajavi*' written by Nagjibha. So, the Maharajah Sayajirao and Arya Samaj social workers never forgot and helped them to come out from the social trauma.²³⁰ Arya Samaj also provided marriage ceremonies with the help of Vedic hymns²³¹.

Shri Syt Ranchoddas Bhagavan, a native of Kathiwar, orchestrated a momentous feast in 1912 that left a lasting impression on those in attendance. The invitees were predominantly from the upper caste, but what was truly remarkable was Balun's presence. As an untouchable, he was not usually included in such gatherings. However, during the meal, a unique occurrence captured everyone's attention. The guests began to consume *Gomutra*, a drink that holds great significance in Hinduism, for their *Shudhikaran*, a purification ritual because they attended the meal in which the untouchable man was also included. Sadly, the organizer was heavily criticized and ex-communicated by the Society.²³²

Swami Visva Mitra Ananad and Swami Jayanand Swami from the Ananad Arya Samaj were passionate advocates for the rights of the Harijans in the Vedas. They fearlessly preached to the people in nearby villages, educating them about the rights of the Harijans and organizing the untouchables for education. Their tireless efforts played a vital role in raising awareness of the Harijans' rights and empowering them to demand what was rightfully theirs²³³. An inspiring figure is Shri Lalji Vishram Takkar from Ambar. He bravely opposed the divisive practice of '*Prythbojan*'. He worked tirelessly to improve the conditions of the untouchables, organizing large gatherings to promote unity and reform. In an era when Harijans were barred from entering temples, he created dedicated spaces for their worship. He generously donated funds to support their education and basic needs. In addition, he authored

²³⁰ Bansidhar, Arya Samaj and Maharajah Sayairao Gakeward, Shri Sayjirao Prathisathan, Baroda, 2021, Pg-53.

²³¹ Bhagat, Shrikanth, Varhad Gujarat Ma Arya Samaj, Shri Arya Seva Sang, Surat, 1960, Pg-64.

²³² Ibid, Pg-134.

²³³ Patel, Bapubhai, Kumberbhai, Varshik Hisab and Vrathanth, Lakshman singh Raval ji, Chattrotar Pradesh, Anand, 1964, Pg-64.

'Karmopasana', a book that dispels the misconception that our ancient culture was responsible for the plight of the Harijans. Rather, it was the misinterpretation of literature that perpetuated the injustice²³⁴. Shri Girdari Lal Kunwar ji Chouhan from Darapur. In 1924 he worked against untouchability and he was the first minister of the '*Shri Arya Seva Sang*'.

Shri Natavarsingh Solanki, Shri Bhupat Singh, and Shri Purshottom Das were strong leaders who worked tirelessly for the rights of the untouchables and Bhil tribes. They took a bold step by utilizing ancient texts to raise awareness about their rights. Moreover, they published many books, including Dr Dilipsingh Vedalanker's '*Vedo Mea Manavatavad*' and Pandit Vir Singh's '*Sandaya Yog Darshan*', which effectively conveyed their rights. Their efforts have made a notable impact on the community, and their legacy continues to inspire many²³⁵. Other people who brought awareness through the lectures were Aomananad Saraswati, Swami Visvamitra, Swami Krishanand Saraswati, etc. Swami Aomananad Saraswati visited the Arya Samaj centre in Anand. In the face of social injustice and inequality, a group of dedicated reformers emerged, committed to improving the lives of the untouchables. Among them was Atmaram Amritsari, who was invited by the ruler of Baroda to embark on a mission to uplift the marginalized community. Atmaram and his family devoted their lives to this cause, focusing on educating the untouchables and empowering them to attain a higher social status. Their tireless efforts helped to bring about significant positive change for the untouchables, who were previously ostracized and mistreated.

So, the work of the Arya Samaj in Gujarat for the untouchables was started before Gandhi. Not only the reformer by ideology but also the many ways were adopted to change the social status of the Harijans. In Gujarat, during the late 19th century it was a very revolutionary work of the Arya Samaj. And in the 20th century, it was at a high peak. It is true that in the 21st century, the Arya Samaj movement weakened but it still existed in the minds of the people. I found out this statement when I visited the Arya Kanya Vidyalaya of Baroda. Now, this institution was under the government control. When I visited this Vidyalaya nearby area I met two women who belong to Parmar Caste and worked in the Arya Kanya Vidyalaya as a cook. As we know, at

²³⁴ Op.cit, Pp-137-139.

²³⁵ Bhagat, Shrikanth, *Varhad Gujarat Ma Arya Samaj*, Published by Shri Arya Seva Sang. Surat. 1960, Pg-138.

that time untouchable people were not allowed in public places Arya Samaj gave them an opportunity as a cook. So, it was a revolutionary work, which made me write the name of the Baroda in the Gold Words in the History of Social Reformers. It can be seen through the answer that was given by Maharajah Sayjirao during his voyage to America in Nov 1925, which is considered the greatest success among the reforms introduced by him in Baroda, Maharajah Replied without hesitation “*Free and compulsory education*”. He believed that “*this problem was of National importance*. It was not a question for one prince or an individual to take up. If they wanted to rise as a nation, they must all espouse the cause of the depressed classes and raise their status socially and politically.”²³⁶

Anti- Child Marriage and Widow- Remarriage

Child marriage has been a long-standing practice in India, and though it has been associated with adverse effects, we must acknowledge the complex social and economic factors that have contributed to its prevalence. It is important to recognize that during the British era, poverty was on the rise, and the economic policies implemented at that time may have contributed to the increase in child marriage. Early child marriage resulted in the boys dying in infancy and according to the customs, the girls could not remarry. He advocated the necessity of Brahmacharya and suggested that the best time for marriage for girls and boys was 16 years and boys 25 years.²³⁷ Because of child marriage, he called the people of India the ‘Children of the Children’.²³⁸

Dewan Bahadur H.B. Sarda, former President of the Propkarani Sabha and member of the legislative council, was an unwavering advocate for women's rights. His arduous campaign against the practice of child marriage culminated in the adoption of the Sarda Act, which effectively put an end to the practice in India. This landmark legislation, which was enacted following a prolonged and determined struggle, has been widely recognized as a significant milestone in the country's history, and a testament to the efforts of those who worked tirelessly to promote gender equality.

²³⁶ Bansidhar, *Arya Samaj and Maharajah Sayajirao Gakeward*, The Shri Sayaji Rao Prathisathan, Speeches and Addresses of His Highness Sayajirao III (1877-1927), 2022, Pg-102.

²³⁷ Parsad, Durga (Tra), *Sathyarth Prakash* (Swami Dayanand Saraswati), Varjannand Press, Lahore, 1908, Pg-61.

²³⁸ Sarda, H.B., *Life of Dayanand Saraswati World Teacher*, P.Bagwan Swarup, Vedic Yantralaya, Ajmer, Ch-XII, Pg-243.

During the lifetime Dayanand Saraswati advocated for the rights of the widow's child. It can be seen in a letter dated 27th July 1880, written from Meerut to Lala Mulraj, President Lahore Arya Samaj says

*'I have a mind to address that our government on a subject, which is unquestionable a matter of Public goods. Now, I am wished for by hundreds of men, who have attended my lecture. It is that the government may be moved to pass a regulation by which children of the widows be entitled to claim and obtain their rights of the property, both movable and immovable of their parents, and that anyone trying to injure the widow in any way be made liable punishment by the Government. The result that I anticipate from the above is, that the lives of thousands of children will be saved, and miscarriage shall be minimized. Niyog or remarriage of widow will be introduced at last. But this is a work not to be dealt with by men of ordinary abilities. I, therefore, leave the matter to you and ask you to frame a regulation worthy of the subject, giving everything required in detail. I hope you will agree with me and do the needful. I have given you only hints, you have to think about the frame of what is called law, complete in all respects, having sections and clauses for every part of the points. This draft regulation may be sent to me as soon as ready to be completed state for submission to the government under my signature but the sooner it is done, much better. This proposal did not take a practical shape. This shows that he was in favor of the status and rights of widow and their children.'*²³⁹

During the lifetime of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, his disciples did not accept the idea of Niyog, which was the practice of appointing a substitute husband for the wife of an impotent husband. After his death, the word Niyog disappeared completely, and the Arya Samajists made significant contributions towards widow remarriage, which was a revolution in Indian society. There were many examples in Gujarat of people who enforced the practice of Widow Remarriage. One such example is of Shri Bimabhai Bagwandas, who was from Kaccholi. He tried to change the prevailing social order. When his wife died, he re-married a widow from Ratanagri, which was a rare act of bravery and compassion.²⁴⁰ Similarly, Shri Mohanji is from the Anavali caste. He was from Umarsade and re-married his daughter when she became a widow in the 9th year of her marriage, which was a bold and progressive step. However, he

²³⁹ Ibid, Pg- 236.

²⁴⁰ Bhagat, Shrikanth, *Varhad Gujarat Ma Arya Samaj*, Shri Arya Seva Sang, Surat, 1960, Pg-148.

was ostracized from society and started living with the Harijans while singing bhajans with them, which was a demonstration of his commitment to social justice and equality²⁴¹. He described that he faced too many problems created by the society. He lived out of the Village, where he faced issues to complete the Basic needs. Sometimes he slept without food but after some time he was helped by the Harijans. He Said that'

Harijan Here Mlse

Olya Dukijan Dukada Dese ji

In Anand 10 October 1940 Widow Tramathi remarried Pandit Patel Kakabhai Shakarbhai by Pandit Shri Mayashanker ji. Trikamlal's Kakabhai Daughter Shradha married Ahmedabad Lawer Shri Jaisinghbhai's son Ramnlal. After seven years of her marriage, she became a widow. Later on in 1938, she Remarried Vadilal Somachand. Pandit Maganbhai Muljibhai of Maltaj's Daughter Kasi Ben, who became a widow at an early age, was married to Kheda Shri Punjibhai Manorbhai on 20 October 1938.²⁴²

Arya Samaj and the Bhil Tribe

The hilly regions of Dungarpur, South Maywar, Shirohi, Gujarat, and Malwa were inhabited by a significant population of Bhil tribes, who were considered the most backward, impoverished, and oppressed class of society. Their habitat primarily consisted of mountains and forests, which made their access to basic amenities and education extremely limited. The Bhil tribes were regarded as tribal people and were kept under the control of the ruling kings, who were staunch opponents of promoting education among these oppressed classes. The rulers deliberately maintained the backwardness and poverty of the castes to prevent them from rising against the king.

Amidst this difficult situation, Govind Guru emerged as a beacon of hope. Born on December 20, 1858, in Dungarpur, he was greatly influenced by the teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Govind Guru dedicated his life to the upliftment of the Bhil tribes and fought against the oppressive practices of the ruling class. His efforts paved the way for the empowerment of Bhil tribes and helped them gain a voice in society. Today, Govind Guru is remembered as a champion of social justice and a symbol of hope for the oppressed classes.

²⁴¹ Anand Swami, *Dartni Ni Bul*, Published by Navbharat Sahithya Mandir, 1981, Pp -8-25.

²⁴² Patel Bapubhai Kumberbhai, *Varshik Hisab and Vrathanth*, Lakshman Singh Raval ji, Chattrotar Pradesh, Anand, 1964, Pg-06.

In Rajasthan, during Swami Dayanand Saraswati's visit, he had the opportunity to spend some quality time with him. Swami Dayanand Saraswati's influence on him was profound and inspired him to set up the "Samp Sabha" for the Bhil tribe. At the early age of 23, he took the initiative to gather the Bhils from various regions, including Dungarpur, Bhasuadi, Gujarat, and Shirohi, and established the "Samp-Saba". His efforts to bring people together, regardless of their social status, were commendable and paved the way for a more inclusive society.

Organization of the Samp Sabha

Samp Sabha is a term that holds great significance in the history of India, particularly Rajasthan. The word "*Samp*" means love and brotherhood in Rajasthani dialect. The establishment of *Samp Sabha* by Guru Govind had the primary objective of promoting cultural campaigns. It aimed to unite people from different areas of Bhiles to foster a sense of brotherhood among them. However, the political scenario of that time turned Samp Sabha into a political body. The kings considered it a threat to their power and authority, which led to the suppression of Samp Sabha's cultural celebrations. The rulers viewed these celebrations as rebellious acts by the people and began working against them. Despite the opposition, Samp Sabha continued to play a vital role in the cultural and social transformation of the Bhil tribe.

This organization had some rules which were

- Every day do the Yajnas.
- Spread the education.
- Give moral education to your children.
- Work to improve the family and society economy.
- Focus on the use of Swadeshi.

In the late 19th century, there was a prominent social movement known as the '*Bhagat Andolan*' in India, led by the renowned leader Govind Guru. He was a visionary who aimed to unite the large population of the Bhil tribe and organized a Bhil meeting in Santharampur, Gujarat, in 1903. This meeting was attended by many Bhil people from different regions such as Gujarat, Bhasvada, and Dungarpur. Despite the initial success of the Samp Sabha in uniting the tribe, the movement faced a huge setback in 1908 when the ruler classes launched a severe attack against the Bhil tribe. The Bhil

people had started to oppose the wrong policy of the ruler, and as a result, a large number of them lost their lives. Govind Guru himself was also imprisoned during this time, but he managed to survive. He spent the rest of his life near Dahod, Gujarat, and his legacy continued to live on. Even today, a huge fair is organized in Managarh, where people perform 'Havana' to commemorate the life and achievements of this great leader.

There were numerous Arya Samajis who dedicated their efforts to assisting the Bhil tribes, including the esteemed Shri Kandya Rao Ganpathrao Jagtap. Originally from Bharuch, Jagtap made significant contributions to the development of Bhil Ashram, a community centre that provided education to the impoverished and disadvantaged Bhil tribes. At the time, missionaries sought to convert the Bhil tribes to Christianity by providing financial assistance and taking advantage of their poverty. Sadly, this led to the exploitation of backward classes, who would sell their daughters due to financial struggles. Jagtap valiantly rescued many Bhil girls from kidnappers and endeavoured to increase awareness among the Bhil tribes through education.²⁴³

An exemplary figure in this regard is Shri Giridari Lal Kuvar Ji Chohan, who embraced the Arya Samaj philosophy in 1925 after being inspired by Mukund Ji Sharma of Malwadas. He dedicated himself to serving the Bhil Tribe and Harijan with utmost zeal ²⁴⁴. Another notable personality is Pandit Bulashanker Jaggivam Vanprasthi, who made significant contributions as an educator at the Songad Gurukul and Bhil Ashram. He firmly believed that education could bring about a positive transformation in the lives of the Bhil community and thus initiated several awareness campaigns in the region to educate them about their rights.²⁴⁵

The Arya Samaj movement aimed to bring together people living in underdeveloped areas, which were previously targeted by missionaries. Given that most of the population belonged to this category, the movement worked towards bringing them on par with the upper classes of society. Education and awareness about human rights were key focus areas for Arya Samaj. Additionally, the promotion of Swadeshi helped boost the local economy by supporting small businesses. The ultimate goal was to create a more self-sufficient and inclusive society.

²⁴³ Bhagat, Shrikanth, *Varhad Gujarat Ma Arya Samaj*, Shri Arya Seva Sang, Surat, 1960, Pg-40.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, Pg-42.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, Pg-46.

Education and Social Reforms

Education and social reforms were interlinked to each other. When there is the spreading of education then there would be the development of the people who believe in reforming the evils that destroy the prestige of the society. So, when Arya Samaj decided to work against the evils that stopped the progress of Society.

In Gujarat, Arya Samaj established many educational institutions that not only educated the people but also ready the people for the National Movement. In Gujarat, many institutions were established for the Harijans, Bhils, and women because at that time all these were not performing their role in society because of the Misinterpretation of the literature.

Arya Samaj upholds and promotes the appreciation of our rich Vedic culture, emphasizing the importance of every Indian citizen embracing it. Through the educational establishments of the Arya Samaj, vital strides were made in raising awareness and breaking down societal biases. Though I cannot provide the exact figures, it is evident from studying the various centers of the Arya Samaj that they played a significant role in enhancing the country's literacy rate during that era. Moreover, this institution acted as a Swadeshi establishment and made significant contributions to the Swadeshi Movement.

Arya Kanaya Vidyalaya of Baroda writes its history in the golden words for spreading education among the different sections of Society. It educated a large number of girls from different parts of India. Under the leadership of the Pandit Ananadpriya Ji, it also sent educational campaigns in different parts of India.²⁴⁶

In the same way the other institutions *Arya Kanya Vidyalaya Porbander, Shrimad Dayanand Kanya Vidyalaya Jamnagar, Maharishi Dayanand Smarak- Gurukul Vidhamandir, Supa, Gurukul Vidyalaya, Songad (Saurashtra), Maharishi Dayanand Mahavidyalaya Choki (Shaurashtra), Dayananad D.A.V School, Bhavanagar, Dayananad Putri Pathsala, Tankara, etc.*²⁴⁷

All these institutions were funded by many wealthy classes and girls came from different castes. Many scholars praised the educational initiatives by of the Arya Samaj.

²⁴⁶ Motibhai, Manilal, *Vedicdharma Praveshika*, Manilal Kalayandas Patel, Suryprakash printing press Panchkuva-Ahmedabad, 1953, Pg-23.

²⁴⁷ Vedalanker, Shankerdev, Vedalanker Dilip, Abinandan Granth, Shri Pandit Anand Priya Abinandan Granth Smithi, Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Baroda, 1976, Pg-48-56.

The educational institution established by Arya Samaj had a significant impact on society. It served as a platform to promote democratic values, ethical and spiritual values, nationalism, national integration, self-reliance, and scientific spirit. With its emphasis on National education, Arya Samaj achieved remarkable success in educating the masses. The institution also played a crucial role in women's empowerment ensuring their success in various occupations, despite the prevalent societal norms that restricted them. The efforts of Arya Samaj were not limited to education alone, as it also inspired women to campaign for change in different parts of India. Through this educational institution, Arya Samaj aimed to bring about a much-needed transformation in society.²⁴⁸

Many festivals celebrated by the Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj played a critical role in raising social awareness amongst people by organizing a myriad of festivals. These festivals were more than just merry-making events, as they served as a medium for gaining knowledge and enlightenment. Distinguished scholars were invited to deliver lectures on various topics, which drew a significant crowd. The events were held with great zeal and enthusiasm, and even the nearby villagers participated in them. During my visit to the birthplace of Tankara on February 19th, 2023, I witnessed the grandeur of the festival firsthand. The venue was packed with a multitude of people, all eager to learn and experience the festival's festivities. The villagers held the Arya Samaj in high esteem as they provided invaluable assistance during difficult times. The festival was marked by Yajnas and informative lectures that added to the overall enlightening experience.

The Arya Samaj is a community that celebrates numerous festivals throughout the year to commemorate various events. One of the most significant festivals is *Rishi Bodvatsva*, which honors the moment when Swami Dayanand attained the true knowledge of the world. Other festivals include *Holikautsava*, Arya Samaj Anniversary, *Guripurnima*, *Sravani Parv*, *Krishna Jayanthi*, *Satyarth Prakash Jayanthi*, and *Rishi Nirvana Day*²⁴⁹.

²⁴⁸Pandit Saraswati, *A Critical Study of the Contribution of The Arya Samaj to Indian Education*, Sarvedeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1974, Pg-260-274.

²⁴⁹ Patel Bapubhai Kumberbhai, *Varshik Hisab and Vrathanth*, Lakshman Singh Raval ji, Chattrotar Pradesh, Anand, 1943, Pg-1.

When I visited the Anand Arya Samaj, I had the chance to explore a primary document that detailed the list of festivals celebrated by the Arya Samaj. It was fascinating to learn about the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the community. During the *Rishi Bodvatsva* celebration on March 4, 1943, a beautiful ceremony where Pandit Mayashankar, Satyvarth ji, Shri Amabalal Chokashi, Pandit Kapildev, and Satyavarth ji, a graduate, performed Yajans. The air was filled with the fragrance of incense, and the sound of mantras created a serene atmosphere. After the Yajans, they delivered an enlightening lecture on Vedic knowledge, which left me awestruck. They also spoke about the freedom movement, which was an important aspect of the Arya Samaj Movement.

Overall, my visit to the Arya Samaj was an enriching experience that gave me a glimpse into their unique culture and traditions. Through these festivals, it tried to organize the people for the freedom Movement.²⁵⁰

The Arya Samaj campaign was launched in many villages to spread the message of Vedic teachings and unite people from all classes. The organization also helped families who couldn't afford to conduct marriage ceremonies and arranged widow remarriages in the Arya Samaj Mandir, accompanied by Vedic hymns.²⁵¹

Philanthropic Activities by Arya Samaj

Arya Samaj, a social and religious reform movement in India, played a vital role in promoting social welfare and philanthropic activities also. It went beyond providing shelter to women and untouchables, offering aid to people from all walks of life, irrespective of their circumstances.

One of the most notable contributions of Arya Samaj was the establishment of orphanages to provide a home for abandoned children. This initiative was led by Lala Lajpat Roy, a prominent Indian freedom fighter, and social reformer. The orphanages not only provided shelter and food to children but also gave them access to education and healthcare. This movement helped prevent the conversion of people to Christianity, which was seen as a threat to Hinduism, by promoting inclusivity and providing a sense of belonging to those in need.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Patel Bapubhai Kumberbhai, *Varshik Hisab and Vrathanth*, Lakshman Singh Raval ji, Chattrotar Pradesh, Anand, 1964, Pg-2.

²⁵¹ Ibid, Pp-2-5.

²⁵² Sharma, Ram, *Mahatma Hansraj* (Makers of the Modern Punjab), Arya Pradeshik Pratindhi Sabha, Lahore, 1941, Pg-104.

During the period of British colonization, India was struck by a series of devastating famines that inflicted widespread suffering and death upon its populace. Despite the establishment of Famine Boards, the assistance provided by the British authorities was woefully inadequate to address the magnitude of the crisis. The root causes of these famines were largely attributed to misguided British policies, such as the emphasis on developing settlements that primarily benefited the British while leaving the local population in a state of destitution.

Amid this unprecedented catastrophe, the non-Christian private agency Arya Samaj emerged as a beacon of hope for the famine-stricken communities, providing them with vital aid and support to help them survive the dire conditions.²⁵³

During the 1899-1900 famine that wreaked havoc on Bombay, Kathiawar, and parts of the Punjab, the Arya Samaj and Christian missionaries were both engaged in charitable work aimed at preserving their respective religions. However, tensions arose between the two groups due to their differing approaches. While the Christian missionaries sought to provide aid and also convert those in need to Christianity, the Arya Samaj solely focused on providing substantial assistance to those affected by the crisis. This selfless act by the Arya Samaj highlighted their indifference towards the Christian missionaries and their proselytizing efforts.²⁵⁴

During a tumultuous period in Indian history, the Uttrotar Arya Samaj of Anand dedicated themselves to aiding refugees and advocating for their wellbeing. The partition of Bengal in 1905 led to the forced conversion of many Hindus to Islam, resulting in immense suffering. In response, the Arya Samaj of Anand penned a letter to the Viceroy and mediator, urging recognition of the forcibly converted Hindus as still being Hindu. Furthermore, the organization extended its assistance to those in need and vowed to champion their rights. Such philanthropic endeavors exemplify the Arya Samaj's commitment to serving their community.

Another example of the Arya Samaj work in Bengal, during 1943-1944 there was a great famine, which affected the large population of Bengal. In the Madhusree Mukherjee's book 'The British Empire and the ravaging of India during World War

²⁵³ Rai Iajpat, Lala, *The Arya Samaj, An Account Of Its Origin, Doctrines And Activities, with a Biographical Sketch of Its Founder*, Longmans, Green and Co. Bombay, 1915, Pg-239.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, Pg-241-242.

II' (basic book, new York.2010) describes the account of the forgotten World War 2 Bengali Holocaust, the man-made, 1942-1945 Bengal famine in which 6-7 million Indians were deliberately starved to death by the British under Churchill for strategic reasons in what was the greatest atrocity in human history but which has been largely whitewashed from the British history.

A committee was established in Anand under the leadership of the Mumbai Arya Pratindi Sabha for the relief work for Bengal. Its members were Shri Babubhai, Shri Ranchod Bhai, and Shri Baldevbhai. It started collecting money from the nearby area for the relief work to Bengal and was submitted to the Anand Arya Samaj. The nearby areas were Samarkha, Chittrodara, Aanand, and many nearby area helping money were collected.²⁵⁵

In Anand during 1940 (Vikram Savath 1997) there was a flood situation and Anand's nearby areas were under the flood. The rain was not stopped for 10 days. Everywhere there was water and the transport system was failing. As a result, a committee was summoned by the Arya Pratinidhi of Mumbai under the leadership of the Anand minister Shri Babubhai and decided to work on the relief work for Anand and the nearby Areas. It decided to open a relief camp in Ahmedabad, Navasari, Surat, and Valsad.²⁵⁶

In this relief work, Mumbai Arya Samaji Shri Kanthilal Sharma examined every center strictly and sent the report to the Mumbai Arya Pratindi Sabha. This relief work was beneficial to the 200 villages in which 642 Patidar, 1602 Bariya, 354 Rajput, 61 Pantanvadiya, 42 Harijans, 362 Muslims, 39 Christians, and 3308 Farmers benefited from it.²⁵⁷

The relief work also saw that the Arya Samaj believed in humanity. Without any religious discrimination, it provided equal help to other religions because the Arya Samaj did not believe in the religion but the humanity.

²⁵⁵ Patel, Bapubhai Kumberbhai, *Varshik Hisab and Vrathanth*, Lakshman Singh Raval ji, Chattrotar Pradesh, Anand, 1943, Pg-5.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, Pg-6.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, Pp-5-8.

Conclusion

As described in the words of Tagore India's real problem is not political but social.²⁵⁸ At the start, Arya Samaj, was not widely known but after its death, it was a great force in awakening the Country. Sir Henry Cotton considered Arya Samaj "*one of the most important and interesting chapters of the Modern Hindu thought.*"²⁵⁹

This Movement is also described as 'Chief among of modern Neo-Hindu Movement in activity and influence, which hindered the spread of Christianity in India.'²⁶⁰ In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, '*it was a crusading and reforming Movement from within, as well as a defensive organization for protection against external attacks.*'²⁶¹ In the late 19th century, Arya Samaj played a crucial role in providing a guiding principle to the Nationalist Movement. Their motto was not just about achieving freedom from the British colonial rulers, but also about eradicating the social evils that plagued the Indian society at that time. The message of Arya Samaj was clear - the quest for independence should not be limited to political freedom, but should also aim to create a just, equitable, and prosperous society, free from the shackles of casteism, superstition, and other regressive practices.

Following this Statement Mahatma Gandhi presented his views about the Arya Samaj social reform Untouchability among the many rich legacies that Swami Dayanand had left to us, his unequivocal pronouncement against Untouchability in Undoubtedly one.²⁶²

Throughout the British colonial era, scepticism surrounded the worth and very existence of India's rich cultural heritage. Yet, Arya Samaj stood at the forefront of preserving the magnificence of ancient literature. Despite British allegations of social maladies within the Indian culture, the truth was that many of these issues stemmed from poverty. This affliction was a direct result of the detrimental governance of the British colonial powers, who implemented various policies that led to the impoverishment of farmers.

²⁵⁸ Tagore, Nath, Rabindra, *Nationalism*, book club of California, Noorwood Press, 1917, Pg- 97.

²⁵⁹ Cotton Henry, *New India*, London, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., Ltd, 1904, Pg-238.

²⁶⁰ Report of the world Missionary conference held at Edinburg in 1910, Vol. Pg-17.

²⁶¹ Nehru, Lal, Jawarlal, *The Discovery of India*, The Signet Press Calcutta, 1946, Pg-290.

²⁶² Gandhi, Mahatma, *A message, Dayanand Commemoration*, Volume, Ajmer, 1933, Pg-1-2.

In the 19th century, poverty made people to indulge in the evils. Two of such examples are of female infanticide and child marriage. Due to poverty, the parents do not want a girl child because financially they are not able to spend money for their future life. They were ready to sell them or marry a man who was twice her age. As a result, they were widow at an early age.

The Britishers' invasion had a devastating impact on our Swadeshi occupation, but Arya's attempts to revive it were commendable. In her analysis, Meenakshi Jain sheds light on how the Britishers resorted to hyperbole to magnify the social issues plaguing India, with the sole intention of consolidating their power and quelling the spirit of nationalism. The struggle to preserve our indigenous industries and traditions was a crucial aspect of India's fight for freedom against colonial oppressors.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, a great Indian philosopher and social reformer, dedicated his life to reviving the ancient traditions and values of Indian culture. He firmly believed that the ancient Indian culture was an embodiment of righteousness and wisdom and that it never included any form of evil practices. Through his extensive research of ancient literature, Swami Dayanand Saraswati sought to present to society a clear understanding of the true essence of ancient Indian culture.

However, Swami also recognized that various evils had seeped into Hinduism during the foreign rule. He was deeply concerned about the negative impact of these evils on the Hindu society. As a result, he advocated for a return to the true values of Hinduism, without any of the negative influences that had been introduced over time.

Today, the concept of neo-Hinduism has emerged, which is a consequence of Western influences. Unfortunately, this new form of Hinduism is plagued with many evils that are contrary to the true essence of Hinduism. Swami Dayanand Saraswati's teachings and legacy continue to inspire many to embrace the true values of Hinduism and to reject any negative influences that may have been introduced over time.

The Arya Samaj has made remarkable efforts to tackle societal issues through their social reform movement. I have observed that individuals residing near the different Arya Samaj centres hold the organization in high regard. For the untouchables and Bhil Tribe, the Arya Samaj has been a cure-all. It has worked towards their integration into mainstream society and advocated for their equal rights as individuals. The Arya Samaj has also been actively involved in empowering women. Numerous women who

were educated at the Arya Samaj centres not only spread the message of human equality in India but also in other countries, during a time when international travel was considered taboo. The Arya Kanya Vidyalaya in Baroda stands as a prime example of this. Many girls from the institution travelled globally to promote education. The Arya Samaj's efforts to promote widow remarriage can be seen through various examples outlined in this chapter.

Arya Samaj is an interesting organization that conducts their marriage ceremonies based on Vedic hymns instead of relying on Brahmins. They also strive to integrate the Bhil Tribe into society and have demonstrated religious harmony during times of crisis by providing equal assistance to all religions. Notably, Jawaharlal Nehru commended Arya Samaj for their successful social work initiatives, which include improving education for both genders, empowering women, and elevating the status of the depressed class.²⁶³ Thus, the role of the Arya Samaj in Social reforms of Gujarat was memorable. Arya Samaj introduced many social reforms and it gained the positive attitude from the people of Gujarat. A large number of population was attracted towards the Arya Samaj which included mostly the down-trodden people of Gujarat. The down-trodden got the equal opportunity in society because of the Arya Samaj in Gujarat.

²⁶³ Nehru, Lal, Jawarlal, *The Discovery of India*, The Signet Press Calcutta, 1946, Pg-336.