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## **A Study on Dayananda Saraswati's Educational Philosophy, Social and Political Ideas Towards Arya Samaj**

**Shiva Agarwal**

(Research – scholar), E mail- shivaagarwal18@gmail.com

**Dr. Halder Yadav**

(Research – Guide), Deptt. of Education, MUIT LUCKNOW

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores Swami Dayananda Saraswati's contributions to education, social reform, and political thought, culminating in the establishment of the Arya Samaj. It examines the philosophical underpinnings of his educational ideals as articulated in Satyarth Prakash and other writings, analyses his social initiatives against caste discrimination, gender inequality, child marriage, and ritualism, and traces his political vision for an enlightened state rooted in Dharma. The study highlights the institutionalization of his thought through the Arya Samaj network of schools, colleges, and reform movements, and assesses their impact on India's modern renaissance and nationalist struggle. Swami Dayananda Saraswati was a pioneering educationist, transformative social reformer, and a staunch cultural nationalist. Revered as a beacon of enlightenment and a spiritual warrior, he played a pivotal role in shaping individuals and institutions with profound conviction and purpose. His most enduring legacy lies in the establishment of the Arya Samaj, a movement that catalyzed revolutionary change in both educational and religious spheres. As one of the foremost reformers and spiritual luminaries of modern India, Dayananda Saraswati's influence continues to resonate across generations. His philosophical and ideological contributions are



encapsulated in three seminal works: *Satyarth Prakash*, *Veda Bhashya Bhumika*, and *Veda Bhashya*. Additionally, the journal *Arya Patrika*, which he edited, offers valuable insights into his thought and vision. Swami Dayananda occupies a distinctive place in the evolution of political thought in India. At a time when many educated youth were imitating superficial aspects of European civilization and advocating for the transplantation of British political institutions without regard for India's cultural ethos, Dayananda courageously asserted India's intellectual and spiritual sovereignty. He challenged Western dominance in social, cultural, and political domains, advocating instead for a revival rooted in Indo-Aryan heritage. A vocal critic of idol worship, caste-based discrimination, ritualism, fatalism, infanticide, and the commodification of marriage, he championed progressive causes such as women's emancipation and the upliftment of marginalized communities. His commitment to Vedic supremacy led him to oppose religious conversions and promote the *Shuddhi* movement, aimed at reconverting individuals to the Hindu fold. Swami Dayananda also articulated a comprehensive political philosophy, addressing concepts such as the theory of the state, forms of government, tricameral legislature, governmental functions, and the rule of law. His ideas reflect a synthesis of ancient wisdom and forward-looking governance, positioning him as one of the most advanced political thinkers of his time.

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## Introduction

Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824–1883) stands as one of the most influential figures in nineteenth-century India, combining the roles of religious revivalist, educational reformer, social activist, and political thinker. His clarion call “Go Back to the Vedas” challenged prevailing ritualism and superstition, while advocating for an integrated educational model that fused Vedic wisdom with modern disciplines to cultivate morally upright and socially conscious citizens. Swami Dayananda Saraswati was a distinguished educationist, visionary social reformer, and ardent cultural nationalist. He stood as a



radiant beacon of truth—a spiritual warrior and a sculptor of individuals and institutions—whose legacy continues to shape the intellectual and moral fabric of modern India.

His most transformative contribution was the founding of the Arya Samaj, a movement that ushered in a profound revolution in the domains of education and religion. Through this institution, Dayananda catalyzed a resurgence of Vedic values, rational inquiry, and national consciousness, positioning himself as one of the most influential reformers and spiritual forces in India’s modern history.

The dynamic personality of Swami Dayananda found powerful expression in the vitality of the Arya Samaj movement and in the character of its adherents. The organization’s contributions to educational advancement are particularly noteworthy, having laid the foundation for institutions that emphasized moral integrity, intellectual rigor, and social responsibility.

As noted by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, “Among the makers of modern India who played a pivotal role in the spiritual upliftment of the people and ignited the flame of patriotism within me, Swami Dayananda occupies the foremost place.”

The significance of Dayananda’s ideas extends beyond his lifetime through the Arya Samaj, an organization he founded in 1875 to propagate Vedic teachings, establish schools and colleges, and lead campaigns for social upliftment. By examining his key texts—Satyarth Prakash, Veda Bhashya Bhumika, and related journals—this study investigates how his educational philosophy, social ideals, and political concepts interlinked to form a comprehensive blueprint for India’s regeneration.

### **Life Sketch of Swami Dayananda Saraswati**

Swami Dayananda Saraswati was born in 1824 into an orthodox Brahmin family in Tankara, located in the Morvi state of Kathiawar. His father, Karsamji Tiwari, served as a priest in a Shiva temple and played a formative role in nurturing Dayananda’s early education. Known in childhood as Mulasi Dayaram or Mulasankar, he demonstrated remarkable proficiency in the Vedas, Sanskrit grammar, and classical literature from a young age.

A pivotal moment in his spiritual awakening occurred at the age of fourteen during the observance of Shivaratri. While his family slept after performing rituals, Mulasankar witnessed a rat consuming the offerings placed before the idol of Shiva. This incident profoundly impacted him, leading to a deep questioning of idol worship and its theological validity. He concluded that a deity unable to protect its



own offerings could not safeguard the world, thus initiating his lifelong crusade against ritualistic orthodoxy and superstition.

Despite familial efforts to anchor him through marriage, Dayananda resisted the constraints of domestic life, driven by a higher calling. In 1861, he encountered Swami Brijananda in Mathura—a decisive turning point in his spiritual journey. Under Brijananda's mentorship, he immersed himself in ancient scriptures, mythological texts, and philosophical treatises. It was here that Mulasankar transformed into Swami Dayananda Saraswati, embracing the mission to revive Vedic wisdom and challenge regressive traditions within Hinduism.

Although he briefly engaged with the Brahmo Samaj, ideological differences—particularly regarding the authority of the Vedas and the doctrine of transmigration—led him to chart an independent path. To institutionalize his reformist vision, he founded the Arya Samaj in Bombay on 10th April 1875. The organization became a powerful vehicle for religious and educational reform, with Dayananda dedicating the remainder of his life to establishing its branches across India.

His uncompromising stance against orthodoxy and his reformative zeal often drew criticism from conservative circles. Yet, he remained steadfast and resolute in his convictions. Swami Dayananda Saraswati passed away on 30th October 1883 due to food poisoning, leaving behind a legacy of spiritual awakening, rational inquiry, and institutional transformation. In Mathura, Mool Shankar encountered his spiritual mentor, Swami Virajananda—a revered blind Vedic scholar—whose rigorous guidance profoundly shaped his intellectual and philosophical trajectory. Under Virajananda's tutelage, he immersed himself in the study of the Vedas, Upanishads, and Vedantic philosophy, critically examining prevailing religious practices. This transformative period led him to renounce superstition and sectarianism, and to embrace monotheism and the doctrinal supremacy of the Vedas.

Upon the completion of his studies, he adopted the name Swami Dayananda Saraswati and committed himself to the reform of Hindu society through the revival of its authentic Vedic foundations. His mission became one of spiritual reclamation, rational inquiry, and institutional renewal.

### **Founding of Arya Samaj**

On April 10, 1875, Swami Dayananda Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj in Bombay, articulating its guiding principles through a codified set of twenty-eight rules. These tenets upheld the doctrine of Vedic monotheism, firmly rejected idolatry and caste-based discrimination, and advocated for progressive



social and educational reform. The Arya Samaj rapidly evolved into a dynamic reformist movement, establishing branches in key cities such as Lahore, Delhi, and others across the Indian subcontinent. It served as a centralized platform for the dissemination of Dayananda's philosophical and reformist ideals through public discourses, institutional outreach, and publications—including the influential journal *Arya Patrika*.

### **Educational Philosophy**

Swami Dayananda Saraswati's philosophical and reformist ideals are most prominently articulated through his seminal works—*Satyarth Prakash*, *Veda Bhashya Bhumika*, and *Veda Bhashya*. Additionally, the journal *Arya Patrika*, edited by him, serves as a vital medium reflecting his intellectual convictions and socio-religious perspectives. Notably, Chapters II and III of *Satyarth Prakash* are devoted to the subject of education, addressing the developmental needs of both infants and adolescents.

These contributions not only establish his stature as a prolific writer but also underscore his role as a transformative educational and religious reformer. Swami Dayananda was deeply critical of the prevailing education system, which he believed failed to cultivate character, discipline, and moral integrity. In his view, true education should produce individuals who are modest, self-controlled, energetic, respectful toward elders, and committed to righteous living. He emphasized the importance of associating with learned individuals and practicing generosity.

In his booklet *Vyavharbhanu*, Dayananda delineated the attributes of a true *pandit*—a learned teacher worthy of guiding students—and contrasted them with the traits of the ignorant, who should not be entrusted with the responsibility of education. His vision of education was expansive and integrative, encompassing subjects such as Sanskrit grammar, classical literature, the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Ayurveda (science of health), Dhanurveda (science of warfare), Gandharvaveda (aesthetic arts), Arthaveda (vocational training), astronomy, algebra, arithmetic, geology, and space science. His educational framework was thus broad-based, foundational, and deeply rooted in indigenous knowledge systems.

Regarding the medium of instruction, Swami Dayananda advocated for the use of *Aryabhasha*—the lingua franca of India—to ensure accessibility and mass communication of Dharmic principles. While he supported Sanskrit for its spiritual depth, he was critical of English as a medium of instruction. Nevertheless, he acknowledged the utility of English for mastering Western science and technology, and



emphasized the importance of mother tongue as the most effective medium for social and mass education. His linguistic philosophy aimed at democratizing knowledge and fostering social unity.

Central to Dayananda's worldview was the belief in the infallibility of the Vedas, which he regarded as the divine foundation of Hindu culture. His clarion call—“*Go Back to the Vedas*”—was a rallying cry for spiritual and cultural renewal. Unlike many contemporaries influenced by Western thought, Dayananda's reformist approach was rooted in indigenous traditions. His efforts led to the establishment of Gurukulas, Girls' Gurukulas, and DAV Colleges, which became instrumental in liberating Indian education from colonial paradigms.

Swami Dayananda also played a pivotal role in India's democratic and national awakening. He is credited with being among the first to articulate the concept of *Swaraj*, advocating political independence as a fundamental objective. His ideas of liberalism and nationalism resonated deeply with rural India, reaching communities long bound by ignorance and superstition. Like a skilled physician, he diagnosed the socio-cultural maladies afflicting the nation and prescribed remedies grounded in moral and spiritual regeneration.

His educational philosophy is marked by its constructive and comprehensive character. He recognized education as the primary vehicle for societal upliftment and human dignity. By harmonizing traditional Indian values with the advancements of modern science and technology, he envisioned a transformative model of education—one that addressed social evils and fostered universal moral and spiritual welfare, transcending barriers of caste, creed, nationality, and time.

### **Social Vision and Reformist Legacy of Swami Dayananda Saraswati**

Swami Dayananda Saraswati was a pioneering social reformer whose ideas challenged entrenched orthodoxy and catalyzed a transformative movement within Hindu society. He firmly opposed idol worship, caste-based discrimination, ritualism, fatalism, infanticide, and the commodification of marriage through dowry and groom-sale practices. His advocacy extended to the liberation of women and the upliftment of marginalized communities, reflecting a deeply inclusive and egalitarian ethos.

Grounded in the supremacy of the Vedas, Dayananda's reformist stance also included the promotion of the *Shuddhi* movement—a peaceful reconversion initiative aimed at restoring individuals who had embraced other faiths back into the Hindu fold. He believed that the regeneration of Indian society could



be achieved through the widespread dissemination of Vedic education, which he viewed as the cornerstone of moral, spiritual, and national revival.

Among his most enduring contributions were the establishment of Gurukulas, Girls' Gurukulas, and DAV Colleges, which provided an indigenous alternative to colonial education. These institutions emphasized character formation, spiritual discipline, and intellectual rigor. Dayananda's educational philosophy rejected blind imitation of Western models, advocating instead for a curriculum rooted in Indian culture and values, while integrating modern sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, and geology.

Swami Dayananda was also a visionary nationalist. He is credited with being among the first to articulate the concept of *Swaraj* (self-rule), asserting that true governance must arise from within the people. He championed the use of *Swadeshi* goods and recognized Hindi as the national language, emphasizing linguistic unity and cultural pride. His democratic ideals were reflected in the organizational structure of the Arya Samaj, which was built through grassroots elections and participatory governance.

The Arya Samaj, founded in Bombay in 1875 and later in Lahore in 1877, became the institutional embodiment of Dayananda's philosophy. Under the leadership of successors like Lala Hansraj, Pandit Guru Dutt, and Lala Lajpat Rai, the movement expanded its reach and impact. Its objectives included the revival of Aryan cultural values, the promotion of moral living, and the re-establishment of India's spiritual greatness in response to internal decay and external pressures.

Guided by ten foundational principles, Arya Samajists upheld the belief in one omnipotent and eternal Supreme Being, rejected idolatry and priestly intermediaries, and emphasized karma, rebirth, and the pursuit of global well-being. They were ardent advocates of social reform, gender equality, and universal education, and played a pivotal role in weakening the grip of conservative orthodoxy.

Swami Dayananda's teachings inspired a renaissance of true Hinduism, restoring its ethical and philosophical depth. His efforts led many who had been influenced by Western ideologies or converted to other religions to return to Vedic traditions. Through purification rites and inclusive outreach, he redefined the boundaries of religious identity and social belonging.

He was particularly vocal about the rights and education of women, condemning regressive customs such as purdah and child marriage. He believed that national progress was impossible without the



empowerment of women, and often cited figures like Sita and Savitri as exemplars of virtue and strength—not seclusion.

Dayananda also denounced untouchability as a moral aberration, affirming the inherent dignity and divinity of every human soul. He envisioned Gurukulas as egalitarian spaces where children of all backgrounds—royalty and farmers alike—would live, learn, and grow together under the guidance of enlightened teachers.

His educational model emphasized serenity, discipline, and cultural immersion, with institutions like the Kangadi Gurukula standing as lasting symbols of his vision. Through these efforts, Dayananda laid the foundation for a spiritually awakened, socially just, and intellectually empowered India.

In conclusion, Swami Dayananda Saraswati remains one of the most influential reformers and spiritual architects of modern India. His legacy is vividly reflected in the vitality of the Arya Samaj movement, which continues to uphold his ideals of education, equality, and national resurgence. As noted in the *Cultural Heritage of India* series, “The Arya Samaj is Dayananda writ large,” encompassing saints, scholars, organizers, and thinkers—all bearing the imprint of his luminous moral and spiritual vision.

### **Political Philosophy of Swami Dayananda Saraswati**

Swami Dayananda Saraswati’s political thought was deeply rooted in idealism, drawing profound inspiration from the study of the Vedas. His interpretative approach diverged significantly from traditional commentaries such as those of Sayana and Mahidhar. Rather than adhering to ritualistic or sectarian readings, Dayananda embraced the enduring belief that the Vedas embody universal truths—principles that withstand the scrutiny of reason and the rigor of scientific inquiry.

He asserted that the Vedas are not merely spiritual texts but foundational sources of knowledge encompassing diverse disciplines, including medicine, mathematics, music, astronomy, politics, and economics. In his view, the Vedic corpus offers a comprehensive framework for ethical governance, social justice, and national regeneration. His political idealism was thus inseparable from his vision of cultural and educational reform, positioning the Vedas as the bedrock of India’s intellectual and civilizational resurgence.

### **Swami Dayananda Saraswati’s Conception of Government Functions**



Swami Dayananda Saraswati envisioned government as the representative and servant of the community, entrusted with both protective and developmental responsibilities. Its primary function, in his view, was to ensure security against internal disorder and external aggression, while simultaneously fostering the highest moral, intellectual, and spiritual aspirations of human life.

He acknowledged the legitimacy of private property and accepted the natural inequality in the distribution of wealth. However, he cautioned that unchecked affluence could pose challenges to governance and social harmony. To safeguard national sovereignty, Dayananda emphasized the necessity of maintaining a robust and disciplined military force, asserting that a strong defense apparatus was indispensable for preserving the independence of the state.

Swami Dayananda also articulated a compassionate dimension of governance. He asserted that the state must act as a guardian for those unable to sustain themselves—whether due to age, infirmity, or youth. He specifically highlighted the responsibility of the government to support the dependents of deceased public servants, such as widows and minor children. However, he maintained that such support should be contingent upon moral conduct; individuals who engaged in unethical or destructive behavior should not be entitled to state assistance.

This holistic vision of governance—combining security, equity, moral accountability, and social welfare—reflects Dayananda’s commitment to a just and enlightened society rooted in Vedic principles.

## **Conclusion**

Swami Dayananda Saraswati’s educational philosophy, social reform agenda, and political thought coalesce into a visionary framework for national rejuvenation—anchored in Vedic wisdom yet responsive to contemporary challenges. His integrative model of education aspired to cultivate morally grounded, intellectually awakened citizens; his reformist zeal targeted the eradication of regressive practices and the restoration of social equity; and his political ideals envisioned a state governed by Dharma, committed to justice, accountability, and the welfare of all.

Through the institutional reach of the Arya Samaj, Dayananda’s principles transcended individual advocacy, becoming catalysts for India’s socio-political transformation. In a time marked by ethical ambiguity, sectarian discord, and systemic educational decline, his comprehensive blueprint offers timeless guidance for building a pluralistic, value-centric society rooted in spiritual integrity and rational inquiry.



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