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Arya Samaj: A linguistic creed, nurturing nationalism

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Abstract

Arya Samaj nurtured the spirit of nationalism through a vision of one nation-one language. Swami Dayanand heralded a new era of nationalistic sentiments and put in the minds of the Indians the feeling of patriotism to achieve freedom. Arya Samaj was a reaction against the influence of the British and western religion. To counter the Colonial tools of expansion, Swami Dayanand championed the usage of Hindi language and encouraged Indians to apprehend the potential of this language as the binding force for the whole nation on the path of independence. He made Hindi a mandatory language of usage in Arya Samaj and he used to call Hindi as the Arya Bhasha which consequently turned a strong impetus for the nationalistic feeling. Swami Dayananda had a deep influence over the entire world of Hindi literature and he stressed the significance of Hindi language throughout life. The unparalleled contribution of Arya Samaj in the spread of Hindi and its popularity can be seen from the fact that Hindi was made the national language with the attainment of Independence.

Keywords: Arya samaj, Dayanand, vedic dharma, arya bhasha, hindi, hinduism, nation, nationalism, language, vedas

Introduction

Swami Dayananda established Arya Samaj on April 10, 1875 in Bombay to re-establish the true Vedic Dharma. Arya Samaj began as a reaction against the Western influences and to reform the Hindu religion. Though the Arya Samaj was primarily concerned with social and religious reforms, it also acts as a crusading force for the rise and growth of nationalism and political awakening in India. Its patriotic and nationalistic impact was equally noticeable. Arya Samaj's linguistic creed sowed the seed of nationalism and nurtured its growth through Arya Bhasha. Creating national consciousness through language was the vision of Swami Dayanand Saraswati. The mother-tongue of Swami Dayananda was Gujrati and he got his education in Sanskrit. He became learned Sanskrit scholar and used to deliver his speeches and discourses in Sanskrit. When he went to Calcutta in 1872, met with Keshav Chander Sen, a Brahmo-Samajist, who advised Swamiji to deliver his speeches in Hindi instead of Sanskrit, because it would be easier to understand and much better than bi-lingual interpretations, which sometimes make completely wrong sense of his speech. It was a big moment in the history of Hindi language, when a Gujrati speaking person and a peerless Sanskrit scholar adopted the Hindi and vowed to deliver his speeches in Hindi, which is the unparallel example. In May 1874, Swami Dayananda came to Kashi from Prayag, gradually well versed in Hindi and delivered his first Hindi discourse. Consequently people started to come in more numbers to listen to him in Hindi as compared to his earlier Sanskrit discourses ^[1]. Thereafter, Swami Dayanand started to deliver all his speeches in Hindi. Laxmi Sagar Varshnaya wrote that because of the discourses of Swami ji in Arya Samaj functions, Hindi language become unexpectedly popular, in all over the Northern India ^[2]. Swami Dayananda had an unfathomable love for Hindi. In Arya Samaj the usage of Hindi was mandatory. In the twenty eight principles, which were framed in the first meeting of Arya Samaj in Bombay, the fifth principle propounded that all the members and office bearers of Arya Samaj have must use Hindi language imperatively. Undoubtedly, Swami Dayanand meant Hindi when he used Arya Bhasha, as for him words like Hindu, Hindi and Hindustan were not acceptable ^[3]. He used to call Hindi the Arya Bhasha. He also used to say that only Hindi language can unite the whole nation into one single entity. To consecrate Hindi as a national language is a great and invaluable beneficence for India. He was the first Indian to say one nation – one language.

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Swami ji also made Hindi the medium of his writings. He wrote many books in Hindi. In June 1874, Swamiji wrote Satyarth Prakash and it was his first creative work in Hindi. Besides Satyarth Prakash he wrote Panchmahayajna Vidhi, Samskara Vidhi, Atamacharit and many commentaries on Vedas. The discourses, writings and commentaries of Vedas were done during the times of Swamiji, but he was the first person to change the traditional system by presenting the commentaries of the Vedas in the language of public – Hindi and making Vedas available to everyone. This was an epoch making moment in the history of Hindi language. Through Hindi language, the Arya Samaj did a significant contribution in nurturing the national ideology. Its influence could be seen in Gujrat, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and other states of Northern India. Arya Samaj spread in the middle class of India especially. The epicenters of Urdu language – Punjab and Utter Pradesh were turned into the hubs of Hindi language and it happened only due to the efforts of Arya Samaj ^[4]. The great Indian poet Nirala has beautifully written about Hindi and Arya Samaj that “the awakening in India today is only because of Arya Samaj and Swamiji is the promoter of national language Hindi. The language of Arya Samaj has been Hindi only ^[5]”. The role of Arya Samaj in making the Vedic knowledge available to all, shutting the mouths of the critics of Vedic Dharma, with the refinement of Hindi poetry and developing a language of comedy and satire, etc., has been praiseworthy.

Since Swamiji’s lifetime, the entire world of Hindi literature is deeply influenced by his views and ideology. On the poetry of Bhartendu Harishchandra, there is a special impact of Swami Dayananda. He has highlighted the efforts of Swamiji in the field of national language Hindi in the following manner: ‘Own language gives progress, which is the root of all progresses and this fulfills every heart’s wish ^[6].’ Swami Dayananda love for Hindi language had a tremendous impact on Hindi literature. Dr Ganapatti Chander Gupt comments, “in fact, the idealistic feelings of the poets of the Dwivedi group were nurtured by full cooperation of the Arya Samaj” ^[7].

Swami Dayananda and other Arya Samaji leaders had an indestructible affection for Hindi language and their impact on Hindi literature and journalistic works is noticeable directly or indirectly. Arya Samaj did a constant promotion and enrichment of Hindi in the country and in foreign countries through the medium of journalism. Swami Dayananda gave new dimensions to the Hindi journalistic works during his lifetime. Arya Darpan (Shahjahanpur: 1878), Arya Samachar (Merut: 1878), Bharat Sudasha Pravartak (Farrukhabad: 1879), Deshh Hiteshi (Ajmer: 1882), etc., were many Hindi Papers, which were published on his inspiration and the number of papers and journals increased gradually. Between 185 and 1900, different Arya Samajs published more than two hundred papers, which helped the spread of Hindi especially in the non-Hindi states ^[8]. Later on through the medium of various papers and magazines, the Arya Samajs contributed the expansion in highly praiseworthy manner. These papers and magazines aimed to promote and expand Hindi language besides providing religious, social and nationalistic knowledge. Shradha, Aryajagat, Bharat Sudasha Pravartak and Aryavandana were the main papers which staunchly supported these factors. Laxmi Narayan Dubey says that Arya Samaj’s Hindi journalism actually is the tale of the inspiring ballet of the history of Indian independence ^[9]. The

role of the Hindi Press were all instrumental for the awakening and growth of national consciousness in the 19th and early 20th century, as this was the language of the majority.

In 1882, Swami ji put forward the issue of teaching the Arya Bhasha Hindi with the Sanskrit before the Hunter Commission. The commission chaired by Mr. Hunter suggested appropriate language for the education system and official works India. During those days Urdu, Farsee and English were the official languages. Swami Dayananda inspires all the Arya Samajists to send a signed memorandum in big numbers to the hunter Commission to make Hindi a language of the court. Consequently, the branches of Arya Samaj from all the nooks and corners of the country send memoranda. From Kanpur people send two hundred memorials on which two lakh people had signed to make Hindi the language of the court. This was one the fantastic incidents of Indian history to honor Hindi language by Swami Dayananda and Arya Samaj ^[10]. Hence the creed of nationalism of Arya Samaj, appeals to its members and they accordingly entered in national politics.

Arya Samaj not only inspired its own members to learn Hindi, but ordered to write the proceedings in Hindi too. The number of letters, which Swami Dayananda had written in Hindi, is more than anybody else. On his inspiration all the Arya Samaj started to write their personal and official letters in Hindi. Many people learnt Hindi getting inspired from Swami Dayananda. Major among them were the people of the families of the royal descent on the one hand and there was also people like H S W Alcott, a foreigner. It is worth mentioning here the rulers of the estates like Shahpur, Jodhpur, Udayapur, etc., were the followers of Swami Dayananda, and they made Hindi the language of the court in their respective estates. These efforts in one hand promulgated the philosophy of Dayanand in the princely states and on the other strengthened the Hindi language in the regional podium.

Swami Dayananda was a staunch supporter of Hindi. When the leader of the Theosophical Society’s asked the permission Swami Dayananda to translate his writings into English, the latter wrote a comprehensive letter in that response, mentioning specifically that the translation into English would mar and stop the studies of the Sanskrit and Hindi knowing people living in the foreign countries. Perhaps there is no other person in the history of Hindi literature, who did not allow his books to be translated into other languages owing to the reason that this would hamper the expansion and promotion of Hindi language. Swami ji answered very passionately to the question of a devotee from Punjab when the latter wanted to translate his works into Urdu language, that the translations help the foreigners only. The letters of Devnagri script are very simple and hence easily comprehensible and graspable. Similarly Hindi language being very simple and be learnt in a short span of time. He asked those fools, who were born in India and don’t want to learn Hindi, what can be expected from them? He further said addressing the audience “you ask me to grant the permission of translation, but Dayananda’s eyes want to see that day when from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Attak to Kattak there would be the spread of Devnagri letters (script)”. Swami Dayananda, the brain behind the linguistic vision wrote in one of his books that for the execution of one language in the whole Aryavarat (ancient name of India) he wrote all his books in Arya Bhasha

(Hindi). Expressing the full love and devotion in his heart for Hindi language, he wrote “one who wishes to know my feelings, he must consider it to be his duty to learn Arya Bhasha (Hindi)”. Not only this, but he made it an essential for every member of Arya Samaj to learn Hindi. We don't find any other organization which imposed the use of only one language ^[11]. The entire Hindi world will remain indebted of Arya Samaj for making Hindi the language of the common man.

The promoters of Arya Samaj wrote and sang the hymns in Hindi. Speakers used to speak in Hindi, which helped the spread and influence in the far flung villages. Apart from Swami Dayananda, Arya Samaj gave talented speakers in whom Pundit Lekh Ram, Swami Darshananda, Budhhdev Vidyalkar were the main ones. They used to conduct discussions in Hindi. Their effort really did a great service to Hindi and this language became popular very quickly. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi has written in this regard that “these debates and discussions helped Hindi language to become rich and mature ^[12]”. Accepting unanimously Hindi as the National language (Rashtra Bhasha) by the Indian Constitution on December 14, 1947 was actually the result of the works done by Swami Dayananda seventy seven years earlier. Arya Samaj has done the promotion and expansion of Hindi after the Independence, and has done works in making this language compulsory, people oriented and national language. Arya Samaj has promoted and bolstered Hindi whether it is social sphere or religious or political or educational, its role is conspicuous.

Another achievement of Arya Samaj was that it introduced Hindi language in the fields and subjects of Sciences. In all educational institutions of Arya Samaj, science was taught in Hindi. In Gurukul Kangri, Hardwar, the books of science subjects and mathematics were prepared and the teaching in Hindi was started successfully. It the result of that endeavor that all the books of science subjects are available in Hindi medium and many papers and magazines like Vigyan Parishad Anusandhan Patrika are being published in Hindi now.

The popularity, spread and expansion of Arya Samaj and its role in the spread and promotion of Hindi language caused reaction in the organizations of Sanatan Religion, who started to oppose Arya Samaj but their rivalry proved a great help in the spread and popularity of Hindi language. The organizations of Sanatan also made their opposition in Hindi, which helped the spread of Hindi language and helped the reach of Hindi to the common people as Arya Samaj did through its papers and magazines. In 1901, the Sanatan Dharam magazine was published in Hindi in Calcutta, and when Swami Dayananda made the people of Punjab aware about Hindi, the workers of Sanatan Dharam started to promote Hindi among Punjabi-Hindu population as a reaction. Now all their papers started to be published in Hindi such as Peeyush Pravah, Sanatn Dharm Pataka, etc. To vie with the Arya Samaj, the Sanatan Dharam started many schools, which became the centers of the education of Hindi ^[13]. Such constructive compete sparked a new tone in nationalism in beyond the turf of Arya Samaj.

Arya Samaj, thus, has waved the flag of Hindi language for the past 145 years and has done unparalleled contribution in the spread and expansion of Hindi language. The spread of Hindi language to the common masses, Hindi literature, Hindi journalism and making Hindi the medium of education, and, to establish Hindi in the field of science, the

Arya Samaj has done a praiseworthy role; and, as such Hindi has grown noticeably. Even today the Arya Samaj is indefatigably doing the social works and the spread and promotion of Hindi language. The entire Hindi world will remain indebted for making Hindi the national language (Rashtra Bhasha) and the language of the common man. By making Hindi a national language, Arya Samaj helped the promotion and growth of Hinduism and Vedic wisdom all over India. The spirit of nationalism grew side by side Hindi as a Rashtra Bhasha.

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