

3. Indian Political Thought (Dayanand Saraswati)

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His life and times

- Born on 12th February, 1824, in Rajkot district of Gujarat, wrote three masterpieces, namely, Satyarth Prakash, Sanskarvidhi and Yajurved Bhashyam. He died in 1883 in a mysterious circumstances.
- He is remembered for launching three movements, ***Arya Samaj, Shuddhi*** Movement, ***Back to the Vedas***.
- Great social reformer to resuscitate Hindu from orthodoxies
- a profound Vedic scholar and master dialectician.
- Opposed idolatry, i.e.. Idol worshipping in any form of gods and goddesses and upheld the existence of only one, ***Formless God***.

Introduction

- For his logical, critical and scientific analysis of religious faiths and bringing a revolution in the notion of 'divinity', he was ensconced with the title of "Maharishi"(noble saint) and is considered as one of the makers of modern India.
- Founded ***Arya Samaj*** in 1875, a Hindu reform movement advocating a return to the temporal as well as spiritual authority.

Reform of the Caste System

- Lend support to Varnashram Dharma wherein the Hindu Society was arranged into four varnas
- Brahmana- main duty was to learn and teach and advice to the king
- Kashatriyas-a ruler and fighter for the nation
- Vaishyas-trade and industry
- Shudras-to serve all other castes

Dayanand's view on Caste System

- He believed that prevailing caste system is a distorted form of ancient caste system
- He said that in ancient times a person's caste was determined by his ***merit, function and temperaments(guna, karma and swabhava) and not by birth.***
- He condemned the prevailing caste order on the basis of birth and encouraged the **idea of intercaste mobility**, a revolutionary message for the dogmatic Hindu society.
- The practice of *untouchability* was not only unjust and inhuman, but also against the Vedic precepts.

The Four ashramas

- Brahmacharya- observance of self-restraint and devotion towards learning;
- Grihastha-person is married and runs a household;
- Vanaprastha- person abandons his household and go to forest as hermit;and
- Samnyasa- rise above all worldly matters and lead a life of ascetic

His Political Ideas

Though not directly involved with the politics, Swami Dayanand love for the nation and its liberation knew no bound. Indeed he has given the call for '***Swarajya***' as '**India for Indians**' in 1876, later taken up by Lokmanya Tilak.

Equally he is known for his penchant for building up Political Organization as per the teachings of Vedic precepts and Manusmriti.

Political Ideas of Dayanand

- Favoured an enlightened monarchy;
- The ideal king should be *kshatriya*;
- Danda is the symbol of political power;
- The Dharma(rules of righetousness) would instill the inspiration to the king while performing his duty;
- Danda, as elaborated in Manusmriti. Will be an abiding idiom for the performance of duty.

Political Ideas...

- Danda is the founder and administrator of justice;
- It is the protector of four Varna and the four ashrams;
- Danda, indeed, is the synonym for Dharma.
- Dayanand warned that when Danda is wielded with a noble intention, it bestows various blessings upon the subject.

Political Ideas

- However, when Danda is applied indiscriminately, it results in the destruction of Kingdom;
 - So, it is the pious duty of the king to apply danda with noblest intention;
 - A deprave king is killed by the power of Danda itself.
- "all actions should be performed with the prime objective of benefiting mankind".**

Political organization and its principles

Three councils should be organized with the joint efforts of king and her subjects, and these are:

- I. *Vidyarya Sabha*** (Educational Council)
- II. *Dharmarya Sabha*** (Religious Council)
- III. *Rajarya sabha*** (Administrative Council)

Together they shall pave the way for learning, freedom, inclination for right conduct, right education and prosperity for all human beings.

The King will preside over all the Council and will not have the absolute say.

An ideal king should treat his subjects as his children and the subjects should also respect the king.

Village Administration

- According to Satyarth Prakash, the king should appoint chiefs of different ranks to facilitate the village administration, and it follows as:
 - i. The Chief of one(1) village;
 - ii. The Chief of ten(10) villages;
 - iii. The Chief of twenty(20) villages;
 - iv. The Chief of hundred(100) villages; and
 - v. The Chief of thousand(1000) villages.

Village Administration

- Each of the Chiefs would report directly the king of occurrence of any crime in their jurisdiction.
- It is clear from the above description that Swami Dayanand completely abhorred theocracy as principles of political organization, rather he was more inclined towards welfare state.

Aryavarta

- The solemn duty of the king such as the provision of Universal education, protection of the widows and orphans, and abolition of child marriage and polygamy further reinforces the belief that Swami was in favour of a welfare state. As clean politics and sense of justice emerged top on his mind.
- He defined ***Arya*** in the following terms: "A person who kills living beings is not an Arya. Arya always entertains feeling of non-killing for all living beings."

Ten tenets of the Arya Samaj

1. God is the efficient cause of all true knowledge and all that is known through knowledge.
2. God is existent, intelligent and blissful. He is formless, omniscient, just, merciful, unborn, endless, unchangeable, beginning-less, unequalled, the support of all, the master of all, omnipresent, immanent, un-aging, immortal, fearless, eternal and holy, and the maker of all. He alone is worthy of being worshiped.
3. The Vedas are the scriptures of all true knowledge. It is the paramount duty of all Aryas to read, teach, and recite them and to hear them being read.
4. One should always be ready to accept truth and to renounce untruth.
5. All acts should be performed in accordance with Dharma that is, after deliberating what is right and wrong.

Tenets of Arya Samaj

6. The prime object of the Arya Samaj is to do good to the world, that is, to promote physical, spiritual and social good of everyone.
7. Our conduct towards all should be guided by love, righteousness and justice.
8. We should dispel Avidya (ignorance) and promote Vidya (knowledge).
9. No one should be content with promoting his/her good only; on the contrary, one should look for his/her good in promoting the good of all.
10. One should regard oneself under restriction to follow the rules of society calculated to promote the wellbeing of all, while in following the rules of individual welfare all should be free.

Evaluation

- Primarily a religious and social reformer
- A great patriot having his own way of promoting nationalism
- His love for Aryavarta, passion for ***Bharat Bhumi*** and description of ***Suvarna Bhumi***, perhaps an archetype of nationalism he synthesized to have for modern India.
- His objection to foreign ,no matter howsoever good and beneficial, was uppermost in his seminal work on Satyarth Prakash.

References

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- Ghoshal,U.N.,A History of Indian Political Ideas,OUP,1966.