

WOMEN EMANCIPATION: ROLE OF ARYA SAMAJ MOVEMENT

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In 19th century many socio-religious reform movement rises in India like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Singh Sabha, Namdhari movement and Dev Samaj also, But in this paper, the researcher has only discussed in the topic of Arya Samaj movement and its Role of women emancipation in society. Swami Dayanand Saraswati was founder of Arya Samaj. It was a reformative, revivalist, movement. Through this movement, Swami Dayanand Saraswati attacked child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, Purdah system, dowry system etc. This movement found the reason for women suffering in society, then un-education and illiteracy so the researcher has discussed the role of Arya Samaj movement which has been also commendable. it also played significant role in women emancipation.

INTRODUCTION

In 19th century India and in Punjab various socio-religious reform movements and Samajes in rises in three different communities in society. The Hindus, Sikhs and the Muslims have started different movements in the society like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Dev Samaj, Nirankari, Namdhari, Singh Sabha movement, Aligarh Movement, and Ahmadiya movement. In 19th century these movements, the women issue was

centre of all socio-religious reform movement. The present paper seeks to “Arya Samaj Movement and its role of women empowerment, emancipation. The Arya Samaj movement was a reformist, revivalist, movement and it began in Gujrat (Kathiawar) on 10th April 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) and later in 1877 he founded the Arya Samaj at Lahore (Punjab)

Social Ideals and main principles of Arya Samaj Movement

The Arya Samaj movement was protest movement. The protest against the domination of orthodox Brahmanism has been proselytizing Islamism and Christianity, degenerating Hinduism and anti National forces. Its main object was to revive the ancient and social order on Vedas. The Arya Samaj movement has made innumerable

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contribution in social, religious and political fields. In religious object: priest craft, pantheism and Avatars and incarnation of God, idolatry, In Social Fields: Untouchability, caste system, child marriage, polygamy, widow marriages, Sati system, Purdah, Cow protection system and women education and equality.

Arya Samaj and role of Women Emancipation

The Arya Samaj movement has also other branches at different places. All these branches were working for the spread of education in women and improving of social reforms. It believed in women emancipation in society. The reformers believed towards the fusion of sub-caste on the principle of reverting to the four Varnas and towards encouraging widow remarriage and discouraging child marriage, the Arya Samaj movement even the fixed marriageable age for girls and boys as sixteen and twenty five respectively. It laid more stress on a strategy to diffuse knowledge and disciple's ignorance.

Women like Harijans, have been called slaves. In the British period men were the slaves of the British and women were the slaves of these enslaved men. Women had few rights, little freedom and were rarely considered as equals. Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj movement was among the pioneers of women's' rights and equality in modern time periods. He advocated the equality of sexes. He also encouraged woman to study the Vedas "a Revolutionary step at the time" They were allowed to recited "Gayatree" mantra while tradition did not permit them this privilege. He also carried on a crusade against child marriage. The Arya Samaj movement took up the cause of and improved education in general and women's education in very impressive way. It has organized a network of schools and colleges in the country.

Status of Women

During the Vedic period, women were greatly honoured and much enjoyed equal status with men. They have active participation in all fields of life, but during post Vedic period women had started losing their own status in society, the women were not eligible for the study of Vedas, nor for use of mantras in performing sacraments except marriage. The status of women in that time being very tender,

women should be protected by father in the childhood, by her husband in young age and by the sons in the old age. She lost her identity after marriage. During the Mugal rule, women also suffered further degradation, since polygamy was a norm with the Muslims they picked up any woman as they wanted and kept her in their "Harems". The Indian woman started using Purdah a veil to protect them. Parents started marrying their daughters at a very early age. Some began to consider a girl as misery and a burden which has to be shielded and protected from the eyes of intruders and needed very extra care. On the other hand a boy did not need any such protection thus a vicious circle started in which the women were at receiving the end. All this culminated into new evils and abuses such as child marriage, sati system, (Jauhar), and restriction on the woman education.

Forbidding of Child Marriage

The evil of child marriage was responsible for a larger share of decadence. Swami Dayanand launched a long crusade against the evil custom of infant marriage as it was the cause of many miseries. In his Satyarth Prakash, Swami Dayananda wrote, "Down into the depths of misery sinks that country where in the people do not practice brahmacharya, nor acquire knowledge, where early marriage and marriage between the unsuitable and prevalent Dayanand suggested that the Ideal time for the marriage of a female was from 16 to 25 years of age and of a male from 25 to 48 years. Swami Dayananda Saraswati apart from physical ground also condemned child marriage as anti Vedic. He wanted the state to enact a law to enforce Brahcharya and the abolished child marriage. The attainment of a proper degree of maturity of body and mind before marriage Swami Dayanand also suggested that the marriage should be celebrated with the consent of the contracting parties. The act of 1860 in respect of child marriage was revised in 1925 which increased the age of consent to thirteen for married girl and fourteen for unmarried ones. The Arya Samaj has conducted a fiery crusade against this unnatural custom and may be congratulated on it success in rallying public opinion to favor its views.

Widow Re-marriage

Associated with the evil practice of infant marriage was another problem, the pitiable condition of this time the Hindu widows. The Number of widows was very large in those days. Swami Dayananda advocated honour and respect for women, yet initially he did not favor the widow remarriage. He suggested Niyoga (temporary union between men and women to beget child) in place of remarriage for both the sexes. Swami Dayanand made this provision mainly to allow the widows and widowers bear children in certain well defined condition. Swami Dayanand was very strong support to the widow remarriage movement. Swami Dayanand was allowed even married women (whose husband were alive) to have Niyoga if their husband were impotent. The Arya Samaj movement was published many pamphlets and distributed and create greater consciousness and awareness and the approval of re-marriage of widows. Swami Dayanand in a meeting with Keshav Chandra Sen (Brahmo Samaj) at Calcutta and he supported remarriage of widows. Swami Dayananda's views on widow remarriage, Dharmatatva, writes "If a widow wants to remarry, she should be allowed to do so. the two category of this time widows in those days who became widows in their childhood and never had sexual intercourse with their husband and became widow after having matured as woman. This time for widows belonging to first category, remarriage was always desirable. That time the Arya Samajees of Amritsar, Lahore sponsored these tracts like Munshi Jiwan Dass "Sada-I-Haqq" (The voice of Truths) and Pandit Lekh Ram's "Risala-I-Nawid-Begwan" (A treatise containing glad news for widows) which strengthening the public opinion. In 1882 Arya Samaj leaders arranged for widow re marriage. In Gurdaspur district (Punjab) the Arya Samajee arranged a widow remarriage of same (chutree) caste. The Arya Samaj published quarterly paper in this time for favoured of widow-remarriage "Vidhwa Bandhu", "Vidhwa Sahayak" and "widow cause" in English, Hindi, and Urdu language. Rig-veda also may be quoted in support of widow re-marriage or women left as the dead husband and go to the world of the living and let this child of the thy (late)

husband belong to the thy second husband who was accepted thy hand. Swami Dayanand views were very progressive and he was keen to elevate the status of women and bring it at par with those of men. This time some books in support of widow re-marriage Ganga Prasad updhyaya wrote "Vidhwa Vivah mimansa". The Arya Samajis of Agra defeated the Sanatanis in many shastrarthas on widow re- marriage. Though widow re-marriage were not held in large numbers that time, but this Satyarth propaganda by the Arya Samaj movement created a psychological revolution in society. The Arya Samaj established "Vidhwa Asharam" (home for widows) and "Vidhwa Vivah Pracharni Sabha" (Society for propagating widow remarriages) at several places on 10 December 1914, Vidhwa Vivah Paracharni Sabha, Saharanpur arranged re-marriage of child widow of a Vaisya family. In Muzaffarnagar on 31 December 1914 re marriage of the widow daughter was done. The widow Ashrams were opened at Lahore, Mathura, and Haridwar where they were lodged and re married. The Vidhwa Vivah Sahayak Sabha (1915) (Society for assisting widow re-marriages) was opened by Sir Ganga Ram. In Punjab, Mahatma Hans Raj also contributed to bringing legislation permission widow re-marriages among the higher castes in the Nabha States. Mahatma Munshi Ram (Swami Shardhanand) also supported widow re marriage in his pamphlet entitled "Kshatra Dharam Palan ka gair Mamuli Mauka" was published in 1895. The Arya Samaj established Vidhwa Ashram or Banita Ashrma at Agra, Dehradun and Bareilly districts of western U P. These ashrams managed re marriage of hundreds of widows and imparted training to them in education and craft. Many persons and institutions outside, Arya Samaj movement also joined hand with the Arya Samaj workers consequently, the early opposition to the Arya Samajist efforts began to subside and the condition of the widows began to improve.

Abolition of Purdha System

Girls and women today have better opportunities for their development. They have more freedom to study and work outside of home but in 19th century the life was much harder for majority of the women. Certain social practices like Purdha

system, polygamy, Sati Pratha were prevalent in some section of Indian society. Purdah was main feature of social life among Hindus and Muslim families. The Purdah is a symbol of social prestige and own security. The Arya Samaj movement broke the Purdah system and premised full freedom of women. Each women keep a member of Arya Samaj and vote and represent in bigger bodies like “Arya Samaj Pratinidhi Sabha” “Arya Dharam Sabha” were greatly concerned and want to fight the social abuses, evils of the restriction imposed on women by Purdah system.

Arya Samaj and Education of Women

In 19th century the education system in Indian society is caste based system. This time period majority of women in those days were illiterate education was limited to handful of men belonging to the upper castes. Many children’s especially girls were not sent to school. Education was imparted in traditional Paathshala, Madrassa, Mosques, and Gurukuls. Religious education was imparted along with subjects like Sanskrit, grammar, arithmetic, religion and philosophy science and technology had no place in the curriculum. Many superstitious beliefs existed in the society. In certain communities girls, were not allowed to be educated. It was thought that the educated women would soon become widows after marriage, but the reality lack of education and awareness was the root cause of social and religious backwardness among the Indian society, so it was Important to promote female education,. The aim of Arya Samaj movement was to remove social evils and spread of education. Arya Samaj emphasized removal of illiteracy to dispel orthodox and darkness from the society. It established a large number of educational Institutions in India for the education of both male and female. The Arya Samaj was clearly reflected in the field of education where one school supported a more traditional system, while another section recognized the value of English education and modernism.

Contribution of Arya Samaj to Promote Female Education

Dayanand’s views on Women Education : To remodel and transform the society Arya Samaj paid ample attention to the education of girls.

About the importance of education, Swami Dayanand used to say “we hold big conferences and function in which many resolutions to the effect that girls should be educated are adopted, He was of the view that without education no person or no society can prosper because education is the cause for human growth and prosperity, so every Hindu should favour women education.

During the 1880 the Arya Samajists had begun to found girls school in different-different parts of the Punjab. In 1885-88, the Amritsar Arya Samaj provided continual leadership while the Lahore Samaj Concentrated on Dayanand Anglo Vedic Schools and Jalandhar Samaj provided new pattern of motivation and leadership. This Samaj opened girl school in 1886. In 1888 Munshi Ram the Arya Samaj Started a girl’s school at Talwan, but he had to close it soon. In 1880 the Arya Kanya Pathshala was opened in Jalandhar. In 1889 the Ferozpur Arya Samaj the Samajes of Gujrat and Bhagwanpura organized a successful girl’s school. Then other school and colleges for women’s established by the Arya Samaj movement during 1886-1947 in different areas in the Punjab. Arya Putri Pathshala, Abohar 1903-4, Arya Girls Middle school Moga (1921), G.M. Arya girls primary school Amristar, Patti (1933) Sain Dass A.S. Girl High School Jalandhar (1942), Hans Raj Mahila Mahavidyalya Lahore (1927)

To Empower women from the lower strata of society DAV runs crafts and vocational centers in slum Araes of Delhi, Faridabad, and Yamuna Nagar Haryana, Ranchi (Jharkhand), and other places women are given free training in cutting, stitching, embroidery etc.. As per DAV records, 1000 girls have been helped to enter the household life (Grihastha Ashrama)

So by 1912 Arya Samaj had established one college. This time the Arya Samaj founded numerous women education schools. Other states the Arya Samaj Founded many school like in 1928 Arya Kanya Mahavidyalya, Narwana. It was up-to 10th standard. In 1930 Arya Kanya high school, Karnal was founded. In 1942 Arya Girls high school, Bhatinda was founded. The main motive of all these

institutions was to impart knowledge for physical, mental, and intellectual progress of girls.

CONCLUSION :

With its opposition to various social evil and abuses the Arya Samaj movement rendered valuable services to Hindu society. He opposed the injustice to women and worked for the education of the females. He vehemently opposed child marriages, polygamy, "Purdah" system and the practice of Sati etc. Citing the teaching of the Vedas he proved that the women should have equal right with men. Inter caste marriages and interlining was practiced by the members of the Arya Samaj. This movement established a number of educational institutions like Gurukuls, Kanya Gurukuls, DAV schools and colleges for the education of both males and the females. These educational intuitions protected the Hindu religion and society and encourage women empowerment and also promoted the growth of knowledge and education, women education in modern scientific line.

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