Chapter 3

HISTORICAL, RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF DAYANAND’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
Thus, emergence of Dayanand as a great philosopher, a deep thinker, a great religious reformer and an educationist is an important event in the world history and the development of various backgrounds produces the real picture of Indian history. He gives a new direction to the philosophy, religion and thinking and he has also developed a new and highest type of educational philosophy which guides and prepares future line for world education.

Dayanand’s aim is to regenerate India and through India, the world. He finds out the causes which have brought about the fall of India, socially, morally and politically and decides to remove them. He criticizes and condemns the tenets of Islam and Christianity but maintains friendly relations with the maulvies and the priests who oppose him and hold religious debates with him. Sir, Sayad Ahmed Khan (1883) believes, “Dayanand was such an excellent and learned man that it behoved men of all religions to respect him, no matter to what religion they belonged. He was in any case such a great man that he has no equal in India”. He has created such an educational philosophy for Vedant-Darsan and Vedic-Dharma which is originated in special types of backgrounds.

Rabindranath Tagore (1924) says, “With a clear sighted vision of truth and courage of determination Dayanand
preached and worked for our self-respect and vigorously awakened mind that could strive for a harmonious adjustment with the progressive spirit of the modern age and at the same time keep in perfect touch with that of glorious past of India”.

(Sarda, 1968, p 596).

In the evaluation of educational thoughts of Swami Dayanand, it seems meaningful to study the bases of his education in the light of **historical, religious, philosophical, social and cultural backgrounds of that period.**

In the **historical background of his philosophy**, Vedic Dharma had always been the critic of Buddha-Dharma and Jainism, though Jain-Dharma is left behind in comparison to Buddha-Dharma so far as effectiveness and universality of religion is concerned. Thus, Vedic-Dharma has always been in conflict with the Buddha-Dharma. Buddha Dharma opposes Vedic-Dharma and considers srutis (Vedas) as unreal. It also rejects Yag etc. Vedic-Karma kand. In the same way, Buddha Dharma creates a problem before Vedic feeling and it also creates a sentiment of disbelief in the minds of people about the existence of Vedas. Hence it becomes essential to remove the disbelief and wrong conception of the people about the existences and utility of Vedas. The Jain faith and Buddhism come into existence after the Mahabharata. The Jains believe only in the mind or chit, and matter or a chit. As they deny the existence of God, they condemn stuti, Upasana, and Prarthna. Historically, Jainism looks upon the world as filled with Jiwas and even stones have souls and that there are countless souls in a plant. The Jain Tirthankars declare that there are four virtues, mercy, forgiveness; correct knowledge, good company and good conduct. Swami Dayanand deprecates the feelings of
malice, hatred and hostility which underlie such teachings of Jainism because this religion carries man to the wrong path of life. “It makes man to indulge in bad Karmas”. (Satyarth Prakash, 1971, p 412). So, he condemns the wrong practices and beliefs of Jainism. The Jains deny God altogether. The Jains assert, “The mind becomes God. They regard their teachers called the Tirathankars as having attained absolute salvation and as having become God, there being no God existing from eternity”. (Sri Durga Prasad, 1978, p 413).

Buddha neither affirms nor denies the existence of God or the existence of the Dharma. The famous King of Morya Vansa, Ashoka, advances Buddha Dharma by his kingly power. The result is that the age of religious conflict starts. Due to which Buddha-Dharma gets a set back and Sanatan Vedic Dharma comes into existence. Ashoka, on the basis of Buddha Dharma follows the policy of Dharma Vijay, which proves to be a curse in the near future. The principle of “Ahinsa-Permo-Dharma” becomes meaningless because the followers of Ashoka can not carry it with the same zeal and zest. The followers of this religion at the end of Morya rule adopt the wrong path and the seats of Buddha become the place of merriment, or pleasure in place of purity, religiousness and spiritualism. This religion also has a disbelief in the authority of God and Vedas. “It is the partiality and untruthfulness of the Jainis and Buddhists to believe in the existence of one conscious being, the ego, and not believe in God.” (Sri Durga Prasad, 1978, p 419).

In this way, the people look towards Vedic-Dharma as they think it to be the solution of their life problems. The “Asvamedha Yagya by Puspa-Mitra is a symbol of reconstruction of Vedic Dharma.
Thus, it becomes essential to remove the doubts of Jainism and Buddhism about the activities and principles of Vedic-Dharma so that the reality of vedic principles may reach the people. In this respect, Shankaracharya and Swami Dayanand did a great job in order to advance the Vedic Jyoti to the humanity. Both “Shankara and Dayanand find the prevailing religion in India to be corrupt and not in accordance with the Vedic teaching and both make it their mission to purge it of its impurities and restore it to its original purity so as to be in strict accord with the teachings of Vedas”. (Sarda, 1968, p LXVII). Shankaracharya does not follow Vedas, Dayanand translates Vedas and writes his great work Satyarth Prakash.

When Dayanand finished his studies and was preparing to fulfill his mission, India was ruled by a foreign power. It had already passed through six hundred years of Afghan and Turk rule, and was then passing, province by province, under the British rule. Christian, Muslim religions and cultural forces were assailing Hinduism on all sides. “Dayanand realized that the eternal verities as taught by the Vedas were the only ultimate realities and tried to restore belief in them” (Sarda, 1968, pPLXXXV). Hence historical background provides a great assistance to the development of religious, philosophical and educational thoughts of Swami Dayanand at that age.

On the religious background of his philosophy Dayanand safeguarded the Hindu religion from the clutches of other religions based on selfish motives and personal ambitions. He criticized in ‘The Satyarth-Prakash’ and in his lectures, the various sects prevalent in India. These sects, though having offshoots of the vedic faith, took their origin in mistaken views of the vedic teachings due to wrong interpretations of the
Mantras. The other sects being of foreign origin have taken root and become largely prevalent in India. Materialism, Charvaka, Jainism, Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism, neo-vedantism and their various sects on the one hand and Islam and Christianity on the other hand were such religions which establish the wrong beliefs about religion in the minds of people.

His chief object is to remove differences that have sprung up among the people of India by following wrong beliefs and to bring about unity in India by bringing the various sects and communities together, and finally to establish amicable relations between the various nations. He himself says, “The sole aim of my life is to help to put an end to this mutual wrangling, to preach universal truths, bring all men into the fold of one religion whereby they may cease to hate each other and, instead, may firmly love one another, and live in peace and work for their common Welfare”. (Sarda, 1968, PLXIV). So, he has been recognized as the greatest teacher in Indian society. In the field of religion, his values, ideas and principles give a new search light to the wavering Hindu Society.

In the words of Dayanand, religion is not simply belief. It is an attempt at realization of the ultimate reality to get into harmony with it. “Meditation and worship are most important parts of religion, in fact they constitute its essence”. (Bahadur, Mal 1962). He lays emphasis upon the daily need of worship. He says in the Satyarth Prakash that the individual can get rid of all sufferings by his nearness to God and thereby acquire divine attributes. So everyone should daily perform acts of worship in the form of contemplation, prayer, and meditation. He is against the practice of idol worship.
From the above facts, it is clear that before his advent, various Avedic (Non-Vedic) beliefs darkened the religious picture of Indian Society. The various sects were connected with the personalities of their founders and teachers. The one distinctive features common to all except the vedic faith (Hinduism) is belief in and worship of the founders of Mohamadanism and Buddhism etc. The Vedic religion which claims to be eternal and of divine origin is free from this feature.

Hinduism does enjoin worship of some of its great men, Sri Ram and Krishna whom it regards as incarnations of God. But they are neither the founders nor the chief exponents of Arya Dharma. Apart from the worship of God as Vishnu, Siva and Brahma and his incarnations Rama, Krishna and others, the other features of Hinduism are the caste-system and the Brahmin priest hood, and the performance of Yajnas. None of these – the idol-worship, the caste system or the Brahmin-priesthood finds place in the Arya Dharma, the vedic religion. The main superstitious belief of the followers of Buddha, Christ, Muhammad is that they give the founders of these religions the same place as the worship of God occupies in Hinduism. “The teachings of vedic-religions purged of the exotic growths on it and the later superstitions such as idol-worship, belief in God’s incarnations, the caste system, Brahmin priest hood and pilgrimages are the same as the essential teachings of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism with its silence about God and the Souls” (Sarda, 1968, LXIII).

Jainism and Buddhism could not admit the reality and validity of Vedas. They were against the Vedas. The main intent of this age was to disgrace the Yagya and Verna-Ashram system based on Vedas and the tendency was to laugh at Vedic
principles. So, it was natural to make effort in this direction in order to eradicate the Avedic (Non-Vedic) beliefs and to establish the principle of vedic-dharma again. The development of the philosophical principles of Swami Dayanand is the result of the effort of the establishment of Vedic-Dharma and removal of Avedic beliefs. His main object is to protect the Vedic-dharma and to criticize these sects which are opposed to vedic dharma. He has expressed his disagreement with the Buddhist school. “If every thing is shunya or void, the knower is also shunya or void”. (Satya Prakash, 1938, p 146).

In contrast to the above, Dayanand believes that every thing which exists is real or true. The Christians look upon Palestine as Holy land and Jerusalem as their sacred place. The Muslims look upon Hedjas and Mecca as their sacred places, for Muhammad was born there. But he does not declare India as a sacred country, nor does he regard Mathura and Ayodhya, the birth places of Sri Krishna and Sri Ram as sacred. He teaches that Hardwar or Rameshwaram or Dwarka or Banaras are no more sacred than any village or any city like Delhi, agra, Ajmer etc. He declares that a man, wherever he may be born, if he is righteous in his conduct and follows truth and worship God, will get salvation, no matter what language he speaks and what country he lives in, but not be, even though he lives in India and believes in the Vedas, but leads an unrighteous life. In the words of Pandit Dharam Deva, 1972 “In Reality, no religion has ever preached things so evidently incompatible with contemporary knowledge or so immoral as the doctrines preached by church or Christianity, what can be more absurd than that the mother of God was both a mother and a virgin. The very foundations of this religion are so absurd and immoral

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that men can not believe in them”. Dayanand emphasizes that the Veda contains truth of science as well as truth of religion.

**Philosophical Background of Dayanand thoughts are due** to his philosophy based on truth and realism which placed him on the high pedestal of Indian philosophers. He saved Indian Philosophy from the clutches of wrong myths and panths. He is a philosopher who translates his beliefs and doctrines into actions. He is the greatest of the personalities of the 19th century. He tries to find out a solution for the complex problems of human life. “He wanted not only an intellectual satisfaction on these matters but he aspired for the realization of truth concerning them”. *(Satya Prakash, 1938, p 4).* The middle age of Indian history is the age of development of philosophical thinking. This age combines the philosophical thoughts of Vedas, Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhism reaches the final limit of its philosophical development in this period, due to which, four classes of Buddha Philosophy come into existence named as Vebharik, Sotrantic, Yogachar and Madhyamik. The thinkers of Jainism like the philosophers of Buddhism give a special direction to Indian Philosophy. Umaswati, Kunth Kunthacharya, Sing Seng Diwanar and Samat Bhadra are the philosophers who advanced the basic principles of Jain Philsophy named “Syathvad”, and Anantad.

So, in the middle ages, the vedic philosophical thinkers tried to criticize the principles of Buddhism and Jainism based on wrong thinking and adorned the vedic thoughts as the real basis of human philosophy. Maharishi Jemini and Acharaya Kumaril criticize the principles of Buddhism which are visible in their writing on mimansa-Sutras. Maharishi Vadrayan’s Brahm Sutras find a highest place in vedic philosophy. These sutras lay
emphasis on rejecting the Avedic philosophical principles and establish the supremacy of only Brahma. Acharya Shankar also makes Brahma Sutra, Upanishad and Srimat Bhagwat Gita, as the basis of his educational philosophy. Shankar’s Advaita is based on the Upanishads. Dayanand believes that Upanishads contain the essence of Vedas. He purifies the doctrine of the advaita philosophy. He does not believe Upanishads as Vedas. “Though Shankara purified doctrines, he let the Hindu society as a whole fall a prey to the evils of the caste and the worship of images and all other evils that flow from such practices”.

(Sarda, 1968, p LXXV).

Cultural Background

Cultural background on which Dayanand’s educational thoughts are based was due to the reason that Buddhists established new values, destroying vedic traditions. Vedic philosophy and vedic religion had been abolished in the whole country. Buddhists rejected the validity of vedas and varna-ashram religion. They produced the melancholic view in the minds of people regarding the Yagyaic activities. Vedic culture remains intact, through the scholars. Acharya Shankar made efforts to protect Vedic culture. But he does not try to go deep into this task as Swami Dayanand goes to protect it from the prevalent panths and beliefs. He saves Indian culture from the hands of those self-motivated persons in this country who for their benefit wanted to gain religious benefit and he also saves the culture from Muslim and Christian rigid thinking. According to him, “All myths and miracles were irrational, and also sometimes implied immoral acts. No such non-sense could be part of Vedas”. (Sarda, 1968, p 307). Thus, Dayanand took an ancient Hindu tradition and culture and gave it a new direction which suffered a lot due to different panths and beliefs.
Before Dayanand, the followers of various religions and panths thought only towards ‘Sunya’ in the name of religion and spiritualism. They neglected vedic thought and wanted to impose their supersitious beliefs on the minds of the people. The minds of people were wavered by the evil thoughts of various panths. Shankaracharya made some efforts in this respect to enlighten the vedic thoughts again. But he only based his thoughts on Upanishads, “Dayanand touches the real core of Vedas and carries the vedic thoughts to the people in easy and simple language and tries to make the people understand the real ancient culture of India i.e. Vedic culture which is based on religion and spirituality. (Sarda, 1968, p 307, 308).

Vedic literature had also been spoiled by the self-interested priests of various panths and beliefs. They imagined the wrong meaning and interpretation of Vedas or Srutis. The reading and teaching of Vedas was neglected and discouraged. At such a critical hour, he comes to protect Indian literature. He again motivates the people towards Vedic literature which is true to the Indian conditions. Through his writings, he again establishes the lost prestige of Indian culture in a reformative form. Dev Chand in his letter, “Dayanand and the Regeneration of India”, says “Swami Dayanand did his best to revive the old cultural system of India which had enriched the world and given rise to many a new cultural ideal.” (Sarda, 1968, p 349).

Social Background of Swami Dayanand philosophy reveals that at that time Shankaracharya tried to uplift the human society but he limited his teaching and thoughts only to his school on his name. Shankaracharya could not think so deeply the problems of people as Swami Dayanand did. Dayanand studies deeply the social problems and tries to find
out a solution. He emphasizes the teaching of Vedas as the real solutions of various social and human problems. According to the teaching of Vedas, man can only get success in his individual and social life if he follows the teaching of Vedas. Gandhi ji ranks Dayanand as a great man, “Who hypnotized people by such virtues as thought freedom, love, sympathy, large-heartedness and work-efficiency” (Bhuvdeva Shastri, 1974, p 12).

Dayanand tries to uplift the Hindu society and opposes the evils prevalent in it. His principal teachings are celibacy before marriage, equality of man irrespective of colour, creed or country, elimination of all prejudices and superstitions and selfish and class interests, doing good deeds, liberty of conscience and more important than all these, service of mankind. He tries to make the people realize their degradation and ignorance and help them to regain strength, self-confidence and a will to break the fetters that bind them and win back their spiritual, political and social freedom. He knows that centuries of worship of false gods and political subjection to men of inferior culture and civilization but strong, courageous and determine to rule have sapped the strength and undermine the morale of his own people. His first task is to instil in them the spirit and the will to cast off the artificial and self imposed bonds that tie them to their present position, and to remove from their eyes the bondage that prevents them from seeing the light of truth and liberty. Thus Dayanand’s teachings are for universal application.

His own words remind us of his thoughts about human social life. “The purpose of my life is the extrication of evils, introduction of truth in thought, speech, and deeds, the
preservation of unity of religion, the expulsion of mutual enmity, the extension of friendly intercourse, and the advancement of public happiness by reciprocal subservience of the human family". (Pandit Ved Mitra, 1972, p 13). Thus, he renders a matchless service to the entire Hinduism and makes it free from the dirty clutches of idol worship.

In the middle ages as well as in Muslim and British period, people took the limited view of varna system as caste system due to wrong influence on them by the Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. The foreign critics as well as social reformers and saints like Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya – Maha Prabhu strongly condemn the Hindu caste system. He lays emphasis on Ashram system and Varna-Vyavastha. He strongly denounces the caste system and wants to re-establish the varnas in their original purity and based on natural tendencies (Svabhava) acquired qualifications (Guna), actual deeds (Karma). He tries to make the people understand that their view towards the low castes and untouchables are wrong. He also criticizes the orthodox view of Brahmin towards the so called lower castes. He emphasizes on the strong Hindu social system which should be without caste thinking, but should be based on mutual understanding and humanity. “It was not his dream to be the founder and Guru of a reformed sect, but to work for the regeneration of the whole Aryavarta. His own efforts and those of his Samaj were not only for the sake of Aryas, but for the sake of the larger body of Hinduism” (Jorden, 1978, p 289).