

MISSION AND MISSIONARY METHODS OF SWAMI DAYANANDA SARASWATI (1824-1883)

Introduction

I was given freedom to choose a topic within the general theme, Mission in the context of multi-faith reality- Hinduism. The general theme expected me to reflect upon Christian Mission in the context of religious pluralism with special reference to Hinduism. This classical Christian missionary approach suggests that only Christians have a mission, and the Hindus are the objects of their mission. Let me suggest a reversal of the approach in order to see that Hindus too may have mission. I am presenting, in this paper, a case for a Hindu mission derived from the life and work of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, one of the pioneers of Hindu reform movements in the second half of nineteenth century. Swamiji was the contemporary of great reformers of his time who struggled hard to present their form of Hindu religion to their fellow men. An understanding of his mission and missionary methods may give us an opportunity to gain a few new insights into our own mission and missionary methods.

The other compelling reason to take up this study is the present context of a revived Hinduism under the forces of Hindutva, talking almost in the same language as that of Swami Dayananda, with the same zeal and might of crusaders. Christians and their institutions are the main targets of their renewed religious militancy that was earlier directed against another minority community in India, the Muslim. Swami Dayananda was one of the first, in modern times, to take up this approach, and these zealots and their organizations, such as, Rashtriya Swayam-sevaka Sangha (RSS), Bajarang Dal, Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) etc., are following. Present study is an attempt to bring forth the general methodology these organizations peruses in order to achieve their goal.

Brief life sketch

In persuasion to his *sanyasin* tradition, Swami Dayananda had kept his life background a closely guarded secret. It was late in life that he was recognised a force to reckon with, and then it was too late to gather much about him and his family. It was during his trip to Pune in 1874, for the first time, he opened himself up to an audience and gave a few glimpses of his early life. He was about 60 years old and was, perhaps, sure enough of not encountering anyone from his family and acquaintances. Many, after his death, tried to reconstruct his early family life, but not with much success. I am depending upon one of the most researched construction of life of the Swami by Jordens.¹

Dayananda Saraswati was the first born of a Brahman, belonging to an ancient *SamaVedic* branch of the Audichya clan, in a town, identified as Tankara, in the state of Morvi in Kathiawar,

¹ Jordens, JTF, *Dayananda Saraswati: His life and Ideas*, Oxford University Press, Delhi. 1978

Gujarat. He was born in 1824, though we can not ascertain his correct date of birth. His was supposed to be known as Dayaram Mulashankar, or Mulji, but became famous with his *sanyasin* name, Dayananda Saraswati. His father was a strict and devout Shaivite. He was an official tax collector, a moneylender and a landowner. As such, he was an important and wealthy man, exerting much influence in his society. He had two more sons and two daughters, but he took great interest in his eldest son; his education, religious initiation, studies of Vedas, Vedic rituals, study of *Dharmashashtras* and Sanskrit grammar. At the age of fifteen, he was encouraged to take part in the religious ceremonies associated with *Shiva-ratri* that included fasting and over-night vigil in the temple. It was on that day, his strong desire to search for religious truth beyond rituals, liturgies and myths was awakened and a life commitment to go after that truth began. It so happened that he saw some mice running over the emblem of Shiva and eating the offerings. This raised serious questions in the mind of young Mulashankar, which his father could not answer to the satisfaction of his son. Soon after this experience, the sudden deaths of his young sister and of his uncle-teacher convinced him the need to seek salvation through some other way. He found the way in and through asceticism, yoga and renunciation. His family tried to tie him with the worldly affairs and arranged for his marriage, which he avoided as long as possible, and when he could not, he ran away in search of *moksha*. He was twenty-one years of age when he left the home of his father.

Religious Influences upon Dayaram

The Brahmanic background and tradition of Swami Dayananda is worth taking note of. The community was characterised by its deep roots in antiquity through Sanskritic rites and learning and maintaining old Vedic tradition. The Hindu community in Kathiawar, in contrast, took up *Puranic* religious practices and rites. The great majority of them followed *Smriti* texts as guides in social and religious relationships and were known as *Smarta*. They trace their origin to Adi Shankaracharya, the great exponent of *Advaitic* philosophy, and Kumarila, the theologian of ritualistic school of *Purvamimansa*. They reaffirmed Vedic rites and *dharma* in reaction to the Buddhists and the Jains. They considered themselves elite, orthodox and guardians of the oldest traditions of Hinduism. They recognised the pantheon of Hindu deities worthy of proper worships though preferred Shiva as their favourite deity. They should not be confused with a particular Hindu sect Shaivism; they only represent a group of orthodoxy of the Hindus with a strong attachment to the worship of Shiva. They took keen interest in their religion and initiated many reforms. It is, however, to be noted that not all Brahmans of the area were conscious of their heritage. Many among them left the tradition and considered as 'fallen' since they reduced themselves to an inferior status by cutting off their connection with the *shastras* and Shaivism. Some followed Vaishnavism. Some of them either adopted Jainism or became priests in their temples. Some among them became the priests of low caste people. The *Smarta* Brahman looked down these groups of Brahmans, some of them were even expelled from their clans and branches. By the end of eighteenth century, some of the brahmanic clans have established

themselves, occupying leading positions in the society, playing important part in the politics, were holding landed properties and engaged in profitable business, and were the real carriers of the rich brahmanic tradition. The Kathiawar brahmanic community, therefore, stood apart not only from other Hindu communities, but also from the brahmanic communities of whole of Gujarat. Swami Dayananda came from such a rich traditional community with deep interest in Sanskrit learning, grounding in *Shashtras* and religious devotion to Lord Shiva.

The socio-religio-cultural environment, from the time immemorial, has been such in the Kathiawar region of Gujarat that it produced many religious and political leaders of repute. The area is characterised by the presence of temples and monuments of saints and martyrs, pilgrim and religious centres belonging to the Jain, Vaishnava and Shaiva religious traditions. There is hardly any doubt about the influence of teachings of these traditions upon the general populace of the area, irrespective of their religious affiliations. Swami Dayananda, as well as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who came from this Kathiawar region of Gujarat, had greatly influenced by these religious traditions.

Shaivism was the family religion of Swami's parents. It was also the religion of the Brahman community in Kathiawar. Though it was not a dominant and majority group in the area, it had a distinctive identity: practically all of them were Shaivite. The Brahmans preserved Shaivism in Kathiawar along with few Kshatriya followers. Shaivism always had a great influence in the area, as it was also associated with the rulers of the region. The famous Somanath temple and the founder of *Pashupata* sect of Shaivism, Lakulisha, belonged to this region which gives us some indication of the strength of Shaivism in this area. It may not be just coincidence that the Swami's later reforms had a clear affinity with that of Madhavgar of Nadiad that took place in 1824 and had a strong followings in the Kathiawar region. The reformists condemned all idol worship and did not believe in the incarnations, depreciated the observance of fasts and the performance of *Shraddha* and gave no credence to pollution of any sort, including untouchability. They taught that the alms should be restricted to the old and the needy, and not to the Brahman. They had no central place or person of supreme authority. The message of the reformists was spread through dedicated workers and teachers in yellow robes with *rudraksha-mala*, who lived in all simplicity, refusing everything except necessary food and clothing. Swamiji might have met many of its missionaries in the early part of his formative period whose influence upon his life, work and thought is quite obvious.

Vaishnavism was a comparatively new in the area but had large following among the masses. Most of its adherents were non-Brahmans, though there were a few Brahmans who joined the sect. The Vallabhacharya and the Swami Narayana sects were the most popular among the main sects of Vaishnavism. Their adherence to the Purana and the practice of rituals with much pomp and show was in direct contrast to the simple and solemn Shaivite worship, upon which it could hardly exert much influence.

Jainism, too, had a large following in this region where it had penetrated deep into the rural areas and the society, from the millionaire to the village grocer. The first modern reformer,

Vijyadharm (1868-1922) came from this region. Rayachand Mehta, another thinker who had a great influence on Gandhi, belonged to Kathiawar. Dayananda's family, being in business, certainly had some dealings with the Jains and he could have not escaped from their influences upon himself. Kathiawar claims to be the land of Swami Aristanemi, the twenty-second Tirthankara. The Jain canon was supposed to be fixed by a council that took place in this area. Among the Jain groups, *Sthanaka-vasi* sect was very strong in the Kathiawar region. They call themselves so, because their monks live in private houses, a marked distinction from those who live in monasteries. They differed from other Jains in their radical rejection of idol, temple worship and did not approve of taking up pilgrimages. They strongly insisted upon strict moral life and severe discipline for their monks.

Vaishnavism, however, greatly influenced the Jains, so much so that the Jains were hardly distinguishable from the Vaishnavites. They also had close caste relationships and had adopted many Vaishnavite ways of life and customs. The Brahmans mostly conducted Jains temple worship; they had Hindu idols in their temples, four of their sacraments were the same as those of Hindus, and they celebrated the same festivals. They had some major differences in rituals and practices: Jains do not give any meaning to the bathing in the holy rivers; they cremate their ascetics just as an ordinary human is cremated; they do not offer gifts to the dead; they do not practice Sati. In spite of these differences, the Jains were not considered to be ritually polluted, unclean or unworthy of closer social or ritual contact with the Vaishnavites.

Another major characteristics of Jain-Vaishnava ethos was its insistence on *Ahimsa*, with its resulting aversion to the slaughter of animals and the practice of vegetarianism. The Vaishnava cult of Krishna, as the divine cowherd, gave a strong mythological and emotional strength for the protection of cows. Jains, on the other hand, went a step ahead in protecting all animals through a special institution, *Pinjarapol*(refuge for animals), where unproductive and old animals were taken cared for. Their representatives even bought the animals from slaughterhouses and saved their lives in their institution.

Kathiawar of the nineteenth century distinguished itself from most of India as the land of *sadhus*, *sanyasins*, monks, saints, and mendicants. Apart from them, there was an additional moving population of holy-men on their way to, and from, many sacred places of pilgrimages in the peninsula. This wandering of holy-men must have been a great attraction for the young Dayaram, who later chose this way of life for himself as a *sanyasin*.

These were the influences that shaped the early life of Dayaram that he carried over to his later life as a *sanyasin*, Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Sanyasa and the Preparation

As it was earlier noted, Dayaram was not satisfied with the answers that were given to his religious quests by his father. He did make up his mind to look out the answers by himself. He began to spend much of his time in studies of religious scriptures under his uncle and other

teachers. The untimely deaths of his sister and uncle took him closer to a decision for renouncing the world and devoting rest of his life in search of personal salvation. He must have explicitly shown this tendency, which must have caused greater anxieties for his parents, so much so that they began to plan for his early marriage. He could manage to postpone this event in his life on the plea for studies till the age of twenty-one. As he heard about the impending marriage, he quietly left the home of his parents, never to return, never to own his family, never to claim their inheritance. Though his father found him out within three months after his escape from home, as he slipped out his family connection to his fellow seeker. He was properly thrashed out by his father and dispatched home with an escort. He, somehow, managed to escape before reaching home, with determination never ever to repeat the same mistake again.

He moved in Baroda region and resumes his studies, especially Shankara Vedanta, with much vigour and conviction, under different teachers. It was here he met the Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Shringeri Math, Swami Purnananda Saraswati, who initiated him as a *sanyasin* in the order of *dandi* and gave him the name by which he is better known, Dayananda Saraswati.

The Dandi order is one of ten monastic orders of Advaita Vedanta, claimed to be established by Adi Shankaracharya himself. Six of them admit *Grihastha* (for married *sanyasins*), whereas the rest admit only brahmacharins (unmarried) *sanyasins*, restricting only to the Brahmans. They are known as *Gosain* and *Dandin* respectively. Saraswati Dandins owe their allegiance to the Shankaracharya of Shringeri Math, who is also the spiritual head of the *Smarta* Brahmans. The Dandins specialise themselves in the study of Yajurveda and their guiding aphorism is the famous *mahavakya* of the Upanishad, *aham brahmasmi* (I am Brahman). They also have a special interest in Patanjali Yoga. It is no wonder that Mulji chose this order and devoted many years in the studies of Vedas, Advaita Vedanta and Yoga.

New life through Initiation

The initiation into the order took place on the bank of Narmada, not far from Baroda, near the twin city of Chanoda-Karnali. After performing purification rites, he performed funeral rites for himself, and then Shraddha, for the last time, to the ancestors including himself. Thus he freed himself, once for all, from his obligations, whatsoever, to his family, and inheritance from them. His immersion into the river and coming out from it symbolised new birth from the womb of the mother Narmada, which was immediately acknowledged by the initiating Shankaracharya who paid his obeisance to new *sanyasin*. He was given a *Kamandal* (water-carrier) and *Danda* (pastoral staff) signifying his new status. Though the ceremony was Vedic and non-sectarian, the young initiated, in Dandin tradition, continued to use the symbols that indicated his special dedication to Lord Shiva - *Rudraksha* and horizontal lines of ashes on the forehead.

The he, on his own initiative and persistence, broke down the fetters of three debts - to the sages, ancestors and gods, at a very young age of twenty-three. He now had no obligation to anyone except to himself in his own search for wisdom and *Moksha*. As a *Dandin*, he is not obliged to

stay in a monastery, or consult his guru or superiors, yet he even surrendered his *Danda* to his guru as it required some rituals and ceremonies associated with it.

Next few years, he spent in studying Sanskrit grammar, Advaita and yoga in baroda-Ahmedabad-Abu area under various teachers. At the end of 1854, he went to attend *Kumbha mela* at Haridwar and, thereafter, he move into the upper Himalayan region to continued his pursuit of salvation through Yoga, especially the *Hatha-yoga*. His preference to action and practice over theoretical search through the studies of Scriptures, *Karma-marga* over the *Jnana-marga* can easily be marked. He travelled whole of upper Himalayas, practising yoga, taking advise from the senior and practising yogis residing in the interior parts of the region. In 1860, he came down, rather disappointed, yet continued his search in the places around Farrukhabad, Kanpur, Allahabad, Mirzapur, Benaras and Vindhya region. A very brief trial with drugs in search for personal and cosmic experience could only lead him to further disappointments. He, after seeing a vision, decided to go back to his studies of grammar and Scriptures under Swami Virjananda Saraswati (1779-1868), a blind-fellow-Dandin *guru*, residing in Mathura. He sharpened his mind through the study of *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini and its chief commentary, *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali, Vedic grammar, Vedic Sanskrit and texts. It was here in Mathura, the famous city of Krishna-legend, the spirit of a reformer was awakened in him; it was here, his search for personal *moksha* was overtaken by the resolve to reform Hinduism.

The Motif for New Mission

The motif was provided by his guru, Swami Virjananda, who himself had a great desire to reform Hinduism from within. He had been a teacher to many rulers and princes of the states who had helped him to establish a regular school to teach grammar and allied subjects. A turning point, in the life of Swami Vajrananda, came through a *Shashtrartha* – a public dialogue on some disputed understanding of the Scriptural texts, with Pandit Krishna Shashtri of Banaras. The dialogue took place between the followers of the contestants, and not between the contestants. This exercise was taken as a fight between the Vaishnava and Shaiva scholars, involving much emotions and passions, and it became a sordid affair, full of intrigues and deceptions. The decision went in favour of Pandit Krishna Shastri, with the alleged help of money and partial moderator. It is interesting to note that the Swami was so hurt that he complained to the pandits of Mathura, as well as the collector, but no one did any justice to his followers. This brought a great change in the life and mission of the blind scholar. He moved towards more orthodox and conservative position, setting aside all secondary texts of grammar and scriptures. In the process, he began to evolve a new criteria for the authentic Hindu Scriptures and religious literature. He made a vital distinction between the *arsha* and *anarsha* texts – works of genuine and real *rishis* and those composed by others. He pointed out that the genuine rishis commenced their work with the word either *OM* or *atha*, whereas others invoked particular deities; *rishis'* compositions exhibit universal characteristics, others are full of sectarian bias and hatred; recognised teachers, such as Patanjali and Shankara, wrote

commentaries on *rishis'* works, and those upon which they have not commented upon can not be recognised as authentic. The Swami, not only set this three-fold criteria, but also passionately moved to win over others. He was concerned with the multiplication of unauthentic and sectarian religious literatures. He wanted to restrict them only within oral tradition, and, if not possible, throw them into the river. He tried another way by encouraging study of Sanskrit in order to bring genuine scriptures closer to the interested people. He tried to enlist the help of the British Commissioner and several Indian princes, even wrote letters to Queen Victoria, but not much help was extended to him. He even planned to convene *Sarvabhauma Sabha* – universal council –, which could look into the causes of degeneration of Hinduism, work out some remedy and do something for its revival and renaissance.

These are the ideas that were inculcated into the mind of the disciple by his Guru. These were consciously demanded by the guru as *daksina*; promise me that you will as long as you live devout everything, even give up your life to the propagation in India of the books of rishis and the Vedic religion. Swami Dayananda Saraswati paid this *dakshina* to *Swami Vajranand*. Thus a new mission emerged for the swami – no longer to seek personal *moksa* but to do something to do for Hinduism and Hindus.

Method applied by the Swami

1. Mass Contact:

It must have been a very painful decision on behalf of a lonely wanderer and *sanyasin* in search of personal *moksa* to go public and enter into bizarre affairs of social and religious reformation of a supposedly degenerated society. Still he moved into it with the same zeal and commitment as he moved out of it. He began to travel around the area within the triangle Mathura,- Gwalior –Azmir, never moving more than 200 miles away from his guru, stayed longer periods at different periods and became a public preacher and teacher of grammar, Vedanta, yoga and scriptures. He began to advise people on matters of rites and rituals, preaching against idol worship and Vaishnavite sectarianism. His visit to *Khumb mela* was necessitated by his desire to contact people in great numbers at one place and at one time. This gave him an immense opportunity to influence a great number of people and win them over to his ideas and ideals. Throughout his life he was seen constantly at different places where local religious fairs and festivals were taking place. Apart from the masses he did not avoid people of high intellect scholarship and elite. He made personal contact with people in high places, princes and administrators and was on constant move contacting people of all shapes and shades and station.

2. Returning to the Source:

In the context of Hinduism, it is not easy to select and define the real source of religious faith. Swami Dayananda was in the *Karma- bhumi* of Lord Krishna and the *Pujya-bhumi* of the

Vaishnavites. Bhagavata Purana and the Krishna cult were the supreme. He soon began to criticise the Vaishnavite scriptures, their rituals, worship pattern and idols through discourses and pamphlets. He advocated the study of Vedas and Upanishads and himself started in all earnest to teach and preach the basic tenets of Vedic religion. He refused to read and teach secondary works even on Shankar, such as *Pancdasi* an exposition of *advaita Vedanta* by Madva because he considered them man-made. Though he was initially attached to Saivism of his order, he began to move slowly towards the vedantic idea of the absolute. Later he vehemently criticised the idols of Saivism as he did to that of Vaishnavism. His study of Upanishads and Vedanta moved him towards a non-puranic and non-sectarian concept of deity. He moved nearer to Veda and Vedic practices and rituals advocating *sandhya* ritual, *agnihotra* sacrifice and recitation of *gayatri* mantra. He encouraged and personally trained many Brahmans to learn Sanskrit, study *Vedas* and perform *Vedic* sacrifices. He revived many Vedic sacraments, giving right to the individuals to perform the Vedic sacraments without the aid of Brahmans. He encouraged people to perform the sacrament when they are due and not merely to their symbolic observations. He rectified the practice of *upanayan sanskar* – sacred thread ceremony, which was being performed at the time of marriage instead of in childhood.

3. Pamphleteering and Propaganda:

By the second half of the 19th century, publishing and printing were extensively used to propagate religion and religious literature. *Swami* too used this method in propagating these ideas among the people as well as entering into the polemics with other religious people and missionaries. In 1867, during the Khumb mela at Haridwar, he went with his Sanskrit pamphlet, entitled *Bhagavat Khandanam* – Refutation of Bhagavat. This was his attempt to demolish the doctrines and practices of Vaishnavism. He also put up a banner inscribed Pakhand Khandini – Refutation of Hypocrisy, and pitched up a tent receiving pilgrims and renouncing as false and worthless all those things they endeared most; idol worship, puranic legends, incarnation myths, sex and holy rivers.

Much before he earned his reputation of demolishing the doctrines and practices of other religions, he set out to do so within the parameter of his own religion at the places and times where they were bound to reach the greatest possible number. He brought thousands of copies of pamphlets against Bhagavat for distribution. Gathered around him a team of *sanyasis* of his own order and other Brahmans, he spent much of his time in instruction to the seekers and discussions with the pilgrims. It was well-planned enterprise by the *Swami*. It was the beginning of a systematic onslaught on the evils of Hinduism at the centre where they are most explicit, where the audience was countless, representing all shapes and kinds of practising Hinduism. He used the same plan and method and opportunity thereafter every where through out his life.

4. Critique of Hinduism:

Dealing with idol worship, miracle pilgrimages and holy men, puranas, modern reform movements, etc. This savage indictment is full of concrete details of persons, places and practices, drawing on a wide variety of services from shastras to folklore

He criticised at length the corrupt teachings of the purana, especially the Bhagavata, He recalled their stories abounding in internal contradictions, logical and physical impossibilities, moral degradation, He charged that their religious leaders were steeped in pleasure, sex and untold luxury.

Idol worship was treated with contempt. He was at pains to prove that it was absent in Vedas and the theory of the lost Vedas is untrue. It is against reason and the idea of giving life to an inert matter. (*pranaprathista*) is nothing but pure absurdity. To prove idol worship from tradition is also worthless as traditions are being established and changed all the times. True tradition is determined by logic and by conformity with the Vedas.

He exploded the myth of the wonders of India by his severest criticism of miracles and pilgrimages, we hear meat eating idols, monkeys of enormous size, idols that smoke and drink, ponds that spot fire, a temple without flies, simple logic dissolves all miracles some are just tricks manufactured by priests, others are simply physically impossible, some are mere physical phenomena, He denounced the deceit of astrology, as a trap to extort money.

It may be interesting to look into his criticism of fellow reformers in Hinduism. Swami Dayananda must have been wonderstruck by the variety of reformers and reform movements present at one place and time, be it Bombay or Calcutta. They had different belief patterns, different concepts and plans for religious and social reform programmes within Hinduism and Hindu society. There were conservative, orthodox, agnostic and rationalist reformers. Among those on the orthodox side the attitude towards social reform was as different as they were among those who staved for religious reform. Some reformers were very westernised others were ardent promoters of a Hindu cultural revival. He was quick to notice the extreme individualism of the reformers. They were hardly found themselves in full agreement with each other on vital issues. Their conceptions of the essence of Hinduism, the sources of true religion, and the implementation of religious reform were quite divergent. Dayananda noted that they all share only in denying Vedas the rightful place for unique and definite revelation, hence, the cause for their disagreement on all other issues of vital importance.

Brahmos, for example, were his friends and admirers. He denounced as errors their belief in the continuous new creation of jivas; their rejection of rebirth and their tenet that repentance deletes sins. They reject the *Varna* system because they confuse *Varna* with caste. And do not understand the symbolic value of sacred thread. They are Anglophiles and neglect their own. They admire Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, Nanak, Chaitanya, as holy men. But forget the ancient *rishis*.

5. Approaching the Elite

It was not difficult for an intelligent person like *Swami* not to discern the existing power structures of the society in which he lived and was so concerned to reform. The elite, consisting of Brahmans, kshatriyas and pandits, had the power and they exercised considerable influence over the masses in rural and urban society in India. They became the centre of his approach in order to reform the society. He applied this approach soon after his initial set back at Khumba mela in an area he knew well. This was the area in the western part of Doab- the area between two rivers Ganga and Jamuna in the heartland of India. This was the area where his guru also had a considerable influence. This area was directly under British administration since the beginning of the 19th century with not much influence of the local princes. Power and influence was largely concentrated in the local religious and social elites. The area was highly fertile, had agrarian populace. The Brahman mostly dominated it. Obviously the main reason can be seen in the fact that most of the holy places that were associated with a great number of religious fairs and festivals, ceremonies and rituals are situated along the banks these most holy rivers. Later he concentrated in the areas where he had established schools, had considerable followers and where people wanted him for their religious needs.

Swami Dayanand was deeply influenced by *Manu Smriti*, especially in its support to *varnaashram dharma* and its concept of kinship. He had always taken keen interest in influencing political authorities that can exert their own influence in changing social and religious orders. He like his mentor sought the help of princes and local authorities, even the British in propagating his ideas and carrying out his plans. In Ajmer he taught the Deputy Commissioner, Major Davidson about the duty of the Raj to prevent religious mal practices and with the British agent, General Brooks about the prevention of cow slaughter.

Though he has many of his followers, contacts and sympathisers in high places in administration politics and among rulers, statecraft in itself had not been his concern. He had only touched upon it in the context of special problems he encountered within Hinduism; propagation of the time *shastra*, cow protection; restructuring of society according to the four *varna*. He has yet to propose a theory of state and government. He Became aware of the questions that were being discussed by the intelligent of Calcutta concerning the nature and function of the state, the role of British government in India; and definition of nation hood and nationality. He met Indian political thinkers and writers, administrators, members of legislative councils, barristers, executives of Indian Associations, through these contacts, *Swami* Dayananda began to evolve his own concept of state craft and also to make some evaluation of the British government of India.

6. Introducing Sanskrit:

Swami Dayananda adopted a new method of propagating his ideas by using Sanskrit as a means of communication with the learned pundits. All his earlier propaganda materials and pamphlets

were written in Sanskrit, and he delivered his lectures in this language. He realised the practical utility of the language in *shastrartha*, as quoting in Sanskrit from the scriptures had general acceptance and authenticity. His mother tongue was not Hindi and he had no opportunity to learn English, thus he found it easy to convey his thoughts in Sanskrit better and clear, till he learned enough Hindi to speak and write. Moreover, he wanted others to learn Sanskrit well so that they can perform rituals and sacraments meaningfully and with ease. He was convinced that the proper knowledge of Sanskrit was essential for the reform, which he would like to initiate. He himself acquired his mastery of the language through his guru in Mathura. The traditional Sanskrit school, in his opinion, were producing traditional pandits and *purohits* whose knowledge of the language was inadequate and they were wasting their time in studying valueless and inauthentic books. Keeping this in mind, he started Sanskrit schools. In these schools he made provision for food, clothes and accommodation for the teachers and the students. The curriculum included the study of Ashtadhyayi, manusmriti and Vedas. Students were expected to perform *sandhya* (prayer) rites twice a day, to miss meant fasting. They were supposed to spend all their time at the school and were not allowed to go outside visits. Regular tests were held; diligent students were rewarded.

This experiment was a failure. Swami realised that they did not achieve their objectives to become centres of training in and the dissemination of his Vedic religion. Some of his pandits reverted to the defence of sectarian shaivism in his absence. Others mismanaged the institution. Students too were a problem, some came only for clothes and books and then disappeared; some tended to go back to their old sectarian Hinduism.

7. Shashtrarth:

It refers to an ancient practice of religious discourses and discussions on the true meaning and import of scriptural texts. It used to be inter- or intra-religious discussions between learned scholars on the matters of religious concerns. It also refers to any kind of polemic between the people and scholars of different schools and religions. By the beginning of nineteenth century, it became a kind of a forum where the scholars of different faiths and sectarian affinities gathered to-gather along with their followers and supporters, to settle their scores through public debates. Swami Dayananda almost perfected this as an art during second half of the century. He entered into public and private debates, discussions and dialogues with the pandits and missionaries of different religions, especially Christian. One should not be unaware of the fact that *sashtrarth*, for Swami Dayananda, was an important method to attack and weaken religious elite – pandits, gurus, *sanyasins*, Brahmans, people in authority- and win people over his side.

One of the central problems and the subject matter of this *shastrartha* was the question of respective authority of the many sources of Hinduism and their scriptures. Dayananda applied his mind to different sources – Vedas, Manu Smriti, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Vedanta, Purana, Bhagvadgita, Ramayana etc., to mention a few. The question of Brahmana being a part of Vedas was the subject often disputed. The concept of revelation, the theory of original but lost Vedas

too was hotly discussed. The authentic and non-authentic shastras, their numbers, and criteria for authenticity of their origin was in the agenda for discussion. Nature of God, identity and difference between God and soul as propounded in the Purana and theological and philosophical books were hotly pursued.

The key issue in these debates was the idol worship, more specifically, its sanction by the scriptures. As the fame of the swami as a challenger and a successful debater spread, the defeated parties often engaged eminent pandits from reputed institutions and centres to challenge the swami. The most important one was at Banaras, which set the trend for all the rest, such exercises and the resolve of the swami to continue this method for most of his life more rigorously, planning and researching. He argued with great self-confidence and competence, making pandits to look defenceless as they failed to present any conclusive proof in favour of scriptural base for idolatry. As the swami took some time to cite the text, the chairman, who was a sympathiser of the pandits, suddenly closed the debate on the pretext that the crowd was becoming restive and emotionally charged. The pandits took it as a victory for themselves and discredited the swami in the eyes of the audience who became hostile to him thereafter everywhere in the northern part of India and lost interest in his reforms.

Subsequently, with rich experience in *sastrartha*, he developed almost a fool proof style consisting of quoting of texts, mostly from the Vedas, applying principle of grammar and logic and taking more rational and practical views.

The theoretical and practical aspect of religion was not left out. The concern for morality- social and ritual led the swami to meet new parameters through his principle of inner righteousness and he defended himself quite convincingly. He confronted caste system and refuted theory of ordained by birth, proposing new hermeneutics. He considered it a political institution of different professional classes or guilds with rights and privileges, though hereditary but can be changed by the state. He made distinction between *varna* and *jati*, and argued that *jati* referred to species-, to the humans only, as such *jati* in the sense of caste has no validity.. It is a secular institution, and not the religious, therefore, it is changeable. He rejected caste taboos about food on the principle of morality and hygiene and refused to practice in any form of untouchability in his personal life. He also rejected the moral principle of Nivriti- inaction, and affirmed the principle of Pravriti- action for the welfare of man and society.

8. Polemics

In 1877 the famous three-cornered disputation of the Chandrapur Mela took place, where Christians, Muslims and Aryas discussed religious issues. The Muslim side was represented by Maulana Mohammed Kasim, the founder of the famous Deoband school for the protection and revival of Islam. Two missionaries represented Christianity, Rev E.W. Panker of American Methodist Episcopal Church who later became the Bishop, and Rev T.P. Scott, later became the Principal of Barreilly Theological Seminary. The disputation was mainly concerned with

problems of creation and salvation. Pressing questions from Rev. Scott could not make Swami clarify the relationship between *prakrti* and the Lord.

It was in March 1877 that Swami Dayananda entered Punjab. It was here that a new face of attracting Swami revealed to the Christian. Earlier he had good and cordial relations with the Christian missionaries. His debates were held even in Churches. They were so cordial to each other that many a time he is said to be an agent of Christian missionary even a paid worker. He was often charged that they had bought him. Yet his Punjab debates did not show such cordiality. Here he gave one of his caustic criticisms of the Bible. He held that the Christian practice like virtues preached in the Vedas. Their anxiousness to meet him only showed their awareness of the importance of his presence and impact. It was the emergence of a new idea of Dayananda, the concept of *shuddhi* that made them realise how real threat he was.

It was in Punjab that Dayananda first mooted the question of *Shuddhi*, when he raised at Ludhiana. A Brahman teacher at a mission school who was getting ready for Baptism, changed his mind at the behest of the Swami. This brought the problem to his attention. He was informed that Punjabi Hindus felt the missionary propaganda as a real threat. At Jullunder he gave a lecture on Shudhi and himself performed the re-conversion of Christians. Many un-baptised Christian and potential converts changed their minds once they met or heard him. Some Christian preferred to reconvert themselves.

8. Foundation of an Organisation- Samaj Experiments:

The most important decision he took to found the *Arya Samaj*, the organisation that would plant his message and reform in the society. The idea first implemented in Arrah, Bihar in 1872 and at Banaras in 1874 but failed within a short time. It is interesting to note that the idea of forming an *Arya Samaj* third time did not originate from the Swami but rather by pressure and demand from below. The very first *Arya Samaj* was established by a whole set take over of the local prarthana *Samaj*. Swami Dayananda formulated a set of rules, which were printed and distributed. The *Samaj* did not agree on Swami's ideas on marriage and *Niyoga*, but he did not press for them, sharing his flexibility, but this experiment failed within six months of its formation.

Dayananda firmly refused to be its leader or president, but accepted an ordinary membership. He did not found any other *Samaj* in Western India but branches were established there for a short periods in Poona, Broach and other places. Sooner business and intellectual humanities began to tend their support to the *Samaj*. The support and active participation by Mahadev Govind Ranade and Mahatma Jotirao Phule in the reform programmes of the *Samaj* gave a big boos the *Samaj* in Bombay and elsewhere, and its support base was extended to the lower orders in the society.

It is a point of interest that the most numerous and dynamic core of the *Arya Sabha* was a group of businessmen of the rising trading class which neither very wealthy nor the leading intellectuals. They had grown used to all kinds of cross-caste organisations in social and municipal affairs and they knew enough about the way to set up a modern association. They were motivated by genuine religious aspirations. The twenty-eight rules constituted a very

clumsy mixture of statements of belief, organisational by laws and moral precepts. The cradle content was minimal, in spite of fact that the Swami had already worked out his own theological system. He had no wish to impose his view on the Aryas. He only insisted upon Vedas and god. The Vedas should be accepted on the principal self-evident authority and should be interpreted with the help of the books composed by the *rishis*. God should not be represented by an idol as he is free from all bodily characteristics and from any birth as avatar.

The *Samaj* had the functions to perform; running of a Central Vedic library, publication of magazine and; general supervision of the *Samaj* school for boys and girls. One had to be of good character,. Principled and concerned with the welfare of the people, Membership to committee was open to males and females. The school should teach ancient scriptures. The *Samaj* was committed to send preachers around to preach the truth everywhere. The duties of *Samajis* were to work for the advancement of the *Samaj* and attend to its weekly meetings. The meetings were the occasion for exchanging ideas and discussing practical matters. But they primarily meant for religious purpose. Chanting of Samaveda and lectures on Vedic dharma. They also had financial obligation too for the running of the *Samaj* and its programmes.

The early *Samajas* were motivated by the desire for a religious entity of their own that would be independent of the established oppressive structures. They were in search of the genuine sources of Hinduism, aspiring for a purified religion, seeking for a faith that freed them from Brahman and sectarian dictatorship and gave them self sufficiency and self respect.

9. Defender of the Hindus:

In a case, involving Munshi Indramani, who had written numerous books and pamphlets against Swami Dayananda came to his help. He directly wrote letters to the branches of the Arya *Samaj* to collect fund for the defence of the Munshi. It was for the first time the Swami succeeded in getting the Aryas deeply involved in an agitation in which Arya *Samaj* projected the image of being the defender of the Hinduism and earned the sympathy of the majority of Hindus.

Cow Protection was another issue that he took up to prove his bonafide, and that of his *Samaj*. On the defender of Hindus, he has been raising this ever since he met his guru. Represented his case and approached the government authorities; but with no success. In 1881 he took decision to launch a systematic agitation against Cow slaughter, issuing his pamphlet Gokarunanidhi (Cow-Ocean of Compassion) *Gokrishyadikrukshini Sabha* (Society for the protection of Cow, agriculture, etc.,) and began signature campaign.

Hindu-Urdu controversy was another step. It was not just a social and linguist problem, but had an intimate connection between language, religion and nation, sum it, connected with Hindu nationalism. In 1882 the Swami heard of Hunter commission, which is looking into the case, he advised Aryans to collect signatures and submit memorials. Thus he was not only taking a novel initiative, but he was pressing them to participate to the full extent in the campaign.

The campaign helps the *Samaj* to consolidate its presence in the Hindu Society. It should be noted that the Swami created none of these campaigns, He only came to assist the movement that

was already launched. They had a common factor in being directed against the Muslim and containing anti-British bias, He thus steered *Samaj* closer to orthodox and sectarian Hinduism, anticipating the Hindu movement of samgathan, solidarity and integration of the whole Hindu Community.

Evaluation

One cannot miss the sincerity, integrity and zeal of Swami Dayanand in his commitment to the mission he set before him that led him to leave the security of his family and society. His was a mission for personal salvation, a strong desire to be liberated from the existential life and realise the essential life. He never moved away from his initial commitment, though he became deeply involved in the process of reforming Hindu society.

He was a practising ascetic in its absolute form, throughout his life. He spent long hours in daily meditations less in sleep. Yet, he was a man of action and practised what he preached. One may see a Shaivite bias in his attack of Shaivism, but it was just for a while before returning back to the Vedic religion, religious practices and advaitic philosophical approach. His deeper involvement in training, propagating and defending his ideas and reforms are well known and well recorded.

His basic critique of Hinduism, attacking idol worship, sectarianism and superstitious belief and practices, may sound to be destructive and negative. But he devoted much more time in positive instructions in Vedic practices, essential rites and sacraments and tried to remove non-Vedic association with them. He emphasised the moral principles of the *shastras* in personal life.

He attempted to reform Hinduism from within on the basis of lofty, ideas and ideals found in the Vedas. He popularised Vedic rituals and rites, freeing them from economic burdens and superstition. He gave rites to women to learn Vedas and recite mantra. He tried to get away with the mediation of priest. Yet he performed *yajnas* (ritual in which his belief in vicarious removal of the results of sin by penance, recitation and fasting was publicly expressed). He even could not do away with the use of specialists, of ritual fees, of fasting and penance.

Sastrarth, as a method had been most successful and Dayananda was concerned of its usefulness in propagating his reforms. Experience taught him its limitations when ever incompetent pandits were invited in presence of an emotionally charged and biased audience. The reaction of the people of Banaras to the demands of orthodoxy demonstrated the strength of the system and the weakness of the individual iconoclast. It has always been an inter-religious dialogue within the context of Hinduism. Like the ancient Upanishadic sages, Swami Dayananda set out to clear the mess of rituals, rites, doctrines, superstitions, institution and leaders that had outgrown the Vedic religion. He just wanted his people to go back to the simplicity of Vedic religion. He was challenged by the Hinduism of his time and fought the abuses wherever he met. He stoically faced fierce opposition, who often used vicious and violent methods, abuse, slander and physical threats to his life. It was out of such situation, his ideas and methods emerged.

His polemics on the other hand introduce an element that was not prominent in Hindu religion and culture, attack on other religions. This gave in to hit campaign against all religions – Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity being most severe on the last two. The language used and the attack made subsequently went beyond all human sensitivities and gave rise to emotional and irrational reaction from the members of all concerned communities. The rise of Hindu nationalism and the communal forces within the Hindu religion are the direct result of his polemics.

Swami Dayananda had never taken defeat as an end in itself. Every defeat strengthened his resolve to fight on. He was ever conscious of the fact that he had to solve his problems for himself, by study and more study; by trial and error, never accepting things from second hand sources.

Through the establishment of the new society, he wanted to incorporate all his reforms into Hinduism. He tried to break the domination of Brahmins in the society and the caste based distinction. He left the members of the society free to continue their ceremonial customs, traditions and rules of caste as long as they shun idolatry and accept the Vedic religion and regulation. He wanted to bring together all Hindus who agreed to dedicate themselves to religious and social reform with conviction that it comes through the revival of Vedic religion.

One should however note that he had no intention of creating a body of followers to propagate his ideas. He just wanted them to bring out reform from within themselves and society. He had a horror of gurdism and sectarianism; he did not want to place himself and his *Samaj* in such a category. Through the concept of *Shuddhi*, Dayananda gave a powerful Hindu counter challenge to the missionaries and it became a passion for many of later Hindu reformers and missionaries. The present debate on conversion needs to be seen in this perspective. Dayananda offered a response that was not just defensive, but aggressive. He affirmed the superiority of the monotheistic and non-idolatrous Vedic dharma over all other religions. To the educated who was ashamed of the exterior of his religion and the poor quality of his traditional leaders Brahmins, it must have been most acceptable to find that Dayananda put the religious leadership in to the hands of those who were the best qualified to undertake. He freed Hinduism from all those aspects that figured most in the missionary attack on Hinduism. To a rising elite the doctrine that caste should be attributed not by birth, but openly according to quality and merit, was welcomed by all.

Personal reflections

It is a myth that Hinduism is not a missionary movement; it is a myth that it has no mission and method to achieve its goal in life and society. The life and works of Swami Dayananda, and many others like him in the past and present, has broken that myth. It was a pity that the Christian missionaries did not foresee this aspect of Hinduism and entered into unnecessary

polemics and attacks. It may be one of the major reasons of their failures in winning considerable disciples for Christ from within Hinduism.

The mission and the missionary zeal of the Hindu is deeply penetrated into the life-pattern of each Hindu individual and family. It, in fact, has dissolved itself into every part of Hindu life and community that it has become its conscious, as well as unconscious, psyche. It is the content of real *Hindutva*, the essential Hindu-ness of a Hindu. It is for this essential part of a Hindu that Hindu religion, as well as Hindu community, could survive the onslaught of many missionary religions and ideologies through out its history.

Swami Dayananda revealed both the positive as well as negative aspects and characteristics of Hindu missionary endeavour. In our endeavours in understanding Hindu missionary movements, we should be aware of the fact that these movements were the movements to reform the Hindu society from within, on the one hand, and to protect it, on the other, from the attacks of the Christian missionaries. They were, therefore, both defensive and offensive at the same time, without any exception to its enemies from within or without. Mission for Swami Dayanand, at the beginning, had been his own personal salvation. It was true to its classical Hindu spiritual culture, which is individualistic. Later, he moved to the communal and holistic understanding of salvation and involved himself in reforming the whole society. This is one aspect, the missionaries of the gospel, and those involved in theology of mission, should take note of.

Dayananda has brought forth the centrality of Scripture for any missionary activity. Back to the Vedas, the source of Hindu religious spirituality, was his dictum. He took *Shastrartha* method to convince his own people, theologians and pundits. One can only be convincing if he looks upon the scriptures for guidance and confirmation. One may not agree with his hermeneutics, yet one may not miss his sincerity in understanding the texts of the scripture. It is to be noted that this method is more effective and convincing in inter-religious dialogues and not in inter-religious dialogues. I understand, it was the anxiety of the some of the Christian missionaries that led them into *Shastratha* with the Swami and later with others. Thus, they entered into the region where they should have not. Their attacks strengthened the missionary goals of the Swami in reforming Hinduism from within. It was unfortunate that missionaries unnecessarily began to hurt the religious sensitivities of the Hindus by attacking their scriptures without much understanding and knowledge. We still continue to do so, either by completely denouncing them or trying to win them over by selectively adopting them. We need to have a clear understanding about the place of scriptures of people of other faiths in our theology of mission and missionary enterprises.

Method of polemic has now become an accepted norm of missionary methodology. It is time to take a break and critically analyse and evaluate the method. From the time of Dayananda it has taken a confrontational pastures, generating much hatred, creating misunderstanding, fuelling communalism, encouraging fundamentalism and destabilising the unity of a pluralistic society. It has produced a very different kind of literature, language and terms that has created a barrier for the people and genuine flow of spiritual traditions from one to the other. This has been, to my

understanding, one of the major factors that turned a genuine enquirer and seeker away from the path of Christ as presented by the evangelists and missionaries of the church. The method is still valid and useful in any attempt to reform and inform the society but the content, subject matter and presentation needs to be thoroughly evaluated and reformulated.

Shastrartha is needed to reform and revitalise the people of God, but not to attack other religions. Bible studies and its application upon our social, political and religious lives of people is more effective than the polemical and apologetic writings of theologians and intelligentsia of our church and theological institutions. Most of our theological reflections are not *Shastrartha* at all, as some of the commentators upon the Gospels, Romans, John and Epistles have been, but philosophical and theological jargons. India is still awaiting that kind of *Shastrartha*. We need to pause and ponder, in the context of our recent experiences of anti-Christian propaganda in words and deeds, the danger such an approach poses for the defenceless but committed Christian in rural and urban India. Swami Dayananda got it back, we have got it back, and therefore there is no need to continue the same path any more. Polemic devoid of sincerity, loving concern and genuine Christ like authenticity cannot be polemic methodology for a Christian missionary. We need to be positive in our approach. Christ can be the best trend setter of true and genuine *shashtrartha*. (cf. Discourse with Samaritan Woman and Nicadimus)

Imperative of missionary endeavour is to strive for the visible unity of the people of the faith. Sectarian Hinduism was the centre of attack from Swami Dayananda from the very beginning of his missionary activities; for they were the hindrance to the unity of true Hinduism as reflected in the Vedas. He tried to organise 'Sarvabhauma Sabha' (Universal Council) for all shades of Hindus, though without much success. He later suggested a kind of *Sangathana* (Organisation), a loose confederation of sects and sub sects of Hindus. What this kind of organisation can do is quite evident from recent events in India. The same is true for the church in India, more so, in the context of numerous mission organisations engaged in missionary activities, often in completion with cross interests, thus weakening the mission of the church. It is unfortunate that the sectarian and denominational Christianity was introduced, and planted, in this part of the world, from the beginning of the history of the Church. It has often been Christianity without *kerygma*; Churchanity with doctrines, sects and denominations. The trend still continues to be so. Gospel in its purest form and structure has not been offered to the Indians. The missionary task is to rethink the content of *Kerygma* and offer the same with 'the raw fact of Christ' to the Indian inquisitive mind and the seekers of the truth.

Swami reintroduced *shuddhi*, a sacrament long forgotten, himself performed it to bring back converted Hindus into Hindu-fold and converting people from other faiths – Christians, Sikhs, Muslims and Jains. He also converted Vaishnavites into Shaivites. The conversion-re-conversion issue is very much alive today, being a part of political and religious agenda of the RSS affiliated organisations and the BJP. We need to re-theologise the concept. There is a need to re-interpret the Christian terms and concepts, such as, baptism. *meta-noia*, conversion etc., and give a new meaning and understanding to the one who decides to follow Christ in a religiously pluralistic

context. Some of the people in India do have difficulty in understanding the relationship between being a follower of Christ and being a member of the sectarian Church. Is it a causal and necessary relationship that cannot exist without the other, or the relationship is only a matter of choice of the follower? Church may think of newer forms of ritualistic and liturgical expression and formulation for entering into the fellowship of the followers of Christ, and into His Church. There are varieties of initiation rites in Indian religions; they can be Christianized and adopted as the outward sign of inward grace. We have to recognise that many followers of Christ may not wish to be a member of the visible Church, and the so-called 'un-baptized Christians' needs to be provided with some kind of recognition, spiritual succour and support from the established churches.

Mission fields have always provided an opportunity to venture into new forms of expression in presenting Christian gospel, new opportunities to rebuild communities, ministry and ecclesiology. The method of primitive Christians in organising themselves, forming their own liturgies and rituals, may be helpful for the missionaries to free themselves, and the neo-Christians, from the alien Church structures and ecclesiastical orders. The mother Church, and missionary organisations, can play nurturing and supporting roles, without colonising them by imposing their denominational/sectarian structures. The example of Dayananda in giving complete freedom and authority to every newly formed Arya Samaj, in forming their rules and constitution, may be a good example, which can be experimented in mission fields. This may help the genuine Indian Christian Communities form and grow.

One can only be conscious of the presence of mission ideologies and methods in other religions, especially the religions of Indic origin. The Hindu *rishis*, Jain *Pravajaka*, and Buddhist *Bhikshuka* have always been missionaries; they have their own methods and they always sought to establish a society of their own. We will be immensely helped in our task in mission if we open ourselves and learn from the experiences of these missionaries who had been no less successful than the Western Christian missionaries. The Indian input to the development of theology of mission is long over due. We are called to accomplish the goal that we set for ourselves, in providing new horizon in our understanding of Christian Mission in the Context of Indian realities.