## CHAPTER FIRST :

# " LIFE HISTORY OF SWAMI DAYANAND SARASVATI "

## Chapter - I

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* Swami Dayanand Sarasvati ( 1824 - 1883 ) was born in an orthodox Brahmin family at Morvi in Gujrat. His father was a staunch disciple of Shiva and duly performed the daily Parthiva Puja.*[1] Dayanand's mother was a kind and devoted woman. Dayanand received a strict and orthodox education in his youth. He became knowledgeable of the books of Shavism and learned much of the Vedas by heart. He learned Sanskrit, and engaged himself in the usual religions ceremonies and temple worship. He also underwent the traditional sacred thread ceremony at the age of eight.

Swami Dayanand's family belonged to the Gujrat State and his father held a post of some responsibility and position in the Government. His family were land owners and were considered wealthy enough to engage in money-lending. They were Brahmins of the highest order, learned in Vedic lore and held in great respect. Thus, father of Swami Dayananda combined property and business with an official status. He saw to it that his eldest son got good education from the age of five; he was taught the Devanagari Script and the customs

of his family and caste. He was made to learn by heart some verses of the Dharma Shastras which was the ritual and social duties of the orthodox Hindu.

At the age of eight, Swami Dayananda was administered the sacrement of initiation, invested with the Yajnopavita, the holy thread of the twice born, and taught the sacred Gayatri Mantra and the daily Sandhya ritual.[2] When he reached the age of Ten his father insisted not withstanding the protestations of his mother, that Dayanand should start the daily practice of worshipping the linga of clay. For that a special pandit to teach Dayananda Sanskrit grammar and his study of the Yajurveda progressed so that by the age of fourteen he had memorized most of it and also some texts of the other vedas.

His father also used to take Dayanand along with him to visit the temples, religious festivals and purana recitations, for conviction that the worship of Shiva was the best of all. So, Dayanand's studie's continued and then he moved on to works dealing with vedic terms and to a further study of the Purva Mimamsa School.[3] Two successive deaths in the family deeply affected Swami Dayanand, ,one was of his younger sister at the age of fourteen shocked him in to an apparently unfeeling. These tragic events shocked him so much that he

mediated on the cruel shortness of life and on that great aim of liberation from life and death, Moksha,[4] which could be attained by asceticism and yoga.

When Dayanand completed his twenty first year, he realized that all had been finalized and that within the family circle there was unavoidable way of marriage. Dayanand left to realize the dream that haunted him was flight; and set out on his journey in search of Moksha.

It is safely assumed that such a determined and individualistic young man, intellectually curious, obstainate deeply interested in religion, and belonging to a prominent family involved in business and public affairs must have to the world around him. If a Gandhi, who left Kathiwar after only nineteen years, was so deeply influenced by Kathiwari, as many recent studies have shown. Dayanand too must in these twentyone years unimpeded by family responsiblities.

Under ordinary circumstances the idea proposed by Dayananda would have appealed to the parents of a promising student since a course of study at Banaras raises the scholar to the dignity of an authority on Hindu's 'Shastras !. Dayanand's parents having reason to suspect the workings of their son's mind, and not wishing to lose him altogether refused to grant his request#

A compromise was eventually arrived and Swami Dayananda was allowed to proceed to a neighbouring village for his studies. He confined in the teacher and considered it obligatory. But they had not fully gauged the determination of their son. A week or so before the marriage day, he left home. His father pursued him, but failed to trace him. In less than three days after leaving home, Dayananda was stripped of all the valuables he had on his person, as well as the money in his pocket. He became a ' Sadhu ' and changed his name, assumed coloured - garments and began to search for a suitable Guru, who could initiate him in the way of solving the mystery of life and death for himself and attaining Moksha i.e. ( Liberation.)

A few days elapsed before Swami Dayanand's father obtained a clue to his son's where abouts from an acquaintance who had seen him in his new garb. Dayanand was confined for the night in a room with a guard posted at the door. By dawn he had put several miles between himself and his father whom he never saw again.

This was his final seperation from home and all that the word implies. It was casting himself. He felt sorrow for his mother; who loved him devotedly, but he had to fulfil a mission and even as early as 1903 vikram about 1844 Swami

Dayanand Sarasvati leaving home to make all India his abode. He was forsaking his kindred humanity and the cause of truth.

For full fifteen years from 1845 to 1860, Young Swami Dayanand Sarasvati wandered north, South, East and West almost all over India in quest of knowledge and truth. During these wandering's he tapped the highest and the purest sources of knowledge. He moved from place to place inquiring about scholars, renownked men of wisdom and Sadhu's of great religious merit. With some, Swami Dayanand studied philosophy with others the Vedas. In these wanderings Swami Dayanand acquired the theory and practice of Yoga. There was scarcely a Hindu place of pilgrimage throughout India which Dayanand did not visit. But some favoured centres of learning he visited again and again. Swami Dayanand in search of teachers of fame and Yogis of merit penetrated the innermost recesses of the Himalaya, Vindhya, Aravali. He crossed, and recrossed, the valleys of the noble Indian rivers, Ganga, Jamuna and Narmada.

For a short period after his flight from home Swami Dayanand Sarasvati passed as a Brahmachari, a first stage of Hindus life, but within a few years, Dayanand was formally initiated into the order of Sannyasis.

A ' Hindu Sannyasi ' is prohibited from cooking food for himself. Dayananda had no money nor valuables in his possession. He has not allowed to own more than absolutely necessary. He ought not to feel of his person but must lead a life of perfect self-denial and perpetual spiritual discipline. Dayananda could be of service to others but no payment or compensation could be made. He belonged to no caste and so was entirely free from all the restrictions of caste. He could not eat meat, but can accept vegetarian food from the hands of any caste, creed or colour. Dayananda was not to enjoy the company of women, and was to strictly could not discharg his duty as a religious preacher. He may accept any gifts, with the exception of food, essential clothing and footwear.

It was this life to which young Swami Dayananda pleadged himself of his own free well before he was twenty five years old; and not a soul, not even his bitterest enemies could assert that he ever broke his oath. We may summarize the notable characteristics of Swami Dayanand's life during the period of which the work is undertaken namely three heads.

1) Swami Dayanand was not of those who to accept knowledge easily from authority. He would take nothing which

could not be verified or demonstrated. An incident which occurred during this period of his life may serve as an illustration. One day when wandering in the valley of Gangas, he noticed a corpse afloat in the river. At the time he had with him some books on anatomy and physiology. The sight of a corpse at once suggested the idea of testing by actual observation the accuracy of the facts cited in the books. He was in a jungle, far from human habitation and not likely to be disturbed. He salvaged the body, cut it open and examine it. He found that what was taught in the books was not true.

2) Never for a moment Swami Dayanand Sarasvati falter or turn his gaze from the ideal to which he aspired. In India there are innumerable religious shrivses and temples ; the heads of which live in a Luxurious state because of hereditary wealth. Being a handsome young man of good physique, intelleqent, well read and well versed in religions polemics, more than one mahant wished to make him a chela or spiritual heir, and offered to nominate him as their successor but on all such occassions Swami Dayanand Sarasvati refused stating that his goal was different and that he was not seeking wealth or power.

3) During this period, Swami Dayanand met number os Sadhus and Pandits some good, some bad, some noble, some

ignoble, some attracted him, other repelled him. He met a few whom be regarded with the highest respect and at whose feet he sat for long in a spirit of perfect reverence and true homage but he did not meet a single one who attained his ideal of a Guru. By birth Swami Dayanand as rebellian, he could not accept as his models the blind followers of authority or slaves of tradition. Swami Dayanand did not care for a life of mere renunciation. Encircled by ignorance, prejudice, misery or tyranny, he did not desire a life of soulless bliss and peace. He was a passionate lover of liberty. In his wanderings through that beautiful and noble land of his land of the loftiest thought to the purest ethics and the noblest traditions he found everything chaotic. Even the repositories of the sacred lore of the Aryas, the representatives of the authors of the Upanishadas and the Darshanas, descendants of Manu and Yajnya valka were steeped in ignorance and superstition.

Swami Dayanand Sarasvati was shaped a real Mahatma, a sage and a prophet during his stay in Mathura, at the feet of the renowned sant Swami Virjanand. The Guru explained to him the burden of sin and suffereing beneath which the mother earth was growing. As a gift from the Disciple, the Guru got a promise from Swami Dayanand to spread the Vedic message

to the whole of mankind. With determination and confidence in himself, Dayanand set out to fulfil his promise to his Guru. During his life time he did not take rest and fought single handed against all kinds of onslaughts till he sacrificed himself in 1876. Dayanand's profound scholarship his magnetic powers of persuasion, his powers of bombardment of an impregnable orthodox position with bombs carefully selected from the armoury of sastric learning, his fiery eloquence inspired by righteous, indignation, and a heart glow with unselfish love of humanity which transfused his words and made them scalding and scorching, and above all his infinite pity for his suffering fellowmen carried all before them.[6]

Swami Dayanand took pains to show that the Vedic culture was universal in its for it catered to the essential needs of man as a spiritual being. It was the civilisation of mankind for the good of the entire human community. The Vedic civilisation was ideal and the Aryans had a society in which every man and woman enjoyed material and spiritual goods to their satisfaction. Through his book " Satyarth Prakash", he tried to show that the Vedas presented a scheme of life for the acceptance of mankind. In the words of Tarachand his biographer " The Rishi hold out a promise that through the Veda

the world's good shall be promoted. Through the teaching of the Veda peace shall come on earth and happiness rule every home. Through the Veda shall be hastened the advent of the Golden Age, the age of which the poets have sung, the philosophers dreamt and to which the prophets have printed".[7]

The religion which once permitted freedom of thought and conscience to every individual, in which divergence of opinion was not only tolerated but respected, which imposed on each the duty of reading and understanding the Vedas for himself; which taught, that everyone was the master of his own soul, directly responsible for his thoughts and deeds to his God, and entitled to receive inspiration, by direct communion with that never failing source of spiritual replenishment and uplift, the maker of the universe - this magnificent religion had been reduced to a soul-destroying system of blind faith in authority.

FIRST YEARS OF PUBLIC LIFE :

The first few years of Swami Dayanand's public life were more or less devoted to the preparation for the stupendous task which he had set himself. During these years he reviewed and revised what he had read and disciplined himself in the

methods of public life. He visited some of the most important town of the north-Western province. Every where his out spoken views, his bold utterances, his novel exposition of the Hindu religion and his profound scholarship attracted hundreds of his countrymen to his discources. Grammar and a knowledge of the Vedas were his strong points.

Swami Dayanand Sarasvati spoke, Sanskrit since Sanscrit was the language of the learned. On one occassion, when a man had tried to prison him and was arrested by the police, he would not prosecute and thus secured the miscreant's release.[8]

In orthodox circles he achieved fame in a brief space of time. High and low, rich and poor, all classes flocked to him and drank in his discours-es gazing at him with mingled awe, respect and admiration. In certain places the public discussions were presided over by the highest ranking British Officers in the district, this being considered the most effective way of maintaining order.

In the first five years of his mission he had numerous admires but few adherents and followers. Yet among the latter were some of the most wealthy traders and land holders of the districts visited by him.

" It was true that Swami Dayanand Sarasvati was very learned and few could venture to oppose him in controversy. The traits that drew his hearers were boldness, courage and his attacks on popular beliefs and practices. Never before had they encountered such a man." [9]

Orthodox leaders appealed to Kashi the Rome of Hinduism. They were confident that there the invader would meet advarsaries worthy of his steel and be laid low. Swami Dayanand Sarasvati too, well knew that unless he reduced Kashi to submission and won a decisive battle there, all the victories so far achieved would be futile. So, before the sixth year of his public career was at an end, he reached Kashi and under the shade of a tree began to preach and express his views on religion, philosophy and grammar. Soon afterwards a public discussion was announced. It was attended by thousands. Ranged on one side were 300 leading Hindu scholars and Theologians of Banaras. On the other, Swami Dayanand Sarasvati with but a few laymen to make a show of support. The meeting was presided over by no less a personage than the Maharaja of Banaras. At the close of the discussion both sides claimed victory, but what really did happened may be gleaned from the following account which was published in a Christian Missionary Journal, evidently written by a European Missionary.[10]

VIRJANAND SARASVATI :

Swami Virjanand Sarasvati, at whose feet Dayanand completed his education, was a sannyasi of the order to which Dayanand belonged. He had been bred in the school of adversity. Dayanand had left his home because his parents loved him too well. He had departed at the comparatively advanced age of twenty-one ; of his own choice to the great sorrow and disillussionment of his parents. Poor Virjananda, on the other hand was just a child of eleven when circumstances caste him adrift on the world, without anyone to cherish him.

He was an orphan. Brothers are as a rule kinder in India, but in this case the nagging, swerish tongue and the nasty temper of his brother's wife proved too much even for the child of eleven. What added to the sadness of his orphanhood was the fact that he was totally blind, having lost his sight at the age of five through a attack of small pox. He was too spirited, however inspite of his blindness and his orphanhood, to endure the tyranny of his brother's wife. He left his brother's house with a hearful sorrow. The death of his parents had deprived him of the ties and associations which render a home so attractive and sweet. On leaving his brother's house he repaired to Haridwar on the banks of the Ganges, one of

the most beautiful spots in northern India; where the Ganges flows from the hills and extends in the plains. This is one of the most sacred sites of the Hindus and a favourite resort of Sadhus, Sannyasis and Pandits.

Such is the place in which Virjananda so journed when his fortune forced him to leave home; and well may the country that nurtured him be proud of the decision which he took at such a tender age. He departed never to return. In a few years he assimilated all that the best and the most learned in Haridwar could teach him. He was an apt pupil ; gifted with a wonderful memory, which his blindness had magnified considerably. The reputation and esteem which he acquired by his scholarship and character were so high that a sannyasi of high ability and profound austerity admitted him into the highest order of his class, his blindness not withstanding. Later in life Virjananda migrated to Mathura another holy place, famous as the birth place of Lord Krishna, one of the greatest and wisest of Hindu heroes, accorded to honour of Divinity. It was here that Dayananda encountered him.

It was a fussion of two kindered souls. Virjananda had outgrown his education. His hatred of image-worship of superstition, of the pettiness of current Hindu life, and of

the traditional system of teaching, kindled in him a consuming fire. He had the intolerance of the true iconoclast. He had mastered both the sanskrit Language and its literature, and all the intellectual treasure contained there in. He had an intative faculty of separating the chaff from the grain. He uttered what he believed. His denunciation of the popular gods, the popular modes of worship, and the popular method of teaching was merciless.[11]

Yet, such was the prestige of his character, his reputation and his learning, that despite his blindness, students flocked to him, though few could remain long enough to receive the full benefit there of, since he was rather short tempered. Nor did he ever suffer privation. Hindus of wealth and position might dislike his denunciation of what they believed and practised, but they attended to his wants and kept him amply provided with the necessities of life. This was the man with whom Dayananda completed his education.

Dayananda had already been standing for more than thirty years and he now required just a finishing touch from the hands of a master spirit for two years and a half he waited on Virjananda, ministered to him with great love, and learned all that Virjananda had to teach. Virjananda was a man of hot temper and sometimes treated his pupils harshly.

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Once he actually inflicted corporal punishment on Swami Dayananda, Yet the latter did not for sake him, and duly finished his course. Then Virjananda informed him that he had nothing more to teach him.[12]

Dayananda left the mountains at the begining of 1856 and we know he arrived in Mathura. To study under Swami Virjananda at the end of 1860. Little is known about these five years coming down the Ganga from Gurhmukteshwar he visited many places and he arrived his first visit to Benaras in 1856. He did not find what he sought for, and continued his journey after twelve days.[13] He was then a mature man of thirty six. His whole adult life had been devoted to some study of Vedanta but mainly to that of Yoga. He had combed the holy land of Kumaon and the rugged peaks of the Vindhyas in search of the perfect Guru who would show him the way to Moksha. But so far this search had remained fruitless. One would like to know what happened to him in those last three years. What frustrations and new discoveries made him at that stage give up that search for Moksha; and take the road to Mathura in order to study grammar under the guidance of Swami Virjananda Sarasvati the famous blind Guru.?

There is no doubt that, nearly three years during which Dayananda studied under Virjananda radically changed the direction of his life ; this pivotal time transformed the individualistic searcher, for Moksha into the man who would become ' the Luther of India '. This transformation can not have been the result of the content of the Guru's formal teaching grammar is what be taught.

As Dayananda himself testifies; " when I met him, he told me that grammar could be learneed in three years. I took the firm decision to study under him." [14]

At the end of his school life, Dayananda in the true Vedic tradition, took his parting present, his dakshina, to his Guru, Some of the cloves, Virjananda liked so much. But the blind Guru is reported to have addressed his pupil thus ; " I want from you a new kind of dakshina. Promise me that you will as long as you live, devote everything, even give up your life, to the propogation in India of the books of the rishis and the Vedic religion. I will accept from you the fulfillment of that promise as my dakshna." [15]

Yet, to Dayananda this was essentially a time of further study and reflection. He stayed for long periods at the same place, was in regular contact with Virjananda,[16] and when urged to get on with reform work this is for me a time of reflection.[17]

At Agra he refused to read the Panchdashi an exposition of Shankara Vedanata by Madhava ( 14th Cent. ) because it was man-made.[18] At Jaipur he got very involved in the teaching of the Upanishadas.[19]

It is evident that Dayananda had discovered or rediscovered the Vedantic idea of the absolute, the terms he uses are all Vedantic as are the works he was studying. Robson[20] recalled that at that time Dayananda believed in the identity of the divine and human spirits, and added that his argument was chiefly based on the omni presence of the divine spirit.[21] These Vedantic concepts forced him to think aspects of the Shaivism that had dominated his teaching since he left Virjananda.

As for religions practice, it is reported that at the begining of the period the Swami Dayananda was not completely against all forms of idol worship, at least tolerating the worship of the p representation of Shiva, although not that of the linga.[22] The practices he advocated were the Sandhya rituals, of which he published one version for the three vernas in Agra in 1864,[23] and the recitation of the Gayatri Mantra.[24] The Sandhya version he published was very probably a rather orthodox one, different from the rite he was to advocate in his

later years. Ghagiram indeed makes the observation that it contained the rite of making offerings to the sun, ' Surya ko argh dena ' and insists that Dayananda did not mean that one should adore the sun as God.[25] At this time Dayananda also used to teach some forms of ' Hatha Yoga ' for the sake of health[26] and seems to have used and distributed certain harbal preparations an art into which he was no doubt initiated by Virjananda.[27]

Dayananda visited his Guru for the last time in December 1866 had came a long way since he left him four years earlier. Although most of his ideas were still in an uncertain and evolving state, and definite directions. He was working himself progrossively free from the Puranic and sectarian aspects of religion. He had found in Vedantic concepts a firm foot hold for his theoiggical thinking, and he was continuously narrowing his study of Hindu lore in a definite direction; the Veda, Vedanta, Manu. The religious practices he advocated too were taking a pronouncedly Vedic turn. At the same time he became increasingly involved in discussion, teaching and preaching. The target of his propaganda tended to be the religious elite- Pandits, Gurus Sannyasis, Brahmins, People in authority. He had a first minor test of publication. Here, however, there still

remained the restraining influence of Guru Virjananda, who could see no good in secondary religious writings. This side of Dayanandâ's propaganda effort would not become prominent untill much later. That was the Dayananda, Swami Dayananda who recieved his Guru's blessing and who at the age of forty two, a pandit in his own right now set out for Hardwar, Once again answering the call of the Kumbha Mele. The first Arya Samaj was established at Bombay on 10th April 1857, by Swami Dayanand Sarasvati.

The rest of his life from 1877 to October, 1883 was spent by the Swami in preaching and teaching and in writing books as well as establishing and organizing Arya Samaj's throughout India. The only province which the Swami Dayananda could not travel was Madras.

He did every thing in his power to obtain for the patient the best available medical aid and every comfort that money coudl procure. But there was no imporvement and the Swami succumbed and passed away at Ajmer on 30th October, 1883 in British territory.

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## : NOTES AND REFERENCES :

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| 1) | | : The parthivapuji is the daily cermony of moulding a linga shape out of balck earth. For details see, Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson " The Rites of the Twice-born", 1920. pp. 234-35. |
| 2) | Jordens J.T.F. ' Swami Dyananda Sarasvati His life & Ideas.' | : This sacrement is called the Upanayna, the secon birth which makes the boys of the three high classes. Brahmin, Kshyatriya and Vaisha into twice born. Since they had right and duty to wear the sacred thread to study the Vedas and to perform the daily sacrifices. |
| 3) | Purva Mimansa | : Earlier system of inquiry was out of the six orthodox darshans or systems of salvation. It oriented as a system of explanation of the Vedas. |
| 4) | Moksha or Mukti | : The liberation of the spirit from the round of transmigration. |
| 5) | S.N. Hay | : " Jain influences on Gandhi's early Thought", in S.N. Roy. " Gandhi, India & the World ", Melbourne, 1970. pp. 29-38. |
| 6) | | : The Arya Samaj and its ditractors, edited by Munshi Ram Jigyasu, p. 6. 1910. |
| 7) | Tarachand Dennal | : " The life of Swami Dayanand Sarasvati", p. 162, 1915. |
| 8) | Lala Lajpat Rai | : " A History of Arya Samaj " Edited by Shri Ram Sharma. p. 26. 1967. |
| 9) | Ibid. | : p. 27 |
| 10) | Ibid. | : p. 28 |
| 11) | Ibid. | : p. 24. |
| 12) | Ibid. | : p. 25. |

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| 13) | | : | Autobiography of Dayananda Published in the Theosoplist, 'Paropkari' (Hindi Version) 17, No. 5. March 1975. |
| 14) | | : | Poona Pravachana Arthat ' Updesh Manjari' Edited by Y. Mimamshak, Sonipat, 1969. |
| 15) | Virjanand Charit | : | p. 162. |
| 16) | Ghasiram | : | Maharshi Dayanand Sarasvati Ka Jivan Charitra. Vol. I. Ajmer 1975. p. 107. |
| 17) | Ibid | : | p. 107. |
| 18) | Lekhram | : | Maharshi Dayanand Sarasvati Ka Jivan Charitra - Translated from original Urdu by Kavira-j Raghunandan Singh 'Nirmal' Edited by Pandit Harish-chandra Vidyalankar, Delhi. 1972. p. 49. |
| 19) | Ghasiram | : | 'Maharshi Dayanand Sarasvati Ka Jivan Charit'. Vol. I, Ajmer, 1957. p. 115. |
| 20) | John Robson | : | " Hinduism and its relation to Christianity." London 1893. |
| 21) | J. Robson | : | p. 217. |
| 22) | Ghasiram | : | " Maharshi Dayanand Sarasvati Ka Jivan Charit". Vol. II. Ajmer, 1957. p. 130. |
| 23) | Lekhram | : | "Maharshi Dayanand Sarasvati Ka Jivan Charitra" Edited by Pandit H.V., Delhi, 1972. p. 50. & Y. Mimanshak, " Rishi Dayanand Ke Granthon Ka Itihas" Ajmer, 1949. p. 9. |
| 24) | Lekhram | : | M.D.S. Ka Jivan Charitra Ed., Pandit H.V. Delhi, 1972. p. 53, 58. |
| | Ghasiram | : | Maharshi Dayanand Sarasvati Ka Jivan Charitra . p. 120. |
| 25) | Ibid. | : | p. 131. |
| 26) | Lekhram | : | p. 50. |
| | Ghasiram | : | Maharshi Dayanand Sarasvati Ka Jivan Charitra, 1972. p. 111. |
| 27) | Lekhram | : | p. 70. |


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