

JOURNAL OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PEER REVIEWED, INDEXED & REFEREED BI-ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

ISSN 0972-8309

<https://www.jndmeerut.org>

[Vol. 38, No. 2 (Winter), 2025]

<https://doi.org/10.62047/JND.2025.12.31.112>

Decoding Swami Dayanand Saraswati's Mindset of a Hidden Revolutionary of 1857

Vighnesh Kumar

Professor, Department of History, Chaudhary Charan Singh University,
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail:<vighneshkmr@gmail.com>

Abstract

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883) is widely known as a religious reformer and founder of the Arya Samaj, but his ideological contribution to India's early anti-colonial resistance, particularly in relation to the Revolution of 1857, remains underappreciated. This article interprets Dayanand as a "hidden revolutionary" by examining his mindset, writings, and intellectual interventions within the broader context of colonial domination. Although not a direct participant in the uprising, his ideas reveal a strong revolutionary consciousness aimed at challenging British political, cultural, and epistemic control. Through an analysis of Satyarth Prakash and related works, the study highlights how his advocacy of Vedic rationalism, swaraj, and cultural self-respect served as powerful forms of ideological resistance. Dayanand's critique of foreign rule, missionary influence, and colonial education sought to restore indigenous confidence and collective national identity as prerequisites for political freedom. His return to the Vedas was not religious conservatism but a strategic reconstruction of Indian identity to counter colonial hegemony. Exercising caution under colonial surveillance, Dayanand's ideas aligned with the spirit of 1857 and influenced later nationalist thinkers, positioning him as a vital bridge between early armed resistance and the growth of ideological nationalism in nineteenth-century India.

Keywords

Mindset, Hidden revolutionary, *Satyarth Prakash*, Muslim ruler, Indian history, British.

Centre For Studies of National Development, Meerut

Editorial Office : D-59, Shastri Nagar, Meerut - 250 004 (INDIA)

Ph. : 0121-2763765, +91-9997771669, +91-9412200765

8

Decoding Swami Dayanand Saraswati's Mindset of a Hidden Revolutionary of 1857

Mentioning about definition of history, one Mr. Prakash Lohia the then Chairman, Research cell, Hastinapur Research Institute, Meerut writes:¹

“In most generalized layman’s terms we may define history as the chronicle of progress of human civilization. History is a great educator as well. We gain confidence and self-respect from the great achievements of our ancestors and also learn lessons from their follies and misdeeds. Through our identification with a region, a nation or the universal human achievements, we are able to expand ourselves from our little selves and history holds our hand in this noble path of expansion.”

Underlining the importance of political history as a kaleidoscope of achievements of human societies in various fields, he further adds:²

“Though history deals with different fields of human endeavour like trade and economy, philosophy and religion, arts and literature etc; yet political history plays the most crucial role because its chronology provides comprehensible time dimension in a continuum. The political situation with its manifestation in peace, prosperity, turmoil, peril has a great bearing on the other activities of human mind and at the same time it is a kaleidoscope of the achievements of human societies in the fields.. It reflects the past, reveals the state of affairs under the period of study and provides clues for the future.”

Throwing light on history as an effective means to pass on the wisdom of human experience, he mentions:³

“Besides being woven with the lives and deeds of larger than life characters around the centre of power, vividly coloured and contrasted, with all the elements of drama, political history holds a great story-like attraction for the laity and thereby becomes an effective means to pass on the wisdom of human experience.”

The political emergence of the East India Company was felt as new comer in the very beginning of the nineteenth century India. Governor-General Lord Wellesley⁴ through 2 generals namely General Arther Wellesley his real young brother and General Gerard Lake had won the battlefields in both the Deccan and northern India respectively. The Company has taken Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II into their influence replacing Daulat Rao Sindhaia in September 1803. The arrangement, through the Surjianjongaon treaty held on 30th December, 1803 was made permanent.⁵ No Peshva umbrella over his generals namely Gaekwads, Holkars and Sindhias could be maintained effective so long and as a result, till the year of 1818, the Company had raised as the Supreme power. After it, no great battles are witnessed except that of Punjab (to some extent).

In the year of 1824, at Tankara village in Kathiawad region of present day Gujarat, one Moolshankar was born to an Ayachak Tiwari family. As a teenager, he left his home and became ascetic who has been known later on as 'Swami Dayanand Saraswati'.

On one hand, Lord Dalhousie's policy was executed during his 2 tenures from 1848 to 1856. Then, the Punjab was won and the Oudh was annexed and the Enlistment Act of 1856⁶ was enacted by the new Governor-General Lord Canning on the other hand since the great Kumbh-mela⁷ of Haridwar held in 1855-56, rumours were continuously being spread through pan-India level that the Almighty had blessed the Firangi-Raj for 100 years⁸ and more, those 100 years were going to be completed in Samvat 1915⁹ only after one and half years; [i.e. in 1857 C.E.]. The future-tellers, Sadhu-Sanyasis, the mendicants and the Akhadas were greatly channelized in spreading those type of related information's that made the resultant-effect on a very high and sensible level. The common people of that phase of colonial British Imperialism was not only ready to accept the advertisement but it was also witnessed eagerly waiting for that happening. There were a number of reasons for discomfort of common Indian people to be angry with the 'Firangi-Raj'.

The discontent among Indians was simmering for quite a long time at one hand while on the other, at the same time, the enlightenment by great men like Raja Rammohan Roy and others was going on. It made Indian renaissance effective.

Then, not at a sudden but at Peshva Nana Saheb Dhondupant's secret imitation, as the modern researches reveal,¹⁰ the outbreak of

1857 was witnessed. Many-a-historians suspect the active role of Swami Dayanand Saraswati¹¹ though being the defeated case a bundle of historical evidences clear in names of participants are naturally lacking. A researcher's eye can only unearth them, which are still awaiting to be discovered since then. Late Acharya Deepankar, the known freedom fighter of the Quit India Movement of 1942 establishes the connection of Swami Dayanand Saraswati with 1857 at Meerut,¹² the land of its outbreak on 10th May, 1857.¹³ In 1857, after 18 years of 1857, the Swami founded the 'Arya Samaj' at Bombay (present day Mumbai). It is not only a simple coincident that the Sadhu, the suspect had used to live either in the Cantonment among the Kali Pattan on in the Suraj Kund Mandir Campus during April 1857 and Swami Dayanand is also seen repeating his stay at Meerut on the similar spots. It is not less mysterious that he hides his life during the years from 1855 to 1860.

Leaving the controversy at that point of time, while going through his famous work the *Satyarth Prakash*, one finds interesting contradictions of ideas relating to political scenario of India. The Swami seems very sharp to make comments on political scene of contemporary India. Being a 'sanyasi', he was supposed to comment on spiritual, religious and even on socio-cultural situation rather than on the political condition during the colonial British imperialism. His thorny and sharp comments made by him in his book enforce a historian to rethink upon.

A new type of fact can be witnessed when one encounters the sixth chapter of Swami Dayanand Saraswati's *Satyartha Prakash*.¹⁴ What an interesting imagination opens his mindset when the place of guns (bandook) attract his attention. He, without hesitation, translates or more correctly refers to top (तेप)¹⁵ and bandook (बन्दूक)¹⁶ in the Rigveda, "the oldest book in the library of the world" as Professor Maxmullor his contemporary declares about it.

Explaining the second mantra of Sukta number 39 in Mandal 6, what he mentions is worth-seeing:¹⁷

*Sthira Vah Santvayudhaa Paraanude Veelu ut Pratishkabhe |
Yushmakamastu tavishi paniyashi ma martyasya maayinah | |*

“ईश्वर उपदेश करता है कि हे राजपुरुषों! (वः) तुम्हारे (आयुधा) आग्नेयादि अस्त्र और शतहनी (तेप) भुशुण्डी (बन्दूक) धनुष-बाण करवाल (तलवार) आदि शस्त्र शत्रुओं के (पराणुदे) पराजय करने (उत प्रतिष्कभे) और रोकने के लिए (वीलू) प्रशंसित और (स्थिरा) दृढ़ (सन्तु) हों (युष्माकम्) और तुम्हारी (तविषी) सेना (पनीयसी) प्रशंसनीय (अस्तु) होवे

कि जिससे तुम सदा विजयी होवो परन्तु (मा मर्त्यस्य मायिनः) जो निन्दित अन्यायरूप काम करता है उसके लिए पूर्व चीजें मत हों अर्थात् जब तक मनुष्य-धार्मिक रहते हैं तभी तक राज्य बढ़ता रहता है और जब दुराचारी होते हैं तब नष्ट भ्रष्ट हो जाता है।”

स्थिरा वः सन्त्वायुधा पराणुदे वीकू उत प्रतिष्कभे।

युष्माकम् तविषी पनीयसी मा मर्त्यस्य मायिनः॥

ऋग्वेद मण्डल 1/सूक्त 39/मन्त्र 2॥

While in this explanation of that mantra Swami Dayanad Saraswati ji has been trying to add his own assumptions from his style of explaining the *Rigvedic* verse. In Vedic period no question of guns and muskets arises at all. It is an addition of his own and he even does not stop himself. He increases his idea and adds writing totally a thing out of reference when he writes the last portion of the last sentence:¹⁹

“.....अर्थात् जब तक मनुष्य धार्मिक रहते हैं तभी तक राज्य बढ़ता रहता है और जब दुष्टाचारी होते हैं तब नष्ट भ्रष्ट हो जाता है।”

The last adjective used by the Swami is ‘दुष्टाचारी’. It may be one of the keys to know the history of India’s Freedom Struggle and an appropriate answer of the question why a number of the Brahmins are visible on the scene to resist the British even after the failure of the Indian Revolution of 1857.

His book entitled ‘*Satyartha Prakash*’ had been published in Hindi. He, after revision, got its revised edition in Bhadrabad, Shuklapaksha Samvat 1939 corresponding to August 29 to September 12, 1882 A.D.

In the Introduction “भूमिका”²⁰ he quotes the *Mundak Upanishad*²¹ and the *Gita*.²² It is interesting to note that the Swami ji preferred to quote “सत्यमेव जयति नानृतं सत्येन पन्था विततरे देवयानः।”²³ As a matter of both the fact as well as of the deeper national interest, the India’s national motto सत्यमेव जयते (Truth alone triumphs) is taken from the following mantra of the *Mundak Upanishad*:²⁴ —*Mundak Upanishad*, 3-1-6

सत्यमेव जयति नानृतं सत्येन पन्था विततो देवयानः।

येनाक्रमन्त्युषयो ह्याप्तकामा यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानम्।¹⁸

“Truth alone triumphs, not untruth. Through truth the divine path is spread out.”

Now come to the point of ‘दुष्टाचारी’ duraachaari. It is a Hindi word that means bad character. There exist a number of parameters in *Satyartha Prakash* to define it. One of them is based on edibles and

non-edibles. Writing on it, Swami Dayanand Saraswati described in 'Bhumika' that has devoted one full chapter titled:²⁵

“10 दसवें समुल्लास में आचार, अनाचार और भक्ष्याभक्ष्य विषय।”

At one place Swami ji declares in writing that “nothing except poverty and sorrows can be there in one's own country under foreigners rule.”

Slowly-slowly he comes to his mindset. It can be witnessed in its full glory when he describes wine consuming rulers in India. As a matter of fact the Muslims were infamous for cord-slaughtering but wine was not associated with them, though their rule was most infamous for other things like that of harassing and forcibly religious conversion of the Hindus. But they were not blamed for liquor or wine as a whole.

The swami seems to target the English so forcefully but indirectly when in the 10th chapter, he hits none but there only the English rule. He writes:²⁶

“देखो! जब आर्यों का राज्य था तब ये महोपकारक गाय आदि पशु नहीं मारे जाते थे। तभी आर्यावर्त वा अन्य भूगोल देशों में बड़े आनन्द में मनुष्यादि प्राणी वर्तते थे। क्योंकि दूध, घी, बैल आदि पशुओं की बहुताई होने से अन्न रस पुष्कल प्राप्त होते थे।”

One can get the impression that cow-slaughtering was the point in Swami ji's mind while writing these 2 sentences. For this crime (?) both the foreign origin Muslim rulers and the British are enbracketed.

But the very next line opens the eyes of a reader that the matter was something different. He pin-pointedly target non but the English for being the role reason for India's sorrows and miseries. He writes:²⁷

“जब से विदेशी मांसाहारी इस देश में आके गो आदि पशुओं के मारने वाले मद्यपानी राज्याधिकारी हुए हैं तब से क्रमशः आर्यों के दुःख की बढ़ती होती जाती है।”

As far as author's understanding of both the Swami and the 19th century Indian History, it is a new postulate of his own. In due course of time, further researches will open the secret witnessed in this article.

The hatred towards the British in Swami Dayanand Saraswati's mind is merely a clue whose so higher a degree can not be assessed without understanding historical scenario of 1857. His findings of guns (तेप) and muskets (बन्दूक) are the inventions of his own mind which were not known to the *Rigvedic* Aryans. It is he who has been drawing such greatly strange imaginations. The question

here arises whether he as one of the established great Vedic scholar should be given credit or discredit. The author is not the competent authority to make any comment on his knowledge of Sanskrit at all but he should not be snatched away or denied from an appraisal relating to history which has been his own discipline since last 4 decades. And if the author can be permitted for a justifiable historical reappraisal on भक्ष्माभक्ष्य, मांसाहारी, मद्यपानी, तोप and बन्दूक words used by Swami Dayanand Saraswati ji some 143 years back in 1882-83, the political scenario having 1857 outbreak sparks one's mind like that of this author, if analyzed historically with the most minute observations of the mindset of this great Krantikari Sanyasi of Gujarat spreading Hindi in the then undivided India, the Bharat varsha or the आर्यवर्त he uses.

Notes and References

1. Vighnesh Kumar and Mudit Kumar, *1857 Ka Viplava* (in Hindi), Hastinapur Research Institute, Meerut, 2007 (during 150 years of Indian Revolution of 1857), publisher's note "Happenings of 1857-Sepoy Mutiny (?)" by Shri Prakash Lohia, 13.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. James Mill, *The History of British India*, Baldwin, London: Cradock, and Joy, 1817.
5. Jadunath Sarkar, *Fall of Mughal Empire*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2007.
6. Vighnesh Kumar and Mudit Kumar, *op.cit.*, 7.
7. *Ibid*
8. *Ibid*
9. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, *Satyartha Prakash* (in Hindi), Bhumika, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh: Arsha Sahitya Bhandar, 2024, j p.12.
10. Vighnesh Kumar, *Ibid.*
11. Acharya Deepankar.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Vighnesh Kumar, *1857 in 1857: Original Mutiny Narrations*, Vol. I, Meerut: Hastinapur Research Institute, 2013,
14. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, *op. cit.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*

17. *Rigveda*, 1-39-2.
18. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, *op.cit.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Mundak Upanishad*, 3-1-6.
22. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, *op.cit.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Mundak Upanishad*, *op.cit.*
25. Swami Dayanad Saraswati, *op.cit.*, 217.
26. *Ibid.*, 220.
27. *Ibid.*

