



Philosophy of Dev Samaj: A socio-religious reform movement

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Abstract

Beginning of nineteenth century in Indian history is considered the beginning of India Renaissance. It was the time when Indian society got exposed not only to European economy but to world theology. New ideas within new change entered India. It was the time when India witnessed many socio-religious reform movements. Dev samaj was that unique chain of these changes which not only made people to develop scientific approach towards society but as well as to have scientific individualistic day to day approach as well. My topic in concern will be quite novel and thorough assessment of a highly diverse phenomenon.

Keywords: naturalistic, organism, atheistic, matter and force

Introduction

Indian Society of 19th century was highly gripped in a vicious web of religious superstitions and dogmas. All religions in general and Hinduism in particular had become a multifarious of magic, animism, and superstitions. The monstrous rites like animal sacrifice had replaced the worship of God. The priestly class was enjoying an overwhelming and unhealthy stimulus on the mind of people. The logical and science based lived in submission, not only to God, the powerful and unseen, but even to the whims, fancies, and wishes of the priests. Social conditions were equally depressing. The most painful was the position of women. The birth of a girl was the outcome of one's previous birth's bad deeds, her marriage had become burden and her widowhood was the curse and considered to be inauspicious. Another debilitating factor of that time was Caste. It sought to maintain a system of apartheid, hampering social mobility and fostered social divisions. There were innumerable other wicked practices marked by constraint, status, authority, bigotry and blind fatalism. At that time, The Dev Samaj movement pursued to create a social climate for modernization. The conquest of India by the British during the 18th and 19th century, which was followed by the modern education, exposed some serious weaknesses and drawbacks of current Indian social institutions. It also brought in completely new sets of ideas. The exposure to post-Enlightenment rationalism or is also called modernity brought a change in the outlook of a select group of Indians. The introduction of western education and rational ideas had the far-reaching impact on the Indian Society. Through the glasses of utility, reason, justice, and progress, educated individuals began to explore the nature of their own society.

Thus, DEV SAMAJ, a religious and social reform society, was founded on 16 February 1887 in Lahore by Pandit Shiv Narayan Agnihotri (1850-1929). Pandit Agnihotri was born in the village of Akbarpur, in Uttar Pradesh, on 20 December 1850. He was the engineer from Thomson College of Engineering at Roorkee. Pandit Agnihotri, through the influence of Munshi Kanhayalal

Alakhdhari who was his personal guru, soon joined the Lahore Brahmo Samaj. Being a dramatic and effective speaker, a prolific writer of tracts, he wrote nearly 300 books and pamphlets during his lifetime. Initially he accepted the rational, eclectic, and reformist ideology of the Brahmo Samaj. In this particular phase, he wrote and spoke in favour of marriage reform, against the evils of child marriage, and supported vegetarianism. In 1877 when he met swami Dayanand of Arya Smaj, they clashed persistently. He openly condemned many religious Ideas in favour of Brahmo Samaj. Agnihotri dedicated more and more of his energy to the Brahmo cause. Thus, he became a Brahmo missionary travelling extensively throughout Punjab and, finally, on 20 December 1882, he took sannyas with the new name, Satyanand Agnihotri. It was the time when Factional strife, competition for leadership, differences over beliefs and the resulting tensions began to impinge on Agnihotri's commitment to the Brahmo Samaj. He found himself less and less comfortable within the Brahmo movement, and finally resigned from the Punjab Brahmo Samaj in 1886. The founding of the Dev Samaj in 1887 provided Agnihotri with a new opening. By the end of 1887, he and his new organization began to move away from the central ideology of the Brahmo Samaj. In place of the eclectic rationalism of the Brahmos based on a reinterpretation of traditional Hindu texts, the Dev Samaj made the `Guru` Pandit Agnihotri. Satyananda Agnihotri was called as Dev Bhagwan Atma by his followers. The Dev Samaj fused traditional concepts with demands for radical social change in its patterns of worship and its ideology.

Naturalism

Under the common phenomena of the 19th and early 20th century of scientific approach there was a rigid separate approach towards scientific and religio-theological attitude. Intellectuals of that particular period were strongly influenced by the theory of five senses means anything which comes in your experience is the only truth. That way religion was imponderable. Because of

this more and more people started questioning traditional religious philosophy and practices. This, in brief, may be said to mark the culmination of the Mechanistic Era of scientific thought, when more and more intricate and subtle quantitative categories and ingenious laboratory-techniques of a perplexingly varied order, virtually became the criteria of science, so that anything that was not amenable to these was supposed to lie outside its field, and, to that extent, knowledge become physical. Theory of metaphysical – the empirical, the factual or natural, and not the ideal or supernatural, which determines the reality. This approach is called naturalistic attitude in which nothing but such verifiable facts comes. To find the answers of traditional questions Bhagwan Dev Atma gave the concept of static, timeless, idealistic intuitionism etc. He said that the Absolute is the ultimately real. For him in the ultimate analysis, is the cosmic universe. This universe is one-unlimited, uncreated, self-created, self-existed. He was totally against the thinking of Russell, who used to say that nature is nothing but merely a continuous process which is blind to good and bad, reckless of destruction. In such thinking the position of man and his intellect was reduced to an ineffectual and ephemeral epi- phenomenon of the inscrutable mechanism of the blind natural forces. He is just a product of causes which have no prevision of the end which they were achieving like his origin, his growth, his feelings, his beliefs allure the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms. For Sachita Anand Agnihotri, naturalism basically, is a post-Hegelian concept which represents a form of traditional materialism appropriately renovated to suit the demands of overwhelming Indian thinkers. Under traditional materialism everything is reduced to Matter- only substantial reality. Upon that one more theory came which said that everything including human mind is nothing but just moving Atoms differing only in size, shape and motion. But in later years this theory too was rejected, to break the traditional fixed frame and for better understanding new theory as termed Naturalism delivered. Under which more emphasis on the concept of energy, motion, natural and casual determination etc. was given. It was the basic explanatory principles of the universal existence. The far most work of naturalists was to make the basic criteria to determine the character of existence. The founder had firm faith in the twain Law of the Conservation of Energy which characterized indisputably his stand in this regard. Under his philosophy this phenomenon is immune from any control of any Supernatural or Transcendental Destiny. It is manifested as *matter* and *force*. All living forces including animals are composed of these two constituents. Since the basic metaphysics of Naturalism is most emphatically monistic, wherein things, events and happenings are continually being governed by Nature's own inexorable law- the grand and gigantic causal system, silently functioning in its somber majesty- it follows that existence is essentially relational, and that the nature of this relation is casual inter-connected of a vitally dynamic character. He firmly believed the typical Heraclitean vein that change and existence are veritably interchangeable concepts as to be is to change and to

change is to exist. Thus, continuous and ceaseless change is the inescapable character of all existence. He called it the concept of higher naturalism. It was not merely a concept of mere collocation of material atoms. It is evaluative of a deep-set creative process. As old materialistic naturalism under one principle used to put man along with other living creatures or one can say that they put human on equal footing with animals. But point is since man is a living being, to that extent he is to be put on a par with any other manifestation of life on earth, that means to accept him as an animal but he is more to it. He is rational and as being social civilized too. If man is an organism, he is unique too.

If we consider him as an object even, then no object is just bare things. They always exhibit as having subtle internal relational within larger structure of *purpose* and *value*. Value cannot be unique realm of essence. It also comes under nature. So, reality is co-extensive with nature, the truth of value would consist is in being natural, and not spiritual. So, we can conclude that value is natural experiences generalized. Under naturalistic approach value is extremely limited. But in empirical revolve around psychological or biological, sociological or evolutionary. In the valuation language, the good is desired or that which is desired to good; desire is a psychological concept and good is an ethical one. Naturalism regards both as co-extensive, and the former as defining the latter. The good or right may also be defined not in terms of will or desire, but in terms of feeling of approval or disapproval. But one must understand that value-significance is unique or can be said that it is an indefinable concept. It cannot be mere a matter of attitude.

The status of value whether ethical, religious or of any other type must be conceived very much as natural phenomena. Which is rooted deep in nature and conceive in the form of the divine can be considered as deity or god. Value represent certain objective character of nature as whole. Related to relation between value and existent Dev Samaj holds different views of its own. It is neither necessary nor purely accidental. Value is a condition which further existence, while dis-value is a condition which acting as a limited existence. Change with optimism envisage a bright future for the whole evolutionary process.

Theory of evolution

The philosophy Dev Samaj is a rebuttal to the acceptance of God as a creator and self as immortal, one finds an iconoclast dethroning the old believes and gave new interpretation of human values. Founder accepts the soul as born with body, and yet a maker of body. He accepts Nature as a system of the multiple form of existences, which include continuously undergoing change, modification and transformation. In Dev Samaj philosophy the essential core of human existence is the law of evolution. The evolution perspective is considered the interrelationships and their functional role in the development of energy patterns, animal behavior, human groups and social organizations etc. It is due to this process that our solar system came into being and most important our earth from molted state to become

habitation place. Under these great stages of evolution plenty of water, air and light provided inevitable evolution. It involves Evolution along with Devolution or life and death. In a process, millions of living and non-living beings that have no capacity for betterment or progress gradually become degenerated. Second under the law of evolution, it is said that things, objects and beings can evolve only if they could serve the prove useful to others. It means don't exist only but to serve others. The law of evolution cannot proceed itself unless the objects and beings produced by its top point, develop power of utility for others. Dev Samaj totally rejects the theory of Darvon under which we are evolution of only monkeys. It believes that at right time unicellular living organism appeared in water which had collected in various parts of earth. With the progress of hindered of years they got converted to two main braches vegetable and animal worlds. As at advance stage vegetable world is conditioned to serve the animal world. Similarly, being a higher specie it's our duty to prove our services to vegetable world. By the evolution of mental powers human won definite superiority over entire world.

The most primary question raised concerning a theory of evolution is about its Matrix or the question as to what evolves. Dev Samaj evolutionism is atheistic but not against religion. It can be said that Dev Samaj is a religion of "religion without God". It does not believe in supernatural or other-world. Religions and the Hindu doctrines of transmigration and past Karma, idol worship and the superstitious rites on familiar and social occasions have no place. He refuses to accept anything which is not known by scientific empirical method. As he himself admitted " the scientific methods of investigation which were imperative for the researches into these domains gradually acquired sovereign sway over my heart. The love of experimental interrogation had completely possessed me and had become integral part of my mind". On this basis, he rejected Brahmanvada of Samkara, the doctrine of Avtara of Gita, the doctrine of Providence, and intercession of Semitic.

Concept of ideal society

Dev Samaj ideology which had been brought upon Western education and had developed great admiration for scientific and logical approach became highly critical of the caste-ridden, feudal and superstition-dominated society of its times and looked forward to the creation of a new society order, under the guidance of Bhagwan Dev Atma, which would represent a happy synthesis between the wisdom of the East and the West and would do away with the social evils which had crept into society and made it so vulnerable.

This striving for a new reformed society order which started with Gyananad Agnihotri is continuing to this day. Some people call this process merely a revival of the ancient ways; others described it as a revolution. Gyananad Agnihotri was deeply versed in oriental languages and philosophy and was a great scholar of occidental thought and culture. He founded the Dev Samaj based on Scientific Approach and repudiation of idol worship and various rites and ceremonies; he pleaded for religious tolerance, condemned the cast system,

favored widow remarriage and strongly urged the abolition of the pernicious practice of Sati. He was a great champion of Western education because, in his view, only through the assimilation of Western knowledge and Western social and political values could Indians combine their great intellectual and society heritage with modern cultural achievements. He was great admirer of some Indian social thinkers who represent both modernity and tradition. Like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Radhakrishnan, two of our foremost thinkers, are both great admirers of ancient Indian thought and culture as well as great students of Western ideals. It is very difficult to disentangle Indian from Western sources in their thought and indicate precisely what is indigenous or foreign in any matter. Only the Left-wingers, particularly militant Socialists and Communists, are influenced wholly by Western ideology. The requirements of modernity are not difficult to enumerate. Modernity assumes that the people should transcend local and parochial loyalties and develop an international or logical outlook based on scientific temperament and that antiquated notions of society dominated by group or caste and orthodox thinking should be discarded and replaced by respect for the rule of law among people. It also assumes that the people will make rational decisions and will be guided by rational considerations rather than by selfish emotion, sentiment or prejudice. When majority 18th century Indian societies represented a closed system with everything defined by custom, birth, social status and rank. Dev Samaj society was open and egalitarian, men form or join associations by choice. In Dev Samaj the stress was on developing man's potentialities and individual freedom in a casteless and classless society. The Dev Samaj Constitution represents a remarkable synthesis of old and new values. The inspiration is more Western than indigenous, but ancient Indian ideals of basic Indian tradition which is based on moral values are not neglected. The Dev Samaj principles of Society have a marked Socialistic and paternalistic bias. They envisage a social order which is broadly egalitarian, which protects the poorer sections of the community against exploitation of any kind and assures them at least of the basic requirements of good life, which accords status of equality to women, which promises a uniform civil code. Other features of Dev Samaj life sought to be preserved include prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health and the prohibition of the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle. Dev Samaj has, by and large, been of a puritanical character in the matter of food, drink and morality.

Dev Samaj's main ideal society principle lies in the status and position of women. In traditional India Marriages were considered compulsory for all, and they were indissoluble, divorce being regarded by some law-givers as permissible only under exceptional circumstances. Though instances were not lacking women occupying positions of importance in public life and being well-versed in higher arts and philosophy, women were generally honored primarily as mothers and wives whose primary function to top perpetuate the race by producing

many children and to look after the comforts of the family. This position persisted down to modern period. Moreover, child marriages became very common, widow remarriage virtually disappeared, the dowry system progressively more vicious, the original concept of women as partners in marriage gave place to that of utter subservience of women in a male-dominated society and the pernicious practice of sati and infanticide assumed serious proportions. The law had permitted a widow to remarry, but where virginity is prized most in marriages. Widow re-marriage was bound to remain unpopular. The law was far ahead of public opinion in several respects with the result that the ugly reality was partly obscured from view and complacency is fostered. Even in cities and towns where the impact of new ideas was more marked, reforms were sometimes noticeable more on paper than in actual practice. At that time, Dev Samaj decided to take this change door to door. Bhagwan Dev Atma gave a great impetus to the movement for women's emancipation by calling upon them to participate in the struggle for national independence when women emerged from the Purdah and stood shoulder to shoulder with their men folk cheerfully facing suffering and martyrdom, the male prejudices of the centuries melted away. The Dev Samaj treated women as men's equals in every way. When Bhagwan Dev Atma went to Lahore in 1873 he was under great influence of Brahma Samaj philosophy of Socio-religious reforms. He edited two journals for this purpose, one in Urdu called *Bradar-i-Hind* and the other in Hindi entitled *Hindi Bandhav*. His main purpose was to reach maximum people. He took it as his individual responsibility for the upliftment of the Indian womanhood. He set his own example in this field. He not only married a woman who was not of his region or his religion but was widow as well. Then he educated her and gave her very responsible post in Dev Samaj institution. In dev Samaj norms child marriage is prohibited. Its members are encouraged for inter caste marriage and widow remarriage. Dev Samaj is encouraged to be free from the curse of dowry. when whole Indian society till time is fighting to abolish this custom, there are hundred examples in Dev Samaj which shows that it is already free from it. The main reason for women suffering throughout history is to keep them uneducated, to keep them in four walls of house and deny them equal right in all spares of life. Bhagwan Dev Atma said that the future of women lay in education. Education is the only instrument with which woman can open a door of justice and opportunities for herself. Only through education she will be independent in professional and public life. Dev Samaj made women education their base of social reforms. Along with this Dev Samaj set some rules for its followers which benefited women at large. Like they set women marriage at 16 years. Strictly made a rule that marriage expenses should be minimum. Encouraged its works for widow marriage. Brought girls out of *parda* and *ghungat* tradition and motivated them to progress in society. Even today in weddings women dancers are believed to be very entertaining but Dev Samaj condemned this system even in 18th century. Due to narrow thinking of society women were not taken to hospital even in emergency. Dev Samaj took this issue

seriously and made women medical assistants like missionary Shradheya Dr. Prem Devi, who helped hundreds of females in their physical sufferings and gave free medical help. Thus, Dev Samaj not only condemned women related injustice but tried to uproot the basic causes related to these problems.

Another biggest black spot on Indian society was the caste system that still persists, still corrupting Hindu society, perpetuating caste distinctions, inflicting terrible sufferings upon the so-called touchable. The institution of castes, per Dr. Radhakrishnan, "illustrates the spirit of comprehensive synthesis characteristic of the Hindu mind with its faith in the collaboration of races and the co-operation of cultures." Whatever the justification for the institution of the caste originally, it has none today, particularly in the form in which it is observed. In the social classification based on heredity, the principle of equality was violated. Untouchability was abolished by law and its observance was a cognizable offence but the prejudices of the centuries die very hard and the pollution barrier persisted, particularly in villages where the plight of the members of the scheduled castes was still most pitiable. Inter-caste marriages were not accepted by society. In socio-religious reform movement- Dev Samaj, it was said that the cast system will inevitably collapse as the people become more educated. There is some evidence to support this thesis. The caste system prevails in a more vicious form in the countryside. In the towns, the evil has not assumed very wide dimensions, particularly in matters of inter-dining and even inter-marriage. Illiterate men and women who constitute most the nation will not be easily persuaded to shed their prejudices and inhibitions.

Thus, in brief Dev Samaj Philosophy for social reform is based on mainly two primary principles-Truth and wellbeing. Truth means the acceptance of only those social norms or religious ritual which have scientific base, which are logical. Wellbeing is that every act of us should be for the benefit of others. We should always remain ready for the welfare of others. We should have strong moral base along with critical scientific clarity. We should accept our weaknesses and remove that stagnation for spiritual and worldly growth. This is not surprising because the requirements of modernity must be satisfied through a fresh interpretation of the tradition. It is a matter of opinion whether the modern version of the Hindu way of life is faithful to the ancient texts or is an imposition upon it. For example, untouchability is universally condemned. Dev Samaj rejects it because it is incompatible with the ancient practice, another because it is undemocratic or inhuman. they look forward to the day when India will recapture the glory of the past and create a casteless society. It believes untouchability will be abolished only through a Socialist revolution.

There is no doubt that a tremendous social change has taken place during the quarter of the century since Britishers established their administrative policies and that the traditional society which was slowly responding to the challenge of modernity has now undergone a rapid change. Dev Samaj was one of those examples. The participation of the people living even in remote villages unaffected by modern civilization in the political life of

the nation has given them a new sense of power and aroused in them expectations which could be satisfied only if the existing social structure is radically modified per the principles of Dev Samaj. There was, however, a danger in over-drawing the picture of the social transformation that was taking place. The law could abolish socio-economic inequalities, but there may be a wide gap between what the law prohibits or permits and what obtains. The law could abolish the dowry system by prohibiting asking for dowry, but if the practice is general and the conditions in the marriage market encourage it, the law is rendered helpless. So, first thing needs to be done is to inculcate the moral based atmosphere where every person feel it his individual responsibility for universal wellbeing. Dev Samaj strongly propagated the theory of truth and wellness. They welcomed people across the social boundaries to their society. They condemned the people who used to illtreat other human being on the name of caste. They were called *Neech Jivan Dhari* and were not considered good human beings. But simultaneously they were not left alone. Under Dev Samaj philosophy any person gets Guru's light could see all humans as one. They did not emphasis on any ritual or who to believe in any supernatural powers for the upgradation of self. They strongly emphasis only on sixteen relations. These sixteen relations were considered the base of human Karmas. Where is child born he gets sixteen relations in this world. If he remains good and honest in these relations he will surely become *Uch Jivan Dhari*. Hence relations include relation with human, animals, vegetation and cosmos. To strengthen this principle in its follower Bhagwan dev Atma used to celebrate each relation on a day and sensitise humans about their surroundings. With which a natural responsivity sense develops and no person will do anything wrong with others.

Atheism

Born in an orthodox Brahman family Dev Samaj founder strove hard to lead the people to a righteous path. He denounced God and underlined the importance of material evolution and its potentialities of which the soul and the body are 'natural' products. Under the scientific theory of existence all the entities of the nature whether its animate or inanimate are composed of only two kinds of forces matter and force. "Since human soul, like millions of other living and non-living existences of nature, is also part of nature and is wholly and solely dependent on nature and is controlled by the immutable laws of nature, therefore all forms of nature can alone be true and should be acknowledged as true".

For Devatma soul is a life-force. It got originated in animal kingdom. It not only constructs but maintain, sustain, repaired human body but also reproduces new individuals of its species. This life force fundamental characteristics are also found in vegetables and animals. When soul loses its constructive biological powers, it meets death. Its biological powers inherent to it. Good make it strong and evil weakens and damages it. Under matter-force unit everything on this planet is to change. So Devatma places soul in the vortex of change, for he

places it in Nature and cuts all its association with some transcendental reality either for its origin or destiny. It wears indelible marks of its origin and growth in Nature. Its nature of evolution helps it to preserve, evolve and strengthen the eradicated of both anthropomorphism and idealistic metaphysics. Human personality is psycho-physical organism; hence its continuous existence depends on their conditions. The psychological conditions for the persistence of human personality are two-fold. The first one is that its soul must refrain from or be free of the diseases of psyche i.e., low-loves and low-hates; second supporter, it must evolve and maintain healthy altruistic forces. Human body and soul are so much connected that when soul leaves body it cannot remain alive. Here soul has also two consequences either it will also die or will remain alive only if it is not able to build a body for itself to live in. This subtle body starts becoming in being's lifetime. It's something can be taken as new body becomes in the womb of mother and collect cells from her and become independent being. When a person dies, immediately this subtle body starts becoming form different subtle particles. It takes the shape of same person as one can easily identify him. This new body has its own consciousness. It like living person has feel hunger, thrust, tidiness, heat, cold, pleasure and unpleasantness. This body cannot be seen with naked eyes. However, about the death of this subtle body, *devdharam* doesn't mention anything.

on the question of God also Dev Samaj is atheist. In Dev Samaj philosophy all credit is given to nature- the force, which sustained the world. He believed this world is natural product of evolution. In Dev Samaj philosophy it is not logical to give God a credit for creating this world. Even for the spiritual growth we don't need the existence of God. There are many references in history where people reach deep into spirituality without any God like *Nirvana* of Buddha, *Mahavir* etc. Devatma clearly state that on this question he adopted the laws of logic and the principle of verifiability as a yard-stick to decide the issue. Neither the scientific method nor logic could lead to the confirmation of the existence of God. As God has no place in the evolution theory nor he is necessary for the explanation of any existence and its causes.

Importance of Guru and Dev Jayoti

"As I have embraced the mission for the good of the whole world it is but inevitable for me to live in this world and struggle hard to destroy, as far as possible, the reign of untruth and evil whenever and wherever existing in various relations of mankind, and to create and establish in its stead the reign of Truth and Goodness. Hence my renunciation will not at all be of the nature of those selfish *sadhus*, *bairagees*, *sannyasis*, and *faqirs* of this land who believe in breaking off various ties of relationship and desert all the right responsibilities about them. *My renunciation would rightly consist in making all kinds of sacrifices of wealth, fame, popularity, happiness, comfort, health, power etc. which may be necessary for fulfilling my highly difficult mission.* I have made the most arduous struggle for converting human souls from the life of low-loves and low-hates, which lead them to falsehoods and evils and make this earth a

veritable hell and renders all their connections and relations most harmful for one another, and which have dethroned living religion of higher life and enthroned irreligious or baser life in their hearts. They have consequently produced misery, pain, sorrow and agonies which have wrung from their hearts cries and lamentations. I must evolve in their hearts higher forces of higher life in their place. This kind of complete sacrifice or *tyag* for the fulfilment of my highest mission will be my true *sannyas*.”

Bhagwan Dev Atma (Part IV)

Through these simple lines, we can understand the Life-Mission of Bhagwan Dev Atma as a Guru. He had unique life-vow, which was intensity, magnitude and agonizing natured. mankind was immersed in soul-darkness. He had all false beliefs, false doctrines, false superstitions, false rites, false ceremonials, false customs and traditions etc. which resulted in soul- darkness. Normal human being loved happiness as the goal of life. Thus, they became slave to low loves and low hates which made pursuit after happiness inevitable in their hearts. This low love or hate made them to look upon any and every such person as a real foe who tried, even out of the deepest sympathy, to cure them of these false biases. When Dev Samaj tried to condemn such evils, they stood against and used all means of inventing and propagating lies, malicious fabrications, monstrous calumnies and false accusations against it through press and on platform and launching prosecutions in courts by influential persons etc. but Bhagwan Dev Atma didn't left his mission and said “During such moments of trial and sufferings, the love for my mission grew deeper and deeper.”

His splendid and unique mission could not let him to give up the work of the highest spiritual and moral evolution of the world. For him Guru-

1. Could not but serve all beings without the expectation of the least return.
2. Could not shut door however sinful, if he showed the least desire to avail himself of his services.
3. Could not harbor hatred for any person.
4. Should be forgiver.
5. Should wish the highest good even of his worse enemies.
6. Could not think of his own bodily health, his own comfort, happiness in front of others.
7. Could not develop attachment or biases for anyone.
8. Always be ready for the upliftment of lower soul.

Bhagwan dev Atma always considered his Sevaks above all. He believed that he is blissed with Dev Jyoti for the upliftment of lower Karma people. Even outer world reformers face opposition in their mission like sati system. Caste system, widow remarriage etc. his work is much above to them. He is in this world to bless people with goodness. When any person comes under him, it becomes his duty to make them *uch jivan dhari*. He started his unique work with most wonderful and phenomenal efforts to get them free from many false thoughts and deeds. Guru continue continued his last moment to think of his disciple's highest welfare and to do all that was possible to save them from their

destructive forces and to develop higher or constructive forces in their soul.

Work towards women education

The Dev Samaj reformers thought that the lack of female education was the cause for all social evils like sati, child marriage, widowhood, devadasi system, dowry, etc. So, they took effort to educate girls to remove these evils and raise the status of women.

The Dev Samaj society was the pioneer in the field of women's education. They invariably noticed that they were not able to get more under their fold because their message did not reach the Indian women folk who were not allowed to cross the doors of their houses. The gross ignorance of the women folk was due to the absence of women education. Realizing this fact, the missionaries set upon them to build confidence among them by bringing the knowledge to their door steps. This paved the way not only for the diffusion of knowledge among the women folk but also the need for the establishment of Institutes for women. Bhagwan Dev Atma opened first women school in. This proved to be a great stimulus because it opened a useful career for women. But however, the progress of female education was confined to the primary stage. The demand for upper secondary education hardly existed since the girls were not permitted to go to schools after the age of ten. Thus, he opened first college for women in 1934 in Ferozepur district of Punjab. That gave a great stimulus to higher education of women. Many journals were-brought out in support of women's liberation. Those magazines and journals of Dev Samaj also played an important role in promoting public opinion in support of elevation of women. This society opened maximum girl schools not only in Punjab but also in entire India. They opened more educational institutions in villages to reach maximum girls. Dev Samaj's experiment in women's education was appreciated and acknowledged at large level. Dev Samaj institutions not only provided a high standard of education, but also inculcated moral culture of the highest quality. Its students are believed to perform all roles in life whether as a daughter, wife, mother or general social individual at its best. They are taught to live simple and serviceable life, a life of purity and loyalty in wedlock, in an exemplary degree. The prominent role which Dev Samaj played in women's education is indicated by the fact that Dev Samaj Girl's High school, Ferozepur, was the first Hindu girls' high school in the Punjab. This school produced the first MBBS in the Punjab, who later retired from the post of principal in Lady Harding's Medical College, Delhi. This girl's high school later upgraded to post-graduate and teacher training institutions and produced hundreds of graduates and thousands of teachers for the schools of across India.

The above discussions make it clear that the pitiable condition of women invited the reformers to decry and carry out propagation for the upliftment of women for a long period. However, in the 19th century very strong and practical steps were taken by Dev Samaj to mitigate the social sufferings of women. The women had the realization that their social sufferings were intertwined with their economic dependence and joint family system,

but first wanted to remove their social disabilities and enhance their health and social status. Thus, Dev Samaj created awareness on the necessity of elevation of women economically and then socially. The sustained work of the missionaries resulted in the creation of educated community even in the lower strata of the society of Punjab. Women became teachers, nurses; government officials and even missionary assistants. Thus, the whole of public opinion for female education was set in motion in the end of the 19th century. However, the 19th century social reform movement of Dev Samaj continued with the new idea of rehabilitation of the affected women in the 20th century.

Thus, the Samaj propagated a code of honesty in public and private and its members were forbidden to lie, steal, cheat, accept bribes or gamble. The members were also prohibited from taking liquor or drugs and were directed to take strict vegetarian diets. No kinds of adultery, polygamy and 'unnatural crimes' were allowed and the main motto of the members' lives was expected to be only to work and live as a householder.

In 1892, Agnihotri initiated a policy of dual worship, both of himself and of God. Three years later the worship of God ended, leaving only the 'Guru' Pandit Agnihotri as the focus of worship and of all ideological innovation. Although the Dev Samaj followed patterns of leadership and legitimization different from those of other reform movements within Punjabi Hinduism, its ideology remained similar. As with the Brahmas and Arias, the Dev Samaj rejected contemporary Hinduism. Its rituals and deities were replaced by worship of the true 'guru,' Dev Bhagvan Atma. All caste restrictions were rejected. Members of the Dev Samaj were expected to practise inter dining and inter-caste marriage. Pandit Agnihotri also sought to change the role of women through the elimination of child marriage; he set the approved age of marriage at twenty for boys and sixteen for girls. He discouraged excessive dowries, pardah, and the traditional mourning rites carried out by Punjabi women. Agnihotri taught that widow marriage was acceptable and married a widow himself following the death of his first wife. The Dev Samaj maintained that women as well as men should be educated and, to further this end, it opened a coeducational school at Moga on 29 October 1899. This later became the Dev Samaj High School, and in 1901 the Samaj opened a separate girls' school, the Dev Samaj Balika Vidyalaya. Over the years, the Dev Samaj founded other schools and colleges in many parts of Punjab. Above all else, the Dev Samaj taught a strongly moral doctrine. Its members were urged to be completely honest in both their public and private lives. They should not lie, steal, cheat, accept bribes, or gamble. They should take neither liquor nor drugs and should practise strict vegetarianism. The Samaj members were divided into three classes, Sahayaks, or sympathizers and Navajivan Yaftas, those who had found a new life. The former joined the Dev Samaj, paid Rs 10 per year, and accepted the leadership of Pandit Agnihotri. The latter members were expected to follow the strict moral code of the Dev Samaj, to reject all "false" religious symbols and to donate one tenth of their income to the Samaj. A third section of members included those who had taken a strict

religious vow dedicating themselves to the pursuit of Dev Dharam. The strict moral code of the Dev Dharam appealed to educated Punjabis, who came to make up the membership of the Samaj. Dev Samaj is were almost all educated, literate men and even a large percentage of their women were literate. Their position in society gave the movement far greater influence than sheer numbers would allow. The Samaj was always an elite organization even at its peak during the 1920's. Following the death of Pandit Agnihotri the movement declined, but did not disappear. Partition saw the loss of its properties in Lahore and thus the centre of the movement shifted to the Moga Ferozpur area where it continues to adhere to the Vigyan Mulak Dharam, the Science Grounded Religion of Pandit Shiv Narayan Agnihotri.

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