

Contribution of Swami Dayanand towards the understanding of the Vedas.

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Swami Dayanand, the founder of Aryasamaj dedicated his whole life towards the propagation of the message of the Vedas. Swami Dayanand completed the commentary on Yajurveda and up-to the 7th mandala of the Rigveda. He also published *Rigvedadibhashya-bhumika* [preface to the four Vedas] as introduction to the Vedas. Before Swami Dayanand advent, Vedas were considered as a book of cumbersome rituals confined to the priest class. Swami ji not even made the Vedas accessible to the common man but also made their interpretation useful and worthy for everyone. He established certain landmarks for the understanding of the Vedas. This article is dedicated towards the understanding of contribution of Swami Dayanand to the Vedas.

Rigveda-10 mandalas, 1028 sukatas and 10552 mantras.

Yajurveda-40 Chapters and 1975 mantras.

Samaveda- 3 Archikas and 1873 mantras.

Atharveda- 20 kandas, 731 Suktas and 5977 mantras.

There are total 20,377 mantras in all four Vedas.

Landmarks established by Swami Dayanand

The authenticity of the Vedas

Swami Dayanand says that the Vedas are self sufficiently authoritative being the creation of the God. The Vedas being the perfect knowledge of God is not dependent on other man made texts. The texts other than the Vedas are considered true only if they are in accordance with the Vedas. Swami Dayanand in Satyarth Prakash writes that

“Of these [books other than the Vedas] too, those which appear to be contradictory to the Vedas, should be rejected; for the Vedas being created by the God, are infallible and self-sufficiently authoritative, that is to say, the Vedas are their own authority.”

Thus, Swami Dayanand established the landmark of supreme and self testified authority of the Vedas.

Revelation and the Rishis

Swami ji said that God is all knowing. So, he revealed his supreme knowledge of Vedas for the benefit of whole mankind. Swami ji said that the four Vedas *Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda* and *Atharveda* were revealed in the conscience of the four *Rishis Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Angira* respectively by God. God is all powerful and all pervading. So, he does not need mouth or vocal

organs to reveal his knowledge. The four seers were not composer of the Vedas. They only realized and expounded the meaning of the Vedic verse. Thus, the Vedas are self authoritative true knowledge of God revealed to the four Rishis.

The *Nirukta* by *Yaskacharya* defines Rishi as one who sees or understands the meaning of the mantra. Rishi is not one who created mantra but who realized the meaning of the mantra.

Thus, Swami Dayanand established the landmark that the Vedas were not composed by the four Rishis but realized by the four Rishis. God is the ultimate composer of the Vedas.

No History in the Vedas

One of the biggest achievement of Swami Dayanand was to establish this fact that Vedas are not History books just like Bible or Quran. Swami ji first established this fact that the four Vedas were revealed with the beginning of Human life. So, no question of inclusion of history appears in front of the Vedas. They were not created after passing of certain passage of time just like the Abrahamic beliefs. This confusion regarding History in Vedas arises due to misunderstanding of the Vedic words. There are certain words like *Visvamitra*, *Vasistha*, *Urvashi* etc. in the Vedas. There is an obsession among the Indian Acharyas like *Sayana*, *Mahidhara* and other Western indologists to impose history in Vedas using these words. To interpolate history using Vedic words lead to lot of confusions. Certain mantra seems to be promoting animal sacrifice, black magic, obscenity, polygamy etc. due to historical misinterpretation of the Vedas. Thus, this misinterpretation brought a bad name to the Vedas. Swami Dayanand established that there are three classes of meaning in the embellishment of language. They are *Yaugika*, *Yogrurhi* and *Rurhi*. *Yaugika* signifies the meaning of its root. *Rurhi* is the common name of definite concrete object. *Yogrurhi* is a combination of the both. Rishis in Vedic times regards Vedic terms to be *Yaugika* and *Yogrurhi* only. While the later age Acharyas regards them as *Rurhi* only. Swami Dayanand followed the way of ancient Rishis. He proved that the real sense of Vedas could only be reached by considering their root meaning.

Thus, Swami Dayanand established the landmark that there is no history in the Vedas.

The source of all True Knowledge and Sciences

Swami Dayanand is regarded as first scholar in modern times who welcomed the modern sciences. Before him it was believed that Science and Religion are enemies. Swami Dayanand established that they are allies not enemies. Swami ji in his work *Rigvedadibhashya-bhumika* proved that Vedas are the source of all true knowledge. He said that there is no self contradiction in the Vedas. Swami Dayanand quoted different mantras teaching us science of Astronomy, Medicine, Telegraphy etc. He considered that Vedas possess all seeds of knowledge embedded in them.

Maxmuller commented on Swami Dayanand's observation of science in Vedas as, "To him (Swami Dayanand) not only was everything contained in the Vedas perfect truth, but he went a step further, and by the most incredible interpretations succeeded in persuading himself and others that everything worth knowing, even the most recent inventions of modern science, were alluded in the Vedas."

[Ref. F. Maxmuller,1884, Biographical Essays,Longman Green and Company, London,P.31]

Thus, Swami Dayanand established the landmark that the Vedas bear all true knowledge and Sciences.

Vedas and Monotheism

One of the most revolutionary landmark established by Swami Dayanand was that the Vedas preach Monotheism. It means only one God. Swami Ji proved that in Vedas God is one and he has countless qualities. He is called by different names .These names also apply on different material entities.

Take an example from first mantra of *Rigveda*.

ॐ अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्तिजम् । होतारं रत्नधातरम् ॥१॥

God is mentioned in this mantra by word 'Agni'. Most of Acharyas and western indologists interpret *Agni* as materialistic fire. Swami Dayanand interprets using ancient method as the source of illumination of all noble activity.

In similar way Swami Dayanand interprets different words like *Agni, Vayu, Aditya, Savita, Indra, Varna* etc. as different names of one God as well as materialistic names. This interpretation was based on the method adopted by Ancient Rishis using *Nirukta* (Vedic Philology). This helps not even in establishing the fact that Vedas preach Monotheism but also there is no History in the Vedas. There is again a misconception that Swami Dayanand adopted the monotheistic concept in Vedas from the ideology of Islam and Christianity. It is again a myth because there are multiple mantras in Vedas supporting Monotheism.

Few Vedic Mantras supporting Monotheism in Vedas

Yajurveda 40.1:

This entire world is embedded within and managed by the One and Only One Ishwar. Never dare do any injustice or desire riches through unjust means. Instead follow the righteous path and enjoy His bliss. After all He alone is source of all bliss!

Rigveda 10.48.1:

Ishwar alone is omnipresent and manager of entire universe. He alone provides victory and eternal cause of world. All souls should look up only to Him in same manner as children look up to their Father. He alone provides for our sustenance and bliss.

Rigveda 10.49.1

Ishwar alone provides true knowledge to truth seekers. He alone is promoter of knowledge and motivates virtuous people into noble actions to seek bliss. He alone is the creator and manager of the world. Hence never worship anyone else except one and only Ishwar.

Atharvaveda 13.4.16-21

He is neither two, nor three, nor four, nor five, nor six, nor seven, nor eight, nor nine, nor ten. He is, on contrary, One and Only One. There is no Ishwar except Him. All devtas reside within Him and are controlled by him. So He alone should be worshiped, none else.

Thus, Swami Dayanand established this landmark that Vedas preach Monotheism.

Vedas and Devta

Swami Dayanand solved one of the biggest riddle regarding Vedas. It was assumed that the Vedas preach *bahudevtavad* or multiple Gods. After establishing the fact that Vedas preach Monotheism Swami ji solved the mystery of multiple *devtas* in Vedas. Vedas speak about multiple *devtas* like *Indra, Vayu, Agni, Varuna* etc. The earlier Acharyas and western indologists established the concept of Polytheism on basis of multiple *devtas* in Vedas. Swami dayanand interpreted the true meaning of the word '*Devta*'

He writes that *devta* word can be used for any entity who provides us with knowledge, wisdom, peace, happiness and light. This interpretation was based on *Nirukta* 7/15. Now the following entities qualify to be called as *devta* as per Vedic philosophy.

1. The one and only almighty God who provides us everything.
2. King or Ruler who provides security and welfare.
3. Parents or Caretaker who provide all means of help and guidance.
4. Guru or Teacher who provides all sorts of knowledge and wisdom.
5. Traders who bring prosperity to the kingdom.
6. Five elements of nature who provide us all comforts like Sun, Water, Air, Earth and Sky.

Overall any entity which help us, benefit us in our life is *Devta*. So, all are respectable for us but **the only one who is to be worshiped is the one almighty God.**

Thus, Swami Dayanand established this landmark that Vedas speak of worship of only one God and respect to all *Devtas*.

Vedas and Idol worship

Swami Dayanand was the only scholar in modern times who established this fact that the Vedas do not support idol worship. Swami ji established that God is formless and omnipresent according to the Vedas. He could not be confined to small idols and an idol cannot represent him. Swami ji advocated worship of formless God through *Stuti, Prarthna* and *Upasana*.

Swami Dayanand provided with different mantras from Vedas like *Yajurveda 32/3* : "*Na tasya Pratima asti*" means "There is no image of Him."

Swami Dayanand faced stiff resistance on his stand against idolatry especially from the Hindu society. Ironically he was not the only one to raise voice against idolatry. Before him *Adi Shankracharya, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Basava* etc. raised voice against idolatry analysing its demerits.

Thus, Swami Dayanand established this landmark that Vedas do not support idol worship.

The Vedas and the Yajna

Swami Dayanand revolutionary teachings related to Vedas was to dispel the myth that the Vedas support animal sacrifice in Yajnas. The middle age Acharyas like *Sayana, Mahidhara* and the western indologists were very keen to prove that the Vedas support animal sacrifice. This led to lot of confusion among the readers of the Vedas. Swami Dayanand revolutionized this belief that Vedas support non violence. Due to the vested interests or the erroneous understandings, these writers made baseless pronouncements regarding animal killing in the Vedas.

Swami Dayanand established that the Cow is considered as *adhvara* (never to be killed) and *aghanya* (never to be hurt) in the Vedas. He also clarified the true meaning of *Ashvamedha* is not to kill horse but to serve the nation. *Gomedha* is not to kill Cow but to sanctify grain, body parts, rays and the earth. *Narmedha* is not to kill human being but to do ritualistic last rites after death.

I will like to quote *Mahabharata shantiparva 26/59* which says that

"It is only the villains who have brought in the corruption of liquor and non-vegetarianism in *Yajna*. The Vedas have nowhere indicated it."

Thus, Swami Dayanand established this landmark teaching that the Vedas nowhere endorse meat eating and animal sacrifice in the *Yajnas*.

Right to Vedic Learning

Swami Dayanand biggest gift to the whole humanity is the right to learn Vedas irrespective of caste, creed or religion. During his days it was widely prevalent in our country that the shudras and women were forbidden to study or to even hear the Vedas. After centuries of discrimination Swami Dayanand opened the door of Vedas for everyone. Swami Ji paved the way for the emancipation of

women and upliftment of the dalits . He clearly said that every human being has the right to study the Vedas.

The self testimony of the Vedas will prove his stand.

Yajurveda 26 /2 God says O! Humans i gift you with this blissful knowledge of **Vedas for all Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya as well as Shudra**. This knowledge is for benefit of everyone.

[God do not deny the knowledge of Vedas for Shudras. Shudras enjoys equal right to read Vedas as a Brahman.]

Atharveda 19/62/1 I pray to God that O God! **Let all Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras glorify me.**

[Vedas do not discriminate between different classes.They consider everyone as equal.]

Yajurveda 18/46 says that O God make me so gentle that **all Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras have affection for me.**

[Vedas speak of good relations with all four classes]

Rigveda 5/60/5 says There is no one superior or inferior in the Vedas. **All are equal just like brothers**.All should help each other to attain the pleasures of this as well as the other world.

[This mantra considers all humans as equal irrespective of their duties.]

Swami Dayanand was the first person to publish the translation of the Vedas in Hindi and the credit of making the Vedas accessible to one and all, goes to him.

Thus, Swami ji established the landmark of

“Vedas for everyone”.

I will like to conclude this article by the comments of *Sadhu T.L.Vasvani*

“Swami Dayanand was in the first place, India's eye opener to the wisdom of the Vedas. I know none in modern India who was a so great a scholar as a Swami ”

Inputs from

Rigvedadibhashyabhumika by Swami Dayananad.

Satyarth Prakash by Swami Dayanand.

The Vedas by Dr Ramprakash

Aryasamaj and the Vedic worldview.

Vedon ka Yatharth Swarup by Dharamdev vidyamartnand

Arsh jyoti by Ramnath vedalankar

Pashu Yagya Mimansa by Vishvanath Vedalankar