



Arya Samaj Ajmer: A Multidimensional Movement

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Abstract :

The year 1881 marked a significant turning point in Ajmer's history with profound social and religious reforms. The establishment of Government College and Mayo College fostered an academic environment influenced by European liberal thinking. Concurrently, Christian missionaries based in Beawar laid foundations for European cultural influence. Amidst these developments, Dayanand Saraswati initiated a campaign to revive ancient Sanatan Dharma, addressing prevailing religious apathy and lack of Sanskrit education. His efforts as a Dharm Pracharak from 1864 onwards challenged religious superstitions, particularly within Ajmer's divided Shaiv, Vaishnav, and Shakti communities. Notably, debates in November 1878 between Dayanand and Christian pastor Haizband on Jesus Christ and idol worship spurred conversions, including that of Rao Masuda Bahadur Singh-I, who became a disciple. Arya Samaj was formally established in Ajmer on February 3, 1881, emerging as a pivotal center for Vedic Dharm Prachar in North India. This marked the beginning of a transformative era with the establishment of numerous institutions under Arya Samaj's banner, contributing significantly to religious, social, and educational reforms across Ajmer.

Keyword : Ajmer, Government College, Mayo College, European liberal thinking, Christian Missionaries, Dayanand Saraswati, Sanatan Dharma Pracharak, Religious reforms.

Introduction :

Year 1881 was a gamechanger year for social and religious reformations in the history of Ajmer. By establishment of Government College and Mayo College, academic atmosphere was developing on the basis of European liberal thinking. Christian missionaries were preparing solid base for European culture by selecting Beawar as their headquarters for Religious propagation. At that time Dayanand Saraswati decided to start awareness campaign for rejuvenation of Ancient Sanatan Dharma. Due to popular beliefs prevailed in Ajmer and lack of Sanskrit teaching and learning citizens of ajmer were frigid towards Ancient Vaidik culture¹. For awakening against religious superstitions Dayanand saraswati toured as a Dharm Pracharak and a curious monk in year 1864 in Ajmer. Society of Ajmer was religiously and socially backward due to division into Shaiv, Vaishnav and Shakti communities as they were opponents and deeply affected by their narrow-mindedness². On 14th November 1878 many heated debates happened between Dayanand Saraswati and Christian pastor Haizband on Jesus Christ and Idol worship. By affecting Dayanand's speeches Istamaradar of Ajmer Rao Masuda BahadurSingh-I became his disciple.³

Arya Samaj & Their subsidiary institutions :

Arya samaj was established at Ajmer on 3rd February 1881 and it became center of Vedic Dharm Prachar in North India. Arya Samaj Ajmer established many institutions under its Multi-dimesional revolutionary activities. Some examples are Dayanand Ashram(1887), DAV School(1888), Arya Anath Ashram(1895), Arya Kanya Vidhyalay(1898), Achoot Pathshala(1900), Arya Ratri Pathshala(1904), Dayanand Pustakalay(1905), Vidhwa Ashram(1908), Arya Veer Dal(1915), Sadhu Ashram(1925), Vanita Ashram(1926) and last Dalit Uddhar Hitkarini Sabha(1934). In starting Arya Samaj were established only at local level, but for boosting up & spreading religious and social reformation movement at every level of society they made various provincial arya samaj committees.⁴ For it Arya Pratinidhi Sabha was established combindly for Rajasthan-Malwa in December 1888. There founders were Rambilas Sarda, Harbilas Sarda, Lala Harbakshi Chandak, Dr. Krishanlal, Master Vazirchand, Thakur Panchamsingh Verma. Offices of Dayanand Trust, Paropkarini Sabha and Arya Pratinidhi Sabha were established at Ajmer.

In year 1889 Arya Samaj adopted a new practice by make people attracted towards Vaidik Sandhya, Havan, Yajna and Vaidik Chantings and promoting 16 Sanskars as per Vadik traditions. From 1923 to 1947 Arya samaj along with Hindu Mahasabha accepted religiously converted and untouchables into Sanatan Dharm again. During 1923-28 to safeguard Hindu community from religious riots Arya Veer Dal was established and for smooth operations dedicated Defense Fund was also made for it. Arya Samaj contributed for rehabilitation of Refugees by providing them House and Jobs. To make Vaidik principles practical & popular among masses Arya samaj started Munnalal Library in 1881 and started publishing “Desh Hitaishi newspaper” in 1882.⁵

Cultural changes started by Arya Samaj :

They started Havan Sandhya, Shanti path, chanting hymns of Rigveda and weekly Prayer sessions on Sundays. To counter reformation in local communities branches of Arya samaj were established at Beawar, Masuda, Naseerabad, Kadail, Pushkar, Pisangan, Ladpura and Saradhna. In 1939 Arya Samajis of Ajmer marched towards Hyderabad by a special train under leadership of Chandkaran Sharda. This march was against Nizam of Hyderabad to protect Sanatan culture, because he banned Hindu festivals and cultural programs in state. Ajmer was home of western English education, to make effective its revolt Arya Samaj founded Dayanand Ashram School on 10th February 1888 with goal of spreading awrawareness of Vedik Culture and literature. It was popularized by name of Dayanand Anglo Vaidik School.⁶ These schools were opened in every part of Ajmer commissionry. They were co-ed schools with highly qualified faculties and with an atmosphere full of nationalist mindset among students. In 1941 Arya Samaj opened its own college also, students passed out from these institutions participated in various national movements and this generation were very successful in provoking Intellectual awareness against British hegemony in state.

Arya samaj worked for development of self awareness and self-confidence towards age old Vaidik culture and practices among women. Gulabdevi Maheshwari established “Stri Arya Samaj” in 1904. Approx 94 women were member of it. These women later various sub sects of Arya samaj based on community system like – Jain, Maheshwari, Oswal, Agarwal, Bhargav, Kayasth Samaj. Famous schools were established in Ajmer dedicated for Girls education were Arya Putri Pathshala, Godavari Arya Kanya Pathshala and an institution named as “Parda Nivarak Mandali Ajmer” were founded by Parvatidevi Sarda, Sukhda Sarda, Savitri Devi and Gulab Devi.⁷ On the other hand Senior leaders of Arya Samaj were shifting their focus towards elimination of social malpractises and started Social Reformation among society. After 1920 local jaatiya sabha started cooperation with Arya samaj on issues of Child Marriage, Widow Re-marriage and Old age marriage prohibition. In between 1926-29 Chief of Paropakarini Sabha Harbilas Sarda tried continuously for making law in central assembly for eradicate Child marriage. On 1st April 1929 Child Marriage restraint Act was passed, in which age of marriage was fixed 18 for boy and 14 for a girl. This was a gamechanger law which introduced from back support of Arya Samaj Ajmer. Same incident happended with Widow remarriage, where Rajputana Marwari Prantiya Agarwal Panchayat and Rajputana Women Association supported Arya Samaj for its work for Widow Remarriage.⁸

Community Upliftment by Arya Samaj

During 1930- 37 for upliftment of Chita, Mehrat and Rawat community Arya Samaj opened micro schools with Rajasthan Prantiya Hindu Sabha. In 1934 for integration of backward classes and communities into Sanatan Religion Arya Samaj shifted its focus on Acchut Uddhar Andolan. On 5th July 1934 on the occasion of arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in Ajmer Advocate Ghisulal ji along with students of DAV School and Arya Putri Pathshala visited harijan basti of Ajmer, Gandhiji got very impressed with Acchutoddhar Andolan of Arya Samaj. Arya Samaj questioned so called monopoly of Brahmin Community for performing Yajna Hawan and professing of religious texts, and gave equal rights to common citizens for performing these activities. During early phase of 20th century traditional upper class of society got very impressed from Arya samaj this change played a very important role in upcoming freedom struggle. In Modern days there is A round circle which was earlier known as QasirGanj later transformed into Kaiserganj Golchakkar.⁹This round shaped circular building is was property of Paropkarini Sabha under purview of Arya Samaj Ajmer. This place was asylum of various freedom fighter all over Northern India. There was A Swatantrata Senani Bhawan which was headquarter of local freedom fighters and leaders of National movements, and this place holds title of war-room for freedom struggle. An Arya Samaji Karmveer Pandit Jiyalal¹⁰ was flag bearer of Arya Samaj after independence of India. Another Arya Samajis Dattatrya Vable and Krishan Rao Vable¹¹ were also very important personalities which established and developed many educational institutions. These schools were nursery of futuristic freedom fighters and various national leaders of North India. That's how Arya Samaj played a very important role for achieving independence and freedom struggle not only in Ajmer but also for all over North India.

Conclusion :

Arya Samaj in Ajmer emerged as a transformative force, spearheading social and educational reforms that empowered women, challenged caste inequalities, and advocated legislative changes like the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929. Their initiatives extended to community upliftment and integration efforts, earning praise from Mahatma Gandhi for their Acchut Uddhar Andolan. The organization's pivotal role as a sanctuary for freedom fighters and a hub of nationalist activities at Kaiserganj Golchakkar underscored its significant contribution to India's independence movement. Arya Samaj's legacy in Ajmer remains synonymous with progressive social change and its enduring impact on North India's socio-political landscape.

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