PEDAGOGY OF VEDIC EDUCATION – SVAMI DAYANANDA'S PERSPECTIVE

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The nineteenth century saw a number of revolutionary socio-philosophers in India among whom the name of Svami Dayananda Saraswati (1824 -1883) is of considerable importance. Being an integral part of the vigorous intellectual and cultural reformative movement, he was a great social and religious reformer of modern India. Raising his voice against the prevailing social iniquity and religious superstitions, he fought against the socio- religious prejudices such as untouchability, illiteracy, evil customs and beliefs, western domination and economic exploitation. As a reformer, Dayananda stood mightily against the evils that had done great harm to the Hindu society. According to Dayananda Saraswati, the status of a person should not depend on his birth or lineage, but on his education and worth. For him, education must be given to all. There should be a law of the State and also the custom of society that no one could keep his son or daughter at home beyond the age of five or eight years.

The teachings of Dayananda Sarawati were firmly rooted in several parts of India and a large number of people, even the illiterate peasantry being among them, became his followers. To continue his work of regenerating India, he founded an organization under the name of 'Āryasamāj'. Svami Dayananda elicited the way of progress in all realms of life - religious, social and political. He propounded his ideas based on the study and interpretation of the Vedas. According to him, the Vedas contain the totality of all knowledge-spiritual, moral, social, political and even scientific. He had shown the genuine way of

approaching the Vedas and method to interpret them. All of his works and ideas gave a call 'Back to the Vedas'.

He wrote a number of books which deal with the Vedic knowledge, such as the Bhāṣyas on Ṛgveda (up to 7 Maṇḍalas) and the Yajurveda, Ṛgvedādibhāṣya-bhūmikā, Satyārthaprakāśa, Vyavahārabhānu, Saśkāravidhi, Āryābhivinaya etc.

Ṛgvedādibhāṣya-bhūmikā is one of the greatest works of Svami Dayananda. It is an introduction to the interpretation of the four Vedas. The text consists of a number of topics like the origin of Veda, eternity of Veda, subject matter of Veda, the Vedic Dharma. It also discusses about various scientific aspects in Vedas, medical science, Varṇāśramadharma etc. In the last portion Svami Dayananda pointed out the mistakes of other Bhāṣyakāras and he gave clear idea about his interpretation. Before the study of his Vedic interpretations, one should have the clear awareness of Ṛgvedādibhāṣya-bhūmikā. In this he explained the teaching system of Vedic education under the title of 'paṭhanapāṭhanaviṣaya'. He says at the very beginning of the study of Vedas, the student should study the alphabets with the knowledge of स्थानप्रयत्न and स्वर।

For eg. the letter प is pronounced with ओष्ठ। Hence its स्थान is ओष्ठौ and प्रयत्न त्व स्पृष्ट. Pronunciation without the essential knowledge of स्थान and प्रयत्न will not give the exact meaning. Mahābhāṣyakāra Patañjali says that

दुष्टः शब्दः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्तो न तमर्थमाह।
स वाग्वज्रो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रुः स्वरतोऽपराधात्।। (Ma. Bh.)

If a singer sings the षड्जादि स्वर in an improper way that is only based on his own mistake. The pronunciation of Veda which is not in the correct प्रयत्न and स्थान, is the mistake of the reader himself. For eg.-

सकलं, शकलं, सकृत्, शकृदिति। (Ṛg.bh.bhū. P.344)

Here the word 'śākala' indicate the meaning 'Sampūrṇa' and 'śākala' is 'Khaṛavāci' and 'Sakṛt' means one times, 'śakṛt' means

'Mālārtha' (continues). Here the utterance of स in addition to श and vice versa, changes the meaning of the word which is totally different from its exact meaning i.e., in what sense the 'śabda' is used due to in correct pronunciation, it deviates from that sense. Hence the student must have studied the pronunciation of the word with the स्वरोच्चारण and वर्णोच्चारण। It says:

अत्रसकलशब्दः सम्पूर्णवाची। शकलइति खण्डवाचीच। एवं सकृदित्येक-वारार्थवाची सकृदिति मालार्थवाचीचात्र सकारोच्चारणे कर्तव्ये शकारोच्चारणं क्रियते चेदेवं शकारोच्चारणे कर्तव्ये सकारोच्चारणं च, तदा स शब्दः स्वविषयं नाभिधत्ते। अतः कारणात्स्वरोच्चारणं वर्णोच्चारणं च यथावदेव कर्तव्यमिति। (Ṛg.bh.bhū. P.344)

The learning must be done by the awareness of its meaning - अर्थज्ञानेन सहैव पठनेकृते परमोत्तमं फलं प्राप्नोति। (Ṛg.bh.bhū. P.345) i.e., one who studied merely the lessons is called 'Uttama', the one who studied the lessons along with the knowledge of 'śabda' and 'Artha' and its relation is called 'Uttamatara'. One who has studied the Veda and acquired its proper meaning and practiced it in his daily life is called as 'Uttamatama'

यः न पठति तस्मात्त्वयं पाठमात्रकार्यप्युत्तमो भवति। यस्तु खलु शब्दार्थसम्बन्ध-विज्ञानपुरःसरमधीते स उत्तमतरः। यश्चैवं वेदान् पठित्वा विज्ञाय च शुभगुणकर्माचरणे सर्वोपकारी भवति स उत्तमतमः। (Ṛg.bh.bhū. P.346)

Here he explains this with the support of these lines.

स्थाणुरयं भारहारः किलाभूदधीत्य वेदं न विजानाति योऽर्थम्।
योऽर्थज्ञ इत्सकलं भद्रमश्नुते नाकमेति ज्ञानविधूतपाप्मा। (नि. अ.१. खं. 181)

It verily implies that a man who studies the Veda as mere lessons without understanding its proper meaning and not living through the path of Dharma becomes like a wooden pillar. One who studies Veda with its true meaning he becomes free from all sins and attains the state of bliss. Without 'Arthajñāna' the knowledge never helps him to succeed in his life. The fact that without fire the wood cannot produce heat and light -

यद् गृहीतमविज्ञानं निगदेनैव शब्द्यते।
अनग्नाविव शुष्कैन्धो न तज्ज्वलति कर्हिचित्। (नि. अ.१. खं. 181)

Then the student must study the Aṣṭādhyāyī and the Mahābhāṣya. After that he should study the Nighaṇṭu and Nirukta, then the six Darśanas. Then after this the ऐतरेयादि ब्राह्मणानां अध्ययनम्। Then only one should carry out the study Veda. He says -"मनुष्यैर्वेदार्थविज्ञानाय व्याकरणाष्टाध्यायीमहाभाष्याध्ययनम्। ततो निघण्टु-निरुक्तछन्दोज्योतिषां वेदाङ्गानाम्। ततो मीमांसावैशेषिकन्याययोगसांख्यवेदान्तानां वेदोपाङ्गानां षण्णां शास्त्राणाम्।

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