

The Identity of Arya Samaj

- Dr. Tulsi Ram Sharma

Identity is the very essence of the being of something in existence. The name - word of the thing or person or community is the language correspondence of that identity. If the thing is lost, the identity is lost. And if the identity is lost, the thing itself too is lost. A character in Shakespeare says: If some one steals my purse or my property, he steals nothing and I lose nothing. But if some one steals away my name, he robs me of something which enriches him not but makes me poor indeed therefore when we pray we self-examine what we have lost and what we have gained. If the balance sheet is positive, we are alive, if not, we are on oxygen.

What is the reality correspondence of Arya Samaj? What did the founder expect of the Arya Samaj in thought, word and deed, in terms of the individual, the society, the nation, and humanity?

Swami Dayananda in his writings writes Vedic Sanskrit through, the medium of Hindi which he called Arya Bhasha. The term Arya Samaj consists of two words: Arya and Samaj.

What does he means by Arya? Not a race, not member of a caste or class, but a person, any person, of highest nature (shreshtha), character and conduct, religiously pious, dedicated to dharma, seriously motivated and dedicated positively, a pursuant of truth and knowledge, honest in thought, word and deed. People of this nature, character and conduct are, in Vedic terms, inheritors of the earth because they sustain the life and environment on earth. Parameshwar says in Rigveda 4.26.2:

I gave (gifted) the earth to the "Aryas" noble cultured humanity, I bring the rain, flowing rivers, rolling oceans and showers of light and energy for people who give in charity, and in consequence, saints, divines and sagely people who live and love to give are blest with the light divine.

Such dedicated people anywhere on earth from any community are dedicated to the progress of knowledge, righteousness, peace and happiness of the world. They are knowledgeable, self-fulfilled, divinely blest, because they live Dharma, truth and universal values o life.

Say Rigveda (9.63.5): Indram vardhanto apturah, Krinvanto Vishvam Aryam..

They (Aryas, Somas) advance fast and vibrant at top speed, glorifying life and the Creator, making the world noble, reducing and eliminating the causes of suffering, forces, of negativity, uncreativity, selfishness, exploitation, fear and terror.

Such are the Aryas: dynamic, enlightened, creative, constructive, in the direction of positive progress, peace and happiness of all (niyam 6 & 9).

The meaning the word Samaj is 'a united, integrated, harmonious, living and vibrant community, it self moving and moving and advancing all others to a life of peace and comprehensive all round progress, physically, mentally, culturally and spiritually, for the individual and society as a whole.'

The ideal of such a creative advancing community is revealed in the Sangathan Sukta of Rigveda (10.191).

It is sometimes said that if the ideal is too high, it remains an ideal, it is not practical. Ok acceptable. But if the ideal is rather soft, attainable, wouldn't you realise it? Yes, you would say, right.

Another question: Having realised that, would you be ultimately satisfied, or would you try to rise still higher? What could be a practical ideal speed for an Olympic contestant of the Marathon or even 100 meter race? Can you fix the ultimate speed? Nothing More? No! The ideal is an ideal. The effort is continuous. The same with the Vedic ideal of the Arya and Arya Samaj.

Now the self examination:

1. To what extent are you, as a member and as a community, enlightened, educated, self-educated, advanced in vedic literature, at least in the writings of Swami Dayananda?
2. How much and what have you contributed to the life of your children, your family, the Arya Samaj and the general community?

Long back in 1950's at Hans Raj College, Delhi, I had a discussion with a colleague on "Arya Samaj: Identity and its Definition."

Identity is the soul, the spirit, the inalienable self, the being that you and I are in the essence. That is indefinable, *Neti, Neti*. That is an abstract. The maximum you can do is to find words closest to the abstract, both positive and negative, a possible statement of the idea. That was my view. So find out the words in the Vedas (Rig. 9.63.5), and in the words of Swami Dayananda.

No, said my colleague. Definition is to be concrete, tangible, and perceptible, in flesh and blood. Find out this in the members as a 'body' and in the work they do, the way they work. The words are abstractions, the people and their work is concrete. That defines the Arya Samaj.

During the last fifty years of *swadhyaya* and *satsanga*, watching, thinking, doing, I have tried to integrate the two views: Veda: Knowledge, work, dedication (*Jnana*, *Karma*, and *Upasana*), Swami Dayananda, the ten principles, the constitution, that is Arya Samaj. The people who worked for all this from Swami Dayananda, Swami Shradhdhananda, Mahatma Hans Raj onwards upto you and me all, whatever we are, we have done and wish to do, this is the Arya Samaj.

Here we come to the discussion of the spirit and the flesh (i.e. the body) and the discussion of the vision and the realisation of it in history, and the human predicament: the spirit in willing, but the flesh is weak. The situation is that those who observe the Arya Samaj from the outside concentrate on the weakness of the flesh, while those are labouring within are struggling with the spirit in a hostile selfish, sensual, irrational and fearful environment of cut throat competition for power and money.

The concrete can not define the abstract, history can never define the divine vision of existence, a translation can not, comprehend the original Veda. How can then the history and body of the Arya Samaj define the Vedic vision and the imagination of Swami Dayananda. Theoretically the gap between the ideal and the actual remains in life, and it is suicidal to focus on the gap and ignore the distance covered.

Swami Dayananda sacrificed the worldly pleasures and even his life for the Vedic message. Swami Shradhdhananda dedicated himself and his children to the Gurukul. Mahatma Hansraj gave Vedic

turn to modern education, living on the bare minimum for self subsistence. Many more took to sanyas and life membership and many of them worked even without caring for their families. At the present time more of us are average people than above average, grhasthis and struggling volunteers, all dedicated in spite of strenuous... problems of an exacting life. We should appreciate and concentrate on the effect in stead of exaggerating our limitations.

Outsiders say: "Arya Samajis quarrel with all, and when they find no body for the quarrel, they quarrel among themselves."

Let us face it: In a democratic set up, difference, criticism, is inevitable, But criticism is not opposition, and opposition is not rejection. Even within ourselves, self criticism, even to the point of self-rejection is natural. In a hostile environment, self-oppression is a sin, Self-confidence and social trust is a boon. We have to recognise our human limitations, maintain and sustain self confidence and faith, keep up the cooperation and move on. The political world does not have the courage to admit the basic seeds of social disruption and destruction, that courage which Swami Dayananda displayed in his life and writings. The Arya Samaj alone can proclaim that reality.

Our identity is truth, the definition of truth against untruth and, now, public dishonesty at the world scale. We must keep up that identity. And remember, that the definition of this identity, in human thought and work through history shall never be complete because the Arya Samaj work is open ended for ever, that is, as long human nature remains what it is: a conflict as well as cooperation of matter, mind and intelligence with the spirit.

One word for us is: Center and the Circle. Between the center and the circle there is immeasurable space for dots, pluses, minuses, divisions and multiplications. The circle contains them all because the center is both, dimensionless and yet infinite, from which uncountable lines can emerge. Keep to the center and expand the circle as far as you can. That center is God, articulated by Veda, interpreted by Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati, and the circle is we all, the world is the work in progress. All this is without end.