

PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

MAHARISHI DAYANAND SARASWATI

NEWS: PM paid tributes to Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati on his birth anniversary.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Swami Dayanand Saraswati: A Visionary Social Reformer and Founder of Arya Samaj

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, a prominent Hindu philosopher and social reformer, was born on **February 12, 1824, in Gujarat**. He is best known for **founding the Arya Samaj in 1875**, a socio-religious movement aimed at eradicating social injustices, promoting education, and reviving Vedic knowledge. His efforts played a crucial role in shaping modern India by challenging rigid orthodoxy and advocating progressive reforms.

Contributions and Ideology

1. Founding of Arya Samaj and Social Reforms

- Dayanand Saraswati established the **Arya Samaj on April 7, 1875, in Bombay (now Mumbai)**, with the primary objective of **reviving Vedic principles and reforming Hindu society**.
- The organization worked extensively to **eliminate caste discrimination, promote education (especially for women), and combat superstitious beliefs**.
- It also focused on **abolishing child marriage, untouchability, and other regressive social customs** prevalent in 19th-century India.

2. Literary Contributions: Satyarth Prakash (The Light of Truth)

- One of his most influential works, **Satyarth Prakash**, was published in 1875, advocating a **return to the original teachings of the Vedas**.
- In this book, he **criticized idol worship, ritualistic practices, and certain aspects of other religions**, urging people to embrace **rationality, monotheism, and moral values**.

3. Core Beliefs and Philosophical Standpoints

- **Rejection of Idolatry:** He **vehemently opposed idol worship** and emphasized a **formless, omnipresent God** as described in the Vedas.
- **Reform in the Caste System:** He **rejected hereditary caste distinctions**, arguing that **one's caste should be determined by merit, education, and individual capabilities, rather than birth**.
- **Advocacy for Women's Rights:** He was a **strong proponent of women's education**, believing that an educated society could only be achieved by **empowering women with knowledge and skills**.
- **Opposition to Social Evils:** He **condemned practices such as child marriage, untouchability, and Sati**, calling for a **more equitable and ethical social structure**.

- **Promotion of Monotheism:** He emphasized the worship of one supreme God, rejecting polytheism and elaborate religious ceremonies.

Impact on Society and Education



Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati

(12 February 1824 – 30 October 1883)

HE WAS AN INDIAN PHILOSOPHER, SOCIAL LEADER,
AND FOUNDER OF THE VEDIC DHARMA REFORM MOVEMENT,
ARYA SAMAJ.

1. Influence on Indian Independence and Swaraj

- Swami Dayanand Saraswati is credited with **popularizing the term “Swaraj” (self-rule) in 1875**, which was later adopted by national leaders like **Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi** in India's freedom movement.
- His **ideas of self-governance and national pride** inspired future generations to **resist colonial rule and work towards an independent India**.

2. Establishment of Educational Institutions

- After his demise in 1883, his followers established the **Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) schools and colleges**, which combined **modern education with traditional cultural and religious values**.
- These institutions continue to play a pivotal role in **educating Indian youth**, imparting knowledge while preserving **India’s spiritual and cultural heritage**.

3. Cow Protection and the Formation of Gaurakshini Sabha

- Swami Dayanand was a **staunch advocate of cow protection**, believing that cows were integral to India's agrarian economy and religious traditions.

- His efforts led to the establishment of the **Gaurakshini Sabha in 1882**, a movement aimed at **preventing cow slaughter and promoting cattle welfare**.

4. Shuddhi Movement (Reconversion to Hinduism)

- He introduced the concept of **Shuddhi (purification)**, a process that sought to **bring back individuals who had converted to other religions into the Hindu fold**.
- This initiative was particularly influential during the **early 20th century**, when **mass conversions were taking place in India**.

Philosophy of Arya Samaj and Its Legacy

- Arya Samaj's core philosophy revolves around the principle of "**Krinvanto Vishwam Aryam**" (**Make the World Noble**), reflecting its commitment to **universal human welfare**.
- It upholds **truth, righteousness, and social justice**, rejecting **blind faith and orthodox traditions that hinder societal progress**.
- The **New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India**, which emphasizes **holistic, value-based, and skill-oriented education**, reflects **Dayanand Saraswati's vision of a reformed and progressive educational system**.

Swami Shraddhanand

- 1. Mahatma **Munshi Ram**, known as Swami Shraddhanand, was a follower of Dayanand Saraswati who was assassinated by a man called Abdul Rashid on **December 23, 1926**.
- 2. Shraddhanand was born on **February 22, 1856** in the village Talwan in Jalandhar district in Punjab province. Sometime in the early 1880s, he came into contact with Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj. This meeting was a turning point in his life.
- 3. Shraddhanand wrote a book called "*Hindu Sangathan*". In the book's introduction, he has written, "In the following pages an attempt has been made to describe the history of the Hindu decline and to trace the causes which led to its present deplorable downfall. As a corollary an attempt has been made to show the way to the nation's emancipation."
- 4. He called untouchability a "curse" and a "blot" on the reputations of the Hindus. "Those who enslave and trample under their feet almost one third of their own kith and kin, have no right to complain of the tyranny of the foreigner."

Conclusion

Swami Dayanand Saraswati's contributions to **religion, society, and education** left an indelible mark on India's **spiritual and socio-political landscape**. His relentless efforts in **challenging orthodoxy, advocating equality, and promoting rational thought** continue to inspire reform movements in modern India. Through the **Arya Samaj, DAV institutions, and the concept of Swaraj**, his legacy remains a guiding force for those striving toward a **just, inclusive, and knowledge-driven society**.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/upsc-current-affairs/upsc-essentials/knowledge-nugget-dayanand-saraswati-upsc-arya-samaj-history-9831563/>