

SOCIAL REFORMATION WORK OF SWAMI SAHAJANANDA SARASWATI IN BIHAR

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Abstract: Swami Sahajananda saraswati was very interested in religious life. But he had no aversion to material life considering the word Maya. He was engaged in a war against both material and spiritual exploitation. He used religion as a means of salvation from social injustice and inequality. He rejected the doctrine that the Kshatriyas were born to rule and that the Brahmins were blessed with wisdom to help rule. He held these castes responsible for the misrule and misfortune of the peasants and workers of India. He launched a war against caste superiority complex and fought legal battle to establish brotherhood between high and low born Hindus. Sahjananda believed in religion, but he had conflicting views about blind faith. So long religion and sacred knowledge served as instrument of exploitation, material or moral of the people, it needed reformation. He fought for the whole of his life against injustice and inappropriate treatment done by any individual, society or nation. He did not ask anybody to treasure hatred about any individual class or nation and consider somebody class enemy, caste enemy or national enemy.

Index Terms:- Na dainyam na palayanam, contribution and subscription earning Brahmins, Swamiship, unclean elements, politico-social reform movement.

Swami Sahajananda saraswati was a recluse. He was deeply interested in religious life. He wished to study sacred books, gain absolute knowledge and wander as a renouncer of the material world. He had no inclination towards social injustices. Either, he didn't understand the importance and necessity of social work. Really, discourses, books and lectures failed to drive him the urgency of taking up social reformation works. It is event to which imprints upon the mind the urgency and disposal of any task. The burning of sister-in-law alive moved Ram Mohan Ray,² kicking and throwing out of train inflamed Gandhi, assignment to speak on zero made Vivekananda a hero and option to take side in the first world war obliged Swami Sahajananda to assess the society or community he belong to and understand the world his nation had to shape to in the time to come. The last quarter of 19th century and first quarter of the 20 century witnessed organization of caste conferences on national level dedicated to build up support bank for Imperial power.³ Swamiji spoke approvingly of Germany and German Sanskrit scholar Max Muller in that conference. This was the big departure from the English appeasement policy of the caste organizations of India.

Although Swamiji was born in Ghaziabad district of U.P in 1889, he chose Bihar to benefit from his innovative social thought and actions. He made his hermitage in Sahabad district. From outward appearance, dress, standard of practice archaic dogmas. But he showed within a few years that he was not averse to material life considering the word a Maya or a mirage, but a true soldier born to solve the multifaceted problems of the world and engage in war against exploitation⁴ - both material and spiritual. Swamiji did not establish a Cathedral Mission like Vivekananda later to flourish as an order by itself but showered as cloud over the needy and faddy lot of people. Like Marx, too, he did not consider sacred book as bottle containing opium but used religion as a means of salvation from social injustice and inequality. He launched a war against caste superiority complex and fought legal battle to establish brotherhood between high and low born Hindus. In political battles, too, he took side with the poor and the low born and defeated the rich aristocrats in Assembly elections in Bihar.

The contribution and subscription earning Brahmins, however, ignorant and unworthy as they had become, used to pose themselves as moving Gods on earth commanding respect of the nobles and elders of the society. Swamiji broke this covenant and asked people to train and elect their own priests like the Imam of a masjid and father of a church who felt prized in serving the living God in the form of knowledge seeking children, medical care to the needy and producers to unit.

Sahajananda Swami was very keen to learn good things from others. He urged people to be good disciples than teachers. His sainthood did not exalt his position in face of any common men. He did not 'mahatmized' himself or magnify his personality. Swamiship did not elevate him to the position of one man commander-in-chief like Gandhiji. He did not become a searcher after truth, experimenter with non-violence and struggle for establishing Supremacy of tolerance. A Swami or Sadhu sees the virtues of others and not vice. But he is required to see the vice of self and not the virtue. Had the Congress and the League looked to the vice of self and virtue of one another and the then rulers, nobody would have quit India and the land and the people would not have been divided to die and let die for ever. Sacred books demand the division of only the righteous from those of the wicked.

Sahjananda trusted in religion but held riotous views with regard to blind faith. Even Vedanta, knowledge supreme, was held worth criticism and rejection by Swamiji. So long religion and sacred knowledge served as instrument of exploitation, material or spiritual of the people, it needed reformation. He did not believe that Vedanta or the Vedas expressed the mind of God, instead, he refuted the holy theory that Kshatriyas are born to rule and Brahmins are blessed to possess wisdom to help rule. On the other hand, he held these castes responsible for the misrule and misfortune of the peasants and workers of India demoralization and indignity of the Shudras and Bhumiharas was considered the handiwork of the celerity of the princes and priests. He toured extensively in Bihar and U.P. regions and preached like Jesus Christ about the raj of the noble priests and their ill handling the illiterate.

Swamiji was expected to practice yoga of the traditional exercise type and to study and interpret the Holy Scriptures like discourse giver of the classical type. But he did not go the way of Gautama, Mahavira, dayananda or Vivekananda. The legendary Prahlad of Kerala and his contemporary Lenin of Russia became sources of his inspiration. He adopted the principle of "Na Dainyam na palayanam" or "Neither subservience nor relinquishment". Why do people suffer and show up to be below standard? Because of the above mentioned demerit. But man is born not to suffer and see others suffer. His aim is to enrich oneself and help try and exert for the happiness of the multitude. He fought for the whole of his life against injustice and inappropriate treatment done by any individual, society or nation. He engaged himself in the moral enrichment of the deprived sections of society. Had Gandhi and Nehru not show subservience to Jinnah and agree to relinquish Indus Valley from origin to conclusion/end, India would have assumed much better personality. But Swamiji failed to baptize the Congress leaders with the water of life.

Initiation of saintliness (Swamihood) generally makes one an upholder of old and outdated sets of belief, such as, practicer of untouchability. At the beginning stage of his sacred life, he, too, put faith in the sacredness of some castes by birth and work. But like Gandhi and Vivekananda he set out as a mendicant to tour India as far as possible. During the course of his travels he realised that a static pit can be contaminated by a touch or income of some unclean elements, but who can contaminate an ocean or a gushing broke on the high mountains. In course of his journey he released that high priests and their abode had no longer remained centers of leaning and booths of blessing. Rather they got reduced to the status of hollow pits receiving ill got money in lieu of issuing clean chits for moral and material offences or sins. This led him to continue as a monk without a monastery. Rather than add to the number of holy band, he chose to join the stream of politico-social reform movement in Bihar till his death in 1950

In between the first and Second World War period, Swami Sahajananda Saraswati worked for the white washing of the mind of the Brahmins-both secular and ecclesiastical. Deva Dashi system flourished in South India and Deva Das tradition held North India in heavy grip. The Brahmin caste people were discouraged from engaging in agriculture work, cattle-rearing, trade and commerce, hunting and fishing, smothery or simple manual work in their locality. Instead, they were encouraged to join temples in various forms and engage in non-productive stone object feeding, clothing and praise heaping in return for lavish donations from kings and commercial magnets. He was stunned to see the plight of intelligentsia class and admonished them to work to produce rather than to worship unidentifiable gods of imagination. He urged the Brahmins to take to agriculture, commerce and cattle-rearing as means of livelihood.

Brahmins are generally held to be repository of learning problem solving skill. But during the British rule in India Brahmins either joined Government Service in different capacities or entered into anti-British activities. Those who learnt English found favour with the Britons, those who could not pick up the alien language were employed in the military branch. Thus, the Brahmins had become Rajbhaktas (Government employees). Swamiji felt that poverty and illiteracy of India cannot be eliminated through government effort alone. He realized that if the Brahmins mortgaged their of the sons of Mother India responsibility their self-respect would vanish. He lectured to inculcate the spirit of Mangal Pandey, the hero of 1857 in each the every Brahmin government servant. He had discussed with the then Bihar government Prime Minister Shri Ganesh Dutta, who was a staunch supporter of the British people, their system and their indispensability for India's progress and fortunes.

Swami Sahajananda Saraswati was very critical of the English judicial system. He held that false oath taking, false fear anticipating, funny pride harbouring and false argument was the means and end of British judicial system. One cannot accept social justice and individual empowerment through alien rule. He felt that learned Government servants were self-seekers and agents of stagnation. He implored the Government servants and the independent court pleaders to imbibe the example of Bhakta Prahlad of South West coast India of legendary times and work for the amelioration of suffering of the multitude of the fellow countrymen, rather than earn luxuries for self and family. Bhakta Prahlad defied the king's orders and preached about the loving kindness of God. Gandhi, Nehru, Sri Krishna later dedicated themselves in the service of God rather than support and serve the British Swamiji's vision got fulfilled without delay denial.

It is expected of a saint, the Swamiji did not instigate rebellion or inspire revolution. He worked for change of heart and mind. He did not subscribe to the view that only the exploiter is responsible for the suffering of the deprived section of society. He held that lack of competence on the part of the sufferer was more harmful than the snatching of the blessing of God by any nation or individual. Blessing of God in the form of riches falls upon everybody like dew drop. It depends upon the recipient to make use of the opportunity and raise above his competitor or at least keep at par with him. The Muslims and Christians were not blessed to rule and ruin Indian fourth estate. Neither will God take Narsimha avatar (incarnation) to encounter the ruling regime. He urged the insignificant lamb like working class to cease being so and take rebirth in the form of lion and to tear apart anyone making advances upon him and his class interest.

Thus he heralded working and peasant class consciousness of India variety in Bihar. Swami Sahajananda Saraswati did not ask anybody to treasure hatred about any individual class or nation and consider somebody class enemy, caste enemy or national enemy. He did not like to find fault outside and engage in struggle to eliminate class enemy. In his opinion enemy of anybody was himself. Man was not like vegetation or lamb or be grazed or devoured by man. It was wild to think so. Man was expected to work as shepherdess or gardener for the less competent man. In his opinion when the Hindu priests and princes failed to discharge God appointed duties of ministering to his men, the Muslims and the Christians assumed their role. God does not differentiate between man and man. He does not reserve the right to rule a black man by a man of same colour or same locality. A self-conscious man of any colour and locality can discharge the duties of the Almighty anywhere. God differentiates only between sin and virtue. If someone shows and rear wickedness, God replaces him by righteous soul.

Swamiji joined Congress to broaden its think tank. But congress was no longer Congress of A.O. Hume and Annie Besant. It had taken by vow to find fault with the British people and the British rule. Resultantly it lost insight and understanding. Nobles lost hold on it and the rogue gained control of it. Hatred treasuring revenge harbouring elements remote controlled Congress. Nobody cared to assess how it was going to damage the interest of the poor. Congress was formed to ensure and facilitate deserved justice and empowerment of the Indian people irrespective of caste, colour and faith, but when two-nation theory, two-class thesis and two-interest blocks began to dominate the party, Swamiji took leave of it. The 1940 Ramgrah Session of Congress saw him as an active leading role player. But the subsequent policy of congress with regard to Pakistan plan and Quit India call broke the Swami and he distanced himself from the Congress movement. Sahajananda succeeded in seeing Zamindari abolition, land ceiling, caste superiority complex elimination but miserably failed in making possible the transfer of power to the workers and peasants of India and Pakistan. He used to say that the workers and peasant would make rule and administer the land. But Pakistan slipped in the hands of communal forces and India got hanged between the communal and the capitalist. Pakistan ruled out the possibility of law making by workers and peasants as Quran and Hadish got imposed in the land. As a result crores of non-Muslim workers and farmers migrated from Pakistan. India also eased out the Muslim workers and peasants but got ensnared by the ecclesiastical majority forces and became a hunting and fishing ground for them. The interest of the people got last in carrying out the policy of minority appeasement.

Swami Sahajananda was a Brahmarshi or burning flame of intellect born to shepherd people both high and low. He lived to ensure everybody's happiness and prevent any body from falling into Armageddon. He was equipped with both word and sword power. Yet he lamented that the Indians became bereft of the true knowledge and lost the status of crane and happened to be crow. Crow partakes of both the fresh fruit and rotten flesh whereas the crane drinks only the water of life. Water of lie flows consumption of the crows in human garb. Sahajananda tried hard to educate people of every faith to discern between water of life and venom of death. He desired every book to become gardener of Eden and priest of heaven. But to his dissatisfaction, he found that every freedom fighter was fully drunk with western education and bent upon to tear down the mutual concord of men and inseparability of natural resources. Indian nobility got ruined and with it the dream of Swami Sahajananda.

Unless the agrarian structure is changed in the state, agrarian violence can't be controlled. Involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions and / or Independent organizations in land reform measures can be of great help. It is also suggested that by minimizing the population pressure on land, cottage and village industries based on local raw materials should be developed. It ultimately will eliminate the cases of violence that arise out of despair and land disputes.

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