

Language, Education, and Nationalism: The Arya Samaj's Role in Promoting Hindi as a Cultural and Linguistic Instrument for Social Reform

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Abstract: The Arya Samaj, founded by Dayanand Saraswati in the late 19th century, was a reformist religious and social movement that had a significant impact on the cultural, linguistic, and educational landscape of colonial India. Central to its agenda was the promotion of Hindi as a unifying language of instruction and a symbol of national identity. This paper explores the role of the Arya Samaj in the development and popularization of Hindi, particularly in its Sanskritized form, through its educational institutions, journals, and literary endeavours. The Samaj's efforts to reform Hindu society and strengthen the nationalist movement were deeply intertwined with the linguistic revival of Hindi, which became a key instrument in the cultural and intellectual resistance against British colonialism. By examining the Arya Samaj's contributions to the education system and the intellectual discourse of the time, this study highlights the lasting impact of its linguistic and educational initiatives on the formation of modern Indian identity and the central role of Hindi in post-colonial India.

Keywords: Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati, Hindi, Nationalism, Colonial India, Language Reform, Educational Reform, Sanskritization, Cultural Revival,

Indian Identity

Introduction:

The Arya Samaj, founded by Dayanand Saraswati in the late 19th century, emerged as a significant force in the social, religious, and cultural landscape of colonial India. A central tenet of the Arya Samaj was its emphasis on reforming Hindu society through education, religious awakening, and the promotion of Hindi as a medium of instruction and national unity. The Samaj's advocacy for Hindi, particularly in its Sanskritized form, played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and cultural milieu of the time. This effort was not merely linguistic but deeply tied to a broader nationalist movement that sought to redefine Indian identity in opposition to colonial rule. The Arya Samaj's contributions extended beyond education to the realms of journalism, literature, and socio-political activism, fostering a reformed and unified Hindu identity. Through its institutions, publications, and intellectual engagements, the Arya Samaj laid the foundation for the modern Hindi language and its role in India's national consciousness.

Even though Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was a native Gujarati speaker, he adopted Sanskrit—the sacred language of the Vedas—as the primary medium of his missionary work upon his arrival in the United Provinces. A distinguished Sanskrit scholar, Saraswati initially used this classical language for his discourses. However, a significant shift occurred during his 1872 visit to Calcutta, where he met Keshub Chandra Sen, the Brahmo Samaj leader. Sen influenced Saraswati to consider Hindi as a vehicle for propagating religious and social reforms. Saraswati's exposure to early nationalist thought in Bengal, particularly from intellectuals like Bhudev Mukhopadhyay and Rajendralal Mitra, further reinforced the importance of

Hindi for India's socio-cultural reconstruction. Two years later, in 1874, Saraswati delivered his first public lecture in Hindi in Benares and authored his seminal work, *Satyarth Prakash*, in the same language. Following criticisms of linguistic "impurity" in its initial edition, he revised and republished it to ensure greater clarity and reach.

Saraswati's advocacy of Hindi as the lingua franca for Hindus, particularly in Punjab—where Urdu and Persian dominated—marked a significant cultural intervention. His efforts were carried forward by prominent Arya Samaj leaders such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhai Parmanand, Mahatma Munshiram, Pandit Gurudatt, Lala Saindas, Mahatma Hansraj, and Lala Mulraj, who championed the use of Hindi in various spheres. Arya Samaj's educational institutions played a pivotal role in realizing Saraswati's vision of promoting Hindi as a medium of instruction. While institutions like Gurukul Kangri and its affiliates, such as Kanya Mahavidyalaya (KMV) in Jalandhar, taught a wide range of subjects, including science and mathematics, in Hindi, Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) colleges and schools used English as their primary medium but contributed significantly to disseminating Vedic ideals. These institutions were also instrumental in publishing scholarly works in Hindi across diverse disciplines. For instance, Professor Maheshcharan Singh of Gurukul Kangri authored textbooks on chemistry and botany as early as 1910–11, while others produced works on ancient Indian history, physics, and chemistry. In 1911, Balkrishna, a postgraduate and history teacher at Gurukul Kangri, authored a detailed history of England and a biography of Akbar, both of which were published by the Gurukul.

The Gurukul's emphasis on teaching higher education subjects in Hindi was widely regarded as a landmark achievement. It was noted that no other country at

the time relied on a foreign language as its primary medium of instruction in higher education. Advocates of this initiative argued that adopting a native language for instruction advanced the language's development while fostering progress among its speakers. Such an approach was particularly significant in disciplines like history, political science, and economics. The vision of the Arya Samaj institutions resonated with the idea that their efforts would contribute to the evolution of Hindi as a national language, making it fit to serve as the lingua franca of India. As one observer noted, "I have no doubt your colleges will be the means of furthering the progress of the Hindu language and making it fit to be the lingua franca of the whole of India."

The Arya Samaj's commitment to promoting Hindi is evident from the deliberations of the DAV College Managing Committee in the 1920s, particularly its consideration of establishing a school focused on Hindi instruction. On January 27, 1921, the Committee discussed a draft proposal for a "non-university" school, placing Hindi at the core of its curriculum. The primary objective was to ensure that students could read and write Hindi proficiently and develop an appreciation for Hindi literature by the time they completed their schooling.

Interestingly, the scheme also included provisions for teaching Urdu to students in the 6th and 7th classes who expressed interest, alongside additional Indian vernacular languages if financial resources permitted. English was to be introduced as a second language beginning in the 5th class, while Sanskrit was made a compulsory subject in the 8th and 9th classes. The curriculum included arithmetic as a foundational subject for the first seven years, while history (focused on India and England) and general geography were also integral components.

History instruction emphasized civic education, nation-building, and patriotism, especially in the early classes, through stories of national heroes.

The proposed curriculum reflected a holistic approach to education, emphasizing character building and religious instruction, which were allocated dedicated periods. Manual and vocational training were mandatory, with offerings in carpentry, sock-making, hand-loom weaving, bookbinding, painting, polishing, tailoring, shorthand, typewriting, bookkeeping, and simple chemical industries. Physical training was also prioritized, with regular tests ensuring that intellectual progress did not come at the expense of physical growth. Activities such as swimming, wrestling, tree climbing, and fencing, alongside traditional Indian games, were actively encouraged.

The academic progression was structured such that arithmetic would be completed by the 8th class and history and geography by the 9th class. Final examinations required proficiency in Hindi, English, Sanskrit, and one or more elective subjects. In appointing a headmaster, preference was given to candidates proficient in Sanskrit and Hindi, underscoring the school's cultural and linguistic priorities.

The school was scheduled to open on April 13, 1921 (Baisakhi day), with an allocation of 700 in the annual budget for its operation. This initiative was part of the DAV College Managing Committee's broader effort to address criticisms from the "Gurukul" faction, which alleged that the DAV institutions were not sufficiently promoting Hindi and Sanskrit. By incorporating both Hindi and Sanskrit into its educational framework, the Committee sought to reaffirm its dedication to the Arya Samaj's linguistic and cultural mission.

One of the Arya Samaj's most significant contributions to society, particularly to Hindu society, was the development and propagation of Hindi as a lingua franca. The Arya Samaj spearheaded the campaign to replace Urdu with Hindi, elevating Hindi to the status of Aryabhasha (the language of the Aryas). This movement was championed by Arya Samaj leaders who actively promoted the Devanagari script, advocating for its adoption in official domains. The institutional foundation for this campaign can be traced back to the establishment of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha in Benares in 1893, an initiative inspired by a speech delivered by Shankarlal, an Arya Samajist preacher.

The Sabha played a pivotal role in securing the recognition of Hindi as a court language in the United Provinces. Similarly, under the Arya Samajist leadership of Sir Pratap Singh, the Maharaja of Idar, numerous princely states in Rajputana adopted the Hindi script for their official correspondence. The Arya Samaj's organized efforts to propagate the teachings of Dayanand Saraswati also extended to formal education, significantly influencing linguistic preferences. For instance, the DAV College was instrumental in popularizing Hindi and Sanskrit in a region historically dominated by Persian and Urdu.

While DAV College aimed to fulfill the broader educational objectives of the Arya Samaj by integrating English and Western knowledge, one of its central missions remained the promotion of Hindi. Urdu was relegated to an optional subject. Reflecting this commitment, the DAV College Managing Committee resolved in 1907 to maintain bilingual records of its meetings in both English and Hindi. By 1914, Persian instruction was discontinued in the BA curriculum of DAV College, marking a decisive shift in language policy.

By the mid-1940s, the advocacy for Hindi extended beyond education into industrial practices. Students and teachers of the Dayanand Industrial School demanded the use of Hindi for official correspondence and the labelling of articles manufactured by the industrial branches of DAV College, emphasizing the symbolic connection between swadeshi goods and the swadeshi language. The petition argued:

"The names and trademarks inscribed on articles manufactured by the industrial establishments of DAV College must be engraved in Hindi (our national language), along with other languages. This will uphold the honour of our swadeshi goods, swadeshi language, and national pride in every respect."

This demand was lauded in Dainik Milap, a prominent newspaper in Lahore, which praised the patriotic fervour of such initiatives:

"The DAV College Lahore, SD College Lahore ... have submitted essential proposals...The emergence of such demands from students of these colleges is a matter of immense pride for India."

Thus, through its educational and institutional initiatives, the Arya Samaj not only advanced the cause of Hindi but also intertwined it with the broader ethos of nationalism and cultural revivalism.

Hindi Journalism

The Arya Samaj played a pivotal role in shaping the socio-cultural and intellectual milieu of northern India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It served as a crucial agent in providing the upper-caste, literate urban society with symbols

and norms to construct a collective self-identity and articulate shared goals. Central to this transformation was the development of a lingua franca for reformed Hindus, or the Aryas, as conceptualized by the Arya Samaj. Hindi, referred to as Aryabhasha (language of the Aryas), emerged as a cornerstone of the movement's vision for a reformed society, particularly in its Sanskritized form. Arya Samaj leaders in the United Provinces were instrumental in championing the Devnagari script and advocating for its adoption in official use. The establishment of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha in Benares, a critical step toward the recognition of Hindi as a court language in the United Provinces, was inspired by a speech delivered by Shankarlal, an Arya Samajist preacher.

Beyond educational initiatives, Arya Samaj leaders utilized the power of print media to propagate their ideals and principles. During Dayanand Saraswati's lifetime, several newspapers and journals were already in circulation. Arya Samachar, published from Meerut, was the first, followed by Bharat Sudasha Pravartak, Arya Darpan (from Farrukhabad and Shahjahanpur), and numerous others, including Ved Prakash, Arya Vinay, Arya Siddhant, Aryavrat, Bharat Bhagini, Rajasthan Samachar, Paropkari, Timirnashak, Brahmavrat, Arya Mitra, Panchal Pandita, Saddharm Pracharak, and Bharatodaya. These publications not only disseminated the Arya Samaj's principles but also contributed significantly to the development of Hindi journalism.

Among these, Arya Mitra, initially published from Moradabad and later from Agra and Lucknow, served as the weekly mouthpiece of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. It became a prominent platform for promoting Hindi literature and journalism. Esteemed editors such as Rudradutt Sampadakacharya, who edited Arya Vinay and co-edited Arya Mitra, Padmasingh Sharma, and Mahatma Munshiram, elevated the quality of these publications. Luminaries like

Lakshmidhar Vajpeyi, under the pseudonym Sarvanand, Banarasidas Chaturvedi, Satyendra, Ramchandra Shrivastava, and Jaidev Vidyalankar also contributed their editorial expertise. Arya Mitra reached its zenith under Harishankar Sharma, earning praise from literary stalwart Munshi Premchand. Since its inception in 1897, Arya Mitra has played a transformative role in fostering Hindi literature, offering a platform for budding writers and creating awareness of Hindi literary traditions. Many prominent authors began their careers contributing to the publication. Similarly, Padmasingh Sharma, as editor of Paropkari (Ajmer) and Bharatodaya (Gurukul Mahavidyalaya, Jwalapur), emerged as a leading figure in Hindi journalism, encouraging writers and introducing literary luminaries like Nathuramshankar Sharma to the field. Thus, through its extensive engagement with print media, the Arya Samaj not only advanced its reformist agenda but also significantly influenced the development of Hindi language and literature, laying the groundwork for its wider cultural and intellectual acceptance.

Kanya Mahavidyalaya (KMV), Jalandhar, played a pivotal role in promoting Hindi through its publication Panchal Pandita. Initially featuring both Hindi and English sections, the magazine transitioned into a wholly Hindi publication over time. As early as 1901, Panchal Pandita actively advocated for the adoption of Hindi, emphasizing its significance as the mother tongue and as a vehicle for national progress:

“Ai pathak gan ... yadi aap bharat ki unnati ke sache premi hai ... to devnagri aksharon dwara hindi bhasha ki varnan mein yatna karen.”

KMV's publications fostered an intellectual culture among its female students, inspiring them to contribute to periodicals such as Panchal Pandita and Jal Vid

Sakha. These articles covered a wide array of topics, including nationalism and household management, thereby nurturing literary skills while promoting socio-political awareness. The Arya Samaj extended its educational reform efforts to the younger generation through initiatives such as the Arya Kumar Parishad, established by Keshavdev Shastri. The inaugural convention of the Parishad was held in Saharanpur, presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai. To further its objectives, the council launched a publication titled Arya Kumar, edited by Shastri. Additionally, in 1914, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Punjab began publishing Arya, a monthly journal that later evolved into the weekly Aryodaya, co-edited by Pandit Chamupati, M.A.

Contributions of Gurukul Kangri to Hindi Journalism

Gurukul Kangri emerged as a prominent center for nurturing Hindi journalism, producing graduates who significantly contributed to the development of Hindi literature and the dissemination of Vedic principles. Among these luminaries were Satyadev Vidyalkar, Ramgopal Vidyalkar, Krishnachandra Vidyalkar, Satyakam Vidyalkar, Dinanath Siddhalankar, Shivkumar Vidyalkar, Kshitijkumar Vedyalkar, and Indra Vidyavachaspati. Indra Vidyavachaspati, in particular, distinguished himself as a journalist, writer, orator, novelist, and historian. He served as editor of the weeklies Arjun and Satyavadi, with Arjun eventually becoming a daily publication. These journals not only propagated nationalist ideologies but also mentored a new generation of journalists, many of whom were trained under Vidyavachaspati's guidance.

Vidyavachaspati also played a pivotal role in the Hindi-Urdu debate during post-independence India, championing Hindi as a national language. As president

of the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha for several years, he contributed extensively to the historiography of the Arya Samaj, authoring a comprehensive multi-volume history of the movement. The Arya Samaj's emphasis on educational and journalistic endeavours not only advanced its reformist agenda but also significantly shaped the linguistic and cultural landscape of India.

Numerous journals and magazines were established by Arya Samaj leaders to promote Hindi language, literature, and reformist ideals. Among the notable publications was Arya Siddhant, a monthly edited by Bhimsen Sharma from Etawah, and Vedodaya, edited by Gangaprasad Upadhyaya from Allahabad (Prayag). The latter continued under the editorship of his son, Viswaprakash, until financial constraints forced its cessation in 1934. Delhi's Shradhdhanand and Shuddhi Samachar, both edited by Chidanand Sanyasi, also garnered significant readership. Similarly, Arya from Saharanpur, edited by Kshemchandra 'Suman,' reflected the journalistic training imparted by Padmasingh Sharma and Nardev Shastri of Gurukul Mahavidyalaya, Jwalapur.

Other prominent journals of the period included Hindi Milap (Lahore), Shankar (Moradabad), Ajay and Vijay (Ajmer), Diwakar (Agra), Ved Vani (Varanasi), Vedpath (Jwalapur), Samrat (Delhi), and Nyaya (Ajmer). Punjab's celebrated social activist Shanno Devi published Shakti, edited by Mohansingh Senger, while Santram's Yugantar and Usha advocated for the Hindi language and the abolition of the caste system, respectively. Bhimsen Vidyalankar's Hindi Sandesh was another significant monthly, alongside Rajpal, later renamed Balidan, which commemorated Rajpal, regarded by Arya Samajis as a martyr.

The Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha contributed to this literary tradition by publishing Sarvadeshik, a monthly edited by Sudhakar and Raghunathprasad Pathak, which achieved considerable popularity, including among international readers. Sudhakar was later honored with the prestigious Mangla Prasad Paritoshik award for his work Manovigyan(Psychology). Several Arya Samaj writers have been recognized for their contributions to Hindi literature. Padmasingh Sharma, Jaichandra Vidyalankar, Satyaketu Vidyalankar, Udaiveer Shastri, and Gangaprasad Upadhyaya received the Mangla Prasad Paritoshik for works such as Satsai Sanghar, Bhartiya Itihas ki Rooprekha, Maurya Samrajya ka Itihas, Sankhya Darshan ka Itihas, and Aastikvad, respectively. Chandravati Lakhnapal's Striyon ki Stithi (1934), advocating for women's social reform, earned her the Delhi Hindi Sahitya Sammelan award.

Similarly, Satyadev Vidyalankar received the Radha Mohan Gokulji award, and Haridutt Vedalankar and Vijayendra were honored with the Harjimal Dalmia award for their works Hindu Parivar Mimansa and Radhavallabh Sampradaya: Siddhant aur Sahitya. In more recent times, G.P. Chopra has continued this legacy of literary excellence. These publications and accolades reflect the Arya Samaj's enduring impact on the promotion of Hindi and the broader intellectual and social discourse in India.

Hindi Literature

The expansion of the Arya Samaj in the United Provinces played a pivotal role in fostering a tradition of didactic literature, particularly in the Hindi literary sphere. Krishan Kumar has demonstrated that Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, a prominent Hindi writer, not only standardized norms for Hindi usage but also aligned these efforts

with an ethical framework heavily influenced by Arya Samaj ideals. This influence was evident in literary magazines such as the early editions of Saraswati.

This era marked a deliberate shift from the 'Riti' poetry of the post-Bhakti period, which often celebrated the female form for the pleasure of feudal patrons, to literature imbued with moral and social responsibility. Themes such as child marriage, widowhood, and dowry became central to the poetry of the Dwivedi era, shaped significantly by Arya Samaj's reformist agenda. Narayanprasad 'Betab,' a celebrated Hindi theatre figure and poet, contributed to this tradition through his compositions, like the following verse, which critiques idol worship:

Ajab hairaan hoon, tumhe kyunkar rijhaon mein
Koi vastu nahin aisi, jise seva mein laoon mein.

The Arya Samaj's impact on literary articulations is widely acknowledged in scholarly works. The organization's critique of idol worship and anthropomorphic representations of Hindu deities (avtarvad) inspired poets like Ayodhyasingh Upadhyaya and Ramcharit Upadhyaya, who humanized gods such as Krishna and Ram in their works. Ayodhyasingh Upadhyaya 'Hariaudh' (1865–1947), for instance, authored the mahakavya Priyaprasava (1914), which portrayed Krishna as a great human being rather than a divine figure. His work embodied the Arya Samaj's ideals of social service and emancipation.

Similarly, Maithilisharan Gupta (1886–1964), renowned for his poetic contributions, exhibited Arya Samaj influences, particularly in the early phase of his career (1910–1937). Although a Vaishnav and devout worshipper of Ram, Gupta was deeply moved by the Arya Samaj's cultural renaissance. During the

centenary celebrations of Dayanand Saraswati in 1924–25, he wrote a poem lauding the Arya Samaj:

Arya Samaj, Arya bhumi par arunoday-sa
Utha ushna, tu saj kar saaj
Arya Samaj! Arya Samaj!

Gupta's works often reflected Arya Samajist ideology, including his critiques of Brahmanical orthodoxy and glorified pilgrimages, as expressed in *Bharat Bharti*. Similarly, his opposition to cow slaughter was evident in *Gau Karuna Nidhi*. Gupta's seminal work *Saket* (written between 1914 and 1931, published in 1932) showcases the Arya Samaj's pervasive influence in Hindi-speaking regions. Terms like *aryaputra*, *devi*, and *arya* illustrate the integration of Arya Samaj ideals into the socio-cultural fabric of North India. Notably, *Saket* is believed to allude to the Arya Samaj's *shuddhi* (reconversion) movement of the mid-1920s. Gupta portrays Ram's journey to the jungles of South India as an effort to grant *aryatva* (Aryan essence) to its inhabitants, symbolizing the Arya Samaj's goal of Hinduizing marginalized communities. Thus, despite being a Sanatanist, Gupta's early poetic oeuvre reveals a profound engagement with Arya Samajist reformist and ideological currents.

Conclusion: The Arya Samaj's impact on the development of Hindi as a national language and cultural instrument is profound and enduring. By promoting Hindi as the language of reform, the Samaj not only sought to enhance the intellectual capacities of its followers but also aimed to bridge the linguistic divide that existed in colonial India. The Samaj's educational institutions, journals, and literary contributions significantly advanced the cause of Hindi, elevating it to a position of national prominence. Furthermore, its alignment with the broader nationalist

movement ensured that Hindi was seen not just as a language of instruction, but as a symbol of resistance and cultural revival. Through its tireless efforts in the realms of education, journalism, and literature, the Arya Samaj provided a powerful framework for the articulation of a reformed, modern Hindu identity and contributed to the linguistic and intellectual foundation upon which India's post-independence cultural revival would be built.

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