

[Schools are Heartbeat of Arya Samaj](#)

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Schools are Heartbeat of Arya Samaj

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It is the biggest non-governmental educational in India. Children are most of their world, though few departments of life escape the attention of the family-focused, social service-oriented Arya Samaj. The educational thrust of this vital worldwide religious organization goes back over a hundred years to 1886 when followers of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswathi, the founder of the Arya Samaj, established the first Dayanand Anglo Vedic (DAV) school in Lahore, now in Pakistan. Maharshi's dream was to eradicate ignorance and illiteracy by building institutions offering a modern education based upon the eternal knowledge in the Vedas. Mr. Darbari Lal, secretary of the Managing Committee at the DAV headquarters in New Delhi said: "From one school in 1886, the DAV now operates 500 educational institutions in India, including schools, colleges and specialized centers." Its Vishvesharanand Vedic Research Institute in Punjab is the largest Sanskrit and Vedic institute in the world and provides educational materials to its many schools.

Samaj institutions also include adult vocational schools, cultural centers, student exchange programs and homes for the elderly and orphans. Today, there are 5,500 branches throughout the world, some in each state of India, representing a total of 10 million supporters. It is firmly established in other countries where Hindus have immigrated, including British East Africa, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Suriname, Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji, Dutch Guyana, Singapore, Thailand, Netherlands, Burma, Great Britain, USA and Canada. In America where it plans to open branches in all American cities and translate the Vedas into English on an encyclopedic scale.

Maharshi himself incorporated the format of successful Christian institutions into his schools, yet within each, he used the traditional Vedic gurukula system for teaching Vedic Dharma. The Arya Samaj has achieved its success by single-mindedly following his example in pursuing only one strategy - setting up

institutions for educating children and adults with knowledge rooted in the Vedas, while also meeting the demand for a high quality, modern education. There are many non-Hindu schools in India that give high quality educations, but large numbers of Hindu graduates from these school tend to abandon Hinduism. Graduates from DAV schools receive outstanding educations and become stronger Hindus. This strategy has also been responsible for keeping Hinduism alive and well for millions in foreign countries.

Mr. Darbari Lal explained to HINDUISM TODAY, "The DAV movement teaches a blend of Vedic theology, Indian culture and western technology." Looking back with satisfaction at the many accomplishments over 100 years, octogenarian Ved Vyas, the doyen of Vedic scholars in India, added: "We have achieve the dream of Maharshi Dayanand and are now the torch bearers of India's Vedic heritage everywhere."

The Arya Samaj is also committed to offering poor children, including harijans (untouchables), an education that was previously available only to the rich. For instance, in Hansraj Model School in Delhi, 80 poor students are admitted yearly and are provided free education and all basic necessities. The expenses are borne by affluent parents of other students. This project has been introduced in other public and DAV schools with at least 10,000 children receiving free education.

Arya Samaj leaders admit that their social reforms need full cooperation from government agencies to sustain their many activities. They have won the respect of various governments to the extent that the Indian government uses DAV programs in public schools, and DAV schools receive government aid from a dozen countries they are in. Inspired by Mr. Darbari Lal to help the Indian government with adult education, the DAV launched an adult education center in 1985 in the Hansraj Model School in Delhi and will soon implement similar programs in 25 more Delhi schools. It focuses on teaching women who reside in Delhi's shanty colonies to read and write, and also help them learn handicraft skills to augment the family income. For want of funds, the center restricts admission to only 100 adults per year.

Many Hindu institutions have teachers who travel to various countries temporarily to promote Hinduism, but the Arya Samaj sends teachers who often settle in foreign countries to create stability and respectability. For example, between 1905 and 1985, 31 religious leaders from the Arya Samaj fulfilled missions in South

Africa, more than from any other Hindu group. Some have stayed there for 30 to 40 years and have trained more than 50 priests, including women. In their classes, they teach how Hindus can evolve spiritually toward God realization through the practice of yoga, and this has served well in popularizing their activities in South Africa.

All this has been possible due to the efforts of the many eminent leaders and dedicated workers of the Arya Samaj. Over a century after the first school was founded, the Arya Samaj is still fulfilling the vision of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati to reform Hindu society through promoting Vedic Dharma throughout the world.

Dayanand

Sannyasi Reformer Activist

Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83) was born in Gujarat in a rich Saivite brahmin family, but left home at age 20 in search of a guru. He met Swami Virajananda, a blind guru and great Vedic scholar, who taught him the Vedas and initiated him as a sannyasin. Feeling that Hinduism at that time was corrupt, Swami Dayanand founded the Arya Samaj (Noble Society) in 1875 to reform Hinduism by reviving the original religion of India which he called Vedic Dharma. He put great emphasis on performance of the homa or fire ceremony to worship the one God, while opposing idol worship, polytheism and animal sacrifices. He also opposed casteism, polygamy, sati, oppression of women and child marriages. He was against gambling and consumption of alcohol and drugs, and he promoted vegetarianism and protection of cows.

Maharshi Dayanand was among the first to raise his voice against British domination and is often credited with building the foundation upon which others later won India's independence. He strongly opposed Christian missionaries who converted Hindus to Christianity, and he reconverted many back and even converted non-Hindus to the Arya Samaj. He established Arya Samaj rites, including worship on Sunday, diksha or initiation, daily observance of homa and recital of the Gayatri mantram. Members pay 1% of their income and must subscribe to ten principles for living. Every Arya must cultivate celibacy if unmarried, austerity, truth and devotion to God while working for the good of the

whole society.

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