

# A LIVING LINEAGE

By Brigadier Chitranjan Sawant, VSM

**THE** day dawned in Lahore on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1886. A special day in the realm of real education in India. The first ever Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School was founded. The DAV movement had begun. A 22-year-old graduate, Hansraj, fresh from the College had volunteered to become the headmaster without accepting a salary. This saga of sacrifice remains unparalleled in the annals of educational realm. His British peers in other schools had mocked at his inexperience. But lauded his dedication. Hans Raj Ji kept the Vedic flag flying from day one to the day he demitted office after a quarter of a century.

Commemoration of contribution of Swami Dayanand Saraswati to unlocking of the Vedic knowledge from the closets and cloisters of seminaries and making it unavailable to common man gave birth to the DAV movement. What better tribute to the Renaissance Rishi who had breathed his last in 1883, could there be. The credit for jump starting the mighty movement of DAV educational institution goes to the Aryas of Punjab. A significant achievement indeed! So much was achieved out of so little, so few strived for the welfare of so many that the singular amalgam of the East and West culminated in the Arya Samaj Lahore and made an imprint on mankind. The Anglo-Vedic seed sown in the fertile soil of the undivided Punjab by Aryas who were spurred by the noble thoughts, writings and discourses of Swami Dayanand Saraswati in the days gone by, germinated well. Blossoming into a Banyan tree, the DAV movement spread all over the country. Each branch transformed itself into a tree as they say in Latin ``QUOT RAMI TOT ARBORS``.

## QUO VADIS

The beginning of the DAV movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was superb. Fine. What is the DAV like at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is the educational movement on track? Are they achieving the aim? Well, myriad questions crop up and ask for satisfactory answers. Indeed, the DAV institutions are growing numerically and have crossed the 600 mark, so chipped in a statician. Very well, said the doubting Thomas and queried about the quality of education imparted and the shaping of the human material into socially-effective citizens. Are they living by the tenets of the Vedas and the principles of the Arya Samaj? Of course, these issues have to be addressed too so that DAVs continue to be called `Pilgrims of Progress.` It gives food for thought to those who bear the onerous burden of running the show. The Show must go on and every dawn should herald anew programme of progress. The present generation of academicians and administrators owe it to Mahatma Hansraj and his generation of Aryas.

The DAV movement was going great guns from its inception on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1886 to midnight of 14-15 August 1947 when India was partitioned and our beloved Lahore was lost. The DAV College, Lahore was converted by Pakistan into Islamia College, Lahore over a period of time. Only the word AUM in the Devnagri script survives, so they say. Nevertheless, the Vedic thought survived. The Aryan Heritage of the Arya Samaj survived the near death blow dealt to the DAV movement by partition of India. Resilience of the leaders of the Arya Samaj and the DAV institutions did wonders to raise the morale.

The DAV educational institutions have risen from the ashes like the Phoenix. They are a living reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century India from the north to the south and east to the west. The nerve center, the DAV College Managing Committee is located in New Delhi. The oldest DAV school, Lahore is relocated in Chandigarh and the famous DAV

College, Lahore is relocated in Ambala. Indeed, there are many more new DAVs in India that are shining bright stars in the firmament of the century plus two-decade-old movement that had commenced in Lahore.

## **ONWARD MARCH**

Moving on and on is indeed the pragmatic motto of the DAV movement. ``Charaiveti Charaiveti`` (move on and on) says the Vedic philosophy of life. And this is what DAV is all about. The Dayanand Anglo-Vedic movement is a living lineage of the Vedic culture and the Arya Samaj as enunciated by Swami Dayanand Saraswati. ``Dispelling Ignorance and promoting knowledge`` is the eighth principle of the Ten principles of the Arya Samaj. Hansraj ji, later a Mahatma in our eyes, put this principle into practice in personal life as well as in academic domain. He made it a point to be with the DAV hostellers for the evening `Sandhya` whenever he was in town. Of his five precepts, the pillars of strength, *Sandhya* – the Vedic prayer – was the first one. Indeed this is worth emulating by principals of the DAV institutions today. If the principals preach and practise the Ten Principles of the Arya Samaj, the staff and students of the DAV institutions will indeed follow the pied pipers. It is the academic leader who should awaken his conscience in the Vedic Chetna Shivir, the students will follow suit. Mahatma Ji has shown us the path, we have just to walk along that path.

The Vedic Chetna Shivirs of today are a step in the right direction. Organised by various DAV institutions, the camps take the message of Maharshi Dayanand to the new generation. One such example is that of the DAV College Amritsar. Under the leadership of the Principal, Shri Dhani Ram, the College had brought together 1,200 girl students on their campus in December 04 and ingrained in them the Vedic philosophy of life for a week. It was indeed a grand success from all accounts. The college is rightly proud of shaping careers of young students brilliantly. In the shivirs to be organised in future, the trainees may be divided into smaller groups for personal attention of the trainers.

## **ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE GIRL CHILD**

The DAV philosophy of education pays equal attention to the personality development of boys and girls. There is no gender bias at all. In fact an important segment of the DAV movement comprises colleges for women. The trailblazer is the Hansraj Mahila Vidyalaya, Jullandhar that was founded by Mahatma Hansraj himself at Lahore in 1927. Uprooted by partition of the country, it was restarted in 1948 in the Arya Samaj bhavan, Jullandhar with only 80 students on roll. The multi facility Mahila Mahavidyalayahas has now over 4000 girl students on its rolls. Of them 539 are hostellers. Hundreds of them have excelled in the academic and ancillary activities alike. This institution is one of the prestigious colleges of the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

Have you heard of an institution that grooms professionally trained, socially awakened, morally enlightened and disciplined to finger tips - nurses``. Yes indeed, The name is Mahatma Hansraj DAV Institute of Nursing at Jalandhar. Swami Dayanand`s dream of harnessing education in the service of mankind has come true. The DAV family is eagerly looking forward to the day that dawns on the 250-bed hospital affiliated to an august nursing college of ours. Our nurses trained up to the highest level will alleviate the suffering of humanity all over the world. They will live up to the Vedic ideal ``Sarve Santu Niramayah`` - let one and all be free from malady.

Are you having a toothache? Please suffer not. The alumni of MN DAV Dental College, Solan will take care of you. The dental College awards a Bachelors Degree in

dental surgery after training its students in the latest technique of dental care. The China man of days gone by did not cure but only extracted tooth. Not so now, with our dental surgeons around. Of course, the Dayanand Ayurvedic College, Jalandhar takes care of other ailments and ensures that we have a healthy mind in a healthy body. Indeed, that is an important step on the way of developing a well rounded personality, without angularities, of the new generation of Man.

## **HIGH ACHIEVERS**

The DAV College Jullandhar walks away with the cake as a high achiever. Established in 1918 the college now has about 3,000 students on rolls and a highly qualified and devoted faculty to guide them in shaping into socially effective citizens with a well rounded personality. An appreciable number of students stand first in the university examination and bag gold medals. One wonders what additional measures are required to be taken to attract students to the Vedic way of life. Can the DAV college be called as flag bearer of the Arya Samaj and living up to the expectations of Mahatma Hans Raj? Let the alumni get together to debate the issue and answer the question sooner than later.

Let us now leave the north India and go down south to meet the staff and students of the DAV institutions in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Kerala is bereft of DAVs , as of now.

To begin with, we must confess that South India has just a nodding acquaintance with the Arya Samaj. At a well organised Seminar on Vedic Thoughts, held in a small village Annavaram-near a mofussil township in Andhra Pradesh ,courtesy Ms Sneh Mahajan of DAV CMC, I have had the privilege of interacting with 25 principals and two regional directors of the DAV institutions down south. Well, the seed of DAV philosophy is sown and the field is fertile. A good Vedic atmosphere to be created by knowledgeable preachers of eminence and manure of suitable literature will indeed help the seed germinate well. Of course, a sustained effort is required for flowering and fruiting of the plant of Vedic way of life. We , Aryas, are optimistic by nature when we say: ``if winter comes, can spring be far behind``?

It goes to the credit of the staff and students of the host school of the seminar, Seetha-Mahalakshmi DAV Public School, Annavaram that they performed the Havan well and gave a good display of discipline and scholastic achievements, although the school is only one year old. It was opened in 2004. The principal, a born Christian, was a performing Yajman with Sneh Mahajan as the purohit. The students chanted the Ved mantras correctly, which they remembered by heart. It goes to show that the Arya Samaj school of thought has a bright future in south India. Organising the Vedic Chetna Shivirs in the South on a fixed frequency basis will be in order.

Assessment of outcome should be scrutinized by the directors concerned.

## **PASHCHIMANCHAL AND POORVANCHAL**

Solapur citizens in Maharashtra are known for their resilience. They had displayed their will power in resisting the religious oppression of the Nizam of Hydrabad, under the banner of the Arya Samaj. They won laurels. To Commemorate the historic victory of the Vedic Dharm, the Dayanand College of Arts and Science was started in 1940, the first ever in the region. The experiment was an instant success. The DAV movement did not have to look back. In 1964, the Dayanand Law College started functioning – much to the relief of the local population who feel legally empowered. The poor farmers cannot be harassed by money lenders. The legal fraternity of the DAV Law College is available for help on call.

Ajmer occupies an important place in the annals of the Arya Samaj. It was here that Swami Dayanand Saraswati had breathed his last in 1883. Five years later a small

school was opened to carry forward the educational mission of the Renaissance Rishi, Dayanand Saraswati. In the golden jubilee year, it was raised to the status of a college. The wheels of progress are moving forward unhindered.

The DAV movement in the Poorvanchal is making its presence felt by and by. The DAV Public Schools in Bihar, Sikkim, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal are a step in the right direction. More such steps need to be taken, especially in rural areas where ``AVIDYA``, that is non-education is the root cause of mental darkness.

Superstitions and evil social practices have to be uprooted through Vedic education. It is hoped that the DAVs in the East will live up to our great expectations and translate the Eighth Principles of the Arya samaj into practice.

## **THE FUTURE**

Shri Vishvanath Ji has been the right link with Lahore in more ways than one. His sagaciousness has been a great help in providing publications and food for thought to the DAV staff and students alike. The future of the DAV movement is bright, the ``think tank`` under the leadership of Mahashay Gian Prakash Chopra is doing its best to give a distinctive colour to the DAV institutions. Of course, we have to modernise our methods of propagation of the Vedic Dharm. More than that a number of role models have to come up in the form of committed teachers and principals to show the pilgrim where the path of progress is. The Vedic Chetna Shivirs are indeed a step in the right direction and a little chiseling - though audio video aids - will enable the diamonds - our alumni - to sparkle. The DAVs will indeed strive to achieve the Vedic mission and make a Man out of a monster. The Vedic injunction is MANURBHAV - be a good human being.