

Q The Arya Samaj "did not however, succeed in capturing the imagination of modern India as a whole". Comment.

The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. He undertook the task of reforming the Hindu religion.

The main tenets of the Arya Samaj were -

- i) The Vedas are the only source of truth. Thus, Swami Dayananda gave the slogan 'Back to Vedas'.
- ii) Opposition to idol-worship.
- iii) Opposition to reincarnation theory of God & polytheism.
- iv) Faith in theory of karma.
- v) Belief in female education.
- vi) Condemned child marriage & stood for widow remarriage.
- vii) Denounced untouchability & repudiated caste system.

Working on these principles, the Arya Samaj did remarkably useful work for reforming the Hindu society & religion. A large number of educational institutions were established by the Arya Samaj, such as gurukuls, kanya-gurukuls & D.A.V. Schools & Colleges.

Arya Samaj also contributed towards arousing national consciousness. He was Swami Dayananda was the first person to use the term 'Swaraj'. He was the first to insist on people using only Swadeshi things manufactured in India & to discard foreign things.

But despite these developments there were certain traits in



the Arya Samaj movement which gave it certain negative connotations. For instance -

i.) The moderate disciples of Swami Dayananda were gradually marginalised after 1893, while a militant group under Pandit Guru Dutt & Pandit Lakh Ram launched a militant campaign. Shuddhi movement was initiated to reconvert who were lost to Christianity, Sikhism & Islam.

ii.) In the 1890s the Arya Samaj became actively involved in the cow protection movement. During Dayananda's time the cow-protection movement was not overtly anti-Muslim but after him it gradually became an issue of communal rivalry.

Thus, no doubt Arya Samaj made remarkable contributions towards Indian society, education & national consciousness but its religious work tended, though unconsciously, to divide the growing national unity among Hindus, Muslims, Christians & Sikhs. It gradually moved from reformism to revivalism & sowed the seeds of communalism. Hence, it failed in capturing the imagination of modern India as a whole.