

Dr. Dayal Asha

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Since ancient times, Sindhis have displayed their skills in every field. Some have become famous and well known in the field of education, while some in the industrial sector and some have shown exceptional business acumen. Some started hospitals for the welfare of society, while some started schools and colleges for imparting education. Not only this, in our Sindhi community there are some personalities who have made a mark in several diversified fields by displaying their extraordinary talents and skills.

One such personality, who has acquired doctorate in Hindi language, and after acquiring the degree of D. Lit. in Sindhi, has served the community by his remarkable contribution to Sindhi Literature and Education is Dr. Dayal Asha and we are honoured by his presence today.

Jawhrani: Dr. Dayal Asha, can you please tell us, how was the bond with Hindi education and Hindi literature developed?

Dr. Dayal: Since childhood I had a keen interest in Hindi. Right since school days I have been well-versed in two languages, Sindhi, which is my mother tongue, and Hindi, which is the national language. I always say both these languages are like my two eyes.

Jawhrani: You completed your doctorate in Hindi prior to your obtaining a doctorate in Sindhi. Isn't it?

Dr. Dayal: This is because in those days, when I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Sindhi, we didn't have a Masters degree in Sindhi. Therefore, I did my Master of Arts in Hindi and Sanskrit. Thereafter, I developed a keen interest in Sindhi. This is because, when I was a child, my mother Sadoribai, had the ambition of making me a doctor. I told my mother "How can I become a doctor, I have studied Arts and not Science." But still it was her cherished dream to see her son as a doctor one day. Now, whether that was just a sub-conscious thought or my upbringing or whatever you may call it - with the grace of the Almighty that cherished dream of hers became a reality.

Jawhrani: So, if not a doctor who prescribes medicines and cures physical ailments, you became a doctor who purifies the soul.

Dr. Dayal: All this is due to the blessings of Goddess Saraswati, my beloved parents, Saint Swami Shanti Prakash, Dada J. P. Vaswani and other saints.

Jawhrani: After obtaining doctorate in Hindi, what attracted you towards Sindhi language and Sindhi literature?

Dr. Dayal: I have been writing in Sindhi since childhood.

Jawhrani: So you have been writing in Sindhi even before you got your doctorate in Hindi.

Dr. Dayal: Yes, for many years.

Jawhrani: How many books have you written till date?

Dr. Dayal: I have written approximately 50 books in total - in Hindi, Sindhi and English.

Jawhrani: Which are the books written by you in English?

Dr. Dayal: 'Saints of Sindh' and 'Golden thoughts of my Satguru, Swami Shanti Prakash Maharaj'

Jawhrani: You have touched each and every branch of literature. You must have written books, novels or stories on human values, relationships, emotions, sacrifices, self respect?

Dr. Dayal: I have covered, in the form of verse or poetry, social life, my own individual feelings and whatever I saw, learnt and experienced in life since childhood.

Jawhrani: Many of us feel that most of the books written by you, or the literature penned by you, is mostly on the life and times of the saints. In those life histories, the saints have been praised; mention is there about the incidents and miracles that took place during their times etc. From these life histories of saints, one doesn't get to see the actual emotions and sentiments of the author. Other than these, which are the other books you have written?

Dr. Dayal: The literature of saints has its own importance because this is immortal literature. You will be glad to know that 'Saints of Sindh' has been reprinted five times. I have been living in the company of saints, and it has had a great impact on my life and my upbringing, which can also be found in my writings about the saints of India as well as Sindh. And these books about the saints have been quite popular. Other than these, I have written in verse and poetry format about experiences of my life. From the research point of view I have written thesis in Hindi, in the form of a book titled 'Sindhi Kaviyon ki Hindi Sadhna'. The book consist of those Sindhi poets and lyricists who in the 18th and 19th century, being Sindhi and staying in Sindh, wrote in the Hindi language. Very few have knowledge about this subject. When I chose this topic and presented it for doing a thesis, it was accepted and I was told that this was a new topic and there was no awareness about the contribution of the Sindhi poets (of the 18th and 19th century) to Hindi literature.

Jawhrani: Since a long time a dispute has been going on in our Sindhi community regarding the script - Devnagri or Arabic. What are your views on this?

Dr. Dayal: I am an educationist, I don't want to oppose any script, but as per the conditions prevailing today, the Devnagri script has also got great value. In 1849, when Captain George prepared the Sindhi-English dictionary, he used the Devnagri script. I am not objecting to any script, but since we Sindhis are spread out in different states all over India, most are familiar with Hindi. From that point of

view, our Sindhis should not be deprived of their mother tongue and as most of our children, whether in Maharashtra or in other states, are being educated in convent schools, they understand the Devnagri script very well. So they can read Sindhi easily in the Devnagri script. Therefore, in the interest of keeping our language alive, there is no harm if we accept the Devnagri script.

Jawhrani: That is just like what Mahatma Gandhi had said. If the script of the entire country is one, that is Devnagri script, then we will be able to unite better and come closer to each other. Even Lokmanya Tilak struggled for Marathi to be written in the Devnagri script and today from the script point of view, Marathi has become quite simple and easy. Today, even the Gujaratis are thinking on the lines of adopting Devnagri script, so that their literature can reach a vast majority of the masses. So you are of the view that all the languages should use the Devnagri script.

Dr. Dayal: I feel that this debate on the matter relating to the script will remain forever.

Jawhrani: How will this debate remain forever, because today our youngsters are not taught Sindhi in the Arabic script in any school except in a few schools in Ulhasnagar, as that is a different kind of settlement where majority of them are Sindhis. But at most of the other places you don't find either the teachers who can teach the Sindhi Arabic script or the students ready to learn that script. So, today when we have reached this juncture, how can we save our language?

Dr. Dayal: Even the government today is taking steps in this direction so that our youth who are going to English medium schools, should be taught their mother tongue in the course of their education. Now the government of Maharashtra has started a composite course of 50 marks. The books from standard fifth to ninth are ready in both the scripts so that it is convenient for the students. This has already been started and many students inspite of being in English medium schools are learning Sindhi, not only in hundreds but by the thousands. For example, in Sindhunagar we have Swami Shanti Prakash High School, Jhulelal High School which is headed by Mr. Harbux Motwani, where, inspite of English being the medium, Sindhi is taught to the students through Devnagri script.

Jawhrani: Just now you referred to Ulhasnagar as Sindhunagar. This name Sindhunagar has been suggested right from day one, from the

time when Kalyan camp was set up. Since the times of Morarji Desai, Sindhis have put forth their appeal that the name of this camp should be Sindhunagar. So why have the residents of Sindhunagar lagged behind in this matter?

Dr. Dayal: The residents do have this feeling, and are very enthusiastic and passionate about it, but now it's the duty of the government.

Jawhrani: But it is we who have to make sure our voice reaches the government.

Dr. Dayal: There are many who have raised their voice on this issue, but since we are in the minority, due importance is not being given to our appeal.

Jawhrani: When we were asked to leave Sindh, and were told to come to India; when we had to sacrifice our lands and leave our country, certain promises had been made to us that we will enjoy equal constitutional rights and civil liberties in India. Today, why have we failed in getting those rights and why are we not being treated in the way as was promised .

Dr. Dayal: Well, that is the job of the administrators, while I am into social service, away from politics, therefore I would not criticize anyone. This is an emotional feeling, that at some point of time we used to call Sindhunagar as mini Sindh of our Sindhis, where we could keep our culture and civilization alive.

Jawhrani: In Sindhunagar, the Sindhi attire, Sindhi food, Sindhi way of life, everything relating to Sindhyat was once very clearly visible. But now slowly all these are vanishing. How can we save and preserve that?

Dr. Dayal: We can easily preserve it. It depends on us totally. Today, unfortunately I am seeing that our own Sindhis are moving away from Sindhi language and Sindhyat. So this is not only the fault of the government or the administration but to some extent even our fault. We should take a look at our own conscience and decide for ourselves how loyal have we been to our language and culture.

Sometime back you asked me what other literature I have written, other than the life history of saints. I have written Ghazals, songs, couplets, verses in Sindhi. While in Hindi I have written couplets, devotional hymns, songs, Ghazals etc. All these have been published at different times.

Jawhrani: In every branch of literature you have shown exceptional talent.

For Sindhi as well as Hindi literature, you have received the maximum number of prizes, honours, admiration and awards.

Dr. Dayal : No my dear, I am just a zero. If God is making me a hero, it is all His grace. It's the blessings of my Guru Swami Shanti Prakash, my parents, Goddess Saraswati, Swami Lila Shah, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, Dada J. P. Vaswani etc.

Jawhrani: At what stage in life did you become so philosophical?

Dr. Dayal : Ever since my contact with the great saint, Dada T. L. Vaswani whose birth centenary we are celebrating not only in India, but all over the world. He was a great soul, an ocean of love who used to treat everyone alike - elders or children, men or women.

Jawhrani: I believe you have also written a book on the great saint, isn't it?

Dr. Dayal : Yes, in Sindhi and in Hindi also. In a similar vein, I have also written on Dada Jashan Vaswani. In this manner, I have written a few religious texts. Even Dada Jashan is an ocean of love and ever forgiving. I am very fortunate indeed that with the blessings of Swami Shanti Prakash I got the opportunity to serve the people in various states of the country like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh etc. In Bihar, in 1968, when there was a draught, with the grace of Swamiji I went to Bodhgaya in Bihar to serve the unfortunate over there. Later, even Swamiji accompanied us. During the storms and floods in Andhra Pradesh, earthquake in Gujarat, the earthquake of Latur (Maharashtra), the Bhopal Gas tragedy, the Koyna disaster and in such other calamities, along with my friends and associates, along with the local people and through our organization, we delivered timely assistance. Swamiji used to say that one should not be lethargic while doing social service, if one is to provide assistance then it should be timely assistance. The timely help and assistance has its own due significance and value.

Jawhrani: When did you establish this organization?

Dr. Dayal : I started this organization approximately 40 years ago with the view to serve the people. It was a small organization. The chairman of this organization was my Guru Swami Shanti Prakash Mahraj, while dear brother Hiralal Sabhandasani and one secretary were the members of this organization.

Jawhrani: What are the main services now being undertaken by this organization?

Dr. Dayal : The main service at present is the Shanti Prakash home for the aged. Such a beautiful home for the aged in the lap of nature you will not find anywhere in India and that too free of cost. The elderly are served without taking a penny from them. It consists of lawns and gardens, self contained rooms where they can live peacefully and comfortably.

Jawhrani : Why did you feel the need to open a home for the aged in UIhasnagar, in our Sindhunagar, where it is said that our culture and values are still alive, where the parents are lovingly being taken care of by their children.

Dr. Dayal : My dear friend, over there also are some negligent sons who do not care for their parents.

Jawhrani : Have they too been influenced by the times?

Dr. Dayal : Yes. In days gone by, one would fear ones parents. Sons would always be afraid of their parents, but nowadays the parents are scared of their children. The mother-in-law is afraid of the daughter-in-law and obeys her so that there should be peace at home. Even I suggest, that if you want happiness, do as the children wish. This is because all around the entire environment has become polluted, limits and values have been trampled.

Jawhrani : How many rooms are there in your ashram?

Dr. Dayal : We have 40 rooms, a temple and a lovely garden.

Jawhrani : Lodging and boarding is totally free?

Dr. Dayal : Everything is free. Besides this, with the grace of Satguru Mahraj, every month, about 650 poor widows are given financial assistance, rations, new clothes, assistance for their children's education and even uniforms are provided to them. Assistance is also provided for the marriage of poor girls.

Jawhrani : Is this help provided only to the widows or to the poor families also?

Dr. Dayal : Mostly to those poor widows who have infant children, because my motive behind starting the organization was to serve the needy widows and the aged persons. Because as it is said those with wings can fly, but what about the sufferings of the wingless?

"By serving the needy, my mind finds immense peace and is at rest."

Therefore, whatever I get, I like to spend in the service of the

distressed and the needy.

Jawhrani: You also run a school?

Dr. Dayal : Swami Shanti Prakash High School is a Sindhi medium as well English medium school. You will be glad to know that Swami Shanti Prakash Sindhi medium school is a full fledged high school. It's in a nice environment and Swami Shanti Prakash was the President. That Ashram Trust is different from this social service Trust. We conduct marriages of poor girls and also 'Samuhik' marriages over here, in Saurashtra and other towns. All this is due to the blessings of my Satguru Swami Shanti Prakash Maharaj whose birth centenary we are celebrating. I cannot forget even one favour of my guru in my life. It is because of the teachings of Swami Shanti Prakash, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani and Dada J. P. Vaswani that I am lighting the lamp of humanity by going to various towns and cities and converting thousands into becoming vegetarians for lifetime.

"Light the lamp of humanity and make a success of your lifetime."

Jawhrani: As far as I know, you also have a cowshed (GauShala). Is that run by the temple?

Dr. Dayal : The Gau Shala was started with the grace and inspiration of Swami Shanti Prakash Maharaj and was a great success and now there are about 1500 cows. That is a different trust by the name of Shree RadheShyam Gau Shala Trust. In a similar manner, the Swami Sarvanand hospital which is run by the Sunder Shevak Sabha Trust had Swami Shanti Prakash as its President and now Swami Dev Prakash Maharaj is the President. This hospital was also built due to the blessings of Swami Shanti Prakash Maharaj. When we requested him that we want to name the hospital in his name, he refused and said name it after my Satguru Swami Sarvanand. This shows his humility and his feeling of benevolence. He had tremendous faith and devotion towards his guru.

Jawhrani: As mentioned earlier you have decorated every branch of literature, like Ghazal, Shayari...

Dr. Dayal : "To spend some moments with you, I don't have time.
Above love there is nothing else in this world.
Love is life, love is nectar,
I love everyone and know no custom other,
To spend some moments with you, I don't have time."

I can sing many ghazals for you, but time is short. I have written ghazals in Hindi also

"If you don't have the desire to live,
then where is the need to live?

If you are intoxicated by love,
then where is the need for wine?

I sobbed all my life
when my heart was full of sorrow,
when there isn't any yearning
then where is the need to weep?

When she looked so beautiful with her hair open
then for cosmetics where is the need"

Jawhrani: This shows you have written romantic poems also.

Dr. Dayal: Yes.

Jawhrani: Which job you love the most - singing, literature or social service? In which field do you find the maximum happiness and satisfaction?

Dr. Dayal: I find joy in literature, singing, music, cultural activities as well as social service, infact in everything.
"I sing songs of love, for my peace of mind,
knowledge of music I have none,
neither do any musician I know,
unaware I am about musical notes,
I just play the instrument of my heart,
and sing the songs of love."

Jawhrani: Playing this musical instrument of you heart, kindly give a message for our younger generation.

Dr. Dayal: I request the younger Sindhi generation to keep alive the Sindhi culture, civilization and traditions, and study Sindhi literature. When you read literature by buying Sindhi books, the litterateurs will get encouragement and you will get knowledge of the enormous wealth of Shah, Sachal, Sami and the rich assets of our great Sindhi saints, darveshs and Sufi saints. To preserve this vast heritage, we should practice what is preached. I thank you that on behalf of Sahyog Foundation you have started this endeavour 'Sindhi Sarvech'. By doing so, you have done a great favour to the Sindhi community. Because these meetings are also very important as others get inspiration. As I have been inspired in my

life to serve in all four fields. With the grace of my guru, I am the first Sindhi who acquired D. Lit. in Sindhi.

Jawhrani: I am sure that this message of yours will be taken seriously by our youth because they should be proud of the fact that they are the inheritors of the civilization of Mohan-jo-Daro which showed the path of progress to the entire world. They will surely put into practice this message of yours.

Dr. Dayal : I thank you for inviting me.