



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

India

India – IND39899 – Arya Samaj – Conflict
with Sikhs – Punjab

13 February 2012

1. Please provide some background information on the Brahmin Arya Samag BAS, e.g. its purpose, where it is based, and the nature of its activities.

No exact matches were located for a group named 'Brahmin Arya Samag'.

Information has been located referring to the Arya Samaj, which is a Hindu sect.^{1 2}

The first Arya Samaj was established in in 1875. In terms of geographical presence, two journal articles were located which state that the first Arya Samaj was located in Mumbai.^{3 4} However, another source, available on the Princeton University Press website, states that the first Arya Samaj was located in Punjab.⁵ Its founder, Swami Dayanand, was apparently from a Brahmin family, although sources differ as to whether he was born at Tankara, Gujjarat⁶ or at Kathiawar, north of Mumbai.⁷ According to the Arya Samaj Australian chapter's website, the movement initially gained footholds in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan states. Eventually, the movement came to have a national presence.⁸ A book published in 2004 stated that Arya Samaj continued to be active across India and internationally:

Almost all Indian states, except probably Meghalaya and Nagaland, today have flourishing Arya Samajes and most of them boast of a provincial organisation of their

¹UK Home Office 2004, *India Country Report*, October, Section 6.30

² 'Religions and Castes' (Undated), Department of Revenue, Rehabilitation and Disaster Management website http://punjabrevenue.nic.in/gaz_asr9.htm – Accessed 27 January 2012

³ Sharma, S.K. 2004, *Cultural and Religious Heritage of India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, Google Books website p. 270

<http://books.google.com.au/books?id=kCgXY1GcGB8C&pg=PA269&dq=Sharma+Arya+Samaj&hl=en&sa=X&ei=dPkxT-egFYyOmQXBrtDWBQ&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Sharma%20Arya%20Samaj&f=false> – Accessed 8 February 2012

⁴ Buffet, E. 1915, 'The Arya Samaj: An Account of its Origin, Doctrines, and Activities, with a Biographical Sketch of the Founder by Lajpat Rai', Review, *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Vol. 12, No. 24, November, p. 667 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2012343.pdf?acceptTC=true> – Accessed 8 February 2012

⁵ Jaffrelot, C. (ed) 2007, 'Hindu Nationalism: A Reader', Princeton University Press website, 25 April <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i8560.html> – Accessed 27 June 2007

⁶ Sharma, S.K. 2004, *Cultural and Religious Heritage of India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, Google Books website p. 270

<http://books.google.com.au/books?id=kCgXY1GcGB8C&pg=PA269&dq=Sharma+Arya+Samaj&hl=en&sa=X&ei=dPkxT-egFYyOmQXBrtDWBQ&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Sharma%20Arya%20Samaj&f=false> – Accessed 8 February 2012

⁷ Buffet, E. 1915, 'The Arya Samaj: An Account of its Origin, Doctrines, and Activities, with a Biographical Sketch of the Founder by Lajpat Rai', Review, *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Vol. 12, No. 24, November, p. 667 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2012343.pdf?acceptTC=true> – Accessed 8 February 2012

⁸ 'History' (Undated), Vedic Pratinidhi Sabha and Arya Samaj of Australia website <http://www.aryasamaj.org.au/History.aspx> – Accessed 8 February 2012

own. Even Fiji, Mauritius, East Africa and South Africa have Arya Samaj. There is at least one in London...[t]he United States too has an Arya Samaj or two.⁹

The Arya Samaj has been described as a revivalist, socio-religious movement grounded in Vedic Hinduism.¹⁰ The Congress of Arya Samaj in North America's website also mentions Vedic literature as being "the scriptures of all true knowledge".^{11 12} The movement apparently arose as a challenge to the persistence of Christian missionaries. The Arya Samaj became known for rejecting some core tenets of contemporary Hinduism, such as idolatry, polytheism, untouchability and the rigidity of the caste system. Another point of difference with mainstream Hindus was that Arya Samaj followers also engaged in proselytising.¹³

Some sources suggest historical links between Arya Samaj and militancy. In 1970, Dua wrote that, during the early years of the movement, Arya Samaj had "presented a militant challenge to Islam and Christianity".¹⁴ Another journal article, from 1968, stated that the emergence of Arya Samaj had "provided an ideology of militant Hinduism that had a wide appeal to Punjabi Hindus".¹⁵

More recently in 2007, *Compass Direct* alleged that an Arya Samaj temple in Himachal Pradesh state had links to the Hindu extremist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).¹⁶ A 2000 source from a Dalit advocacy organisation also referred to Arya Samaj as a "neo-Brahmanist fundamentalist movement", alleging that it was the predecessor to the RSS.^{17 18}

According to an article available on the All About Sikhs website, Arya Samaj is said to have comprised a springboard for Hindu political parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).¹⁹

2. Please provide information on whether the BAS is in conflict and tension with Sikhs in Ludhiana, Punjab, or vice versa. If they are in conflict, what is the basis of their disagreement?

⁹ Sharma, S.K. 2004, *Cultural and Religious Heritage of India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, Google Books website p. 269

<http://books.google.com.au/books?id=kCgXY1GcGB8C&pg=PA269&dq=Sharma+Arya+Samaj&hl=en&sa=X&ei=dPxxT-egFYyOmQXBrtDWBQ&ved=0CDYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Sharma%20Arya%20Samaj&f=false> – Accessed 8 February 2012

¹⁰ Dua, V. 1970, 'Arya Samaj and Punjab Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 5, No. 43/44, 24 October, p. 1787 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/4360647.pdf?acceptTC=true> – Accessed 8 February 2012 IND

¹¹ 'Principles of Arya Samaj' (Undated) Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America website <http://aryasamaj.com/principles/principles.htm> – Accessed 8 February 2012

¹² For a detailed description of Vedic religion and ritual, see: Jamison, S.W. & Witzel, M. 1992, 'Vedic Hinduism', Harvard University Faculty of Arts and Sciences website <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/vedica.pdf> - Accessed 8 February 2012

¹³ Dua, V. 1970, 'Arya Samaj and Punjab Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 5, No. 43/44, 24 October, p. 1787 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/4360647.pdf?acceptTC=true> – Accessed 8 February 2012 IND

¹⁴ Dua, V. 1970, 'Arya Samaj and Punjab Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 5, No. 43/44, 24 October, p. 1787 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/4360647.pdf?acceptTC=true> – Accessed 8 February 2012

¹⁵ Jones, K. W. 1968, 'Communalism in the Punjab: the Arya Samaj Contribution', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 52 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2942838.pdf?acceptTC=true> – Accessed 8 February 2012

¹⁶ 'Dubious 'Reconversion' Movement Expands in India' 2007, *Compass Direct*, 12 March

¹⁷ 'Know Your Hindu Fundamentalism', 2000, Dalitstan Journal

<http://www.dalitstan.org/journal/hindutwa/htv000/what.html> – Accessed 14 January 2003.

¹⁸ For background information on the RSS, see: RRT Country Advice 2011, *Country Advice IND38934*, 4 July (Question 2)

¹⁹ Weiss, M. 2002, 'The Khalistan Movement in Punjab', All About Sikhs website, 25 June

<http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/operation-bluestar/the-khalistan-movement-in-punjab> – Accessed 13 January 2012

Information was located to suggest historical social tension between Sikhs and the Arya Samaj in northern India. Many Sikhs who initially thought that Arya Samaj was compatible with Sikhism reportedly became disillusioned in the early years of the movement. In the late 1880s, the Arya Samaj apparently spread anti-Sikh propaganda.²⁰

A 2007 article in the *Hindustan Times* cited continuing sectarian tensions between orthodox Punjabi Sikhs and Arya Samaj. The article stated: “[o]rthodox Sikhs have been unhappy with the Arya Samaj for allegedly trying to assimilate the Sikh faith into Hinduism”.²¹

In 2011, it was reported that a current Congress party leader had accused Arya Samaj of creating anti-Sikh sentiment in Haryana state at the time of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.²²

3. Please provide information on whether there are any reports on whether Sikhs in Ludhiana have targeted or attacked BAS members in recent times.

No recent reports were located stating that Sikhs or Sikh groups have targeted people in Ludhiana, or Punjab more widely, on the basis of Arya Samaj affiliation.

²⁰ Weiss, M. 2002, ‘The Khalistan Movement in Punjab’, All About Sikhs website, 25 June <http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/operation-bluestar/the-khalistan-movement-in-punjab> – Accessed 13 January 2012

²¹ ‘Control Punjab before losing control’ 2007, *Hindustan Times*, 18 May <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?id=e04636a7-d78e-49e6-ab9e-b1bd5a428e79&MatchID1=4464&TeamID1=10&TeamID2=6&MatchType1=1&SeriesID1=1109&MatchID2=4466&TeamID3=2&TeamID4=4&MatchType2=1&SeriesID2=1110&PrimaryID=4464&Headline=Control+Punjab+before+losing+control> – Accessed 21 May 2007

²² ‘Buta Singh blames Bhajan for Sikh carnage in Haryana’ 2011, *Times of India*, 21 February http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-02-21/india/28619007_1_anti-sikh-buta-singh-bhajan-lal – Accessed 9 February 2012

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UK Home Office 2004, *India Country Report*, October.

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