Defender of Vedas
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INSIGHT

Defender of Vedas

Affirmations of Vedic Dharma from Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, one of the great Hindu saints of this century

As when a fire is lit with damp fuel, different clouds of smoke come forth. In the same way from this great Being are breathed forth the Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas."

Sukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.4.10

The Vedas are eternal and are the source of all creation. Their greatness is to be known in many ways. Their sound produces in our nadis (subtle nerve channels), as well as in the atmosphere, vibrations that are salutary not only to our own Self but to the entire world--to the good of mankind as well as of all other creatures. This concern for all creation expressed in the Vedas is not shared by any other religion. Even grass,

shrubs, trees, mountains and rivers are included in their benign purview. The happy state of all these sentient creatures and inert objects is brought about through the special quality of the sound of the Vedas.

"The Vedas are also notable for the lofty truths expressed in the mantras. The tenets of these scriptures have aroused the wonder of people of other lands and faiths. They are moved by their poetic beauty, the subtle manner in which principles of social life are dealt within them, the metaphysical truths embedded and expounded in them, and the moral instruction as well as scientific truths contained in them.

"My duty is to impress upon you that it is your responsibility to keep the Vedic tradition alive. Whether or not you listen to me, whether or not I am capable of making you do what I want you to do, so long as there is strength in me, I will keep telling you tirelessly, 'This is your work. This is your dharma.' If in India the Vedas retain their original vitality even today, it is because they are being continuously repeated by students and

teachers of the Vedas, and the purity of the sounds and accents of the words are retained in that process. But it is only by practicing the Vedic injunctions that we can obtain the grace of God, both for our individual welfare and for the welfare of the whole world."

The Vedas are sounds emanating from the vibrations of the Great

Intelligence, the Great Gnosis. That is why we believe that the mantras of the Vedas originate from the Paramatman Himself. Although the Vedas deal with many matters, all of them together speak of one goal--the One Reality. It is through the various entities, through knowledge of a multiplicity of subjects, that we may know this One. To attain this Reality we need to discipline our mind. Performing sacrifices, practicing austerities, doing the duties of one's dharma, all these go to purify our consciousness and finally to still the mind that is always agitated. Ved (from vid) means 'to know.' The Upanishads proclaim, 'The Atman is that, by knowing which all can be known.' The goal of the Vedas is to shed light on this Atman. The rituals enjoined on us in their first part and the jnana (knowledge)

expounded in the second have the same goal--knowing Isvara, Brahman or the Atman. The beginning of the beginning and the end of the end of our scripture have the same ultimate aim. Thus, the supreme purport of all the Vedas is to make us realize by our own experience that all is Brahman and thus lead us to a state of bliss. We must take special care of such scriptures to ensure the good of the world."

Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati

Keeper of dharma: Born May 20, 1894, in Villuppuram town, 100 miles to the south of Chennai, Swaminathan, as the pontiff was known in childhood, was precociously spiritual. He was only 13 when initiated into sannyasa to become the 68th pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Peedam on February 13, 1907, following the unexpected passing of the 67th pontiff at age 18. Sri Chandrasekharendra was intensively educated by the center's pandits, both in religious and secular knowledge. He could converse in English, French, Swedish and a dozen Indian languages. Like the Shankaracharyas before him, he traveled the entirety of India on foot. In fact, he only traveled by foot. "Lending ear to the prayers and petitions

of all kinds of people, round the clock, year upon year," he remarked, "I have come to know, as none other perhaps, the endless afflictions of humanity." The pontiff endeavored to carry on the traditions of Kanchi Mutt, specifically the preservation of its Smarta Vedic tradition. "It is my ardent wish," he told devotees, "that every locality, every street should have a center for teaching the Vedas. When there is no Vedas, where is the need for this mutt? Where is the need for a pontiff? While I lay down the shastric rules so strictly, people have given up a lot of them. If I were myself to relax them, how much more lax will the people become?" The widely revered swami attained mahasamadhi suddenly on January 9, 1994, at age 99.