

Swami Dayananda Saraswati: The Man Who Took Vedanta to the Masses

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Floral tribute offered to Swami Dayananda by BJP State president Tamilisai Soundararajan at the party headquarters in Chennai, on Thursday | D Sampath Kumar | EPS

CHENNAI: Vedanta, the term once considered as a privilege of scholars and students of Sanskrit, became intelligible to the common man after Swami Vivekananda's advent. Thereafter, there have been a stream of Vedantic teachers who opened this treasure-house of wisdom to the world. Among them, Swami Dayananda Saraswati carved a niche for himself in expounding Vedanta during the spiritual journey that stretched for around six decades spanning continents.

Such was his understanding of the Vedic scriptures that he could explain the complex nature of reality and profound truths in simple words, filled with a lot of jokes. Listening to when Swami Dayananda, one feels compelled to understand the message. The jokes he cut used to kindle deep thinking when one contemplated on them.

The term 'Vedanta' is very often understood in a roundabout way. Swami Dayananda puts the essence of Vedanta in his impeccable style: "I would say that Vedanta is a solution to the problem of taking myself to be

a mortal, imperfect, and subject to various limitations. Vedanta is the teaching which solves this problem. In its vision, you are the solution to the very problem from which you suffer. 'I am Brahman, the whole' is Vedanta."

The Swami, further simplified this message in his saying: "We do not say there is only one God, we say there is ONLY God. Nothing is secular, all that is here is Ishvara, the Lord." He also made it clear that Vedanta permeated our day-to-day life and every move.

Apart from expounding Vedanta, he was engaged in a number of service activities. Once he commented on the purpose of life this way: "Living begins when one contributes something that will bring about more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom. Until then one merely drags one's life."

Many scholars have given definitions to the word 'love'. Here goes Swami Dayananda's: "What do we mean by love? Surely it is difficult to define, for 'Love is the unknown' and what is unknown cannot be made known with all our known faculties. Love comes into being the moment our mind stops all its manipulations born of selfishness, cupidity and identification. And it is this love that can be the arbiter, not systems, policies and ideals."

The saint always advised his students to reflect and contemplate on whatever was said in the scriptures before accepting them. Once he said, "Mother Shruti compels the seekers after Truth not to gulp down anything hocus pocus; but to doubt; reflect and then reflect and then accept. For, blind belief will never dispel the ignorance. It is wisdom born of reflection and contemplation that can dispel nescience."

A prolific writer, Swami Dayananda has authored over 100 books including the Bhagavad Gita Home study course (Four volumes) and "The problem is you; the solution is you".