

The country would have significantly more depth and originality of thought says Dr. David Frawley

India for centuries has had one of the most rigorous, profound and insightful intellectual traditions in the world, the great system of Vedanta. Vedanta was the basis of the training for many of the greatest minds of India from ancient to modern times, from Krishna to Shankara to Swami Vivekananda.

Yet Vedanta is more than a mere conceptual intellectual tradition, such as we find in the West, caught in an outer view of reality, it is a way of meditative knowledge designed to lead us step-by-step beyond the mind and its opinions to a higher truth not limited by time, space or person.

Unfortunately, few Indian intellectuals today seriously study Vedanta, particularly those who claim to be modern. They prefer to imitate more popular but less profound systems of Western thought, which focus on outer sociopolitical views of life and seldom seriously examine the nature of consciousness.

If Vedanta was more commonly studied in India, the country would have significantly more depth and originality of thought, and be able to progress in a determined way on both spiritual and scientific levels.

Teachings of Vedanta

Vedanta during the colonial era was looked down upon as an otherworldly approach, regarding the world as maya or illusion that kept India backward. Yet since Einstein's Theory of Relativity over a century ago, Vedanta has been sounding more like the cutting edge of physics, which is discovering the illusory nature of physical reality and the existence of subtler energy and information currents behind all that we see.

Vedanta is the very science of consciousness at both human and cosmic levels. It recognises consciousness as the ultimate reality and affirms its presence in all existence. Modern physicists have looked to Vedanta for understanding their proposed unitary field of consciousness behind the universe, to explain the coherence of all cosmic laws.

Vedanta is the unitary philosophy behind the practice of yoga, explaining the oneness of the individual soul with the universal consciousness that yoga aims to realise. Vedanta constitutes the yoga of knowledge, considered to be the highest of all yoga branches.

Vedanta in modern India

Vedanta was the most important philosophy that inspired and motivated the Indian Independence movement, emulated by Vivekananda, Rama Tirtha, Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi, among many others. It brought the country back to a dharmic sense of self-rule, not simply political independence, but the independence of the spirit and the awakening of the yogic traditions of the region.

More recently, Swami Dayananda, head of the Hindu Acharya Sabha, spread the message of Vedanta with logic, humour and penetrating insight. Prime Minister Narendra Modi honoured Dayananda as his own guru and visited Swamiji shortly before his Mahasamadhi in September, showing how much the PM respects the Vedantic teachings.

This year marks the 100th birth anniversary of Swami Chinmayananda, who taught a lucid practical Vedanta that resonated with the youth and intellectuals alike. A brilliant and inspiring movie *On a Quest* was made on his extraordinary life. The prime minister released a national coin in honor of Chinmayananda on the Swami's birth anniversary as part of these extensive celebrations.

The Vedantic view

Vedanta is a physics and psychology of consciousness, an inner science of self-knowing that the outer science can benefit from to arrive at a full view of the multidimensional universe in which we live.

Vedanta teaches a way of self-knowledge that does not require any beliefs. It says we must first know ourselves in order to arrive at true knowledge of anything. This requires looking beyond body and mind to the core awareness within us. Vedanta employs a strict rational approach allied with introspection, yoga and meditation to enable us to directly perceive our own consciousness that is universal in nature.

The Vedantic view is simple – the entire universe dwells within your own heart. Your true self is one with the self of all. All the powers of the universe belong to each one of us as energies of love and wisdom.

We have moved from materialist views to a high tech view of reality as energy and information. Vedanta takes us to a yet higher level of the universe as a manifestation of consciousness.

Let us not forget our true self, which is the self-aware universe. This is the spiritual soul of India and its message of peace, happiness and unity to the world.