



The Vedas

By Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati/Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

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The Vedas are the ancient scriptures or revelation (Shruti) of the Hindu teachings. They manifest the Divine Word in human speech. They reflect into human language the language of the Gods, the Divine powers that have created us and which rule over us. There are four Vedas, each consisting of four parts. The primary portion is the mantra or hymn section (sanhita). To this are appended ritualistic teachings (brahmana) and theological sections (aranyaka). Finally philosophical sections (upanishads) are included. The hymn sections are the oldest. The others were added at a later date and each explains some aspect of the hymns or follows one line of interpreting them. The Vedas were compiled around the time of Krishna (c. 3500 B.C.), and even at that time were hardly understood. Hence they are very ancient and only in recent times has their spiritual import, like that of the other mystery teachings of the ancient world, begun to be rediscovered or appreciated even in India. Like the Egyptian teachings they are veiled, symbolic and subtle and require a special vision to understand and use properly. This book contains selected discourses of the Paramcharya rendered into English from Tamil by the late N.S.S.Rajan. Originally published in the year 1988 it has run into seven editions till date.

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Editorial Review

Review

Incidents leading to Sainthood During the childhood of the Acharya, his father consulted an astrologer who, upon studying the boy's horoscope, is said to have been so stunned that he prostrated himself before the boy exclaiming that "One day the whole world will fall at his feet." In 1906, the 66th Acharya of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham performed the annual Chaturmasyam (a forty-day annual ritual performed by Hindu ascetics while remaining in one place), in a village near Tindivanam in Tamil Nadu. This was Swaminathan's first exposure to the Math and its Acharya. Later, Swaminathan accompanied his father whenever he visited the Math where the Acharya was deeply impressed by the young boy. In the first week of February 1907, the Kanchi Kamakoti Math had informed Subramanya Sastrigal that Swaminathan's first cousin (son of his mother's sister) was to be installed as the 67th Peetathipathi. The presiding Acharya was then suffering from smallpox and had the premonition that he might not live long. He had, therefore, administered upadesa to his disciple Lakshminathan before he died. Sastrigal being away in Trichinopoly on duty arranged for the departure of Swaminathan with his mother to Kanchipuram. The boy and his mother started for Kalavai (where Lakshminathan was camping) to console his aunt who, while also being a widow, had just given up her only son to be an ascetic. They traveled by train to Kanchipuram and halted at the Sankara Math. By then, Lakshminathan had fallen ill: I had a bath at the Kumara Koshta Tirtha. A carriage of the Math had come there from Kalavai with the people to buy articles for the Maha Puja on the tenth day of the passing of the previous 66th Acharya. One of them, a hereditary maistry (mason) of the Math, asked me to accompany him. A separate cart was engaged for the rest of the family to follow me. During the journey the maistry hinted to me that I might not return home and that the rest of my life might be spent in the Math itself. At first I thought that my elder cousin having become the Head of the Math, it was his wish that I should live with him. But the maistry gradually clarified matters as the cart rolled on. The acharya had fever which developed into delirium and that was why I was being separated from the family to be taken to Kalavai... I was stunned by this unexpected turn of events. I lay in a kneeling posture in the cart, shocked as I was, repeating "Rama... Rama," the only prayer I knew. My mother and other children came some time later only to find that instead of her mission of consoling her sister, she herself was placed in the state of having to be consoled --T.M.P. Mahadevan, from the book The Sage of Kanchi

About the Author

His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekhara Saraswati, Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, was the sixty-eighth in the succession of Pithadhipatis from Adi Sankara. He became the head of the Math at the age of thirteen in 1907. After the requisite training in seclusion on the banks of the river Kaveri, near Kumbakonam, he went round the country from 1919 to 1939. After ministering to the needs of the afflicted and the distressed and spreading the message of Advaita Vedanta for almost half a century, he felt it was time he gave up the burden of Mathadhipati and devoted his time to penance for universal wellness. A tapasvin of the highest order, His Holiness exuded love and compassion. The devotees felt blessed and found themselves transformed. His soul-stirring presence evoked such reverence that one looked upon him as The Living God. His Holiness attained Mahasamadhi on January 8, 1991.

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