



## 28. SWAMI DAYANDA SARASWATI

Swami Dayananda Saraswati is a contemporary teacher of Vedanta and a scholar in Sanskrit in the tradition of Śankara. Swamiji has been teaching Vedanta in India for more than five decades and around the world since 1976. His deep scholarship and assimilation of Vedanta combined with a subtle appreciation of contemporary problems make him that rare teacher who can reach both traditional and modern students.

A teacher of teachers, Swami Dayananda taught six resident in-depth Vedanta courses, each spanning 30 to 36 months. Four of them were conducted in India and two in the United States. Each course graduated about 60 qualified teachers, who are now teaching throughout India and abroad. Under his guidance, various centers for teaching of Vedanta have been founded around the world; among these, there are three primary centers in India at Rishikesh, Coimbatore, Nagpur and one in the U.S. at

Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania. There are more than one hundred centers in India and abroad that carry on the same tradition of Vedantic teaching.

In addition to teaching, Swami Dayananda has initiated and supported various humanitarian efforts for the last forty-five years. The most far-reaching of these is the establishment of All India Movement for Seva in 2000. Awarded consultative status with ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) by the United Nations in 2005, this organization is devoted to serving people in the remote areas of India, mainly in the field of Education and Health Care.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati has also promoted several international events and participated as a speaker in several global forums, among which are: the United Nations gathering of NGO's, the UNESCO Seoul Global Convention, the United Nations 50th Anniversary Celebration, the Millennium World Peace Summit, the International Congress for the Preservation of Religious Diversity, the Conference on the Preservation of Sacred Sites, the World Council for Preservation of Religious Diversity, the Youth Peace Summit, the Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders, a Hindu-Christian dialogue with the World Council of Churches, and the Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit.

## **INTERVIEW**

***Q: Modern advaita teachers today charge money for sitting with the teacher. Like to sit with a teacher like this it would cost maybe \$35 for an hour. So maybe they get 100 or 150 people together in a group. Then each person gives the teacher money. Traditionally, how do you do that?***

Swamiji: (Laughs). You know, they have to survive, and this is India's contribution to that fellow's life. And so, for his livelihood, India has contributed something – some words, which are useful for him to earn his livelihood. And he earns his livelihood, and there are always blokes to subscribe to all that. And therefore, that's fine. There is nothing wrong in it. He has to live his life. He has to pay his bills, and therefore he charges what he needs to take care. So teaching becomes his profession. He is an advaita professional. (Laughter). What I say is that there is nothing wrong in it as long as he teaches properly. If the teaching is alright, what he does is fine, it's okay. But if the teaching is not alright, then I don't know what people pay money for. But generally teachers don't deny people – teachers in India, they don't deny people who want to know. They don't bring money in-between. Money is required perhaps, but money is never brought in between a true student and a teacher, no.

**Q: *Why not?***

Swamiji: “You give me this much money and I will give you...” Then you are trading ātmā – and you are not giving anything to that fellow. What you are giving is himself – for a price – and it's not quantifiable. What is involved here is infinite. For infinite, you have to charge infinite. Therefore the value of this knowledge is not understood. If the value of this knowledge is understood, you will not trade. You will not make it a commodity – a tradable commodity. when you teach a discipline of knowledge like astrology or yoga or something, you can charge. There is something you are giving, and so you can charge. But everything will pass if the teaching is proper. The truth is – if the teaching is proper, you won't charge. Now you can figure out what's going on. (Laughter)

**END OF INTERVIEW**

