



# DIVYA DARSHAN

A Newsletter of Hindu Heritage Society



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## Our Great Sages

This special edition of Divya Darshan purports to elucidate brief bibliographies of some of our great sages.



**There is no limit to My divine manifestations.  
This is only a brief description by Me of the extent of My glory.  
Every such being as is glorious, brilliant and powerful.**

**Gita 10/40-41**

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# Hinduism

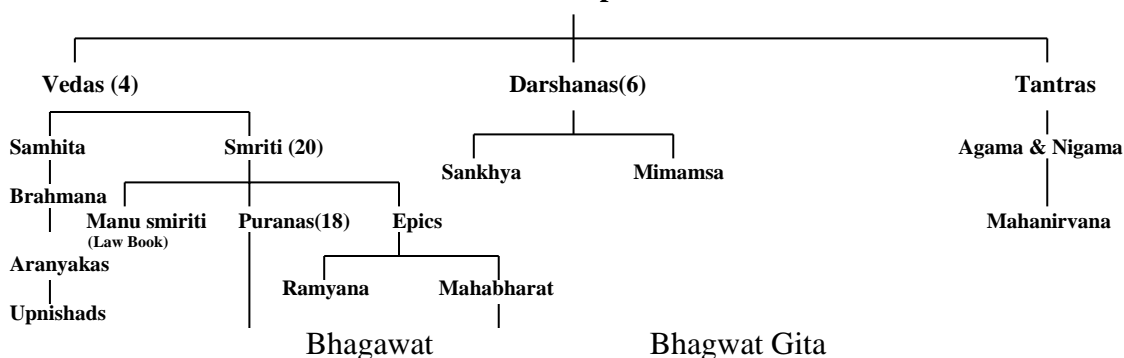
**Hinduism** is one of the world's major religions and holds the distinction of being the most ancient of the world's religion. It is known as **Sanatan Dharma** (*Eternal Religion*). The Everlasting Religion, **Hinduism** was founded, exists and flourishes in India. There are over one billion Hindus today. Most are in India, but Hindus live all over the world. Sizable Hindu populations live in Nepal, Mauritius, Fiji, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Guyana, Indonesia, Australia, America, Canada, England, New Zealand and some other countries. Australian census 2000 indicates that with more than 100,000 Hindu families in Australia, Hindu religion is rapidly on the increase in the country.

What is **Hinduism**? Is it a religion or is it a culture? The truth is - it is both a religion and a way of life. Hinduism is a way of life, a philosophy on life. Hinduism asks each one of us to search for Divine within us. In their homes most Hindus maintain a little shrine set aside for devotional worship or *puja*. We are all divine and each one of us has the capacity to realise divinity within us; therefore each one of us is a Hindu by birth. It is through ignorance we do not know our divinity. Under the umbrella of Hinduism, today one finds numerous religious denominations promoting and practicing the Hindu philosophies throughout the world.

India gave to the world the original, oldest and most profound philosophy of life. The brilliant ancestors of present-day Indians explored the **Truth** behind our existence and gave several philosophies and theories to define the **Truth**. The ultimate truth aims to reach **Moksha** when one goes beyond the cycle of birth and death. At the same time, they created a set of rules for "good living" on this earth.. However, the rules for good or "**Dharmic**" living that they lay down constitute the Hindu religion. That the Supreme can be worshipped in any form is a concept unique to Hinduism. Hinduism gives form and shape to these "works" of the Infinite with the Hindu Trinity - Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. "Brahma" creates, "Vishnu" sustains, and "Shiva" destroys or consummates everything in the Universe.

At different periods of time, many genuine **Rishis**, **Saints** and **Sages** born in India have cleansed, reformed and revitalised **Hinduism** and made it relevant to their times. The Saints and Sages were called **Rishis** because they had seen truth with their purified minds. A Sage or a Saint, in the context of Hinduism, is one who has directly experienced **god**. The Revealed Divine Truths are called **Vedas**. The 'Vedas' are the primary scriptures of **Sanatan Dharma**. The Vedas shaped ancient Indian society and governed ethics and morality. The Vedas can be identified in terms of their origin into "Shruti" (verbal) and "Smriti"(written). A Sage named Krishna Dvaipayana ( *Ved Vyasa*) recorded and documented them as **Yajur Veda** which was the original Veda. Due to its voluminous content it was classified into four categories: -1.**Yajur Veda** (sacrifice) 2. **Rig Veda** (Chanting) 3. **Sama Veda** (music) 4. **Atharva Veda** (modern science) The sages who shaped the Hindu religion merely reiterated the knowledge of the Vedas.

## Hindu Scriptures



## Geographic distribution of Hindu Population in 2004/5

The total Hindu population of the world, about 94% (890 million) live in [India](#). Other countries with a significant Hindu population include:

- [Nepal](#) (22.5 million)
- [Bangladesh](#) (14.4 million)
- [Indonesia](#) (4.3 million)
- [Pakistan](#) (3.3 million)
- [Sri Lanka](#) (3 million)
- [Philippines](#) (1.8 million)
- [Malaysia](#) (1.5 million)
- the [United States](#) (1.5 million)
- [South Africa](#) (1.1 million)
- the [United Kingdom](#) (1 million)
- [Russia](#) (700,000)
- [Mauritius](#) (600,000)
- [Bhutan](#) (560,000)
- [Kenya](#) (330,000)
- [Canada](#) (320,000)
- [Fiji](#) (300,000)
- [Guyana](#) (270,000)
- [Trinidad and Tobago](#) (250,000)

Source: <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Hinduism>

### Hindu population in Australia 12.20 RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

	1996		2001		Change
	'000	%	'000	%	
Buddhism	199.8	1.1	357.8	1.9	79.1
<b>Hinduism</b>	<b>67.3</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>95.5</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>41.9</b>
Islam	200.9	1.1	281.6	1.5	40.2

Source: ABS data available on request, 1996 and 2001 Censuses of Population and Housing.

## The great sects of Hindus

The Sagun Saakaar (image worship) practicing Hindus are divided mainly into three great classes as below:

1. **Vaishnavas** who worship the Lord as Vishnu;
2. **Saivas** who worship the Lord as Siva; and
3. **Saktas** who adore Devi or the Mother aspect of the Lord.

### (1) Vaishnavas Sect

#### **(A) Ramanandis**

The followers of Ramananda are the Ramanandis.

#### **(B) Vallabhacharins or Rudra Sampradayins (Rudra Sect)**

Their founder was born in the forest Camparanya in 1479. He is regarded as an incarnation of Krishna. The Vallabhacharins worship Krishna as Baba-Gopala. The great authority of the sect is the Srimad Bhagavata as explained in the Subodhini, the commentary thereon of Vallabhacharya.

#### **© The Chaitanyas (Hare Krishna Movement)**

This sect is prominent in Bengal and Orissa. The founder Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or Lord Gouranga, was born in 1485. The Chaitanyas worship Lord Krishna as the Supreme Being. All castes are admissible into the sect. The devotees constantly repeat the Name of Lord Krishna. "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" During the twentieth century, Swami Prabhupada, A.C. Bhaktivedanta became the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness with branches all over the world.

#### **(D) The Nimbarkas**

The founder of this sect was Nimbarka or Nimbadiya. He was originally named Bhaskara Acharya. He is regarded as an incarnation of the Sun-God (Surya). The followers worship Krishna and Radha (Krishna's consort) conjointly. Their chief scripture is the Srimad Bhagavata Purana.

#### **(E) The Madhavas**

The Madhavas are Vaishnavas. They are known as Brahma Sampradayins. The founder of the sect was Madhavacharya, otherwise called Ananda Tirtha and also called Purna-Prajna. He was born in 1200 ad.

The Madhavas are divided into two classes called the **Vyasakutas** and the **Dasakutas**.

#### **(F) Radha Vallabhis**

Radha Vallabhis worship Krishna as Radha-Vallabha, the Lord or the Lover of Radha. Harivans was the founder of this sect. Seva Sakhi Vani gives a detailed description of the notion of this sect and more of their traditions and observances.

**(G) Others:-** Charana Dasis, Dadu Panthis, Hari Chandis, Kabir Panthis, Khakis, Maluk Dasis, Mira Bais, Madhavis, Rayi Dasis, Senais, Sakhi Bhavas, Sadma Panthis, are all Vaishnava sects.

## **2. The Shaivas**

### **(A) Smarta Brahmins of the South**

The Saiva Brahmins of the Tamil India have their title Aiyer. They are called Smartas. They all wear three horizontal lines of Bhasma or Vibhuti (holy ash) on their forehead. They all worship Lord Siva. The different sects are as follows:

1. Vadamas : Vada Desa Vadamas, Chola Desa Vadamas and Inji Vadamas
2. Brihatcharanam: Mazhainattu Brihatcharanam, Pazhamaneri Brihatcharanam, Milaghu Brihatcharanam and Kandramanikka Brihatcharanam
3. Vathimars
4. Ashtasahasram
5. Choliyas: Otherwise called Pandimars and inhabitants of Tiruchendur, and
6. Gurukkal: A sub-sect of Vadamas not recognized as one amongst them and whose duties are to worship at temples. They are also known by the name of Oattar in southern districts of Madras. These are different from Archaks. Archaks belong to any of the above sub-sects and inter-marry with persons of other professions, but not Gurukkal or Pattar. While Gurukkal is used only for Saivites, Pattar and Archak are used for Vaishnavites.

### **(B) Shaiva Brahmins of Malabar**

1. Nambuduri 2. Muse, and 3. Embrantiri

### **© Shaiva Brahmins of Bengal**

1. Chakravarti 2. Chunder 3. Roy 4. Ganguli 5. Choudhury 6. Biswas 7. Bagchi 8. Majumdar, and 9. Bhattacharji

### **(D) Shaiva Brahmins of Karnataka**

1. Smarta 2. Haviga 3. Kota 4. Shivalli 5. Tantri 6. Kardi 7. Padya

### **(E) Shaiv Brahmins of Kashmir**

### **(F) Telugu Smartas**

1. Murukinadu, 2. Velanadu 3. Karanakammalu 4. Puduru Dravidis 5. Telahanyam 6. Konasima Dravidi and 7. Aruvela Niyogis

### **(G) Lingayats**

They are called Vira Saivas. They are found in Mysore and Karnataka. They wear on their neck a Linga of Lord Siva that is placed in a small silver box.

### **(H) Other Shaiva sects**

Akas Mukhis, Gudasas, Jangamas, Karalingis, Nakhis, Rukharas, Sukharas, Urdhabahus, Ukharas are all Shaiva sects.

## **3. The Saktas**

The saktas are worshippers of Devi, the Universal Mother. The divisions are: 1- Dakshinis , 2- Vamis, 3- Kanchelias, 4- Kararis all Sakta sects.

**(4) Miscellaneous** The Sauras adore the Sun, the Ganapatyas adore Ganesh, and the Kaumaras adore Skanda.

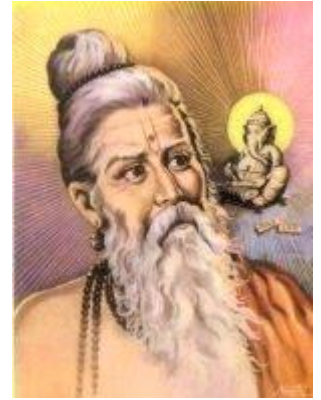
The non-Brahmins of South India are Naidu, Kamma Naidu, Chetty, Mudaliar, Gounder, Pillai, Nair, Nayanar and Reddy.

# Ved Vyasa

Vyasa is one of the mightiest of the mighty personalities in our mythology. Thus Vyasa was an eye-witness to the happenings in the Dwapara Yuga. Rishis could live for hundreds of years by the power of 'tapas' and 'yoga'. They could conquer old age and death if they so willed. Vyasa was one such rishi. It is believed that he is still living in Badari

It was Vyasa himself who gave the story of Mahabharata to mankind, the Storehouse of realism, wisdom and compassion.

The Bhagavadgita which is honoured all over the world as a book of wisdom forms a part of the Mahabharata. The good honoured and respected him. The wicked feared him. He saw the rise of quite a number of powerful kings and dynasties. He radiated wisdom like the bright sun.



Veda Vyasa

He witnessed the rise and fall of seven generations from Shantanu to Janamejaya. He lived among gigantic heroes like Lord Krishna, Bheeshma and Yudhishtira. He spoke tenderly to the grief-stricken. He gave clear warning to those who erred. He spoke encouragingly to the good and the pious. He was himself an example to others and his life was as pure as fire. You know that it was Vyasa who classified the Vedas into four branches - Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas. Formerly, it formed a single body of knowledge. Vyasa had a number of disciples. The four great 'rishis' called Vaishampayana, Paila, Jaimini and Sumantu took the Vedas to people in different corners. Vyasa wrote the Brahmasutras in order to explain the meaning of the Vedas. To explain the mean background of the Brahmasutras he wrote the eighteen Puranas; in these he wrote about the great men connected with Brahmasutras and also told moral tales. At the end of it all, Vyasa wrote the Harivamsha, the history of Lord Krishna. Veda Vyasa was the sage who gave the world And he was the guide to whom seven generations of the high and the humble looked up in hours of sorrow and darkness.

## Maharshi Valmiki

The Adikavi, the Poet of Poets, of India, who gave the world the immortal epic, the 'Ramayana'. By profession a highway robber, he came under the spell of Maharshi Narada and became a 'Brahmarshi'. He not only sang the matchless greatness of Sri Rama, but gave shelter to his wife Seetha Devi, and taught the epic to Sri Rama's sons. Who has not heard these two names in our country, from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari? Ramanavami is a sacred festival. People observe the Ramotsava and listen to the stories of Rama and Seetha again and again. They worship Rama and Seetha with great devotion. Valmiki lived in the age of Sri Rama - called the 'Treta Yuga' (the Age of Treta).



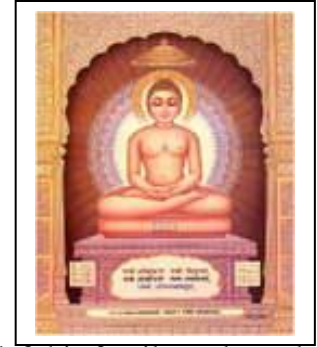
Maharshi Valmiki

Valmiki was not the name that his parents chose for the poet. His real name was Ratnakara. The word 'Valmika' in Sanskrit means an ant-hill. Since he came out of an ant-hill, he got the name of Valmiki. wonderful and delightful story. The poet who composed 'Ramayana' and taught the song and story to Lava and Kusha, was a great sage by name Valmiki. How this man became a sage and a singer-poet is itself a very interesting story. Like the story of Valmiki's becoming a sage, the story of his composing the 'Ramayana' is also very interesting. Valmiki wrote the 'Ramayana'. He taught the slokas first to the sons of Sri Rama, Lava and Kusha. They were born twins in Valmiki's ashrama and grew up there. Now, why did they, a king's sons, grow up in a hermitage?

The story of Rama and Seethadevi is the 'Ramayana'. It is remarkable that Sri Rama himself listened to the story of the Ramayana' and was pleased. Valmiki's Ramayana is in the Sanskrit language. It is a very beautiful poem narrating the story of a very great hero is called an epic. Valmiki's 'Ramayana' is the very first such poem in Sanskrit. Therefore, it is also called the 'Adikavya' or -the First Poem; Valmiki is also known as the 'Adikavi', which means the First Poet.

## Lord Mahavir

was the Twenty fourth and the last Tirthankara of the Jain religion. According to Jain philosophy, all Tirthankaras were born as human beings but they have attained a state of perfection or enlightenment through meditation and self realization. They are the Gods of Jains. Tirthankaras are also known as Arihants or Jinas.



Mahavir was born in 599 B.C. as a prince in Bihar, India. At the age of 30, he left his family and royal household, gave up his worldly possessions, including clothing and become a monk.

He spent the next twelve years in deep silence and meditation to conquer his desires and feelings. He went without food for long periods. He carefully avoided harming or annoying other living beings including animals, birds, and plants. His ways of meditation, days of austerities, and mode of behavior furnish a beautiful example for monks and nuns in religious life. His spiritual pursuit lasted for twelve years. At the end he realized perfect perception, knowledge, power, and bliss. This realization is known as keval-jnana.

He spent the next thirty years travelling on bare feet around India preaching to the people the eternal truth he realized. He attracted people from all walks of life, rich and poor, kings and commoners, men and women, princes and priests, touchables and untouchables.

He organized his followers, into a four fold order, namely monk (Sadhu), nun (Sadhvi), layman (Shravak), and laywoman (Shravika). Later on they are known as Jains.

The ultimate objective of his teaching is how one can attain the total freedom from the cycle of birth, life, pain, misery, and death, and achieve the permanent blissful state of one's self. This is also known as liberation, nirvana, absolute freedom, or Moksha.

He explained that from eternity, every living being (soul) is in bondage of karmic atoms, that are accumulated by its own good or bad deeds. Under the influence of karma, the soul is habituated to seek pleasures in materialistic belongings and possessions. Which are the deep

At the age of 72 (527 B.C.), Lord Mahavir died and his purified soul left the body and achieved complete liberation. He became a Siddha, a pure consciousness, a liberated soul, living for ever in a state of complete bliss. On the night of his salvation, people celebrated the Festival of Lights (Dipavali) in his honor.

# Shankaracharya

It is the opinion of scholars that he belonged to the period between 788 and 820 A.D. He was born at Kalati, a beautiful village at Kerala.

Though he lived for only thirty-two years, his achievement was unparalleled.

It is said that at the age of eight he had understood the four Vedas. By the time he was twelve years of age, he had understood all branches of knowledge. At sixteen he had written commentaries on those Vedanta which are considered to be his major work.

Sharp in his intellect, Shankaracharya had become proficient in Prakrit, Magadhi and Sanskrit languages. At the first year of his age he had learnt both Malayali, his mother tongue, and Sanskrit, the language of the Vedas. During his second year he was able to read and write in these languages. During his third year he was able to read and explain epics and mythology. At the age of five Shankara's Upanayana was performed.

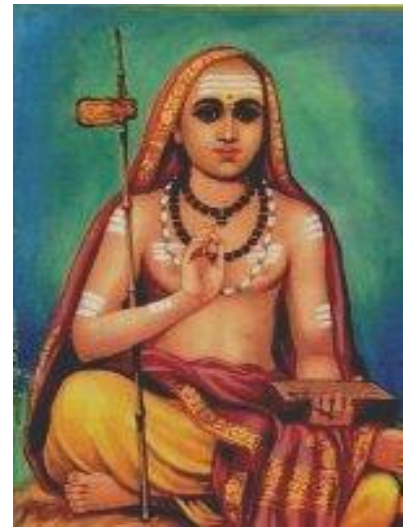
Under the guidance of Guru he studied the Vedas and its branches and also all other subjects. His brilliance brought credit to the entire Gurukula. Shankara wrote philosophical books to help the people understand Hindu Dharma. At the early age of 32, he cut asunder all bonds of relation with the 'world and attained the state of Brahman. Ordinary people will have to spend 32 years even for being able to ask "What is the meaning of life?" But the Acharya during his brief life-time had brought about a great religious renaissance all over Bharat. By his memorable works on religion and philosophy he had pointed out the unique feature of our ancient religion. He found fulfillment of his life by consolidating the history of Bharat from the point of view of culture. He gave a concrete form to the truth that the whole of India became one by establishing spiritual centres in various zones. May the divine life of such great men be a guiding light to us.

## Ramaujacharya

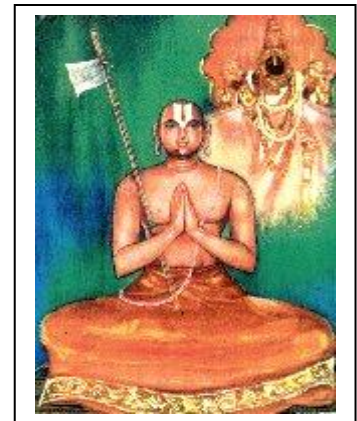
Chief exponent of the Vishishtadvaita school of Vedanta and great social reformer. "If I can bring deliverance to so many, I do not mind being condemned to hell," he said, and spread his spiritual message to even the lowliest of classes of people. He established the Yatiraja Math and the Cheluvanarayanawami temple at Melkote in Karnataka.

## Introduction

Chief exponent of the Vishishtadvaita school of Vedanta and a great social reformer. "If I can bring deliverance to so many, I do not mind being condemned to hell," he said, and spread his spiritual message to even the lowliest of classes of people. He established the Yatiraja Math and the Cheluvanarayanawami temple at Melkote in Karnataka, and also renovated many ancient temples. He wrote many philosophical works and preached the oneness of mankind.



Shankaracharya



Ramanujacharya

## Author - 'Raghusuta'

born in A.D. 1017

Ramanuja was a bright child. Since he resembled Sri Rama's brother ('anuja') Lakshmana, he was called Ramanuja or Rama's brother.



The boy Ramanuja was very smart. If he read or listened to his lessons even once, he could always remember them. Naturally the teachers came to like him. They were very fond of him. He learnt the Vedas and the Vedangas even as a child.

He had his sacred thread ceremony at the right time. When Ramanuja was about sixteen years old he married a girl called Rakshambal who appears to have been known also as Tanjamma. After a few days, his father Keshavacharya died. This caused bitter sorrow to Ramanuja. With his wife and mother he left for Kanchipuram and settled there. Ramanuja renovated many old temples, which were in ruins. He was by now a ripe old man of 120 years. His eyes turned Heavenward since he had fulfilled all that he wanted to achieve. Ramanuja delivered his final message to his disciples: "Shed your ego. Love the devotees of God. Serve the cause of mankind who is God's children. Nobody is infallible; do not humiliate any one  
Ramanuja delivered his final message to his disciples: "Shed your ego. Love the devotees of God. Serve the cause of mankind who is God's children. Nobody is infallible; do not humiliate any one on the tenth day of the month of Magha, in the year 1059 of Shalivahana era (A. D. 1137).

Ramanuja particularly laid stress on the merciful nature of God. God possesses numerous attributes like truth, grace and beauty. If we worship God devotedly, he will bless us. We should not make much of personal happiness. Those who love God are the real great men irrespective of their caste or religion. Ramanuja loved all mankind without making any distinction between man and man. He taught his disciples the virtues of humility and equalit

## Guru Nanak

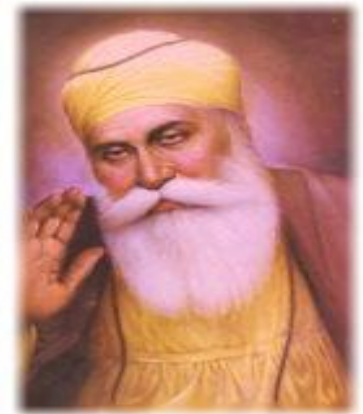
The great saint, the pioneer of Sikh tradition (its first preceptor) who made Vedantic knowledge easy to grasp for the ordinary persons by presenting the same in a simple language of the people.

The great saint, the pioneer of Sikh tradition ( its first preceptor ) who made Vedantic knowledge easy to grasp for the ordinary persons by presenting the same in a simple language of the people. The founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak was born on April 15, 1469 in the Western Punjab village of Talwandi. (Kaliyuga years 4570 to 4640 i.e. 1469 to 1539 A.D.)

He was born to a simple Hindu family He not only did his wayfaring in India but also visited Mecca, Madina, Kabul

and Bagdad etc. outside the country. His teachings ( preachings - Vani ) are found in Sri Guru Granth Sahib which according to himself are the essence of the Vedas, Puranas, Smritis and other Sastras. During the period of the destruction of temples and idols he, through his preaching of the worship of Saguna Nirakara i.e. God with qualities yet without form or having only one form of Om ( Ekonkara ), drew the attention of the people towards fundamentals of Dharma. At age 16 he was married to Sulakhani daughter of a pious merchant. They had two sons Sri Chand in 1494 and Lakshmi Chand three years later.

The next stage of his life began with extensive travels to spread the message of God. Feeling his end was near, the Hindus said we will cremate you, the Muslims said we will bury you. Guru Nanak said; "You place flowers on either side, Hindus on my right, Muslims on my left. Those whose flowers remain fresh tomorrow will have their way." He then asked them to prey and lay down covering himself with a sheet. Thus on September 22, 1539 in the early hours of the morning Guru Nanak merged with the eternal light



Guru Nanak

of the Creator. When the followers lifted the sheet they found nothing except the flowers which were all fresh. The Hindus took theirs and cremated them, while the Muslims took their flowers and buried them. Thus having spread the words of reform throughout his lifetime, Guru Nanak successfully challenged and questioned the existing religious tenants and laid the foundations of Sikhism.



Kabir

## Sadguru Kabir.

There was a legend about the appearance of Guru Kabir. It was Monday morning, the full moon of Jesth month, 1455 Vikram Era (June 1398 AD), at pre-dawn hours when Swami Ashtanand was meditating on the bank of Lahartala Pond, near the city of Varanasi. He saw a light appearing on the lotus flower in the pond. The light took the form of a baby, later to be adopted by Neeru and Neema and named "Kabir". In the tradition of the mystic saints of India, Sadguru Kabir Saheb holds the highest position. He was the incarnation of Supreme Spiritual Knowledge. He is accepted as the founder of "Sant Mat". His spiritual message was followed by several other saints. Kabir Saheb was a symbol of impartiality. For the upliftment of humanity, he delivered his discourses in very simple language. He spoke on every aspect of life. He told the people that he was neither enemy nor friend to anyone, but wanted the welfare of all. He preached that all are children of the Almighty, and they should live in peace, happiness and harmony without fighting over castes and religions. He gave the essence of all holy scriptures in simple "Sakhis", which are couplets with musical rhythm. His Sakhis are so important that they are accepted as supreme testimony for profound spiritual truth. Kabir Saheb was the supreme spiritual master of "Surati Shabda Yoga". He taught the spiritual path of Easy Union with the Almighty Satpurush. Several miraculous incidents happened through him. Those supernatural incidents are beyond the scope of this brief. The message of those incidents is the importance of Devotion, Love, Purity and Humility in our life. Satguru Kabir started delivering sermons at an early age on such subjects as Eternal Truth, Non-violence, and Monotheism which impressed the masses and bewildered the learned. He explained the path of love and compassion in his forthright, unrestrained and lucid language. Though formless in origin and the abode of Eternal Knowledge, Satguru Kabir manifested himself in a human form. In order to honour the traditional concept of initiation by a Guru, he decided to be a disciple of Swami Ramanand, who was an accomplished Vaishnava saint in those days, and a great devotee of God.

## Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in West Bengal in the late 15th century. Gaudiya Vaishnavism as a widespread movement of bhakti or devotion. This is the teaching of Gaudiya Vaisnavism, or Bengal Vaishnavism, the religion and philosophy of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Sri Chaitanya is the Great Master Who came into the world to teach about the glories of the Holy Name of Sri Krishna

In the 16th century in Bengal, Chaitanya founded a sect of erotic mysticism, celebrating the union of Krishna and Radha in a Tantric theology heavily influenced by Tantric Buddhism. Chaitanya believed that both Krishna and Radha were incarnate within him, and he believed that the village of Vrindaban, where Krishna grew up, had become manifest once again in Bengal. The school of the Gosvamins, who were disciples of Chaitanya, developed an elegant theology of aesthetic participation in the ritual enactment of Krishna's life. These ritual dramas also



developed around the village of Vrindaban itself during the 16th century, and they were celebrated by Hindi poets

Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. accepted by all Gaudiya Vaishnavas as an incarnation of Krishna but in the "hidden" role of a devotee of Krishna, and this is supported by references from Srimad-Bhaagavatam, the Chaitanya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, the Mahaabhaarata, and other scriptures.

I am a particle of consciousness and consciousness is the original substance. Deviation from that sort of spiritual consciousness to some other consciousness must be considered delirium. We have deviated so far, thinking this flesh is our self. My home is in the conscious world where there is proper existence (Sat), pure consciousness (Chit) aecstasy and fulfillment (Ananda).

### Jagadguru Goswami Sri Tulasi Das



The great poet who composed the 'Ramacharita manasa'. His boyhood was one of poverty and suffering; but yet he became a great scholar. One word spoken by his wife brought him a realization of his true goal; he became a devotee of Lord Sri Rama. And this poet-saint showed thousands of people the way to a meaningful life.

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One word spoken by his wife brought him a realization of his true goal; he became a devotee of Lord Sri Rama. And this poet-saint showed thousands of people the way to a meaningful life. Goswami Tulasidas was born at the close of the 15th century and lived upto the beginning of the 17th century. Opinions differ regarding the exact date and place of birth of Sri Tulasidas.

The majority of scholars hold that Sri Tulasidas was born in Rajapur of Uttar Pradesh in 1544 of the Vikrama Era (that is, 1488 A. D.) Tulasidas was a great man. He suffered much hardship from his early years. Even after he became a sanyasi, difficulties did not cease.

Sri Tulasidas set before the people the image of Sri Rama as all virtuous, all powerful, the Lord of the World, and

the very embodiment of the Supreme Reality (Parabrahma). He gave them the light of 'Bhakti' and thus dispelled

the darkness of fear from their minds. Goswami Tulasidas was a great scholar well versed in Vedic lore,

philosophy and mythology. Goswami Tulasidas, by virtue of his perfect devotion, was so fortunate as to meet

Anjaneya, the renowned servant of Sri Rama. who helped him to see with his own eyes Sri Rama and

Lakshmana. Tulasidas declared: **Bhakti** is the only way leading to God's grace. Sri Rama is the Supreme God

(Parabrahma). **Tulasi Ramayana** is a very famous and great epic of North India. It was written by Goswami

Tulasidas. (Goswami means one who has renounced the world and has become a sanyasi, that is, an ascetic.) That

is why it was popularly known as Tulasi Ramayana..Tulasidas gave it the title, '**Ramacharitamanasa**'. Tulasidas

was a very great scholar. He had made a profound study of Indian philosophy and literature. But his scholarship did not make him arrogant. For him meditation on Rama was more important than all other things.

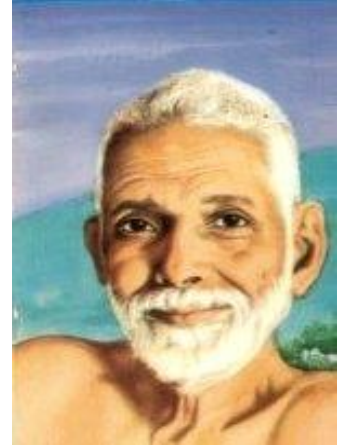
॥श्री राम जय राम जय जय राम ॥

## Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi was born in 1879. There is a small village, thirty miles from Madurai, in Tamilnadu. The name of the village is Tiruchuli.

A Great Soul, He left home in boyhood seeking knowledge and peace.

Ramana Maharshi was full of compassion for all living beings.



Ramana Maharshi

He became kindly light to all who came to him seeking peace of mind.

Who ever -knew that this boy would become a saint some day? But many of the important events in life come about by chance.

*Venkataramana* became a saint *Ramana Maharshi* did not expound

his teachings either in speeches or in books. He would give simple, direct, short and clear replies to the questions put to him by his devotees. He used to guide his devotees. He used to guide his devotees always on the path of reason.

His constant teaching to his devotees always on the path of reason. His constant teaching to his devotees was that the way to cleanse the mind of its impurities was meditation. According to him, the mind becomes pure by thinking over and over again about the source of evils. The sacred land of India (Bharat) has given birth to many great men and women. From the time of the Vedas to the present day, many Rishis, Seers and Saints have been born in this country. Some of them, living in the forests, performed severe 'Tapas' (meditation on Gods), sought Truth, and attained Knowledge; they helped the spiritual progress of the world. Some others dedicated their lives to the service of the people and the country; they lived with the people and shared their life. They have contributed to social progress. Ramana Maharshi is a great man who belongs to the latter category

By the year 1947, Ramana's health began to decline. People from far and near flocked to the Ashram to have the last darshan of Ramana Maharshi. They were all sorrow-stricken. Ramana Maharshi himself had to console them all. He said his devotees "Every one that is born must die. The body is not the soul. Therefore nobody need feel miserable for the death of the body."

Ramana Maharshi breathed his last at two o'clock in the night of April 24, 1950.

# Tukaram

Tukaram was born in 1608 in Pune Maharashtra.

Tukaram was a very sharp and shrewd boy. By his various activities he was keeping his parents happy and was hospitable to people visiting the house. Bringing guests and invitees and serving them made him eager and happy.

Tukaram's radiant eyes, long nose, serene face and courteous talk attracted everybody. When prayers were sung in the house, boy Tukaram was joining the group of songsters. He had a good voice and sang melodiously. People used to be pleased with this. Tukaram, who with his father was worshipping God, circumambulating and participating in group singing of prayer, also knew business methods well. Although engrossed in thoughts of God, he knew the ways of living. He had great respect for the parents. Tukaram's generosity, simplicity and other virtues were inherited from his parents. He was kind to the poor. Hardly has such a virtuous man come to manage the household affairs earlier.

Tukaram, by his efficiency and hard work, improved the business and came to be liked by the customers. From boyhood he secured a place in the ranks of the big businessmen. When Tukaram was thirteen years old his marriage to a girl called Rakhmayi was celebrated with great pomp. One day

Tukaram went into the Indrayani river as if he was about to take a bath and went forward. Once he entered the river he was not visible again. They say that within a few minutes his rug, the cymbals in his hand and the tamboora fell down. The citizens bowed in reverence saying that Tukaram bodily went to heaven. Tukaram died in about 1650. He was then 42 years old.

A great saint who lived only for his God vittal. He faced varieties of difficulties with astonishing patience. He refused diamonds and opals offered by Shivaji Maharaj himself. His devotional songs are an invaluable contribution to Marathi spiritual literature.



Tukaram



## Bhanubhakta Acharya

Bhanubhakta Acharya, also called *Adi Kavi*, was one of the pioneers in the Nepalese literature was born in 1814 AD. He was born in a Brahmin family in a village in Tanahu, a western district in Nepal. Since there was no good schooling system during that time, he received his education at home from his grandfather.

He led a remarkable life until he met a ghansi (grass cutter). Bhanubhakta got an inspiration from the ghansi who wanted to give something to the society so that he could be remembered after his death. Ghansi wanted to build a well in the village from his meagre income from selling the grass collected in the village. This was a turning point and ghansi's word inspired Bhanubhakta, and he wrote a poem about the ghansi. In fact, the poem written by Bhanubhakta was his first work and considered to be the first poet to write in Nepali language.

The glory of lord Ram and his heroic descriptions were highly impressive to Bhanubhakta. Bhanubhakta decided to make the lord Ram's glory accessible to the people who spoke Nepali, thus translated Ramayana in Nepali. His translation of the Ramayana was so lyrical that it is more like a song than poem. Before he could finish his work and publicise his work to the wider readers he was to die without receiving credit for his contribution. It was later in 1887 AD that Moti Ram Bhatta found his manuscript and printed it in Benaras, India, what is best known as Bhanubhakta Ramayana. In fact, one day, while attending a

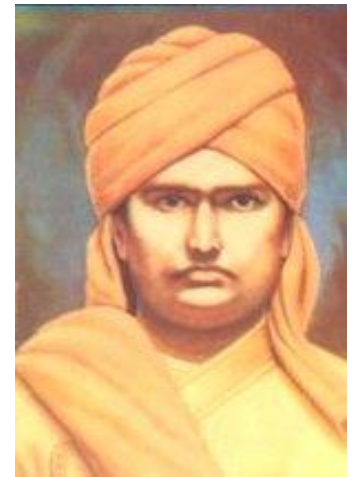
marriage ceremony of his friend, Moti Ram heard the verses of Ramayana translated by Bhanubhakta, He was very much mesmerized by Bhanubhakata's work that he decided to find more about his work, which he successfully did. He collected and edited the poet's work and published it in 1887 AD. It was due to Moti Ram's effort that Bhanubhakta's Ramayana received wider recognition. When people first heard Bhanubhakta Ramayana they liked it very much, soon Bhanubhakta and his book become the household name.

**Nepal is the only constitutionally declared Hindu state in the world and approximately 90% of the Nepalese people identified themselves as Hindus, great Hindu epics like Ramayana and Gita are treated with reverence and kept in most of the households. They are not only treated with utmost respect but also widely read during the religious ceremonies.**

**Sri Ramakrsna  
Paramahansa**

## **Dayanand Saraswati**

The founder of the Arya Samaj. The great sage who sought to restore to Hinduism its natural radiance and wisdom. A fearless reformer. He saved the man who poisoned him - so boundless was his goodness. This happened about 150 years ago. In Saurashtra of the present Gujarat lived a wealthy Brahmin, Karshanji Lalji Tiwari and his wife, Amrithbai. In 1824, a son was born to the couple. They named him Moolashankar. According to the custom of the place, he was also called Dayaram. This child was to become famous as Maharshi Dayananda. At the age of eight, his Upanayana Samskara (being invested with the holy thread) was performed. The boy used to perform religious rites like 'Sandhyavandana' with devotion.. By the time he was fourteen he had learnt by heart the Yajurveda, the scriptures and the upanishads.



**Dayananda Saraswati**

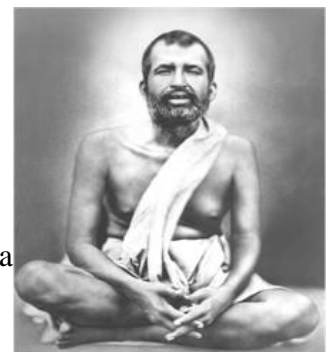
Dayananda wished that his work of social reform should continue even after his death. So he founded an institution called 'Arya Samaj' at Bombay on the 10th of April 1875. Gradually it grew into a huge institution and spread even beyond the shores of India. The 30th of October 1883 was Deepavali day. He then recited the Gayathri manthra and closed his eyes in Samadhi. The word 'Om' came from his mouth; and then his breathing stopped at six in the evening.

Dayananda was a great Rishi (a sage). He sacrificed the great joy that would have been his by observing yoga practices. He chose a very difficult life for the well-being of mankind. But what did he get in return for all this? Beatings, insults, abuses and poison. He accepted all this with a smile. And he always wished the well-being of all mankind.

## **Sri Ramakrsna Paramahansa**

The famous ascetic (renunciate) householder, saintly accomplished person endowed with supernatural powers - Siddha Purusa) of Bengal, Swami Vivekananda has been whose disciple.

Sri Ramakrishna, who was born in 1836 and passed away in 1886 (Kaliyuga's years 4936 to 498), represents the very core of the spiritual realizations of the seers and sages of India. His whole life was literally an uninterrupted contemplation of God.



His name in childhood was Gadadhar. Doing the work of a priest in the temple of Mother Goddess, Kali, at Daksinesvara near Calcutta, his entire life had become fully replete with Kali. A longliving accomplished saint, Swami Totapuri was his Guru from whom Sri Ramakrishna got enlightening

knowledge of Vedanta. Along with practising for knowledge he also did Tantrasadhana. Drawn by the magnetism of Sri Ramakrishna's divine personality, people flocked to him from far and near men and women, young and old, philosophers and theologians, philanthropists and humanists, atheists and agnostics, Hindus and Brahmos, Christians and Muslims, seekers of truth of all races, creeds and castes. The greatest contribution of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world is his message of the harmony of religions. To Sri Ramakrishna all religions are the revelation of God in His diverse aspects to satisfy the manifold demands of human minds. Thus he declared, "As many faiths, so many paths." The paths vary, but the goal remains the same. Harmony of religions is not uniformity; it is unity in diversity. It is not a fusion of religions, but a fellowship of religions based on their common goal -- communion with God. Sri Ramakrishna's message of harmony gives us hope and shows the way. May his life and teachings ever inspire us.

## Swami Vivekaanand

The valiant monk who proclaimed in America the greatness of Hinduism and of Indian culture at a time when the West regarded India as a land of barbarians. The beloved disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He was the living embodiment of sacrifice and dedicated his life to the country and yearned for the progress of the poor, the helpless and the downtrodden. He was the great thinker and mighty man of action whose ringing words galvanized the slumbering Indians. For ages to come he will be a source of inspiration.



Narendra was born on 12th January 1863 in Calcutta. His parents called him Narendra. His father was Vishwantha Datta and his mother Bhuvaneshwari

Devi. He came to be known as Swami Vivekanda only when he became a sannyasi or monk. As a child he was very lively and naughty. He had great reverence for Lord Hanuman. "I loved my motherland dearly before I went to America and England. After my return, every particle of the dust of this land seems sacred to me." Do you know who carried this message to every nook and corner in the whole continent of Asia? It was Swami Vivekanda.

By the time he arrived in India, Swamiji's fame had spread far and wide. When he landed in Colombo on 15th January 1897, he was accorded a welcome that befitted an Emperor. He had realized that social service was possible only through the concerted efforts of an organized mission. That is why he started Sri Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 and formulated its ideology and goal. On 4th July 1902 he performed his daily routine. That night at nine 'o' clock he breathed a deep sigh and went to sleep. Within a short while he attained eternal bliss. His disciples and fellow-teachers felt orphaned and cried like children. He said, "You rejoice that you belong to the race of the great sages. May the song of New India echo and reverberate amidst mountains and in forests and valleys!"

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## Sai Baba of Shirdi



**As per certain belief Sai Baba was born in 1839 in Sailu village in Jintur district. There is however another belief that He was born in Pathri Village of Parbhani District. But it is learnt that much of His childhood was spent in Aurangabad. Sai Baba was also born a Fakir. His childhood was full of hardships, and it is perhaps these difficult days that gave Him his immensely compassionate nature as a Perfect Master.**

Sai Baba of Shirdi was a crown jewel among Saints. He lived his entire life out in a small and obscure village in India. The villagers of Shirdi each claimed him as a member of their own religion, Muslim or Hindu, but really he came to make peace between them and he always encouraged each to stick to his own religious path. He drew devotees from all over the country though he never traveled and never cared for

fame. Over and over his devotees found he knew their innermost thoughts and details of their lives. He effected cures, conferred health, happiness, and prosperity, and made childless couples conceive. His real purpose though was to awaken in them a longing for the spiritual life. Thousands thought of him as a wonderful saint with miraculous powers but his innermost circle knew him to be in incarnation of God himself. Some said of Datta, others of Shiva, still others saw ecstatic visions of their own beloved Guru or chosen Ishta (personalized icon of God) while gazing at Him. He himself said only that he was the humble servant of God and pleased and furthered all who came in contact with him. Many books have been written about Shirdi Sai Baba but the Shri Sai Satcharita, the story of Sai Baba's life and actions (quoted from below) was written in his own lifetime and is best known among Sai devotees. Just before leaving his body he told a disciple he would be reborn in a certain village 8 years hence and so it came to pass. (See section on Sathya Sai Baba.)

Sai Baba was first seen as a youth of sixteen sitting under a neem tree in Shirdi. None knew his origin or past. Even then he seemed to be full of the knowledge of Brahman. He had no desire for worldly objects, even in dream. He kicked out Maya (illusion) and Mukti (illumination) was serving at his feet. This young lad, fair, smart, and very handsome, was first seen under a Neem tree seated in an Asan (meditative posture). The people of the village were wonderstruck to see such a young lad practicing hard penance, not minding heat and cold. By day he associated with none. by night he was afraid of nobody. People were wondering whence that young chap turned up. His form and features were so handsome that a mere look endeared him to all. He went to nobody's door, always sat near the Neem tree. Outwardly he looked very young; but by his action He was really a great soul. He was the embodiment of dispassion and an enigma to all.

A saint name Gangagir who frequented Shirdi said of him on first setting eyes on him "Blessed is Shirdi, that it got this precious jewel". Another saint by name Anandanath said "This is a precious diamond in reality, though he looks like an ordinary man. You will realize this in the near future."

Peace or calm was his ornament and he was the repository of wisdom. He had no love for perishable things and was always engrossed in self-realization. He did not know or care for honor or dishonor. The name of Allah was always on his lips. His inside was as calm as the deep sea. Though he sat in one place, he knew all the transactions of the world. Though a Siddha (realized being), he acted like a sadhaka (disciple on the spiritual path). He was meek, humble, and pleased all.

**Sai Baba of Shirdi was one of the Self realized souls of our time. Meher Baba called Him Qutub-i-Irshad, or the First amongst the Masters. A Perfect one is always beyond the finite barriers of religion. The consciousness of the Self is perfectly beyond any notion of caste, creed or religion. Even if it is still a matter of discovery if Sai Baba was born a Muslim or a Hindu, it hardly matters for the spiritual status He enjoyed.**

**While wandering from place to place with His mother, the child Sai came in contact with Gopal Rao Deshmukh, a blind Saint in the village of Shelwadi. This Saint saw the child with his inner eye and immediately recognized the Divine in Sai Baba. Sai Baba began living with Gopal Rao Deshmukh and also had to face opposition from the disciples of Deshmukh.**

**After Gopal Rao died, Sai Baba started His search for a more peaceful place and went towards the hills surrounding the Ellora caves. He chose a small cave atop a hill and remained there for a few years. Sai Baba had become a God-Realized soul at the tender age of hardly twenty years. Meher Baba in His book "God Speaks" explained that once a soul attains Realization his entire consciousness of duality is lost. He experiences nothing but Himself as everything. But only those who simultaneously gain both the consciousnesses of "Adwait" and "Dwait" or Divine unity and duality are in the state of a Sadguru or a Perfect Master.**

**During this period Sai Baba met The Swami of Akalkote. Moving from place to place He came to the hill called Kuldabad, near the tomb of the Muslim Qutub Zarzari Baksh. Gradually, in this cave near Ellora, Sai Baba regained His "Dwait" or duality state. Although He was about five feet six inches tall, and had a very strong build, He became very weak and almost like a skeleton during this process in isolation. Meher Baba has explained the real stages of development of consciousness of a pilgrim on the spiritual path as a hierarchy:-**



राम राम राम राम राम राम राम राम

## SWAMI SHREE SATYANAND JI MAHARAJ

FOUNDER OF  
SHREE RAM SHARNAM



**SHRADYE SHREE SWAMI SATYA NAND SARAWATI JI MAHARAJ**, The founder of Shree Ram Sharnam, was born in 1861 in Rawalpindi. He had lost his parents in his early childhood. At the young age of 17, he took up the company of spiritual teachers of Jain faith. In 1891, at the age of 30, he joined the Arya Samaj, and studied Vedanta, Upanishads, and other sacred epics.

He spent the following 25 years giving spiritual talks and spreading the spiritual teachings from the sacred epics.

During this period, he also wrote the following books: Dayananda Prakash, Satya Updesh Mala, Onkar Upasna, Arya Samajic Dharma, SandhyaYog, Ishwar Darshan, and Dayananda Vachnamrit.

Lacking inner peace, in early 1925 he went to Dalhousie in the Himalayas, to meditate in solitude to seek God. On July 7, 1925 the day of Vyas Purnima, Swamiji was blessed with the sounds and inner vision of "Ram Naam", and with the realization of his soul's oneness with God. In 1928, he began initiating his followers with "Ram Naam".

He wrote additional books, namely, Bhakti Prakash, Valmiki's Ramayana-sar, Sri Bhagwat Gita, Akadashopnishad Sangrah, Pravachan Piyush (Collection of Swami Ji's Lectures), Prarthna Aur Uska Prabhav, Upasak Ka Anteric Jeevan, Bhakti Aur Bhakti Ke Lakshan, Sthitpragya Ke Lakshan, Bhajan Avam Dhvani Sangrah, and Amritvani. These volumes are published by Shree Swami Satyanand Dharmarth Trust, New Delhi, and are sold at price below cost. Swamiji has written these epics through inner guidance gained in a state of samadhi. Of all these wonderful books, AMRITVANI has uniquely become universally popular because of its deep Spiritual Power. It is presented in a small book and is widely recited because of its unique power in invoking devotion to Ram.

Swami Ji did not start a separate Spiritual Path. He was a God-realized Saint, like Sant Kabir, Guru Nanak, Samarth Ramdas, Goswami Tulsidas, Sri Ramakrishnan Paramhansa and Maharishi Dayanand. Goal of his teaching was to intensify devotion to God through concentration on "Ram Naam"

### Brief Biography of Pujya Vishwa Mitter Ji Maharaj

Pujya Vishwa Mitter Ji Maharaj was born on March 15, 1940, in Narowal District, Sialkot (West Pakistan). He received his early education in Hissar and later earned Master's and Doctor's degrees from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi. After serving 22 years as an Ocular Microbiologist at AIIMS, he took voluntary retirement.

In 1964, at the age of 24, Maharaj Ji met Shree Prem Ji Maharaj. Initially skeptical of Gurus, he soon recognized Prem Ji Maharaj as a true devotee spreading "Ram Naam" and sought his blessings to serve humanity humbly.

At the request of the Trustees of Shri Satyanand Ji Maharaj Dharmarth Trust and other devotees, Maharaj Ji became the Spiritual Successor of Param Pujya Prem Ji Maharaj.

Known for conveying profound truths with a scientific perspective, Maharaj Ji embodied humility and service. He did not see himself as a Guru but as a servant of all. On July 2, 2012, while chanting "Ram Naam," Maharaj Ji passed away, attracting many with his lack of pride and devotion.