

Defender of Vedas

Affirmations of Vedic Dharma from
Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, one of
the great Hindu saints of this century

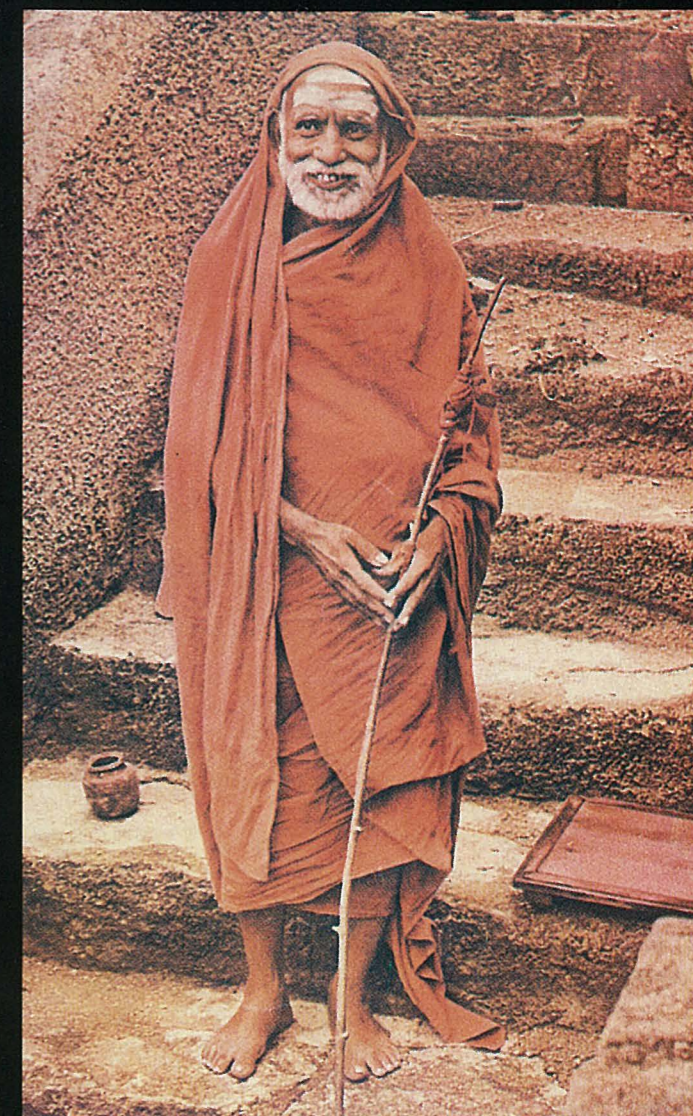
“As when a fire is lit with damp fuel, different clouds of smoke
come forth. In the same way from this great Being are
breathed forth the *Rig, Yajur, Sama* and *Atharva Vedas.*”
Sukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.4.10

Vedic edifice: The ancient Sun temple at
Konarak. The Sun God, *Surya*, is the subject of
many hymns and prayers of the Vedas.

“THE VEDAS ARE ETERNAL AND ARE THE
source of all creation. Their greatness is
to be known in many ways. Their sound
produces in our *nadis* (subtle nerve
channels), as well as in the atmosphere, vi-
brations that are salutary not only to our
own Self but to the entire world—to the good
of mankind as well as of all other creatures.
This concern for all creation expressed in
the *Vedas* is not shared by any other religion.
Even grass, shrubs, trees, mountains and
rivers are included in their benign purview.
The happy state of all these sentient creatures
and inert objects is brought about through the
special quality of the sound of the *Vedas*.”

“The *Vedas* are also notable for the lofty
truths expressed in the mantras. The tenets
of these scriptures have aroused the wonder
of people of other lands and faiths. They are
moved by their poetic beauty, the subtle
manner in which principles of social life are
dealt within them, the metaphysical truths
embedded and expounded in them, and the
moral instruction as well as scientific truths
contained in them.

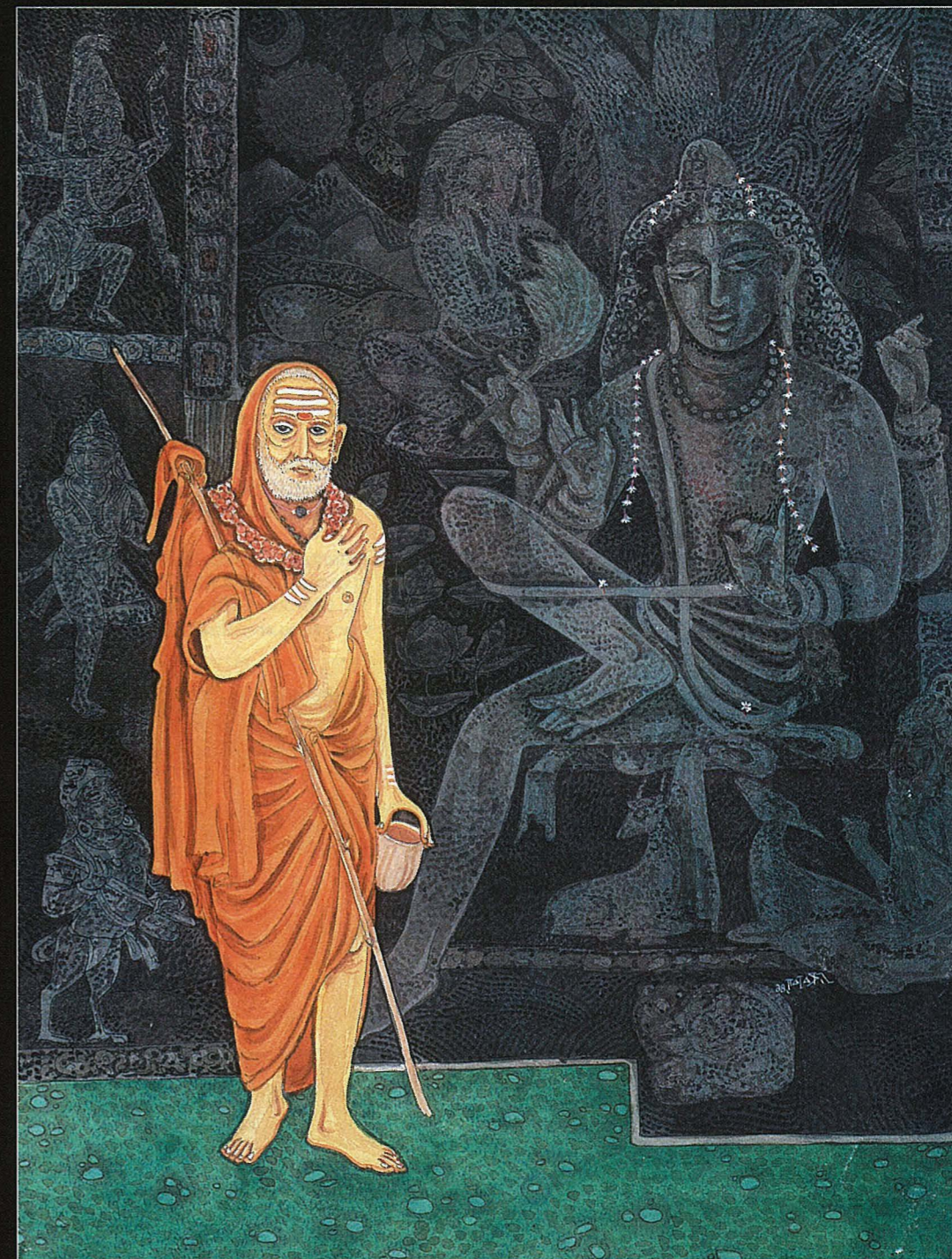
“My duty is to impress upon you that it is
your responsibility to keep the Vedic tradi-
tion alive. Whether or not you listen to me,
whether or not I am capable of making you
do what I want you to do, so long as there is
strength in me, I will keep telling you tire-
lessly, ‘This is your work. This is your dhar-
ma.’ If in India the *Vedas* retain their original
vitality even today, it is because they are be-
ing continuously repeated by students and
teachers of the *Vedas*, and the purity of the
sounds and accents of the words are retained
in that process. But it is only by practicing
the Vedic injunctions that we can obtain the
grace of God, both for our individual welfare
and for the welfare of the whole world.”



Keeper of dharma: Born May 20, 1894, in Villuppuram town, 100
miles to the south of Chennai, Swaminathan, as the pontiff was
known in childhood, was precociously spiritual. He was only 13
when initiated into *sannyasa* to become the 68th pontiff of Kanchi
Kamakoti Peedam on February 13, 1907, following the unexpected
passing of the 67th pontiff at age 18. Sri Chandrasekharendra was
intensively educated by the center's pandits, both in religious and
secular knowledge. He could converse in English, French, Swedish
and a dozen Indian languages. Like the Shankaracharyas before
him, he traveled the entirety of India on foot. In fact, he only trav-
eled by foot. “Lending ear to the prayers and petitions of all kinds of
people, round the clock, year upon year,” he remarked, “I have come
to know, as none other perhaps, the endless afflictions of humanity.”
The pontiff endeavored to carry on the traditions of Kanchi Mutt,
specifically the preservation of its Smarta Vedic tradition. “It is my
ardent wish,” he told devotees, “that every locality, every street
should have a center for teaching the *Vedas*. When there is no *Vedas*,
where is the need for this mutt? Where is the need for a pontiff?
While I lay down the shastric rules so strictly, people have given up
a lot of them. If I were myself to relax them, how much more lax will
the people become?” The widely revered swami attained *maha-*
samadhi suddenly on January 9, 1994, at age 99.

“THE VEDAS ARE SOUNDS EMANATING from the vibrations of the Great Intelligence, the Great Gnosis. That is why we believe that the mantras of the *Vedas* originate from the Paramatman Himself. Although the *Vedas* deal with many matters, all of them together speak of one goal—the One Reality. It is through the various entities, through knowledge of a multiplicity of subjects, that we may know this One. To attain this Reality we need to discipline our mind. Performing sacrifices, practicing austerities, doing the duties of one’s dharma, all these go to purify our consciousness and finally to still the mind that is always agitated. *Ved* (from *vid*) means ‘to know.’ The *Upanishads* proclaim, ‘The Atman is that, by knowing which all can be known.’ The goal of the *Vedas* is to shed light on this Atman. The rituals enjoined on us in their first part and the *jnana* (knowledge) expounded in the second have the same goal—knowing Isvara, Brahman or the Atman. The beginning of the beginning and the end of the end of our scripture have the same ultimate aim. Thus, the supreme purport of all the *Vedas* is to make us realize by our own experience that all is Brahman and thus lead us to a state of bliss. We must take special care of such scriptures to ensure the good of the world.”

Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati



S. RAJAM