

## About Dr. David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)



Dr. David Frawley is one of the most important scholars of Ayurveda and Vedic Science today. I have great respect and admiration for his knowledge and the way he has expounded the ancient wisdom of the Vedas.

**Deepak Chopra**

Frawley is an Indian in an American body. The ease with which he enters into the spiritual of the Indian tradition and renders its deeper concepts in terms of modern thought shows an unusual familiarity with this ancient wisdom.

**M.P. Pandit**, Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Certainly America's most singular "practicing Hindu."

**Ashok Malik**, *India Today*

Dr. David Frawley is a formidable scholar of Vedanta and easily the best known Western Acharya of the Vedic wisdom.

**Ashish Sharma**, *Indian Express, the Express Magazine*

Dr. David Frawley is one of the few westerners recognized in India as a *Vedacharya* or teacher of Vedic wisdom. In 1991 under the auspices of the Indian teacher, Avadhuta Shastri, he was named *Vamadeva Shastri*, after the Vedic Rishi Vamadeva. In 1995 he was given the title of Pandit along with the Brahmachari Vishwanathji award in Mumbai for his knowledge of the Vedic teaching. Over the years Vamadeva has received additional awards and honors for his work from throughout India.

Vamadeva (Dr. Frawley) is a unusual western born knowledge-holder in the Vedic tradition. He carries many special Vedic ways of knowledge (*vidyas*), which he passes on to students in India and in the West. In India, Vamadeva is recognized not only as a *Vedacharya* (Vedic teacher), but also as a *Vaidya* (Ayurvedic doctor), *Jyotishi* (Vedic astrologer), *Puranic* (Vedic historian) and *Yogi*. He is a visiting professor for the Vivekananda Yoga Kendra in Bangalore, India, a government approved deemed university for yogic and Vedic studies and also a teacher with the Sringeri Shankaracharya Math, the most central of the traditional Vedantic centers in India.

In India, his translations and interpretations of the ancient Vedic teachings have been given great acclaim in both spiritual and scholarly circles. In America he is more known as a teacher and practitioner of Ayurvedic medicine and of Vedic astrology (*Jyotish*) and has done pioneering work on both these subjects in the West.

Vamadeva (Dr. Frawley) presents authentic Vedic knowledge in the Western world and in a lucid presentation recognized by the tradition itself. He has worked extensively teaching, writing, lecturing, conducting research and helping establish schools and associations in related Vedic fields over the last thirty years. He has studied and traveled widely gathering knowledge, working with various Vedic teachers and groups in a non-sectarian manner.

Vamadeva sees his role as helping to revive Vedic knowledge in an interdisciplinary approach for the planetary

age. He sees himself as a teacher and translator to help empower people to use Vedic systems to enhance their lives and aid in their own Self-realization. He sees Vedic wisdom as a tool for liberation of the spirit, not as a dogma to bind people or to take power over them. Vedic knowledge is a means of communing with the conscious universe and learning to embody it in our own life and perception.

Though Vamadeva has worked in several different fields, he has endeavored to approach each of these with a great deal of specificity and precision. For a good overview of his work and background, it is best to examine his recent book *Yoga and the Sacred Fire: Self-Healing and Planetary Transformation* (2005). Most of his books are available through Lotus Press in the USA, though he has a few special titles through Voice of India in India only.

## **Dr. Frawley's (Pandit Vamadeva's) Work and Background Reviving Ayurveda**

Vamadeva's main teacher of Ayurveda was Dr. B. L. Vashta of Bombay and Pune (1919-1997). For ten years he remained under the guidance of Dr. Vashta, visiting him regularly in India and consulting with him on a wide variety of topics. Dr. Vashta, a graduate of one of the first Ayurveda programs in India in 1941, wrote many books on Ayurveda and helped formulate Ayurvedic products for several Ayurvedic companies in India. He was also one of the leading journalists in the state of Maharashtra and became an important spiritual guide for Vamadeva as well.

In America, Vamadeva studied Ayurveda with Dr. Vasant Lad, noted Ayurvedic teacher and author. He taught regularly along with Dr. Lad at his school in 1983 -1986 as a regular instructor and has remained on the visiting faculty ever since. He has worked with many other Ayurvedic doctors including Dr. Subhash Ranade, Dr. Dinesh Sharma, and Dr. Sunil Joshi. He works with Dr. Deepak Chopra and Dr. David Simon and has been a faculty member of the Chopra Wellness Center in San Diego since its start. He also works closely with the California College of Ayurveda, founded by his colleague and former student Dr. Marc Halpern. His Ayurvedic work in Europe is represented by Atreya Smith, who runs an affiliated European Institute of Vedic Studies, and in England by the East-West School of Herbalism.

Besides Ayurveda, Dr. Frawley has a background in Chinese medicine, in which he received a Doctor's degree in 1987. He taught Chinese herbal medicine at the International Institute of Chinese Medicine from 1984-1990. He served as a board member of the American Herbalist's Guild, the largest professional organization of western herbalists, from 1993-1994.

Vamadeva's main areas of specialization in Ayurveda are herbal medicine, Ayurvedic psychology, and Ayurveda and Yoga. He has written several books on Ayurveda including the *Yoga of Herbs* (with Dr. Vasant Lad, 1986), *Ayurvedic Healing* (with a foreword by Dr. B. L. Vashta, 1989), *Ayurveda and the Mind* (1997), *Yoga and Ayurveda* (1999), *Ayurveda, Nature's Medicine* (with Dr. Subhash Ranade, 2001), *Yoga for Your Type* (with Sandra Kozak, 2001), *Ayurveda and Marma Therapy* (with Drs. Ranade and Lele, 2003), and *Neti: Healing Secrets of Yoga and Ayurveda* (2005). His Ayurvedic books are popular in India as well as in the West and are used by many Ayurvedic training programs worldwide. He has taught many Ayurvedic programs for the Yoga community and emphasizes the unity of Yoga and Ayurveda.

## **Spreading Vedic Astrology**

Vamadeva began studying Vedic astrology (Jyotish) as part of his Vedic research in the early seventies and first brought out a correspondence course in the subject astrology in 1986, which remains one of the standard texts in the field today. This was followed by his book on Vedic Astrology, *Astrology of the Seers* (1990) and his recent *Ayurvedic Astrology: Self-Healing Through the Stars* (2005). In 1997, he brought out the book the *Oracle of*

*Rama* (1997), an important Hindu oracle which in 2005 has been made into a set of cards through Mandala Publishing.

In 1992 he helped convene the first American Conference on Vedic Astrology, which led to the founding of the American Council of Vedic Astrology (ACVA) the following year. He became the first president of the organization and remains so today. ACVA has convened eight international symposiums, a tutorial program in Vedic astrology and is now founding a college on the subject, the American College of Vedic Astrology.

Vamadeva's main Vedic astrology teacher was Dr. B.V. Raman (1916-1998), perhaps the greatest Vedic astrologer of modern India and founder of the *Astrological Magazine*, with whom he was specially initiated in 1992. He has also visited with Gayatri Vasudev, K.S. Charak, Dinesh Sharma, R. Santhanam and Bepin Behari and works closely with Chakrapani Ullal, perhaps the most noted Vedic astrologer in the West today. He was one of the first Americans to receive Jyotish Kovid title from the Indian Council of Astrological Sciences (ICAS, 1993), the largest Vedic astrology association in the world, followed by the title Jyotish Vachaspati in 1996. He has written many articles for the *Astrological Magazine*, the largest Vedic astrology publication in India. He has researched medical astrology and psychology and astrology, as well as the historical origins of Vedic astrology, bringing out ancient Vedic material on the Nakshatras.

### **Courses and Students**

Dr. Frawley's work is aimed at teaching people the Vedic systems in depth. For this purpose he has developed distance learning programs and correspondence courses to provide a deeper level of learning and study than books. The Institute currently offers three programs, one on Ayurvedic Medicine, one on Yoga and Ayurveda, and the other on Vedic Astrology. Both are quite extensive and are regularly updated. They are used by various schools and associations throughout the world. Over the past twenty years, around five thousand people worldwide have taken these courses, among the most of any such courses.

Vamadeva also takes upon a few private students, under special circumstances. For this he has created several tutorial programs in Ayurveda, Vedic astrology, Yoga and Vedic Studies.

### **Work with Yogis and Sages-Spreading Yoga and Vedanta**

Vamadeva has been a devotee of **Ramana Maharshi**, the great sage of South India, since 1970. He specially carries on the work of Ganapati Muni, one of Maharshi's chief disciple, whose teachings he received through K. Natesan of the Ramanashram in 1991, who he has been in close contact with ever since. Natesan passed on Ganapati's writings to him, many in hand written form never published, for their preservation and propagation. Ganapati's work that he has taken up includes both the Vedas and Tantra, as well as Ayurveda and Jyotish. Note picture of Ramana and Ganapati below.

His study of Vedantic meditation methods, particularly the practice of Self-inquiry as taught by Ramana Maharshi, is the subject of his book, *Vedantic Meditation: Lighting the Flame of Awareness*, by North Atlantic Books (2000). He has followed this up with a study of ancient methods of examination of Brahman or the supracosmic reality, which is part of his current field of research.

His study of Ganapati Muni's work was the basis of his book *Tantric Yoga and the Wisdom Goddesses* (1994), which is considered one of the best books on the deeper aspects of Tantric spiritual and mantric practices. He also brings Vedantic and Tantric perspectives into his books on Ayurveda and Vedic astrology.

Vamadeva has spoken before the main Ramana Maharshi centers (Ramana Kendras) in India and writes frequently for the Mountain Path, the ashram's main publication and an important resource for information on the direct path of Self-Inquiry.

Over the past several years he has been working with the noted South Indian guru, Sivananda Murthy of Andhra Pradesh (Vishakhapatnam), who is also of Ramana's line and a great yogi as well, with connections to Trilinga Swami. He has worked with Sivananda Murthy on the study of the Upanishads. Sivananda Murthy visited the United States in 2004.

Vamadeva is closely connected with the work of Sri Aurobindo, through his work with M.P. Pandit over many years. He has followed a number of Sri Aurobindo's approaches relative to both ancient and modern India, for his journalistic and social work. Aurobindo's work opened the doorways to the ancient Vedic world for him in 1971, which he first discovered Aurobindo's Vedic interpretations.

Vamadeva has received the blessings of many saints and sages including Anandamayi Ma (with whom he corresponded with for several years between 1976-1982), Pramukh Swami (of the Swaminarayan movement), Sivaya Subrahmuniya Swami (of Hinduism Today), Hansa Baba, Swami Amar Jyoti, Sri Ma, Ammachi, Swami Dayananda, Swami Veda Bharati, Bharati Tirtha, Shankaracarya of Sringeri, and Chandrashekhar Saraswati and Jayendra Saraswati, Shankaracharyas of Kanchi. He sees his work as part of the greater Vedic and Hindu tradition and remains connected to its great teachers and lineages and many of its holy sites like Tiruvannamalai, Kanchipuram, Sringeri, Rishikesh, Uttar Kashi, Hampi, Alandi and Kamakhya.

He has also been connected to the work of Paramahansa Yogananda the the Kriya Yoga movement, since he first took the SRF lessons in 1970, and has closely studied the teachings of Yogananda's guru, Sri Yukteswar.

### **Working with American Yoga Groups and Ashrams**

Vamadeva has taught at many yoga and spiritual centers in the United States over the past fifteen years. These include the Shivananda Ashram, Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, the Himalayan Institute, Ananda, Kripalu, CSA, Unity in Yoga, International Yoga Studies, the American Yoga College, the Yoga Journal Conference, the Southeast Yoga Conferences, and the Southwest Yoga Conferences.

He is on the editorial board of the magazine *Yoga International* and on the advisory board for the Yoga Research and Education Center of Georg Feuerstein. His work has also been featured in *Yoga Journal* and *LA Yoga Pages*. He has been one of the pioneers of bringing Ayurveda and Vedic astrology into the Yoga community and trying to look modern Yoga with its classical roots in India.

### **New Light on the Vedas**

Vamadeva began his study of the Vedas in 1971 through the works of **Sri Aurobindo** and started to study the Sanskrit language, at first on his own, in 1970. This led to writing many Vedic books and articles, starting in 1978. In 1979, **M.P. Pandit** of the Sri

Aurobindo Ashram gave his support to his work and personally was responsible for publishing dozens of Vamadeva's Vedic articles and translations in various Sri Aurobindo publications in India, which occurred regularly from 1980-1984 in World Union, the Advent and Sri Aurobindo's Action. Pandit first awakened Vamadeva to his "Vedic mission" and encouraged him up to his death in 1994. Pandit helped publish Vamadeva's first book in India, the *Creative Vision of the Early Upanishads* (1982) and serialized material from two of his other books, *Self-realization and the Supermind in the Rig Veda*, and *the Heart of the Yajur Veda* that were never printed in book form.

Vamadeva's Vedic studies have included the early *Upanishads*, followed by the *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*, and in recent years several *Brahmanas* and *Aranyakas* as well, which he has gone over in the original Sanskrit. Vamadeva has made special studies of the Rig Vedic hymns, particularly those of Vishvamitra, Parashara, Dirghatamas and Vamadeva. He has also worked specially with the *Shukla Yajur Veda*, *Shatapatha Brahmana* and *Taittiriya Brahmana*. Of the *Upanishads*, he worked extensively with the *Brihadaranyaka*, *Chandogya* and *Taittiriya*.

He set forth a radical new spiritual interpretation of the Vedic texts, reflecting the work of Sri Aurobindo and Ganapati Muni showing the yogic meaning of the Vedic mantras, which has remained the inspiration for all that he has attempted. Starting from a poetic background in his youth, he was able to penetrate into Vedic symbolism and discern its spiritual and cosmic implications.

In 1986, he brought out a volume of his translations from the Rig Veda in India under the title, *Hymns from the Golden Age*. A revised version of the book came out in the USA and later again in India under the title *Wisdom of the Ancient Seers: Selected Mantras from the Rig Veda* (1993).

### **Revising Ancient History**

After seeing how badly the spiritual meaning of the Vedas had been misinterpreted by modern scholars, Vamadeva could easily see how the historical side of the Vedas had similarly been distorted. This led him to a revision of ancient history in light of such knowledge. His work revising the history of ancient India has received wide acclaim and brought him into contact with major archeologists and historians.

His book on ancient India, *Gods, Sages and Kings* (1991) was one of the first to propose a new model of history for ancient India which many subsequent scholars and archeologists have followed. A shorter version of this material *Myth of the Aryan Invasion* (1994, 2001) has been one of the most popular books on the subject available on the internet.

Along with Georg Feuerstein and Subhash Kak, Georg Feuerstein he wrote *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization* (1995) and along with N.S. Rajaram he wrote *Vedic Aryans and the Origins of Civilization* (1994). His most recent book in the field, the *Rig Veda and the History of India* (2001) takes this work yet further, setting forth a reconstruction of the

history of ancient India in a Vedic light. Quotes from Dr. Frawley's books on ancient India and an interview with him were featured in Graham Hancock's *Underworld, Flooded Kingdoms of the Ice Age* book and television series (for British television and the Discovery Channel).

He works with Subhash Kak on further Vedic research and remains in close contact with him. Presently, along with N.S. Rajaram he helps run the Naimisha Research Institute for Vedic Studies in Bangalore, India that focuses in this area. He collaborates with N.S. Rajaram on issues of modern India as well.

He has lectured throughout India on the Vedas and ancient history and spoken along with major historians and archaeologists in the field including B.B. Lal, S.R. Rao, S.P. Gupta, Devendra Swarup and Bhagwan Singh.

Currently Vamadeva, whose ancestry is Irish, is also looking into connections between ancient Europe and India, including those between Celtic-Druidic and Vedic-Rishi traditions. His research shows how the ancient Europeans are an offshoot of the Vedic culture and originally had similar yogic traditions. In this process he is in contact with important Western Celtic scholars like Michel Boutet. He is also working with Aidan Rankin, who has published some of his work in the *New European*.

### **Contemporary Issues, Reviving Hindu (Sanatana) Dharma**

Vamadeva has written many articles and several books on contemporary issues in India, particularly the challenges to Hinduism and yogic culture posed by modern civilization. This examination of Hindu Dharma began with his book *From the River of Heaven: Hindu and Vedic Knowledge for the Modern Age* (1991). Additional titles addressing more contemporary issues published through Voice of India in Delhi like *Arise Arjuna* (1995), *Awaken Bharata* (1998) and *Hinduism and the Clash of Civilizations* (2001) offer a helpful alternative to the media view of India and the Hindu religion, countering academic and leftist distortions and media stereotypes. This has given him the reputation in India as one of the foremost Hindu writers today.

His book *Hinduism: the Eternal Tradition* (1995) has been widely used by Hindu groups and temples. He has been invited to speak on Hindu Dharma at conferences at the United Nations in New York and at UNESCO conferences in India, as well as at universities, temples and cultural centers in North America, Europe and India.

His main teacher of Hindu Dharma was Ram Swarup of Delhi (1921-1998), whom *Hinduism Today* called the most important modern writer on Hinduism, with whom he was associated with from 1992. Note 1992 picture to the left of Vamadeva, Koenraad Elst, Ram Swarup and Sitaram Goel. Ram Swarup wrote the foreword to his book *Awaken Bharata* (1998) that continues his call for a revival of dharmic traditions in India. Vamadeva's book *How I Became a Hindu: My Discovery of Vedic Dharma* (2000) unfolds his story of self-discovery. He wrote the forewords for Ram Swarup's collected works, including, *On Hinduism; Meditations, Gods, Yogas*; and the *Word as Revelation: Names of Gods*.

## **Touring and Speaking in India**

Over the past twenty years, Dr. Frawley has lectured in various cities in India including Delhi, Bombay, Pune, Bangalore, Rishikesh, Lucknow, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Vishakapatnam, Ahmdebad, Calcutta, Guwahati, Shilong, Itinagar, Calicut, Coimbatore, Pondicherry and Madras (Chennai). Places include Ayurvedic schools, Vedic Astrology schools, ashrams, universities, Hindu associations, Vedantic associations, and Yoga schools. He has become a well known figure through India both in traditional and modern circles.

In the course of his travels he has met with major Indian social and political leaders including Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi and K.S. Sudarshan. He has met with many journalists and thinkers like Arun Shourie, Sitaram Goel, Koenraad Elst, Francios Gautier, M.V. Kamath, S. Gurumurthy, J.C. Kapur, Lokesh Chandra, Michel Danino and Seshadri Chari.

He has lectured at Delhi University, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and Chennai, JNU (Jawaharalal Nehru University), Gauhati University, Anna University (Chennai), the Dalai Lama Foundation, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Pondicherry), the Sri Aurobindo Society (Delhi), Ramana Maharshi Kendra (Hyderabad, Chennai), Swami Narayan Akshardham, Chinmaya Mission (Chennai), the Sai Baba International Center (Delhi), Indira Gandhi Center for the Arts, Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), the Nehru Memorial Library, Vivekananda Yoga Kendra, the Museum of Lucknow, Vivekananda Kendra (Assam), the World Sanskrit Conference, and many other institutions in India.

He has done articles and interviews for Times of India (which serialized portions of his book *Vedantic Meditation*), India Today, Indian Express, the Hindu, Hindusthan Times, the Deccan Herald, the Business Standard, the Observer, the Organizer, and many other prominent publications throughout the country. He has given several talks and programs for all India Radio and for Indian television (through Rajiv Mehrotra of the Dalai Lama Foundation).

## **Working with the Indo-American Community**

Dr. Frawley has worked extensively with the Indo-American community, including the VFA (Vedic Friends Association), VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad), Arya Samaj, and HSC (Hindu Students Council), Sringeri Shankaracharya Math, and the Swaminarayan movement. He has spoken before many temples and Hindu cultural groups throughout the United States, as well as at several universities. He also toured UK and spoke at various Hindu temples and at universities in 1996 and has visited Hindu groups in Trinidad. He has written for the magazine *Hinduism Today* on a number of topics.

## **Articles**

Dr. Frawley has written articles for many magazines and publications in the United States and India. In this country magazines he has contributed to have included *Yoga International*, *Quest*, *Hinduism Today*, *Light of Consciousness*, *Clarion Call*, *Yoga-Vedanta*, *Vegetarian Times* and *Yoga Journal* and such newspapers as *India Post* and *News-India Times*. In India he has contributed to the *Mountain Path*, *World Union*, *Sri Aurobindo's Action*, *the Advent*, *Mother India*, *Glory of India*, *Vedanta Kesari*, *Bharatiya Prajna*, *the Astrological Magazine*, *the Journal of Vedic Astrology*, and *Tattva Loka*.

### **For the Future**

Vamadeva is taking up various new projects. These include a book on the Vedic Yoga, a book on Shakti and a book on mantra. He hopes to develop a Vedic educator distance learning program as well.