

Pujya Swamiji's birth anniversary

69 years ago, Bhārata (is said to have) gained Independence from her invaders (though the dire need of decolonizing our minds still remains on the 'to do' list, let us return to it at another time and revel in the moment). Another grand reason for celebration is to honor the physical birth anniversary of our Āchārya, Pūjya Swāmi Dayānanda Saraswati ji, the Mahātmā whose mere presence was a blessing for all. The freedom Pūjya Swāmiji gave was of a very different kind- a special kind, and this freedom can be appreciated on three levels.

1. On the physical plane, through the AIM for Seva Movement, Pūjya Swāmiji brought freedom by empowering the eager youth of our



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country, the impoverished future of tomorrow, by providing for their basic needs, and helping nurture their minds with all elements required for healthy growth. 105+ Chhātrālayas (student education facilities and homes) stand erected due to the efforts put forth by Pūjya Swāmiji's and the volunteers of AIMS, and millions more are direct or indirect beneficiaries of his goodwill. Furthermore, Pūjya Swāmiji freed us from the trauma we, as a society, have endlessly faced from zealots of aggressive faiths with a proselytizing agenda, stripping people from their indigenous culture and traditions- person by person, village by village, day after day. Pujya Swamiji made great strides by turning this into a critical point of discussion on national and international forums alike.

2. On the emotional plane, through his in-depth appreciation and addressal of the impediments of the human mind and its unresolved psychological concerns, he liberated us from the pangs of fear, pain, guilt, sorrow.

3. On the Adhyātmika plane, Pūjya Swāmiji freed us from the most lethal ignorance of all- ignorance of the self. He rescued us by negating what we aren't, by asserting who we are; thus giving us the ultimate independence, the freedom of identifying with the whole, and disenfranchising us from the limited. Moksha.

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Pujya Swamiji is a blessing to us all. Even today, though no longer available in the same familiar upādhi, he continues blessing us as Īśvara. May we take this day to remember all that he has taught, all that he has done, and all that he stood for. Indeed, to the one who has crossed the ocean of saṁsāra, gave us the raft in the form of teaching, and guided us all the way with his love, commitment and compassion, our koṭi namaskāram.

Harih Om Gurubhyo Namah.

-Prashant Parikh