

[A Short C.V. of Swami Agnivesh](#)



Swami Agnivesh, an activist based in New Delhi, India, is a leader of Arya Samaj, and Board member of KAICIID (King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue). He was awarded the Right Livelihood award, known as the Alternative Nobel, in 2004, for his work for social justice. Late Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer called him a cyclonic swami, reflecting his dynamism and the diversity of his activism.

He was born as Vepa Shyam Rao in 1939, the grandson of the Diwan (Chief Minister) of a princely state called Shakti, now in Chattisgarh, and part of an Orthodox Hindu family. Later on he obtained Law and Business Management degrees, became a lecturer in Kolkatta's famous St. Xavier's College 1963-1968. Also practiced law in Kolkatta High Court under Sabyasachi Mukherji who subsequently became Chief Justice of India.

In 1968 he became a full-time worker of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reformist movement, and two years later became a sanyasi, renouncing worldly possessions and becoming, in the process, Swami Agnivesh in March 1970. With Swami Indravesht led various movements of students, teachers and farmers in Haryana. In 1974 as a trusted lieutenant of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan led his movement in Haryana. Spent 13 months in Ambala Central Jail during emergency. He studied Mahatma Gandhi's literature and was deeply influenced by Gandhian thought. He was elected MLA in Haryana and was Minister for

Education for a short stint. He resigned 1979 , Nov. and plunged in the movement for the emancipation of Bonded Laborers and Child Slavery.

Swami Agnivesh a powerful communicator in Hindi and English, has worked on many social issues nationally and internationally such as abolition of untouchability and caste system in Hindu religious society, women's equality, and religious tolerance and reconciliation. He is a strong advocate of interfaith action for social justice. First International Anti-Slavery Award was given to him in London in 1990, Freedom and Human Rights Award in Berne , Switzerland in 1994, Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavna Award in 2004 and Right Livelihood Award (Alternative Nobel for Peace in 2004.)

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