

Veda ॐ Jyoti

“Light of Knowledge”

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healing our land

With the current state of affairs in our country, one cannot but despair and think the country is in a crisis. There are many ills that have blighted our beautiful land. A sombre feeling of helplessness has sapped the positive spirit of people of all colours. Sadly, there are those in society who continue to instigate and provoke the masses to resort to violence to resolve their grievances. Their destructive thinking has a ripple effect on society - our resources are destroyed and citizens get caught up in senseless violence. The media newsfeeds, in real time, often portray the worst in society. The cycle of violence continues. We all exist in a society where the actions of one person have an effect on one or more other people. We are all inter-dependent and inter-connected with one another and need to co-exist. Harm to one part of society will lead to harm to the entire group. Think of the analogy of a human body where an injury to one part, say an arm or leg, will lead to the *dis*-functioning of the entire body. Mankind's oldest scriptures, the Vedas, declare **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**, which means “the world is an extended family”. Unfortunately, many have not yet understood the meaning of this idea, let alone practised it. We continue to isolate ourselves from our fellow beings. If we all could see each other as fellow brothers and sisters on an earthly journey, rather than segregated in terms of race, gender and ethnicity, we would be living like the extended family the Vedas speak of.



Xenophobia

Segregation and discrimination run deep, whether on grounds of religion, gender, race or nationality, as the xenophobic attacks that take place in our country from time to

time show. The deep inequality and poverty continue to create tensions among our people, which flare up in conflict, both within our society and with other races. There is fierce competition for very limited opportunities and resources in South Africa, by the large number of unemployed people living in poverty, which is one of the root causes of the attacks against foreigners. While the government grapples to implement adequate measures to curb unemployment, crime, illegal activities and immigration, the people feel the need to resort to self-action. Unfortunately, the majority who are targeted are foreigners. While many of our own people also engage in criminal activities, there is the perception that it is only the foreigners who thrive on such illegal activities. We cannot take the law into our own hands and resort to vigilante behaviour! Looting and destruction of property is a crime. Brutal assaults that often result in fatalities are not acceptable as the way to solve our country's problems. We cannot turn our despair, anger and frustration against our fellow brothers and sisters. We are all children of the same African soil. This only starts a feud which always ends in tragedy. Our strength as a rainbow nation now has a dark ominous cloud hanging above, with very little light in sight.

Violence against Women



One of the most heart-breaking forms of discrimination and segregation is that based on gender. The number of females who have been affected by gender-based violence is increasing at an alarming rate. Recently, we have witnessed an overwhelming support and solidarity for gender equality and protection of women and children through public protests and the expression of nationwide outrage. However, the causes of such crimes

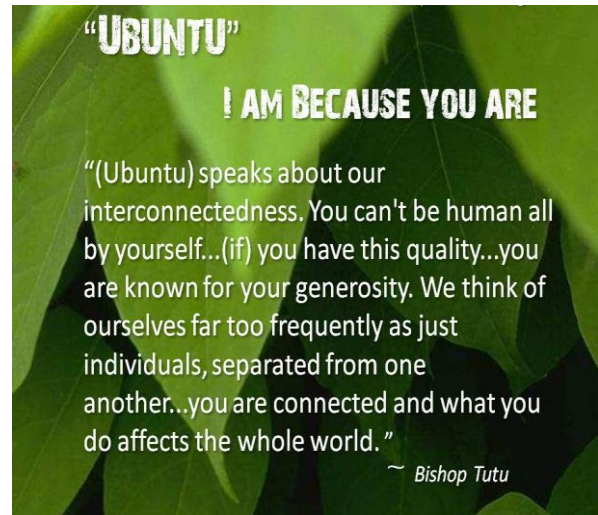
go much deeper and cannot be resolved by-quick fix solutions. Some reasons for gender-based violence are patriarchy, which is still deeply entrenched in society, a breakdown in family values, the destruction of the very family unit by the evil migrant labour system and the objectivization of women, enabled so effectively by social media. We will need more than just expressions of anger and outrage to overcome a psyche steeped in these mindsets. Men of this country need to become role models and protectors of their feminine counterparts. They need to overcome the vices of anger, lust and domination. These are the challenges we all face but it takes true character to conquer and overcome them. For far too long mankind has remained slaves to its passions. Discipline and training of the mind are the steps to take control of oneself and governs one's relationship with others.

To start living the values of *Ubuntu* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* will not happen in an instant, but remember a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.

Ubuntu and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (A concept of 'oneness')

Ubuntu, in a literal sense, means "humanity." It is often translated as "I am because we are," but is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all of humanity."

Ubuntu refers to our behaviour towards others or our actions in ways that benefit the community. Such acts could be as simple as helping a stranger in need, or in more complex terms, ways of relating with others. A person who behaves in this manner lives up to the spirit of Ubuntu. He or she is a complete person. Ubuntu drives one to perform selfless acts. It is the realisation of how our actions have consequences on others and how we should strive to act morally for the greater good.



Similarly, the Vedas have a universal approach, giving it a special status through its teachings of "dharma", meaning duties and essential nature. Righteous people, adhering to the Vedas, consider the whole world as an extended family, embodied in the Vedic saying (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*). The Vedas teach the very essence of a living based on humanity

and thus advocates "humanism" as the dharma of the human race. "**Oh man, be humane, and create a society of divine, enlightened people**" – this is the eternal clarion call of the Vedas.

According to the Vedas, the world is governed by eternal natural laws under one universal Creator. Having the high moral character is the cornerstone of Vedic thought. It is the bedrock on which, according to Vedas, the foundation of human life is built.



The main message of the Vedas is striving for the highest good and the promotion of the welfare of the world i.e. to promote the physical, spiritual and social development of all human beings. No one should remain content with his or her own welfare but consider his welfare in the welfare and well-being of all. The individual good is always dormant in the collective good, this is what the Vedas proclaim.

We have such a rich legacy propagated by our ancestors, noble concepts that we are yet to truly understand. We cannot continue on the path society is presently following. It is destructive and will only lead to further unrest. The challenge is for each one of us to internalise these values of *Ubuntu* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in our daily lives and to live it with all around us in harmony. Then and only then will we see a change in society. We all complain and want change, but the first step begins with us!



Simple tips to cultivate peace in your day:

- Cultivate peace from within first. Practice meditation, yoga, being in tune with nature, taking walks and doing things that you just simply enjoy.
- Become conscious of your response to situations during the normal course of the day by being aware of your reactions in tough circumstances. Being calm in these situations ought to become the new superpower!
- Never just believe in hearsay. Study the facts before making a conclusive decision. Most importantly, evaluate how the decision you make will impact all those around.



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