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On 19<sup>th</sup> October 1977 two South African newspapers - World and Weekend World, and a church journal - Pro Veritate were shut down. Journalists were banned and detained. Since then, journalists have marked the day as Media Freedom Day in South Africa. Freedom of expression is a right enshrined in the South African Constitution of 1996.

Apartheid South Africa censored news and limited access to the truth. Globally censorship has intersected with terror. The freedom to speak is not always guaranteed in the world. In September 1988 Salman Rushdie, a novelist who wrote Satanic Verses was the subject of a death threat and a fatwa. In 2015 a French satirical weekly newspaper was attacked, and 12 Charlie Hebdo writers were killed.

The Arya Samaj principles require all to stand for the truth and to consider logic and reason.

In this issue we cover the Vedic view on the Sun with a ray of hope that we will develop our intellects to be as bright as the sun.

On the 2 October is the 152<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who founded the Natal Indian Congress and learnt about injustices and non-violence means to end injustices in our country. His granddaughter Ela Gandhi shares her reflections on Gandhiji's message and legacy.

The United Nations has declared World Habitat Day on 4 October, World Food Day on 16 October, and World Cities Day on 31 October. Public transport and human settlements are key aspects of city life. Dr Shamin Mahabeer shares her memories and research on Commuter Pioneers who tirelessly lobbied for safe, reliable and affordable public transport, an aspect that all our cities have yet to deliver on.

#### **Veda Jyoti Editorial Committee**

Arthi Shanand, Divesh Cassiram, Karuna Mohan, Nishi Bundhoo, Ressma Rambharos, Sudhira Sham, Usha Depipersad.

## When the sun rises, it rises for everyone

**May the luminous sun take me to the realm of spiritual heights and may it enlighten my mind with its bright light! (Atharva Veda 19.43.3)**

The sun with its ever-pulsating energy like a magnet attracts and holds all the planets and their moons to itself, yet within their respective limits, boundaries and orbits. The universe is dynamic. It is ever active, changing and full of energy.



The sun is the brightest object in the earth's sky. Humanity's most fundamental understanding of the sun is that its presence causes day and absence causes night.

Light travels from the Sun's horizon to Earth's horizon in about 8 minutes and 19 seconds, while light from the closest points of the Sun and Earth takes about two seconds less.

The energy of sunlight supports almost all life on Earth by photosynthesis and drives Earth's climate and weather. The Earth's relationship to the sun and the amount of light it receives is responsible for the seasons and biodiversity.

The universe, including the sun, functions by three eternal firm principles which is stated in Rig Veda 10.1.90. Even God and nature functions through *Rta*, *Satya* and *Tapasya*. The precise conditions for life have been set in place by God at the beginning of creation for the sustenance of all life: air, water, food is '*ritubhi*' because it is produced in an orderly manner according to the seasons (*ritu*).

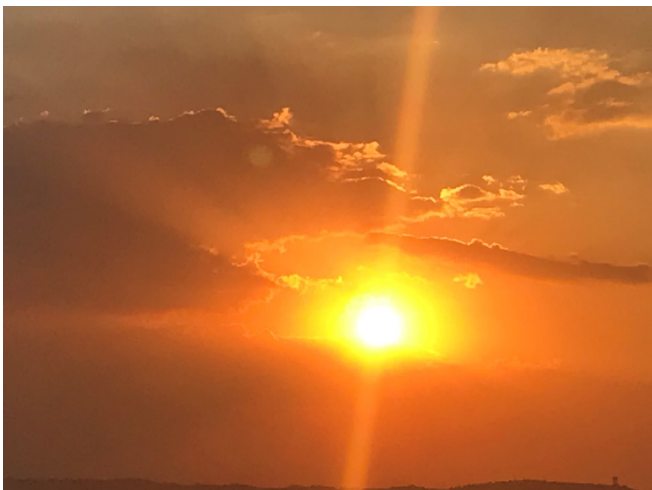


God is the producer of all that we need, nature is His factory, and we are the consumers. Humanity has yet to manufacture a single drop of water, a drop of milk or blood, a grain of sand or salt, or a ray of sunshine.

**RTAM** is the universal law about regularity, right procedure and righteousness. Uniformity and regularity are also about punctuality, truth and arduous effort and penance.

Rta gives us terms like Ritu – seasons, which are methodical as in producing food. Rituals, all things like prayer, making a cup of tea, or our daily work have a method. Things may be done in a particular sequence but do not have to be ritualistic, repetitive or mechanical.

The rising and setting of the sun is a natural, God-ordained ritual, from east to west, but not ritualistic, for each day is a unique creation.



Rta is also truth, untruth is an-rta. We must ever cherish and uphold truth (Yajur 1.5), exemplified by the sun.

**SATYAM**: is the truth. All our work, efforts, fame, glory, progress and prosperity (material and spiritual) must be achieved based on the truth. We must be ever committed to cherish and uphold the truth.

**TAPAS**: is austerity, penance, strenuous voluntary effort and discipline. It is also spiritual and moral effort, and intention. Deep thought must be applied in all our work whilst keeping God in mind to guide us.

There are many names for the sun, some are shared below:

*Soorya or Surya*. The sun is Surya in the morning and Agni in the evening.

*Agni* is the source of warmth and energy. The word 'energy' and ignite comes from agni.

*Aditya*: First to awaken, removing darkness. Aditya is masculine, while *Aditi* – earth is feminine.

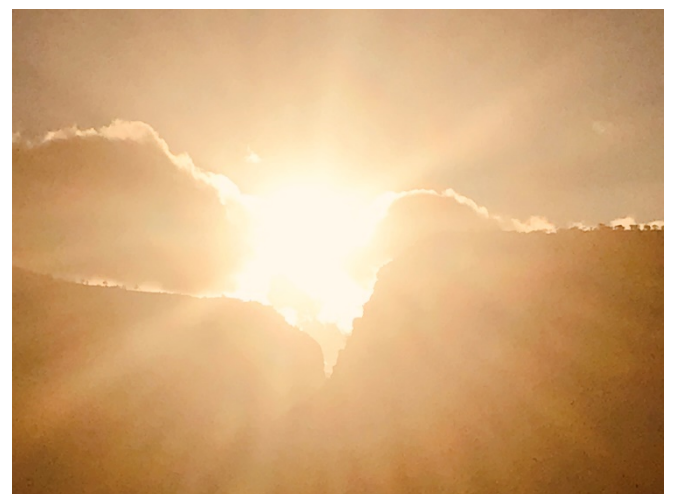
*Savitar*: Life-giving energy, Sun is a principal source of vitamin D. God is *Savitur* – Creator.

*Vyushtau*: the FIRST light before the visible rays of the sun, that begins to permeate every home.

*Ujaala*: bright

*Kiran*: rays, positive. Each day brings new hope. From *tamas* to *jyoti* – darkness to light

*Usha*: the light of dawn. The sun quietly, peacefully removes the darkness of night, to usher a new, unique day.



As in the principle of creation, nothing that has the hand of God is duplicated. So too, no two days are the same.

The sun rises and sets at a different moment and a different place each day. Time is a blessing from God for

goodness and progress of all life. The prefix SU indicates sweet or good, as in su-man = human, a good mind.

In Hindi, the word for *listen* or *hear* is *sun*, pronounced s-u-n. The American Space Agency NASA discovered that there is a sound resonance or vibration present in the universe, including, and emanating from the sun - the sound of AUM.

*Indra vasubhirdevo astu* (Rig Veda 7.35.6; Atharva Veda 19.10.6): Life-giving rays over 12 months.

*Indro vishwasya raajati* (Yajur Veda 36.8): Bright sun which illuminates the universe and all beings.

*Mitra varuna indra aditi* (Rig Veda 5.51.14): Earth and sun 'embrace' as friends for the greater good.

*Chakshur Deva* (Yajur Veda 36. 24): Divine 'eye' which opens our eyes every morning.

*Chakshur Mitra*; Friendly Eye; *Soorya Aatma jagatasta* (in All 4 Vedas): SOUL of our solar system

*Jyotir-uttamam* (Yajur Veda 35.14): Light from the sun is the highest physical (*adhibhautik*) and natural (*adhidaivik*) product. It is also *adhyatmik* (created and pervaded by God). The Highest spiritual light is God, for He has created the sun, and gives it its light.

*Swasthi panthaam anu charema... soorya chandra... sangamemahi.* (Rig Veda 5.51.15) The sun and moon, representing the 'big needle and small needle,' exist and function in harmony and unity with each other for the good of all life on earth. They are balancing opposites. Agni and Soma which is energy and calmness, representing day and night.

Everyday there is visible evidence of the solar system and universe at work. The annual equinoxes and solstices in each hemisphere are the result of this unity and harmony. June 21 is winter solstice in the south and the summer solstice in the north. It is also International Day for Yoga. Body, mind and soul must be harnessed (yoked) for peace.



The most auspicious and beneficial time for meditation, yoga, studying, writing, painting, music is between 3 and 6 in the morning, and the same time in the evening. These are the two conjunctions of day and night (*Sandhya*). This means starting and ending our day on a spiritual, calm and pleasant note.

The human body is set to the functioning of the sun: when the sun rises, we awaken. We cannot sleep much later. When the sun is at its peak around midday, we are working at our peak, and when the sun starts to set, we begin to rest.

Like any parent, God does not do anything to harm His creation. He created time - day and night - at the very beginning: *Samvatsaro ajaayata* (Rig 10.190.2).

The divine dawn unfailingly rising since the beginning of creation, spreading its beautiful crimson hue, can reduce the life span of those who continue to sleep. (Rig Veda 1.192.10)

*Praataa ratnam praataritvaa ... tena prajaan vardhayaana aayu raayasposhena sachate suveerah.* (Rig Veda 1.125.1)

This hymn praises the benefits of rising with the sun as having 'jewels' of prosperity, long life, strength and bravery, leading one's children onward to progress.

*Adhaa devaa uditaa sooryasya...* (Rig Veda 1.115.6)

The rays of the rising sun, the divine rays of God spread all around their lustre and wisdom in our hearts thereby removing evil thoughts and deeds.



## Message from the APS President Pt Arthi Nanakchand Shanand

The 6<sup>th</sup> of the 16 Sanskaaras, the Nishkraman sanskaar contains sacred procedures for an individual's spiritual growth. It introduces a baby of about 4 months to the greater universe, symbolised by the sun and moon.

Our elders would rise in time to clean their yards and offer a little water to welcome the sun (*Soorya-jal*). Water and fire are two of many 'balancing opposites' in nature, like heaven and earth, day and night, heat and cold. (Atharva Veda 14.2.71)

The sun dutifully rises at dawn and quietly and peacefully clears the darkness of night - *tamas* bringing its light - *jyoti* unselfishly into each home without discrimination be it a palace or hut. (Rig Veda 1.113.1) At a micro level, in almost every Hindu home a little corner is set aside where a lamp is lit.

We must be the bright light to others, removing dark thoughts, speech and actions; purify our thoughts, intentions and feelings, and spread goodness all around. This must be our continuous struggle for goodness over weaknesses, vices and evil intentions, fear, blind faith, superstition and ignorance of truth. We are engulfed in the darkness of fear, abuse, crime and poverty. Yet we are each endowed by God with divine virtues. All of this is expressed by the lighting of the lamps. It takes just one little flame to light up a whole room. In the same way the sun lights up the solar system.



The sun is 'God's lamp,' working 365/24/7. Surely, we can spare 7 seconds, if not 7 minutes out of God-given 24 hours to contemplate on life, pray, offer thanks that we are alive.

**May the luminous sun take me to the realm of spiritual heights and may it enlighten my mind with its bright light! (Atharva Veda 19.43.3)**

Namaste to all our readers. I trust that you are all well and keeping safe.

October is a month of Praise, Prayer and Worship. It is a month of great devotion and sacrifice, as Hindus throughout the world revere God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Dissolver.

As Hindus observed Purnima, Pitr Paksh, Mahalaya Paksham and Navaratri, we are reminded of the strict discipline practiced at this time of purification and cleansing of the Body, Mind and Soul. Devotees practice abstinence from meat and alcoholic drinks, this bringing about a control of all senses.

An individual is also expected to devote time to prayer and worship, self-study of the scriptures, yoga and meditation. It is a time to develop an attitude of gratitude for all that God has bestowed on us - the elements, nature, vegetation, animals and the knowledge to use these to the best of our ability and to share with all.

In observing Navaratri, God is worshipped in His/Her attributes of Laxmi (bestower of happiness and prosperity), Saraswati (giver of knowledge) and Durga (remover of pains and sorrows). Thus, it would be important for all to gain strength from this to fight the pandemic of gender-based violence that we experience in South Africa and in the world.

In our daily prayer let us include those who are disadvantaged and destitute, those who are experiencing sorrow, those who are ill and the victims and perpetrators of conflict.

*"Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramayah,*

*Sarve bhadrani pashyantu, ma kashchid dukham apnuyat."*

O Paramatma! May all be happy. May all be free from misery. May all realise goodness and may no one suffer pain."

## Remembering the Message and Legacy of Gandhiji

Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Gandhiji shared her thoughts on "Heritage and Legacy" at the Arya Samaj Sunday Havan hosted by the Veda Dharma Sabha in Pietermaritzburg recently.



Gandhiji's work spans over many disciplines. The unique feature about his legacy is his holistic approach in which he binds everything into one whole. He said that compartmentalising all aspects of life is missing the essence. So we see his ideas on the issue of health, environment, conservation, economics, education, innovation, art, industry, business, gender, politics, communication and social and communal life and he binds it all within the context of spirituality.



He said: "Faith is not a delicate flower which would wither under the slightest stormy weather. Faith is like the Himalaya mountains which cannot possibly change. No storm can possibly remove the Himalaya mountains from their foundation.... and I want every one of you to cultivate that faith in God and religion." He went on to say: "I am no indiscriminate superstitious worshipper of all that goes under the name of "ancient". I never hesitated to demolish all that is evil or immoral, no matter how ancient it may be, but with this reservation, I must confess to you that I am an adorer of ancient institutions,

and it hurts me to think that people in their mad rush for everything modern despise all their ancient traditions and ignore them in their lives."

It is precisely these teachings that brought me into the fold of the Arya Samaj movement in South Africa. People like Nardevbhai, Shishupal Rambharoseji and Pt and Mrs Dookran whose concept of religious purity was based on reasoning and not blind adherence. Their interpretation of Hinduism was to my mind closest to Bapuji's beliefs.

So I saw the dedicated, compassionate way in which Bhai Shishupalji cared for the elderly and the children and all those who needed care and attention regardless of gender, race, class, caste creed. For him Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam was a reality and his actions proved that reality.

I saw the dedication of both Pt and Mrs Dookran, and Mr and Mrs Bandhoo not just to people and their suffering but the fearless way in which they participated in community action against the apartheid system. Mrs Dookran had no hesitation in being in the frontline of demonstrations and faced the might of the apartheid police force with courage and determination borne from their inner faith and conviction. This is our powerful legacy which is seldom spoken of. They were not alone they had many followers who joined them fearlessly.



When Gandhi Development Trust wanted to present Dasrathbhai Bandhoo with a Satyagraha award, he called me and said: "Bahenji I am deeply appreciative of this gesture however let me remind you what the Gita has clearly stated about renunciation. At this stage of my life therefore I would not like to hanker after any recognition or accolades."

What we clearly see is that each of them was also true Gandhians besides being Arya Samajis. They saw the interlink between Gandhian thought and their own learning of their faith. These were indeed giants of the Arya Samaj movement in South Africa and an inspiration to me and to many of you and today in this Heritage Month let us proudly recall their teachings and examples and imbibe them into our lives.



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But as we do so let us also recall the recent unrest in our country and its effect on our people. What happened has had a devastating effect on the people especially in KwaZulu Natal and more specifically on the Phoenix Settlement and the surrounding community.

In a show of solidarity the faith-based community came together to broker peace and goodwill in the area. In addition to the healing and peace building processes, we have been providing computer literacy programmes, an advice and community support office and an internet cafe.

A Covid 19 vaccination drive was also undertaken in the area at the same time. This is part of the ongoing work towards social and spiritual cohesion in the area. The support of the Shembe community in this programme has also been secured.

On the 24th of September the South African Council of Churches in collaboration with the South African Hindu Maha Sabha and other faith-based organisations organised a peace prayer at the Phoenix Settlement.

Thus, the work started by Gandhiji continues.

## Commuter pioneers: paying tribute to our leaders

The Arya Samaj principles call for active involvement in social life, for action that promotes the good of all and for actions that improves the quality of life during the Heritage Month at the Arya Samaj Sunday Havan hosted by the Veda Dharma Sabha Pietermaritzburg, Dr Shamin Mahabeer shared memories of her great grandfather and grandfather who were commuter activists in public transport during the apartheid era.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 forced the relocation of thousands of Indian, African and Coloured families from Central Durban to suburbs on the periphery like Umlazi, Phoenix, Wentworth and Chatsworth. Those who worked in the city-centre struggled with their daily commute.



The government failed to provide a transport infrastructure to them post relocation. Trains and buses were crowded, there was no lighting at stations, no policing, and poor ticketing facilities.



<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Gandhi Development Trust for the photographs sourced on-line



The hurdles faced by communities can be traced back to the work of volunteers. They formed commuter bodies to make representation to the authorities.



The Non-European Passengers Association was started in 1936 by my great grandfather, Bhavani Jarbandhan. The organisation approached the authorities about the lack of resources and injustices. Some improvements were made thereafter.

After Bhavani's death in 1972 his sons, Jarbandhan Ramdhani (my great Uncle) and Jarbandhan Bugwandeem (my maternal grandfather) continued with their voluntary work. The organisation was renamed the Natal Commuters Association.

The scope of work done by the organisation was impressive. They worked with local authorities and bus owners to increase access to suburbs like Phoenix, Chatsworth and Kwa- Mashu. They were instrumental in the roll-out of trains and stations between Chatsworth and Durban Central. They negotiated for shelters, halts, bridges, improved lighting and footpaths to improve congestion at peak times.



Leyland QPS4B MD15125 - Durban  
Photo Brian Hughes 1977 © Andrew Johnson

The organisation was also successful in assisting commuters in the hospitality industry, and the public gained access to the Mobeni Heights crematorium. They advocated on behalf of store-holders in Clairwood and arranged transport facilities for patients at King Edward Hospital in Congella. The bus and train network grew prolifically during this period.

The Isipingo temple was a popular site for pilgrimage by the Indian community. Through their endeavours, the Pilgrim's Halt station was established between Isipingo and Reunion. However, the process was tedious, the progress painstakingly slow and often yielded minimal or no rewards.



The NCA evolved post- apartheid to become the South African Commuters Association. Jarbandhan Ramdhani was the first president of the organisation.

I have clear memories of my grand- father and great uncle, as we spent every weekend with them at our family home in Merebank.



I remember soft spoken gentlemen, impeccably dressed in suits, clattering away at an ancient typewriter. I now realise that they were drafting representations on behalf of the community.

They were artisans, humble men, who always welcomed bus owners, and disadvantaged members of the community to their home. They did not possess a vehicle, so they used buses and trains for their own transport around the suburbs of Durban. Thus, they were ideally positioned to experience first- hand the challenges faced by commuters.

My mother, Mrs K Mahabeer and I remember trips on buses to Clairwood, Merebank and Durban City. We would accompany these elderly gentlemen on long walks at the height of summer so that they could deliver their letters to the authorities, and to the offices of our local newspapers.

During a conversation with my mother, she remembered that my great uncle had left some documents with her brother. I was delighted to discover that they had left meticulous records of our family history, their personal experiences during the 1949 riots, and the NCA.

Together with my cousin Pravin Ram, we expanded our knowledge of their work by perusing hard copies of the Leader, Graphic and Herald at the UDW Documentation centre. I think my grandfather and his brother thought that by leaving these documents, that maybe someday their story would be told.<sup>2</sup> It is my honour and privilege to do so.



"Krinvanto Vishwam Aryam" - Make the world noble (Rig Veda 9.63.6)

To contribute to projects of the Arya Samaj contact [admin@aryasamajsa.org](mailto:admin@aryasamajsa.org)

"Mitrasya Chakshusha samikshamahe" - May we Look at All with an Equal and Friendly Eye (Yajur Veda 36.18)

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**Veda Jyoti Founding Editors were Pt Nardev Vedalankar (1913-1994) and the late Manohar Somera.**

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Tel: 031 2670544/0519  
Arya Samaj South Africa,  
87 Harbottle Road,  
Sydenham Durban,  
4091, South Africa  
[www.aryasamajsa.org](http://www.aryasamajsa.org)  
PBO No. 18/11/13/2971

<sup>2</sup> A more comprehensive version of this article may be accessed at [www.1860heritagecentre.com/wordpress](http://www.1860heritagecentre.com/wordpress). We are grateful to the 1860 Heritage Centre for sharing photographs with us.