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The 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference will end on 12 November. Will the world leaders this time round consider the needs of 9,2% of the world's population living in extreme poverty who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change? They too must be a part of the Just Transition away from fossil fuels. Arya Samaj South Africa is a signatory to the Climate Justice Charter presented to the South African Parliament on 16 October 2020. The charter covers participatory democracy, international solidarity, decoloniality, eco-centric living, socialised ownership, climate justice, social justice and inter-generational justice.

The religious intolerance experienced in Bangladesh calls for leaders to ensure that all citizens are protected and have the freedom to practise their choice of religion. Leaders must ensure that hate speech on social media that spurns such attacks and communal violence is regulated.

During Deepavali Deep Daan in the Arya Samaj offers the opportunity for those who have the means to share their wealth. Deep Daan is also about sharing knowledge and developing skills to build capabilities and take steps to unite society.

In this issue Dr Satish Prakash the Founder-Acharya of the Maharshi Dayananda Gurukula in New York, United States of America & Guyana, South America was invited to share his views on Diwali. His stimulating thoughts form our feature article.

On the 3 November 1991, 30 years ago change was unfolding in South Africa. As we emerged from the darkness of apartheid, Nelson Mandela delivered an address to the Diwali Celebrations held at the Durban City Hall. We are proud to share this with our readers and thank the leaders who provided this address.

"From Untruth to Truth; From Darkness to Light" considers the current situation and the need for social action in the context of renewal and Diwali.

We also share an article entitled "Navraathri: The Archetypes of Knowledge, Wealth and Strength"

Divesh Cassiram Director of the Heal Foundation, a project of the Arya Samaj South Africa, shares the work of the foundation in this issue.

Wishing all a blessed Deepavali!

Veda Jyoti Editorial Committee

Arthi Shanand, Divesh Cassiram, Karuna Mohan, Nishi Bundhoo, Reshma Rambharos, Sudhira Sham, Usha Debipersad.

Towards an Understanding of Diwali



Diwali is a festival on the fifteenth day of the Hindu month of Kaartik. Diwali, also called Deepavali, means *rows of lighted lamps* and thus the celebration is often referred to as the Festival of Lights.

During this time homes are thoroughly cleaned. Windows are opened to welcome the coming of new wealth. Little oil lamps, called *deeyaas*, are lit and placed in rows to commemorate the occasion. Gifts are exchanged and festive meals are prepared. The celebration of Diwali means as much to Hindus as Christmas does to Christians.

Festivals are an expressive way to celebrate our glorious heritage, our culture, and our traditions. They are meant to motivate us to rejoice on special occasions and to express emotions with our loved ones. Festivals play an important role in adding structure to our social lives and connect us with our families and our historical background. They give us a necessary distraction from exhausting routines in our day-to-day life and inspire us to remember ethics and values that have moulded us from childhood. As we observe Festivals, we pass on

knowledge, legends, and traditions to the next generation.

Festival time is characteristically different from ordinary, everyday time. Festival time is sacred time, whereas everyday time is filled with insecurity, fear, profanity, and corruption. Festival is called *Parva* in Sanskrit, - that which makes us complete – it makes us sacred, courageous, and connected with our inner self. Diwali, like Phaguua-Holi, is one festival that makes us feel complete.



Wealth equals power and power is good if it does not harm another living creature. Wealth should be used to develop oneself and the society in which one lives. It should not be a barometer to measure social prestige but should be a tool for us to rise to higher levels of magnanimity and divinity.

In celebrating Diwali, we perform Havan by chanting Mantras and making offerings of newly harvested grains unto a blazing sacrificial fire, and thereby share a portion of our accumulated wealth for the purification of the environment.

Vedic Tradition teaches us one concept of Prasaad. Prasaad is what remains after a portion has been offered. Is your wealth Prasaad? Have you shared your resources with someone who is hungry, or who does not have enough to make a success of life? This is another call inherent in the celebration of Diwali.

We, who are not farmers by profession can still feel comfortable with this sowing-reaping significance of Diwali. The question is one that targets the inner spirit: Did we sow seeds of virtuous inclinations and habits, called **Sanskaars**, that can germinate and grow into bearing fruits of enriched character? Is this year's Diwali the time for us to reap such fruits?

Diwali and Rishi Dayananda

In addition to focusing on wealth on Diwali Day, Hindus also focus on the passing of the lionine soul of Mahaa Rishi Swami Dayananda Saraswati. On Diwali Day, October 30, in the year 1883, Rishi Dayananda inhaled his last breath and entered Emancipation. Approximately half of an hour before this, many of the Rishi's devoted followers stood in front of him, contemplating the noble figure lying prostrate before them. Sometime between 5:30 and 5:40 PM, the Rishi beckoned, giving a signal that they stand behind him. They all did in total silence. The Rishi now signaled for all doors and windows to be opened and looking at the ceiling he asked: "What is the day and date today? What fortnight (*Paksha*) is it?" The



Diwali and Dark Night

Diwali occurs on the darkest night of the month called *Amaavasyaa*. Outer atmospheric darkness is significant of inner emotional and spiritual darkness. When we kindle and place lamps on the outside, we kindle and place the Lamp of Wisdom in the temple of our hearts.

This gives us a clarion call to seek out all human hearts that are dark with emotional turbulence. There are millions of souls out there groping in darkness – afraid of what is yet to come. Diwali calls upon us to share the light of wisdom with such souls, and thus, lend them a sense of assurance and protection.

Diwali and Reaping Harvest

During Diwali farmers reap bountiful harvests. Reaping crops is considered a time of amassing wealth. In Vedic/Hindu society and culture, wealth is seen as a positive notion. **Vayam syaama patayo rayeenaam** – Let us be masters of wealth in abundance, says the Yajur Veda.

Wealth is not a corruptive contrivance used to harm others. What is corrupt is one's attitude towards wealth.

reply was: “Swamiji, it is the end of the dark fortnight (*Amavasya Krishna Paksh*). Today is Tuesday.”

Hearing this he looked up at the ceiling, composed himself for contemplation, began chanting *Veda Mantras*, and praised God in both Sanskrit and Hindi. With deep joy on his face, he repeated the *Gayatri Mantra* in clear tones, and was absorbed in a deep trance (*Yoga Samadhi*) for quite a few minutes. He then opened his eyes and exclaimed in a tone lower than normal:

Merciful and Almighty God!

What a wonderful life-drama You have enacted!

*This is Your Will! This is Your Will!
Let Your Will be fulfilled!*

With these last words the Rishi turned in his bed to lie sideways, took a deep breath in, held it for a while, and then completely expelled it with one vigorous effort. The soul of India’s greatest savior, in modern times, had finally passed on into the Great Beyond. It was 6:00 PM, Diwali Day, October 30, 1883.

Historians ask a pertinent question. Seeing that the festival of lights started simultaneously with the exit of the Rishi’s Soul, can it be intelligently assumed that the universal illumination of Diwali was in honor of the departed Soul? Can it be further assumed that a huge, bright, and glorious light in the form of the Rishi had kindled countless human heart-lights, saw them flickering luminously, and then departed?

Those present around the Rishi’s bed on Diwali Day, 1883, would never forget that moment in history when the soul of the Rishi passed on in peace and tranquility. In their experience it was as if a huge, tall mountain had collapsed and left them stunned and shocked.

Gurudatt Vidyarthi of Lahore, a scientist and agnostic, who was looking at the Rishi all the time, standing on one side of the room was converted in a moment from being a sceptic to a confirmed God-believer. The moving scene of the Rishi’s calm and resigned ‘death’ forever wiped away from his mind the lingering doubts that he had entertained about the existence of God. Swamiji’s so-called death gave Gurudatt a new life and a new faith. As Swamiji’s soul flew to the Great Beyond, Gurudatt saw bright visions: one was the Rishi’s death without tears of agony, and the other was the Rishi comparable to a huge, bright light, kindling, in Diwali style, the flickering light of hope in the hearts of humanity overcome for centuries by hate, untruth, superstition and irrationality.

Did death conquer Dayananda? Gurudatt wondered. Then he realized, oh no! it was Dayananda who conquered death.

The Rishi cast off life with as little concern as an elephant casting off a garland of flowers. His life was filled with the bliss of the soul. He made humanity drink from his hand the nectar of that bliss. And now, he passed into the reservoir of God’s Bliss. The Rishi’s followers and admiring friends may lament over his death. But in life he stood face to face before His God, executing His command, for which he was sent into the world.

Each year, on Diwali Day, we observe the Rishi’s Emancipation Day (*Nivaan Divas*) not in a spirit of mourning, but in a spirit of thanksgiving, expressing gratefulness that God had sent His special gift, called Dayananda, to India in particular, and to humanity at large.



This elevated human being relinquished the alluring affluence of his ancestral inheritance. He turned his face away from the warm smiles of his affectionate parents, loving siblings, friends, and neighbors, and wandered for fourteen tortuous years across North India, traversing hills and plains, entering dangerous jungles and caves, and crossing deep ice-filled rivers in quest of spiritual freedom (*Moksha*).

At last, he found a Guru in Virjananda, who fired him up with such a passion that he quickly forgot about his personal *Moksha* just for the sake of *Moksha* for his fellow human beings. To alleviate the sufferings of others, he suffered so much hunger and thirst, heat and cold, abuse and humiliation, injuries, and death-threats that even so-called gods could shed tears. Verily, this Rishi suffered a living crucifixion every day since he left home in 1846. Ultimately, he died a martyr’s death in 1883.

Ah! Here was a true human being; when comes another one like him?

Diwali and Brother-Sister Relationship

Another practice during Diwali is *Bhaiyyaa Dooj*. On this day women are given gifts by their brothers and held in the highest respect. While *Rakshaa Bandhan* is Sisters' Day, *Bhaiyyaa Dooj* is Brothers' Day.



Diwali – A New Financial Year

In North India, Diwali is also the time to close old accounts books and open new ones, and so, it represents the commencement of a new fiscal year. Hence, many Hindus celebrate the dawn of a new year.

In certain other parts of India, the celebration of Diwali lasts for five days. Each of the five days is marked with worship and meditation. During these five days people focus on a celebration of life, joy, and goodness. From darkness we enter light, and light empowers us to do good deeds and bring ourselves closer to divinity.

Diwali calls upon all humans to recognize that there are many minds living in so much darkness that they see no bright future for themselves. Homes are broken, children run to the streets looking for support from drugs and crime, and generally people are hungry.

This Diwali, as you and I chant Mantras, and kindle little lamps, let us focus on our self and the self of people in the community.

Place a *deeyaa* in your heart, in your home, in your village community, and in the nation at large. And let's remember the soul of Rishi Dayananda Saraswati.

HAPPY DIWALI!

RISHI NIRVAAN!

Message from the APS President Pt Arthi Nanakchand Shanand

NAMASTE

November heralds the festival of Deepavali. This brings with it hope and new beginnings.

People all over the world have experienced the devastating challenges of Covid-19, unemployment, racial tensions and destruction by natural elements.

This Deepavali as we light our little diyas, let us also light the flame of knowledge within us to dispel ignorance, ego, hatred and the darkness that shrouds our path to righteousness. Let the knowledge of our Dharma empower us to recognise and speak the truth, support and help others and be citizens of a caring world.

The Arya Samaj South Africa sends out an appeal every Deepavali in the form of the Deep Daan pamphlet, asking for donations to help us light up the lives of those less fortunate. Please support this initiative.

Many organisations contribute to helping several families celebrate this very important festival by way of donating food hampers. It is our hope that this continues regularly throughout the year. The HEAL Foundation, the humanitarian wing of the Arya Samaj, has set an example by feeding the hungry every week.

Dear readers, the local government elections have taken place, many candidates have made promises to practise good governance. We pray that the light of knowledge guides the successful candidates to work harmoniously together to bring about equity and restore the dignity of all citizens by ensuring that every voice is given a hearing, that services are delivered, and that social justice and social cohesion prevails.

Students throughout the country are preparing for examinations. We wish them well and pray that they achieve good results.

On behalf of the Arya Samaj South Africa, I wish you a very Happy Deepavali. Be safe, maintain social distance and remember to wear your mask.

Speech by Nelson Mandela at Diwali Celebration held at Durban City Hall 3 November 1991



Diwali brings back memories of my days on Robben Island. Regularly at this time of year when our Hindu friends the world over were preparing to celebrate the Festival of Lights we would be visited by Hindu priests. I recall Mr. Govender from Cape Town and Mr. Padyachee from Pretoria. They would come and offer prayers with us and bring with them parcels of sweet eats. The authorities were insistent that these parcels were only for believers in the Hindu faith. Through our struggles were able to challenge the authorities on this narrow conception and we insisted that the all-embracing philosophies that Hinduism is based on extending a hand to all of humanity. In this way I and my fellow comrades such as Wilton Mkwa, Ahmed Kathrada, Ismail Ebrahim and many more joined Billy Nair, Mac Maharaj, Issoo Chiba, George Naicker and others in collectively marking this important celebration in the Hindu calendar and, also enjoying the offerings that were prepared at this time

It humbles me to be associated with a festival that goes back over 5000 years. I also feel privileged and proud that our country is blessed with so much diversity and richness of cultures and traditions.

The Festival of Diwali and the history and significance that is a part of the festival carries innumerable lessons for us all and I can refer to only a few.

We have been engaged in the battle against the forces of darkness along lines similar in the Hindu scriptures. The policies of apartheid and its creator, the National Party have inflicted serious damage on the country and its

people. Notwithstanding some apologies for this crime against humanity this party now wants to project itself as the defenders of the peace and the guardians of democracy. Today it is this party which wants to woo the Indian people into its ranks.

But let us remind ourselves of the historical role that the Indian community has played in resisting every form of discrimination, inequality and oppression. From the time of Gandhi, who enabled this community to create the first democratic political organ in Africa by creating the Natal Indian Congress in 1894, this community has displayed consistent political wisdom and courage. From the first mass actions during the passive resistance campaigns of 1913 to the total rejection of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indians Representation Act in 1946 to the gallant defiance campaign of 1952 and the defeat of the Nationalist Party's plan to repatriate Indians in the 1950's the Indians have demonstrated their oneness with all other oppressed South Africans.



Passive Resistance Campaign 1946-1948

But this tradition continued even during the worst years of repression when the leadership of the congresses were forced into jail, exile or silence; they still refused to accept the National Party-chosen South African Indian Council in 1962. This rejection was demonstrated time and again:



Congress of the People in June 1955. Seen with Monty Naicker (president of NIC) is Moses Mabhida (front) (secretary of the CPSA) and Unionist, Melville Fletcher (right). The 'Thumbs-Up' symbol of resistance (Mayibuye iAfrica!) was banned.



Late Sewmungal Satgar, President of VDS Pietermaritzburg and Karuna Mohan lead a march organised by the Pietermaritzburg Combined Ratepayers Association and UDF, against the Pietermaritzburg 2000 under the national campaign "One City One Rate-base" in 1985.

During the SAIC elections of 1981, during the Tri-Cameral elections of 1984 and during the elections of Management Committees and Local Affairs Committees during the eighties. Generation after generation have been the proud bearers of the mantle of Gandhi and defenders of the rich political culture that Sathyagraha introduced into the politics of this country.



Clockwise: Late George Sewpersad (president of NIC), Late Archie Gumede (Natal President of UDF), Late Billy Nair, Late MJ Naidoo, Late Mewa Ramgobin, and Late Paul David were detained after leading a national campaign for a boycott of the discredited Tricameral parliamentary system. They took refuge in the British Consulate in Durban to circumvent arrest in 1984.

This I can vouch for from my own personal development. I and my generation of political activists owe a great debt to the Gandhian tradition of passive resistance. It was this spirit which moved us in 1949 to formulate the programme of action of the African National Congress Youth League. It is this spirit which inspired us to launch the Defiance Campaign of 1952.

¹ We thank South African History online and Capital News for the historical photographs sourced on-line.

It is this unity in action ushered into our history by the Dadoo-Xuma-Naicker Pact in 1947 which consolidated a political relationship and tradition which has endured the trials of many decades since. This is the substance of the congress tradition: An unmovable commitment to non-racialism, to unity in action and to safe-guarding the interests of every section of the oppressed community. It is these years which created a comradeship among Yusuf Dadoo, Monty Naicker, Braam Fischer, Oliver Tambo, Jimmy La Guma and many others.

We are poised to see through our long battle the forces of truth, enlightenment and democracy triumph. But this is not going to come easily. It is still a battle. This past weekend in Durban we were part of creating a patriotic front which is intended to bring us all together to make one big push against the forces of darkness that we have been confronting and struggling against for so long.

Justice, truth, integrity, humility, freedom, are values that the Hindu scriptures like the scriptures of most other religions espouse. In the ANC we have built on these values and through the contribution of the people in 1955 we drew up the Freedom Charter which has acted as a beacon for us in our struggle for non-racial democracy in South Africa. We have worked hard to build unity among all the people of this country and for us to come together to build a peaceful, tolerant and prosperous country. The ANC has been and will continue to be a home for all freedom loving people, not least of all our Indian brothers and sisters.

WE are committed to building bridges and helping to embrace all of humanity under one umbrella and move forward in strength and confidence to a better future. We believe that this is not different from what Hindu scriptures have also been saying.

At this time of Diwali and as I light this sacred lamp, I am aware of how this lamp symbolises the triumph of:

*Enlightenment over blind faith,
prosperity over poverty,
knowledge over ignorance,
good health and well-being over disease and ill
health, and
freedom over bondage.*

In our struggle we will be celebrating this triumph together. But we have a difficult road to walk before we can claim that victory for us all in this country. The Indian community has always supported the cause of freedom.

Now more than ever before it will have to become more visible and, in that way, recognised and acknowledged.

I am told by learned Hindu scholars that as we light the lamp and, also pray to the Goddess Laxmi, we need to remember that from our position of well being and prosperity that there are many who are less fortunate and deprived and that we will have to work together to formulate ways of helping to respond to the grinding poverty and desperation in the country.

At this time we also remember leaders and persons who gave their lives for the cause of freedom. Now we remember Swami Dayanand who was poisoned for his convictions for a free and independent India and who died on Diwali day. We remember the many brave persons in our struggle who gave their lives for the cause of freedom. We remember Krish Rabillal, Ahmed Timol, Solomon Mahlangu and thousands of others. Those lamps went out and in their place thousands more lamps were lit for there to be freedom and peace in our land.

Friends, I feel deeply honoured to be with you at this time of Diwali. I will always remember this festival which we religiously marked for many years on Robben Island. In our struggle in this country there are many lessons that can be drawn from the festival and the Epic - The Ramayana which is closely associated with the festival.

We are on the verge of entering a new era in this country. We must light lamps of thanksgiving for enlightenment as we go forward into the future in peace and hope and prosperity.

AMANDLA!

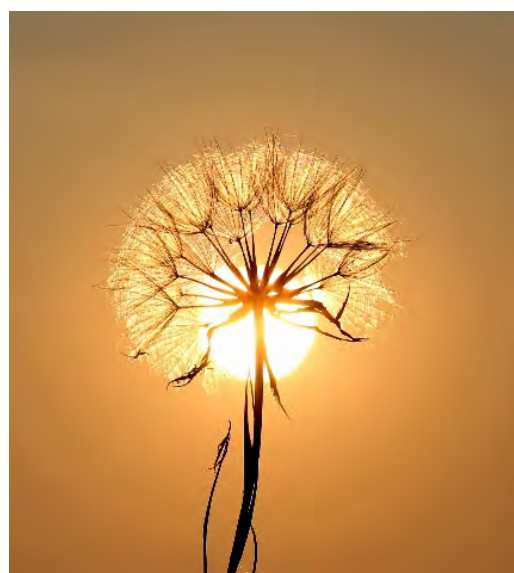


From Untruth to Truth; From Darkness to Light

Diwali is a special time of renewal. Renewal only takes place once we have taken stock of where we are and how far we have come. Currently the world is facing a crisis on climate change, urbanisation pressures that stress the infrastructure in cities, health pandemics that has curbed our free movement and brought about loss of dear ones, cyber insecurity with hacking resulting in loss of data, and an increased inability to be inclusive based on race, class, ethnicity, and gender.

In South Africa we have just emerged from a period of strife and fear, where disregard for property and life graduated from domestic and gender-based violence to community-wide attacks and self-defence. The failure of the state to deliver basic services and to curb the relentless greed and theft of state resources that manifests in corruption has disappointed many as freedom has come to mean the ascendancy of a few at the expense of the majority being outside the circle of benefits without access to opportunities.

We recite "*Om Asato ma sad gamaya. Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya. Mrtiyorma-mrtam gamaya*" (O Lord lead us from untruth to truth, lead us from darkness to light, lead us from death to immortality) daily. How do we put this into practice? As social beings we relate to each other daily. How can we collectively realise a move from untruth to truth, a move away from darkness into light?



Diwali implies a time when we renew and enrich ourselves, when we come together with friends and family. As the global struggles against poverty and inequalities, for climate justice, peace and acceptance

continue, we renew our commitments individually and collectively in these efforts.

The Hindu community has mobilised itself over the years reflecting the spirit of giving, the commitment to uplift the poor and marginalised. This was rooted in the Diwali festivities. We could extend this Diwali spirit to assist in the development of a South African community where respect for each other, commitment to developing others and upholding the truth is paramount.

The Arya Samaj principles 4-10 guide us to live our lives through social action.

Truth: We should be ever ready to embrace truth and forsake untruth.

Righteousness: All acts should be done in accordance with Dharma after deliberating what is right and wrong.

Benevolence: The prime object of the Arya Samaj is to do good to the world, that is to promote the physical, spiritual and social good of every sentient being.

Love and Justice: Our conduct towards all should be guided by love, righteousness and justice.

Nescience and Science: We should dispel "avidya" (nescience), and promote "vidya (science), spiritual and physical.

Individualism and Altruism: No one should be content with promoting his good only; on the contrary, he should look for his good in promoting the good of all.

Subordination and Liberty: All individuals should subordinate themselves to the laws of society calculated to promote the well-being of all; they should be free regarding the laws promoting individual well-being.

One of the key aspects of social action is to share our wealth and riches. This includes sharing money, knowledge, possessions and being inclusive. In this respect, wealth is also our human resources, our creativity, our natural resources and our moral fibre and ethics.

In individuals, wealth is also the capacity to forgive and to trust, the capacity to do the correct actions to serve humanity. This service must be to build and capacitate others. When we continue dependency, we are not uplifting others but keeping them back. When there are natural disasters humanitarian relief work is necessary, but to continue such relief work in normal times is letting the state off from their duty to provide a decent life for all.

As a country we had a process of Truth and Reconciliation which took us down the road to forgiveness and humility. We are increasingly being shown the truth of the past atrocities but there are now new struggles for access to services, sound ethics and honesty to be ingrained.

To move away from untruths and closer to truths, to heal and move away from the darkness of the apartheid past and the current crisis of leadership and lack of development toward light of freedom, equity and peace. We must take up social actions and promote social justice. There will be no peace without a decisive change in the lives of people.



The Arya Samaj has joined the Dennis Hurley Centre and a broad coalition to lobby local government to provide shelter, access to healthcare, access to sanitation and ablution, equal treatment by local law and security forces and increasing economic opportunity for the homeless in Durban.

We have a unique opportunity to make a new commitment, a commitment to development, truth, justice and peace. As Hindus have a wealth of experience, a rich cultural heritage and valuable learning to share with our fellow South Africans.

DIWALI IS THEREFORE A TIME FOR STOCK TAKING AND SOCIAL ACTION.

Navaraatri: The Archetypes of Knowledge, Wealth and Strength ²

Navaratri heralds the celebration of God as the Divine Mother, over nine nights – **Nava – nine and ratri – nights**. God is One but he is called by many names according to His attributes. **Ekam sad viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti – God is one, but wise people call God by many names. Rig Veda 1:64:46**

During Navaratri the nine days are dedicated to the reverence of Goddesses, Luxmi, Saraswati and Durga. It is also known as Durga Pooja, because, as the saying goes, the festival symbolises the victory of Durga over the demon, Mahishasura, signifying the victory of good over evil.

How do people who do not believe in Idol Worship or who understand God as formless interpret the observation of the nine nights and ten days?

The ten days of the festival refer to the purification of the ten *Indriyas* by the spiritual practices. The ten *Indriyas* are the 5 *Karma Indriyas* of action and the 5 *Gnana Indriyas* of perception.

The Goddesses represent the Shakti or Creative energies of the three names of God according to the three primary attributes viz., Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Rudra the Dissolver.

So, how do we pay reverence to the Shakti or Divine energies?

The life of a human being according to Vedic teachings, is divided into four Stages or Ashramas. These are the *Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha and Sannyasa* Ashramas. These four stages are complemented by the four *Purushartas* or objectives in life – *Dharma, Artha, Kaama, Moksha*.

In illustrating the relationship of the four stages of life to the four objectives the revering of Goddesses during Navaratri comes to light.

The first stage of life – Brahmacharya Ashrama

² In this article the description of female counterparts, consorts and deities is taken from Hindu mythology. The interpretation in this article is based on equality and counterpart is seen as the



During the Brahmacharya or the first stage the young individual concentrates on acquiring knowledge, practising self-restraint and being disciplined.

The presiding Deva or Deity during this stage is Brahma, the Creator of this Universe. His female counterpart is Saraswati – the Goddess of Knowledge. The objective during this stage is Dharma.

Dharma is the Sanskrit word for religion based on justice virtue and duty, meaning that which sustains. Religion or Dharma must be evident in every aspect of our lives. We cannot confine it to specific days dedicated to prayer only. Every action, thought, and word must be based on Dharma. Then only can we say that Dharma raises Man above the nature of the animal.

There are three aspects to religion. Belief in God, rituals and ceremonies, and ethics and morals. These three aspects should become part and parcel of our lives. This means that whatever we do and say must be based on the truth. Dharma therefore refers to our religious duties.

This the Yajur Veda mantra invokes Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge: **“Maho’arnah Saraswati pra cetayati ketūnā. Dhiyo visarā virājati.” Chapter 20**

Saraswati is like a giant ocean of knowledge. Whatever we know is a small indication of the immeasurable knowledge existing in the world. Our knowledge is resplendent due it being a part of universal knowledge.

What is this universal knowledge?

There are two kinds of knowledge – worldly knowledge and spiritual knowledge. It is necessary to acquire knowledge of worldly things like language, science, economics, mathematics, politics and so on. The acquisition of knowledge about the world is necessary so that we can use it to alleviate worldly sufferings such

gender balance or equivalent: that both male and female have equal weight. This interpretation, given that patriarchal nature of modern society, assists to understand the intersection of religion and spirituality with the feminist concepts of equality.

diseases, malnutrition, droughts, wars, conflicts and the social problems.

Spiritual knowledge is the understanding of God. Based on an understanding of and through the communion with God a human being actualises their potentialities. Scientific advancement contributes to improvement in living. However, humans experience a life of pain and pleasure, and harbour feelings of envy, jealousy, and hatred. To counteract these there is a need for spiritual knowledge or knowledge of Brahman. With this knowledge the mind becomes still, is guided by the intellect to act within righteousness and thus the soul advances to becoming pure. The underlying point is acquisition of spiritual knowledge.

The second stage of life – Grihastha Ashrama



The second stage of life is the *Grihastha Ashrama* – the life of a householder – the stage of marriage. This may be the most important stage of life. The *Brahmacharya* and the *Vanprasth* stages arise from this *ashrama*. During the *Grihastha Ashrama* a family is raised, nurtured and sustained. The family unit contributes to the social and economic development of a community and nation.

The presiding Deity during this stage is Vishnu, the Preserver and Sustainer and the female counterpart is Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth. The objectives in life during this stage are *Artha* – material prosperity, a means of obtaining the necessities of life and *Kaama* – the natural desire of humans to obtain worldly happiness.

The following mantra from the Yajur Veda, the Rig Veda and the Atharva Veda demonstrates very aptly, the meaning of Lakshmi.

“Srisca te Laksmisca patnya avahoratre, parsve naksatrani rupam asvinau vya attam Isnani sanamum ma isnani sarvalokam ma isnani “

Shri means beauty, attractiveness, that which everybody desires. Lakshmi means the one who bestows wealth, beauty and joy; the divine energy which everybody aspires to experience. These are symbolic of the attributes of God, the Supreme Being.

The universe created by the Supreme Being is one of great magnificence and one looks in awe at the beauty of nature that is seen everywhere.



We see this beauty in the flora and fauna, in the brilliance of the constellations, in the perfect arc of the rainbow and we are reminded that God is omniscient and omnipresent.



Does Lakshmi - wealth, possessions, riches this mean only the possession of money?

Wealth lies in every substance provided by God. Every substance is valued according to its usefulness - water, wind, soil, and the vast treasures provided underground such as gold, diamonds, iron ore, and those that rise from the Earth – fruit, flowers, grain etc. All these natural resources provided by God make up our collective wealth.

How do we as human beings pay reverence to Mother Lakshmi?

We often say that when a baby girl is born, that Lakshmi has entered our homes. Lakshmi is referred to as Mother. The attributes of a mother are caring, sharing, loving,

sustaining and protecting. In our homes our mothers are constantly caring for all of us. They make sure that everyone is fed, clothed and made comfortable even though very often they have to go without something themselves. They also never turn away someone from their door without offering them something to eat or drink. Our mothers are our sustainers and therefore we often refer to them as Mother Lakshmi.

The objective of the *Grhasta Ashrama* or married life is to work hard and earn an income so that the family can be sustained. This is the only *ashrama* where householders have the privilege to contribute to the economic life of a country. It is not wrong to accumulate wealth provided that, it is used in the right way and earned by honest means and through effort.

We constantly pray to Mother Lakshmi as householders because we always want the best for our families. We must remember that prosperity will only come to those who earn their income by honest and pure means as this will herald the entry of Lakshmi into our homes.

Our earnings should not be tainted by dishonesty and deviousness. Likewise money earned should not be squandered on gambling, substance and alcohol abuse and spending on trappings of luxury.

Those who share their wealth and food with those who are less fortunate revere Mother Lakshmi and therefore lead lives of contentment.

So how does the objective of Artha fit into the Grihasta Ashrama?

Wealth is necessary to maintain a comfortable lifestyle and run institutions. To a Hindu, material wealth is also related to Dharma. Conspicuous display of wealth and greed goes against Dharma. Wealth must be used for the benefit of all beings. While material wealth is necessary for family welfare spiritual advancement too is an important feature which is reflected in how accumulated wealth is used.

The first verse of Chapter 40 of the Yajur Veda: “..... **tena tyaktena bhunjitah...**” – enjoy it detachedly. These three simple words contain a volume of philosophical truth. And the verse goes on to say, “**ma gridhah**” – do not cling. “**Kasya swidhanam?**” Whose property is it? Not yours alone.

The Vedas say: “**Akshair ma divyah krishimat krishashwa, Vitte ramaswa bahumanyan manah**” which means: “Do not gamble, earn your money by working hard, tilling the Earth and producing crops. Be satisfied with whatever you get, for contentment is the basis of

happiness. Greed, on the other hand, is the cause of misery and envy.”

Respect your wealth and it will respect you.

How does Kaama get fulfilled in the Grihasta Ashrama?

Kaama means the satisfaction of worldly desires. Both men women are happy when their physical pleasures are fulfilled. The mere satisfaction of hunger and thirst makes them happy. Humans enjoy the world by means of their sense organs – eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. Their desire for sexual happiness is fulfilled after marriage, having exercised control of the senses during the Brahmacharya stage.

These days we are made aware of cases of women and children being raped, murdered and abused by their own people. Where is the respect then for the Mother?

All females should be regarded as the Mother. Even one’s spouse must be afforded every respect. We can only earn respect if we afford the same respect to everything and every person. We must be mindful that God has given humans the highest form of life and has put us on Earth so that we can live righteously and allow others to do so as well.



The third and fourth stages of life

The third stage of life is the *Vanprasth Ashrama*, sees the householders relinquishing their home and responsibilities of caring for family, and making an economic to their children. The *Vanpasth* dedicates his/her life to enhancing the lives of others. He/she lives a life of renunciation, preparing for Moksha.

The presiding deity during this stage is Rudra, the Dissolver and His female counterpart is Durga, the Remover of pains and sorrows and the Granter of bliss and peace.

Durga or Parvati, the Consort of Shiva, does not make an appearance in Vedic literature. The Kena Upanishad however, talks about Uma-Haimavati who manifests as Shakti. Uma (Shankara or Shiva) and Haimavati is Parvati the daughter of King Himavan, the King of the Himalayas. Like Shiva, Parvati too is the embodiment of bliss and peace. This is evident in the last two stages of life – the Vanprasth and Sannyas Asharamas.

The objective during these two stages is Moksha. When one is experiencing bliss and peace, it means that one is free of pain, sorrow and disease, illness and suffering.

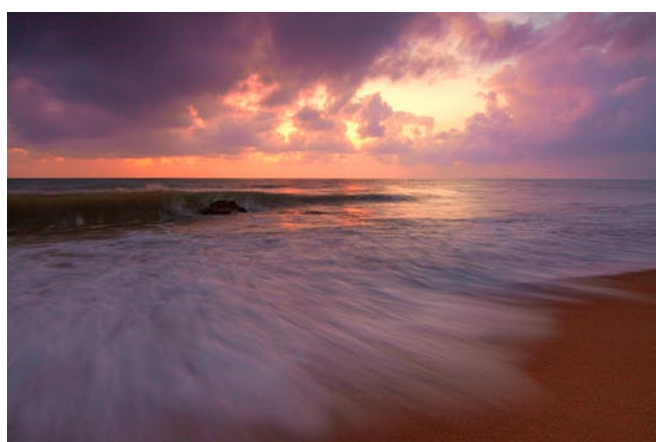
But what causes unhappiness in life?

While external factors such as natural disasters, poverty, jealousy and enmity are huge contributors of mental anguish, disease, old-age and death are also known to be the contributors of unhappiness.

Just as Mother Durga defeats the demon Mahishasura, getting rid of evil, in the same way, getting rid of our evil thoughts and being free of physical and mental illness brings us closer to God and ultimately, brings us closer to freedom from birth and death – which is salvation or *Moksha*.

“...Avidyayaa mrityum tirtvaa vidyaa mritamshnute”
Yajur Veda chapter 40:14

With worldly knowledge hardships and sufferings can be overcome. But with spiritual knowledge immortality (*Moksha*) can be reached.



HEAL Foundation: A project of the Arya Samaj SA

HEAL (Humanitarian, Environmental and Animal Liberation) Foundation is a dedicated humanitarian wing of the Arya Samaj. Its basis is the universal and symbiotic coexistence with love and respect. The Foundation officially began its work in January 2020.

In South Africa, the effects of poverty and suffering are witnessed daily. The disparity between the rich and the poor is ever widening.

HEAL Foundation attracts individuals who are inclined towards a service-based approach, thus making Karma Yoga more relevant in the modern age.



“Karma” means action and “Yoga” means spiritual union (literally from the word Yuj “to join”), thus Karma Yoga is the uniting with the inner Supreme Spirit through Action or duty in all facets of life, not necessarily only that of volunteership or social work. In chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gita Shri Krishna said: *“Do your duty without the concern to the fruit of it”*. This can be simply explained as carrying out your responsibilities to the best of your ability without any involvement of ego or attachment.

Karma yoga has no concern with race, caste, creed or language – it is a duty of every human being.

By providing the structure and platform like the HEAL Foundation, individuals especially the youth, are given a path to serve and give back to society. Through Seva, the individual develops a greater intuition within themselves, creating a dual purpose of uplifting themselves as well as others. It is personal transformation in collective action. It develops one’s character over time through a mindful approach. The sense of entitlement is lost, and a renewed purpose of selfless service is inculcated. This allows for our limited consciousness to expand into greater levels realising that it’s not only about us as individuals or our personal surroundings but of society, nature and animals included.

The HEAL Foundation works on the values of Karma Yoga in its daily operation. Some of the projects are:

Humanitarian Projects – Feeding and Hamper Distribution

Over **100 000 meals** and over **5000 hampers** have been served across the province throughout the Covid pandemic. This is because of a dedicated and consistent approach that has been applied. We are also grateful to Manav Seva Foundation for partnering with us in the establishment of the **HEAL Kitchen @ HumanGig** which serves 1000 meals a day across different areas of the province. With projects like these the hope is there to facilitate the growth and expansion in other areas.

Environmental Welfare Projects

Our Environmental Welfare team has also successfully completed a tree planting initiative, “Plant a Spekboom”, which was launched in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day. The team also partnered up with KZN Clean Blue Lagoon and Adopt a River Foundation to clean up our lagoons and beaches in Durban. The clean-up operations continue at Blue Lagoon Mangroves with many volunteers.

Animal Welfare Projects

Our Animal team has ensured that we address the plight of animal welfare organizations. They donated food supplies to the SPCA and are working with farms and zoo’s by providing much needed supplies.

Baby Beanie Drive

In June 2021, the Foundation launched a crochet campaign requesting members of the public to crochet beanies for new-born babies. Participants were provided with the raw materials. This initiative grew far beyond our expectations and proved to be a roaring success, as we received over 1000 beanies and counting. This is currently being distributed to various NGO’s and Hospitals.

Disaster Response

The Foundation has also been able to successfully respond in times of crisis with the recent riots that has affected numerous individuals. During the riots a co-ordinated effort was achieved, which allowed us to efficiently pack and distribute much needed essentials for individuals who were struggling. We have provided Oxygen Concentrators as well as medicine packs in the efforts to support the victims of the Coronavirus Pandemic.



The success of these projects was possible through dedicated volunteers and selfless donors who have come to the fore in assisting those in need. For this, we express our deepest and heartfelt gratitude.

Only together, united in our thoughts and actions, can we succeed and achieve all that we envision and aspire towards.

Disunity creates disharmony. Ego and attachment for the benefit of oneself alone goes against the very dictates of Dharma, the universal principles of humanity.

As a Foundation, the spotlight of all our efforts is towards those we serve. Ours is the path of Karma Yoga - Yoga in Action!



Comments from Readers

I resolved after your September 2021 edition to write a short note to you to convey my thanks and appreciation for the September 2021 edition and the Veda Jyoti in general.

The September 2021 edition: 17 pages, Pandit Nardev Vedalankar, Mac Maharaj, Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Agnivesh, what was there not to like? I was pleased to be able to read Mac Maharaj's speech as I had missed his session.

What I appreciate about the Veda Jyoti is that it records our history and stories that are most likely not to be recorded anywhere else so readily. As a student of our Vedic heritage these are personalities that have lived our Dharma and are an inspiration when their stories are known.

My purpose was not to critique this edition but to express my appreciation for the energy, effort and care that went into this edition and all editions of the Veda Jyoti.

For me the Veda Jyoti is enjoyed for its authenticity and as chronicler of our vast and beautiful Dharma and current events.

To you who bring us a new edition each month I say thank you and remind you that your hard work is appreciated and that I look forward to future editions with much anticipation.

Please keep up your very important work.

Ravin Persad



RISHI NIRVAAN!

To contribute to projects of the Arya Samaj contact admin@aryasamajsa.org

"Mitrasya Chakshusha samikshamahe"

May we Look at All with an Equal and
Friendly Eye

(Yajur Veda 36.18)

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

Veda Jyoti is only possible through Deep Daan. We thank all donors for their generous contributions.

Please do remember to make your yearly Deep Daan contributions for 2021.



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"Krinvanto Vishwam Aryam" - Make the
world noble

(Rig Veda 9.63.6)

Please send your comments and
suggestions to admin@aryasamajsa.org