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The founding of the Arya Samaj on 10 April 1875 is significant in the calendar of the Arya Samaj. The formation of the Arya Samaj is a watershed in the history of Hinduism.

The immense impact of the Arya Samaj on society, more especially in social and religious reforms, is immeasurable. In fact it could be said that the Arya Samaj rekindled the age-old ideals of society based on progress, logic, truth, reason and even protested injustices.

For organisations in South Africa the month of April has heightened significance. Three of the older organisations that form the foundation of the Arya Prathinidhi Sabha were established during the month of April. The Veda Dharma Sabha of Pietermaritzburg was formed on the 10 April 1909, the Arya Yuvak Sabha on the 19 April 1912, and the Yuvak Arya Samaj of Clairwood was formed on the 3 April 1932.

In this issue we take you on a journey covering the formation of the Arya Samaj in South Africa from indenture to settlement. This journey was intrinsically linked to the struggle for the vote and representation to becoming citizens of South Africa, to develop roots in South Africa while retaining the tenets of Vedic Dharma.

This year the Yuvak Arya Samaj celebrates 90 years. We congratulate the organisation on reaching this milestone and look forward to the centenary celebrations in 10 years. We thank the President of Yuvak Arya Samaj, Kishore R. Singh for the article and photographs.

Veda Jyoti Editorial Committee

Arthi Shanand, Divesh Cassiram, Karuna Mohan, Kirun Satgoor, Nishi Bundhoo, Ressa Rambharos, Shoba Singh, Sudhira Sham, Usha Debipersad.



धियो विश्वा वि राजति Dhiyo vishvā vi rājati. Rig Veda 1.3.12

“The divine knowledge of the Vedas is revered throughout the world due to the Vedas being a repository of deep divine knowledge.”

The eternal truths espoused in the Vedas are lessons for good actions. The hymns and verses are for the benefit, welfare, and advancement of humanity.

Malnourishment has increased. Access to clean and affordable living conditions has lagged in the world. Life expectancy in developing nations is on average 14 years behind developed nations. Obesity has become a global issue. The lack of physical fitness affects future health.

70% of the world lives in poverty on 3% of the total global wealth. One of the driving factors in continued poverty is the lack of access to credit. There are deep inequalities on wages, education, water scarcity and food insecurity. Inequality between genders in specific parts of the world has emerged as a large part of the question.

Throughout the world political scandals have led to a distrust of government and governments' accountability is low. Most citizens do not trust the government to do what is right. Political polarization has increased and

brought with it the rise of social movements that have highlighted discrimination. Terrorism and the rise of religiously motivated insurgent groups have forced the hand of several governments. As a result, defence spending around the world has risen steadily. At the same time diplomacy and peace efforts have decreased the number of civil wars and intra-state conflicts. Trafficking of women and children continues to be a serious crime.

In sharing the teachings of the Vedas with humanity, we may be able to overcome the social issues and socio-economic divides and create a better world.



Message from the President

As we reflect on the past and the formation of the Arya Samaj, let us also take stock and prepare for the future. There are many valuable lessons that our founders have left for us. This legacy and rich heritage we inherited must be preserved but at the same time we also need to embrace the new world we live in.

This month we celebrate the founding of the Arya Samaj and Ram Naumi on 10 April, which is celebrated throughout India and the Indian diaspora.

In the epic of the Ramayana, Lord Rama is *Maryada Purshottam*, the perfect human being, who lived by truth and justice, a perfect human being in all human behaviour.

On this day we celebrate the inner light within us. *Ra* means radiance and *ma* means me or mine. Therefore *Rama* means the radiance or light in my heart which is eternal. Rama was born to King Dashrath and Queen Kaushalya.

Dashrath means ten chariots – referring to the *Panch Jnana Indriyas* (five sense organs) and *Panch Karma Indriyas* (five organs of action). Our bodies are therefore referred to as *Ayodhya Puri*. The sense organs and the organs of action are the King of our bodies. Interestingly 'yodhya' means to be fought or to fight and when 'A' is added to it, it negates the meaning. – not to be fought or to be invincible.

Queen Kaushalya is also the Queen of Ayodhya (our body). She is the skill from the *Kushal* of our body. All our senses are outwards. Our goal is to bring them inwards using our skill. We are able to focus on the light in our hearts (Rama). With the use of skill when you bring your senses inwards, when your mind is quiet and free from conflict, that is when the divine eternal light dawns within you.

It was Maharishi Patanjali who said, "If you recognise the light present inside of you, then you will attain wholeness and purity." Is this not what happened to Sita?

So dear readers, this Ram Naumi, light the inner light within, experience happiness and spread that happiness and light to others.

Pt Arthi Nanakchand Shanand

Foundations of the Arya Samaj in South Africa

South Africa's Indian community is "not really Indian"¹ nor is it NRI (Non-Resident of India). Settled in South Africa since 1860 it is a community rooted in South African society with five generations born in South Africa. Having undergone identity, race, and class struggles the community has carved a space in South Africa contributing to the social, political, and economic life.

The South African Indian community has common bonds with *Girmitiyas*, also known as *Jahajis*, who were part of the Indian indenture system. Indian indentured laborers were shipped to plantations in Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, and the Caribbean (mostly Trinidad, Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and Jamaica) by the British Raj as an alternative to slave labour.



Indentured workers on ships arrive in Durban

The word *girmit* represented an Indian pronunciation of the English language word "agreement" - from the indenture "agreement" of the British Government with Indian labourers. The agreements specified the workers' length of stay in foreign parts and the conditions attached to their return to the British Raj. The word *Jahāj* refers to 'ship' implying 'people of ship' or 'people coming via ship'.



Indentured workers on sugar plantations in Natal

Indian settlement in South Africa thus came about due to colonial rule. Indian Indentured labourers were brought from 1860 onwards to work the sugarcane fields of Natal.

Post indenture, several labourers opted to remain in South Africa and commenced on market gardening and other jobs. Indentured Indians were followed into South Africa by passenger Indians who set up businesses.

Life under indenture was harsh. Some were defrauded into migrating others chose to make a clean start away from the dark and desperate colonial life in India.

Socio-economic conditions under indenture made family life precarious. Many indentured labourers were men who left their families in India. Violence was endemic. Often women were on the receiving end. Indentured life had resisters and collaborators, class fighters and caste defenders.

At the same time, the business class were also subject to discrimination. To fight a legal case they brought a young lawyer Gandhiji in 1893 to wage their battles. In 1894 Gandhiji founded the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) to fight discrimination in South Africa. The NIC was an integral part of the politics and resistance to apartheid.



MK Gandhi

In 1867, diamonds were discovered and by mid-1886 the discovery of gold on the banks of Witwatersrand became a defining moment in South African history. Gold, more so than diamonds; revolutionised South Africa from an agricultural society to become the largest gold-producer in the world. These changing economic circumstances were attractive to the indentured labourers who saw the opportunity to progress, notwithstanding the difficulties.

¹ With due acknowledgement to the Late Brij Vilash Lal

From 1899 to 1902 conflicts to gain influence on the newfound wealth between the two Boer republics and the British Empire escalated into the Second Boer War, also known as the Boer War, the Anglo-Boer War, or the South African War. In 1906 in Natal the Zulu kingdom embarked on the Bambata Rebellion against the imposition of the "Poll Tax" on their land by the rulers. It was a fight of spears against guns.

Between November 1860 and 1911 (when the system of indentured labour was stopped) nearly 152 184 Indian indentured labourers arrived in Natal. After serving their indentures, Indians were free to remain in South Africa or to return to India. By 1910, less than a third indentured men returned to India, while over two thirds chose to stay and thus constituted the forbearers of the majority of present-day South African Indians.

Within this context the Arya Samaj took root in South Africa influenced by a constant stream of Arya Samaj missionaries who began to visit the shores of Africa. Forty-five years after the Indians had arrived in South Africa, the early leaders of the Arya Samaj in India who were part of the Indian liberation struggle began to engage with the Indians in South Africa. Professor Bhai Parmanand was the first such missionary.

in 1905 Bhai Paramanand came to Natal with the message of the Arya Samaj. At the time he was a Professor at the Dayanand Anglo Vedic College in Lahore. Prof. Bhai Parmanand was a dynamic orator in both English and Hindi. He travelled to Johannesburg where he was accorded a welcome by Mahatma Gandhi who was the chairman of the Reception Committee and then went on to Cape Town, where the first Indians had arrived during the Dutch colonial era, as slaves, from 1684 onwards.



Prof. Bhai Parmanand (1876-1947)

Paramanandji established several societies in South Africa. The Pietermaritzburg Hindu Young Men's Association became well known in Natal for its protection of Hinduism and development of youth to participate in society. The Transvaal Hindu Young Men's Association also played a critical role alongside the resistance and protest work organised by Gandhiji at that time.

Bhai Paramanand was unable to spend much time in Natal, but he created a thirst for religion among the Hindus. To quench this thirst Swami Shankranand arrived in Natal from England in 1908. Swamiji carried on with the work of preaching the Vedic religion continuously for four years. The result was that the "inner-eye" of the Hindus was open.



Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883)

The Vedic philosophy expounded by the dynamic social and religious reformer, Swami Dayanand Saraswati of India, made a tremendous impact on the minds of the early settlers.

His call to revolutionise the social order resonated with the life experiences of the newly settled indenture group. Many early settlers possessed the firm fibre to help foster a religious and social understanding and facilitated the work of the missionaries.

As social position and status was established, caste divisions slowly fell away and is non-existent in South African society today with inter-ethnic marriages.

The cherished tenets of the Vedic movement, as directed by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati embraced the entire world and South Africa like many other countries was directly influenced after the arrival of the indentured Indian labourers. The seeds of Vedic Dharma took firm roots in the fertile social field amongst the settlers of Natal.

In October 1908 Swami Shankranand Saraswati visited South Africa. He delivered eloquent discourses on Hindu Culture, religion, Indian civilisation, faith in God, ceremonies, the importance of mother tongue and other related cultural topics. He emphasised the importance and significance of festivals and since then Deepavali has come to be recognised as a festival of Hindus in South Africa.



Swami Shankranand

He established the Veda Dharma Sabha with aims and objectives to consolidate Hinduism amongst the settlers. In 1909 the first Arya Samaj body was formed in Pietermaritzburg. The early pioneers of the Arya Samaj purchased a piece of land and thereby firmly established roots in South Africa. On 31 May 1910, South Africa formally achieved its independence from Britain. Indians living in South Africa were disenfranchised.

On 8 January 1912 African leaders formed the African National Congress to bring all Africans together as one people, to defend their rights and freedoms. Swami Shankranandji motivated the formation of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha during his second visit to South Africa. On 31 May 1912 Swamiji called a conference of all South African Hindus.

Today, the South African Hindu Maha Sabha provides a forum for all Hindus in South Africa – Sanathanist, Saivite, Arya Samajist, Vaishnavite, Shakta, Advaita, Visisthadvaita, Dwaita, and Mimansaka, to meet, discuss their common problems, exchange views and ideas and renew the perennial faith.

The South African Hindu Maha Sabha does not direct what its constituent members should believe in or practice but instead tries to unite the Hindus as stated in the famous Vedic quotation "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam."

Both directly and indirectly the work already done by Swamiji helped the people to understand the struggle launched by Mahatma Gandhi of Satyagraha (Passive Resistance). In this sense Swami Shankranand was certainly the apostle of religious awakening and a massive pillar of spiritual strength.

Pandit Bhawani Dayal, who was born in South Africa, returned from India on 22 December 1912. At the age of 20 he and his wife Jagrani Devi involved themselves in Gandhiji's famous Satyagraha campaign and were both imprisoned on 10 October 1913.

A staunch Samajist he faithfully preached the tenets of the Vedic religion. He pioneered the study of Hindi and his contribution to the propagation of the Hindi during his time was unparalleled.



Swami Bhawani Dayal Saraswati (the first South African to become a Swami)

During the 20th century the Arya Samaj continued to grow and flourish and like the indentured Indians there were resisters and collaborators, defenders of Vedic Dharma and promoters of the Hindi language. Hindus who had been converted to other faiths were brought back to Hinduism through initiation ceremonies (Shuddhi).

The Arya Yuvak Sabha established in 1912 was the first to give this new thrust support. In the Arya Samaj movement in Durban this society has been very active.

Those who received inspiration from Pandit Bhawani Dayal's praise-worthy work were Shri B. Bechoo, F. Ramlagan, F. Satyapal, S. Bhugwandeem, D. Lutchman, Heera Singh, Bodh Singh. They and others who emulated Bhawani Dayal promoted the Vedic Dharma in their own areas.

In 1913 Swami Mangalanand Puri from India delivered several lectures under the auspices of the Arya Yuvak

Sabha. He proved to be an eloquent Hindi orator. During his time, he attracted many young men who joined the Arya Samaj.

In the early 1920's Pandit Ishwarduth Vedalankar, the first graduate of the Gurukul Kangari, came to Natal under the banner of the Arya Yuvak Sabha. As an eloquent orator Panditji attracted large audiences of all faiths. He concentrated on the correct performance of Sanskaaras and Havan. As an exponent of the Ramayan he drew large gatherings to his Ramayan Kathas.

The Arya Anath Ashram (Aryan Benevolent Home) established in Durban in 1921 by the Arya Yuvak Sabha was officially opened by Pt Bhawani Dayal.



The Aryan Benevolent Home

Today this Home is in Chatsworth and run in a very highly organised manner with full recognition from the democratic government. One of the past Presidents of the Arya Samaj came from the Aryan Benevolent Home.

Under the auspices of the Arya Yuvak Sabha a meeting was held in Durban and the Maharishi Dayanand Birth Centenary Celebration Committee of South Africa was formed on 2 November 1924. Pt Bhawani Dayal was the Chairman of the Committee.

This celebration was held on a grand scale from 16 to 22 February 1925 in Durban. The outstanding achievement of this occasion was the formation of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (Natal, later South Africa). Today all the Arya Samaj organisations in South Africa are affiliated to this National Body.

By the end of the first quarter of the 20th century Arya Samaj structures were well established in Natal. However, there was no central organisation to co-ordinate and give the work done by the different early pioneers any kind of unity.

Notwithstanding, the concept of the Hindu Maha Sabha being mooted, at that stage no organisation was working

to unite Hindus to give them any social or cultural direction. All the hard work done in the various quarters promoting Vedic Culture, necessitated establishing a central organisation.

Mr D. G. Satyadeva mooted the concept of a Central Organisation and this idea readily met with strong approval from the delegates to the conference. He considered it well-timed to use the occasion of the Birth Centenary Celebration of Swami Dayanand to establish the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha.

Thus that eventful Shivaratri day, 22 February 1925 heralded the establishment of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (Natal).



FIRST OFFICIALS AND DELEGATES (1925)

The Centenary Celebration coincided with the first Vedic Conference where Mr RM. Naidoo moved the third resolution which read: "For the purpose of preaching the tenets of the Vedic Religion a body named 'Central Aryan Vedic Society' be formed."

As an amendment to this proposal, Pandit Bhawani Dayal moved that "The delegates attending the Rishi Dayanand Centenary Celebration resolve to establish an Arya Pratinidhi Sabha through which medium the cause of Vedic Religion be advanced."

It was confirmed that Durban should be the Headquarters. The first officials elected were; Pt. Bhawani Dayal (President), Mr B.A. Maghrajh (Hon. Secretary), Mr P.R. Pather (assist Secretary) and Mr R.K.Kapitan (Hon. Treasurer)

The Pratinidhi Sabha became a lively, active, and respected institution. The government also recognised its credibility and accepted its nominated preachers to hold services in all the prisons every Sunday just as Christian preachers did.

Two years later, on the 23 October 1927, the officials of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Natal decided to affiliate to the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (International

Aryan League). This decision made it possible to bring the different branches of the various areas under the control of one large powerful centralised global organisation.

Following the affiliation of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha other Sabhas throughout the world followed. Thus, the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha was able to assume the mighty stature that it possesses today.

The later generations owe their gratitude to the early pioneers of the Arya Samaj in India and in South Africa. They were largely responsible for rousing and awakening the Indians from their miserable conditions of their indenture. They laid the foundations for Arya Samaj organisations to grow and flourish in South Africa.



The First Arya Samaj Organisation in South Africa: Veda Dharma Sabha (VDS) Pietermaritzburg

During the period of indenture and immediately thereafter the prevalence of ignorance, orthodoxy and blind faith, imbued Indians with a sense of pride in their cultural, religious, and traditional well-being. There was an obvious need for religious nurturing. This prompted a few enlightened and progressive Hindus: Babu Padam Singh, Makan Singh, Gai Singh, Charlie Nulliah, D K Soni and Bikhari Maharaj and others to establish the Gujjar Sabha of Pietermaritzburg during 1904. This name was subsequently changed to the Arya Samaj in 1908. This was the establishment of the first Arya Samaj and the start of the movement in South Africa.

On 10 April 1909 Swami Shankranandji visited Pietermaritzburg and addressed the Arya Samaj. He advised members that others would be attracted to the society if the name was altered. The leaders of the Arya Samaj concurred and decided to change the name to Veda Dharma Sabha. Thus the Sabha was launched. The Sabha purchased its first property in York Road in 1910. This was named the Vedic Ashram, which was the abode of Swamiji for some time.



Vedic Ashram 1910

The Veda Dharma Sabha (VDS) was determined to disseminate the knowledge and heritage of Hindu culture. The first Hindi School was started in 1909. Classes were held at an African Women's Hostel which was situated at the lower end of Church Street. Some fifty to sixty pupils attended with Mr Goshalaya as the first teacher at the school. Regular Sunday services were conducted by Swami Shankranand ji and Pandit Rampersad Panday.

In 1917, the Sabha sponsored the Second South African Hindi Literary Conference which was held in the Vedic Ashram.



Second South African Hindi Literary Conference 1917

VDS members formed Aryan Anath Ashram a separate organisation to cater for the needs of orphans, the destitute and the aged. Today it has grown into an organisation known as the Aryan Benevolent Home involved in humanitarian services and operates as an independent society in Pietermaritzburg.

In 1921, the Vidya Pracharnee Sabha (VPS) was formed for the purpose of managing and controlling Hindi education. After working independently for ten years, the VPS decided to amalgamate with the Veda Dharma Sabha on the 20 April 1931, bringing assets to the value of R300.

Dr Bhagath Ram from India who toured the country in 1921, extolled the virtues of the Arya Samaj and a move was made to change the name of the Sabha back to Arya Samaj. This proved unsuccessful. However, die-hard Samajists left the Sabha to establish a separate body known as Arya Samaj, Pietermaritzburg.

Its first President was Pandit R B Maharaj with Messrs S Muthiray Pillay and R Bunwarie as joint secretaries. However, in 1941 it was realised that both the institutions were disseminating the same ideals of the Vedic Dharma and the call for unity led to the Arya Samaj to amalgamate with the Veda Dharma Sabha. The Samaj's assets which were R1 150 were taken over by the Sabha which liquidated their liabilities of R650.

To cater for the cultural and creative aspirations of the younger generation and to raise funds, the Arya Nav Jivan Natak Mundal was formed in 1925. Several plays were dramatised e.g. Balidaan, Asoor Sangram, Swaraj Pharas and Vijay which were produced by the late Mr F Satyapal. Aside from providing entertainment, these plays also contributed towards the preservation of the Hindi language.

Later, this took form in the eisteddfods organised by the Hindi Shiksha Sangh. By the decade of 1980 the five Hindi schools of VDS had an enrolment of 500 and were keen

competitors in dance, drama, poetry, storytelling, and scripture recitals. This has proved very successful in obtaining pupil, teacher and parent response and co-operation. Fund raising for the 80th Anniversary expenses in 1989, was achieved through five concerts from the five schools.

Those who were responsible for Hindi education in the early period were Pt Rampersad Panday, Pt Dasarath Panday, Pt Shivnarain Panday, Pt Sadanand Maharaj, Pt R Bunwarie, Messrs Goshalaya, Sardhwan Singh, Pushkarnath Singh, Maikooram, Ramparthab Singh and Babu Rambally Singh. Initially the VDS ran one Hindi school first at Saraswati Hall (Regent Cinema) and then at the Shri Vishnu School with Pt R Bunwarie as the principal and 5 teachers. With the schools increasing to 5 in the decade of the 1980's the complement of teachers increased to 11.



Hindi School Teachers 1984

Seated left to right Mrs Seebran, Miss S Rajkumar, Mrs B Pillay, Mrs S Maharaj, Mrs Mungal Singh.

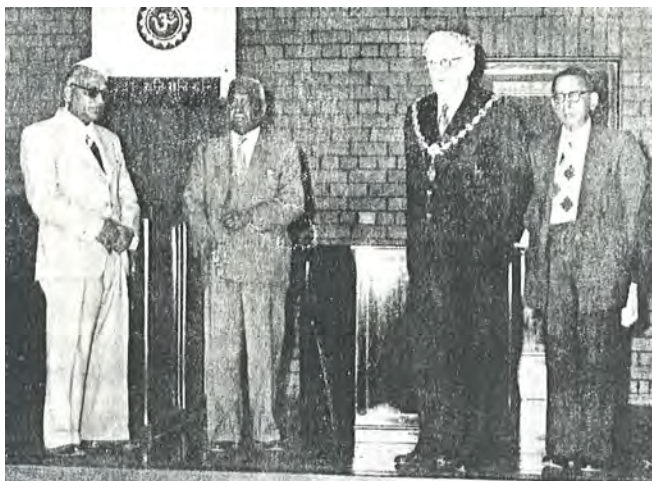
Standing left to right, Mrs S Bridgellall, Mrs S Ramkumar, Mrs Sadanand, Miss I Bookhan, Mrs K Gobind, Mrs Dukkee

In 1940 Pt Jugmohan Singh returned to South Africa at the invitation of the Veda Dharma Sabha of Pietermaritzburg as priest, principal of the Hindi school and preacher. He acquired the qualification of a Vidyaratna at the D.A.V. College in Lahore where he spent five valuable years.

The principles of hygiene and the philosophy of reincarnation as embodied in the Vedic teachings manifested itself when the Satya Vardhak Sabha was formed in 1928. They built the first crematorium in Natal. People of all races have used this facility until their own were built. In 1940 the Satya Vardhak Sabha merged with the Veda Dharma Sabha with an asset of £950.

In 1954 the Sabha began to work towards a modern crematorium. Under the Chairmanship of Mr S G Soni

and his committee consisting of Messrs G Jugwanth, B Bookhan, I T Ghela, V N Sewpaul, C Maikoo, S R Naidoo, P Srigoind, R Vaghjee and F Satyapal, R6 000 was collected from the public. The City Council subsidised an equal amount and the new crematorium was put up. The crematorium was officially opened on 18 August 1956 by His Worship, the Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, Clr C B Downes.



Opening of Crematorium 18 August 1956

In 1983 an extended assembly hall was added to the crematorium, which holds 500 people. The extension was made possible by the kind generosity and impetus given to the project by Mrs B Nankan, Mrs Hiralal and crematorium committee members Pt R Baldeo, P Mohan, Mohan Sundar, and S Satgar.

The Sabha had purchased a property in Church Street for the sum of £1750 to cater for public functions. In 1935 part of the property was sold for £800 and on the remaining portion a hall was built which was named the Saraswathi Hall – which was known as the Regent Cinema in later years. Mr Kupie Marie laid the foundation stone on 2 May 1936. The hall was officially opened by Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, former Vice- President of India.

The income from Regent Cinema was utilised to pay for the running of the Hindi Schools, salaries, stationery, lights, water, rates, all religious celebrations, printing and maintenance of all the Sabha's moveable and immovable assets. It enhanced the position and stability of the Sabha.

The Sabha's property at 472 Church Street, occupied by the owners of China Bazaar was demolished in 1959, and a modern block of shops and flats was established fronting Church Street. In the late 1960's under the leadership of the President Pt Bookhan and the Treasurer

S Purmasir, an innovate fundraising project to free the property was undertaken. Loans to the Sabha by members were secured to meet the repayments for the building. In some instances, loans were partly turned into donations. In this way the property was freed. This approach was also used by APS to free their commitments on the flats built in Carlisle Street in Durban.



VDS Shops and Flats 472 Church Street

Extensions to the rear of the property was undertaken in the late 1970's under the leadership of Mr RB Maharaj former Treasurer of the Sabha.

The idea of building a Vedic Temple for organised prayers and services, was conceived by the late Mr F Satyapal. This challenge was met by forming a committee on 20 November 1952 to devise means of building this temple.

Through the kind generosity of the Hindu community, building operations commenced during 1956 and the Vedic Temple in Longmarket Street was accomplished at a cost of R10 000. It was officially opened by Pandit Nardev Vedalankar on 24 August 1958. The contributions of the following people: Messrs F Satyapal, B Sewpaul, S Satyapal, B B Maharaj, GM Singh, B Bookhan, M Sewpaul, GS Maharaj, Mrs R B Maharaj, T Ramkhelawan, BA Maharaj, D S Vather, Pt S Jugmohan Singh and Pt R Bunwarie saw the completion of the project.



Longmarket Street Mandir 1958

With the resettlement of Indians in Northdale from the decade of the 1960's, the Sabha acquired two more religious sites in the greater Northdale area. The Nohar Road Vedic Temple was built at a cost of R35 000 and was officially consecrated by Pt Nardev Vedalankar in June

1978. This land was purchased by Pt B Bookhan who was the President at that time on behalf of the Sabha. The subsequent President Mr G M Singh went on a successful fund-raising drive and was able to raise R35 000 for the building.



Nohar Road Mandir June 1978

When there were no more sites available for religious use, the second site was donated to the Food for Life Project run by the Krishna Consciousness Movement. This made the visit of Swami Agnivesh during in the 80th Anniversary celebrations in 1989 possible.

The Sabha has always played an active role in propagating Dharma in the form of huge campaigns. All major festivals: Diwali, Ram Naumee, Krishna Asthree and Shivrathree were celebrated with the full co-operation of pupils, parents, and the public at all the temples and premises used by the Sabha. It was the first organisation to initiate the Ramayan Week and Gita Week. In the late 1960's Pt Bookhan screened slides on the Ramayan and Gita to large audiences in the Vedic Mandir. Weekly Sunday Satsangs at both the mandirs have been the hallmark of VDS. Since the pandemic in 2020 the VDS has hosted an online havan every Sunday.

When the Deepavali Cheer Society was unable to fulfil its duties in 1983, the VDS stepped in. Two weeks before Diwali every year saw the efficiency and dedication of the committee which was able to give Diwali hampers to 600 destitute families irrespective of religious denominations. The committee also undertook to serve hot meals to the following institutions: Fort Napier Mental Hospital, Goodwin Centre, Illenga Bantu, Aryan Benevolent Home, and Sunlit Gardens. Mr Pravesh Maharaj, Mr Ashwin Maharaj and Mr P Mohan served as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

The VDS has over the years hosted several visiting missionaries. Prof Satya Prakash was the chief guest for the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in 1969 and in 1989 Swami Agnivesh was the chief guest. Their discourses in public halls, temples and under marques created an

immeasurable impact on the community. The following missionaries will always be remembered: Swami Shankranand, Pt Rishi Ram, Pt Gangaparsad Upadhaya, Prof Bhai Parmanand, Swami Bhawani Dayal, Pt Ishwardath, Dr Bhagath Ram, Swami Mangalanand, Pt Vaidyanath Shastri, Acharya Krishenji who became Swami Deekshanand, Swami Satyaprakash, Pt Satyapal Sharma, Dr Satyakam Varma, and Swami Agnivesh.

The Sabha owes its strong foundation to men and women who worked selflessly and without any desire for rewards. Three members lost their lives while raising funds for the Sabha. They were Messrs B Sundar, R Budree and SL Singh. The memory of the dedication and service of all those who have passed on will not be forgotten.



Officials and Members 1937



Ways & Means Committee 1943-1945

Right to left: S Satyapal, R Rajkoomur, B Bhugwandeem, GS Maharaj (Chairman) and B Bookhan (Secretary)



Officials and Members 1959

Left to right Top row: H Samjhawan, M Sewpaul, M Mungoo, B Dookie, R maharaj, R Sewpaul, S Sewpaul, S Rajkumar.

Middle Row: K H Patel, S H Maharaj, P Mohan, R Marrie, S Satyapal, H Ghela, B Bugwan, D Bundhoo, H Maikoo, G M Singh.

Seated: S Vather (Trustee), R Bunwarie, SRD Maharaj (Auditor), B Bookhan (Trustee), M Sewpaul, (Treasurer) C Maikoo, (Jt Secretary) G Jugwanth (President), P Srigobin (Jt Secretary), SD Chetty (Patron) M Ramdeen, B Sewpaul, R Rajkumar.



1984 Officer Bearers and Trustees

Seated left to Right, BB Maharaj (Treasurer), S Satgar (President), S Sundar (Jt Secretary), Pt R Chedie (Jt Secretary)

Standing Left to right: Pt B Bookhan (Trustee), S Satyapal (Trustee), M Sewpaul (Trustee), P Shrigobin (Trustee), SB Maharaj (Trustee)

Under the leadership of Mr S Satgar, with the full support of all trustees, the VDS took the bold decision to support the struggle for freedom in South Africa. The VDS was a signatory to the United Democratic Front in 1983, took a stand against the Tricameral parliament in 1984, assisted in the campaign against local government elections in 1989, joined the Pietermaritzburg Combined Ratepayers Association in the various campaigns on rent and rates struggles as well as the rejection of Pietermaritzburg 2000, and participated in the Stand for the Truth march.

In 1988 Pt Vidya Satgar and Karuna Mohan were elected Vice President and Publicity Secretary respectively. For the first time in the 80-year history of the VDS women were elected on the executive of the organisation.

The VDS led the group responsible for shifting Hindu leaders in Durban from supporting the IFP and NP to

accepting the ANC, albeit a banned organisation, as the credible leader of the people of South Africa.

When the Indians made a trip to meet the ANC in exile, Satgar represented the VDS with the full support of the Council.

In 1988 the youth of the VDS made a call for a National Hindu Youth Congress. Following consultations with Hindu youth formations across South Africa, the National Hindu Youth Federation was set up.

In 1989, the VDS held a prayer meeting to launch the 80th Anniversary celebrations and called for the unbanning of the leaders and organisations as well as the release of all political prisoners. The Natal Witness covered this with a front-page photo.

Mr Satgar and members of the VDS participated in inter-faith forums and worked on peace initiatives following the outbreak of violence in Natal in 1990. Y Sundar and S Satgar represented the VDS at the Constitutional Committee on Religion.

In 1992 stalwarts of the VDS were honoured by the Hindi Shiksha Sangh: Pt C Maikoo (Vidya Ratna Award) and Messrs H Maikoo, P Mohan and P Shrigobin (Seva Ratna Awards).

This year the VDS is 113 years. Under the current leadership of Pt Kirun Satgoor, the programme of the VDS, as a pillar of strength, in Pietermaritzburg has continued.

The successful functioning of the Sabha is due to the vision, foresight and courage of members and officials past and present.

The actions of past leaders of the Sabha in a unity of purpose made the Veda Dharma Sabha a premier institution in South Africa, reflected in the base of assets owned by the Sabha today. The support of the Indian community who generously contributed towards the various projects, activities, and tasks that the Sabha undertook makes the VDS a rallying point for the community in Pietermaritzburg.

These two aspects: the legacy of selfless services and willing contributions, has developed the spirit of the Sabha in its pursuit of disseminating Vedic Dharma.



Arya Yuvak Sabha: The first Arya Samaj in Durban

The influence of the Arya Samaj Movement and Rishi Dayanand awakened the Hindus settled in South Africa from a deep slumber. Hindus comprised the indentured labourers who chose to remain here after their five-year contract had ended. They were the followers of rituals and religious practices which stemmed from ignorance and superstition.

When Arya Samaj Movement leaders came to South Africa, they began a reformation in worship and belief in One God. One such preacher was Bhai Parmanand who arrived in South Africa in 1905. This started the ball rolling and many Young Men's Associations were formed, the Arya Yuvak Sabha being one of them.

The Arya Yuvak Sabha was established on 19 April 1912. This was the name given to the Sabha by Swami Shankranandji on his visit to South Africa as a missionary.

The original name of the Arya Yuvak Sabha was "Arya Bal Mitra Mandal" – a name given to the society of young men who gathered regularly at night to learn Hindi under the tutorship of the Late Mr D G Satyadeva.



Mr D G Satyadeva an ardent Arya Samajist, member of the Natal Indian Congress, member of Durban Indian Municipal Employees Society

Swami Shankranandji taught the young men the correct pronunciation of the Sandhya and Havan mantras, as well as performing the Havan Ceremony.

Pandit Nayanrajh took up the cudgels and conducted weekly services at various venues, the Mayavant Hall, the Tamil Institute and Patel's Hall. When the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha was established, the weekly services were held there.



Pandit Nayanrajh, founding member of the Arya Yuvak Sabha, the Arya Benevolent Home, the Arya Mithra Mandal and the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha and an active member of the Andhra Maha Sabha and the Tamil Vedic Society, regularly conducted spiritual ministry to Indian prisoners in Durban Central Prison

The Sabha took a firm stand against conversion of Hindus into the Christian and Islamic faiths. Due to ignorance and proper guidance on the performance of rituals and ceremonies, many Hindus converted to other faiths.

A programme to convert them back to Hinduism was embarked on. The Arya Yuvak Sabha brought many Hindus back to Hinduism. Regular Satsanghs and Havans at various venues imparted knowledge of the Vedas to adults and children alike.

Illiteracy among the children led to the Sabha erecting a school on its premises in Mayville on the 1 August 1928.

What began as a small school to overcome illiteracy and teach English grew in leaps and bounds as the intake of students increased every day.

The Committee extended the school to accommodate the growing numbers and the institution was run as a Government Aided Indian School with English being taught as per the curriculum and syllabus adopted by the Department of Education.



AYS School Staff: 1946, with three school supervisors of the Natal Education Department.

The school served the general community of Cato Manor. Hindi and Tamil were taught in the late afternoons by dedicated teachers. The first school Manager was the late Mr B M Singh who was succeeded by the late Mr B S Singh.

The Grantee of the school was the late Mr S L Singh, also a founding father of the Arya Yuvak Sabha. He was also President of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha from 1926 to 1929 and was instrumental in obtaining the land in Carlisle Street in Durban.



Mr SL Singh was a non-racial sports activist, President of the Natal Cricket Union, Natal Football Association and Sports Grounds Association. He was the Honorary Organising Secretary of Durban Indian Municipal Employees Society.

The Arya Yuvak Sabha was supported by many individuals and families who gave their time and resources to ensure the smooth running of the Sabha. Among the stalwarts are Messers D G Satyadeva, V C Nyanarajh, S L Singh, R C Singh, R Ramklass.



Members and Officials of the Arya Yuvak Sabha 1928

Mr D G Satyadeva served as President of the Sabha for twenty-nine years since inception. Some of the officials who served after him were Messrs B Govind, Sishupal Rambharos, R Sewpersad, S Rughoobeer.

The unstinting and committed service to uplifting the lives of many destitute men, women and children resulted in the establishment of the Arya Anath Ashram or the Aryan Benevolent Home.



The first Aryan Benevolent Home Durban

The Aryan Benevolent Home is the Magnum Opus of the Arya Yuvak Sabha.

The establishment of the Aryan Benevolent Home took seed after Mr D G Satyadeva witnessed a policeman beating up a homeless person because he slept at the side of a street. The unfortunate homeless man took shelter in a public toilet and spent the night there. This traumatic incident led to Mr Satyadeva urging the members of the Arya Yuvak Sabha to acquire a place to house the homeless and destitute.

The decision to establish a Home was taken at a meeting of the Sabha on the 7 July 1918, although there was no finance to launch such a project. To overcome this challenge, the members, under the supervision of the very talented Mr N Lal Bahadur, wrote and produced plays and dramas which were very popular with the public. The members themselves acted in the productions, concerts and musical evenings organised by the cultural arm of the Arya Yuvak Sabha, the Bhajan Mandal, later named the Arya Woonathee Natak Mandal.

The proceeds from the plays were channelled into the procurement of a property with a building on it, which was converted into a benevolent home. The Arya Yuvak Sabha became the owner of the land and cottage at 186 Bellair Road, Cato Manor on the 2 December 1920. This Home was officially opened by Pandit Bhawani Dayal on 1 May 1921 with the first three homeless men who were already staying on the premises. Mr Satya Bhooshun voluntarily offered to manage the Home for about nineteen months thereafter.

In 1921, during the celebrations of the first anniversary of the Aryan Benevolent Home, four officials underwent a 'naming ceremony' during which they took on 'Sat' (Truth) as an affirmation of their commitment. The ceremony was performed by Pandit Ishwardutt Vidyalankar of India. D. Geriou became D. G. Satyadeva, F Gareeb became F Satypal, T Gudar became Satyabhoosan, and Beechook became Satyapri.

As the work at the Ashram grew with the increased intake of inmates, there was a need to extend and expand the Ashram.

Initially, admission to the Home was restricted to very old persons without family support only. As the Home began enjoying the confidence of the Indian community, requests were being received for the acceptance of orphaned children.

The first lot of orphans were admitted on the 7 October 1926 and are still being admitted to the Home from various parts of the country to date.

Sishupal Rambharos, the past President of the Aryan Benevolent Home and of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha was admitted to the Home in December 1926, together with his ailing mother and older brother.

Fortunately, after just three years of existence, through the efforts of Mr H Robinson, the Protector of Indian Immigrants, the Ashram began receiving a Government Grant.

This however, brought about an immediate separation of the Aryan Benevolent Home from its parent body, the Arya Yuvak Sabha.

Receiving State funding meant that the Home had to have its own bank account and a Council to administer the Home. The Aryan Benevolent Home Council was formed as the administrative structure. Most of the members of the Council comprised the members of the Arya Yuvak Sabha, thus the Sabha continued to guide and support the Home as any parent would.



Members of the Aryan Benevolent Home Council



Arya Yuvak Sabha - Officials and Members - 1972/1973

From Left to Right - Standing: First Row: K. T. Maistry, S. Sewpersadh, H.S. Singh, Devadas Naidoo, N.Rajaram, P. Kalidas, S. Ragoobeer. Second Row: Mrs V. Singh, Mrs N. Francois, Mrs P. Ramharakh, Mrs D. Singh, Mrs M. Salikram, Mrs P.B. Singh, Mrs K. Sewpersadh, Miss E. Sullapen, Mrs Iadoo, Mrs K. Satyadeva. Third Row: G. Dhanjee, A. Bispath, S. Satyadeva (Vice-President), L. Naidoo, K.Lugoo, R. Jeawon (Patron), Gobind Hulasi (Hon. Secretary), P. Seebran, G. Naidu, M. Naidoo, S. Ragannath (Treasurer). Fourth Row: Mrs P. Lalla, M.T. Govender (Patron), S. Bechan (Trustee), B. Purthab, (Trustee), Pt. S. A. Naidoo (President), Mrs S.L. Singh (Vice-President), S. Rambharos (Vice-President), Mrs D.G. Satyadeva (Vice-President) Sitting: K. Pillay, Rabi Govind, C. Ragoobeer, A. Rajkumar, V. Somiah.

Many eminent people have visited the Aryan Benevolent Home over the years: Mrs Sarojini Naidoo, Ambassador of the National Indian Congress - visited the ABH on 24 May 1924; Rt Hon, Field Marshall, J C Smuts, Former Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa on 24 April 1946; Councillor Senator, the Hon, S J Smith, the Mayor of Durban on 10 April 1946 and Pandit Gangaprasad Upadhaya, Eminent Vedic Missionary and General Secretary, International Aryan League, India on 6 January 1950.

More recently, the highly respected Actor, Mr Amitabh Bachchan visited the Aryan Benevolent Home in Chatsworth.



Amitabh Bachchan greeted by Dr S Rambharos. He donated R250 000 to the home.

The Shaping of the Arya Samaj South Africa

Social stratification and legislation adopted by the Union Government and the later Republic of South Africa, forced Indians to look inwards. They spend much of their efforts in improving their status and developing their communities. This provided the opportunity for leadership to emerge in administration, fund raising and organisation.

Several erudite Vedic Scholars and highly trained preachers visited South Africa under the aegis of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha to promote Vedic Culture. Today with the restrictions on travel and through technology, the "Back to the Vedas" online lecture series has been arranged for Arya Samaj missionaries to engage with South Africans and the Veda Jyoti has been modernised and is now restored to its former glory as an e journal.

In 1931 Prof Ralaram MA of D.A. V. College, Hoshiarpur, India, proficient in both Hindi and English spent a year in South Africa. He travelled extensively to deliver lectures on Vedic Religion in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, Dundee as well as the Transvaal and the Cape Province.

In 1934 Pandit Mehta Jaimini, a distinguished Vedic Missionary arrived in South Africa. His deep insight into Vedic Religion left an indelible impression on the minds of his followers. In the same year he opened the conference convened by the South African Hindu Maha Sabha. Panditji had brought along with him several copies of the Vedas which he distributed amongst his followers.

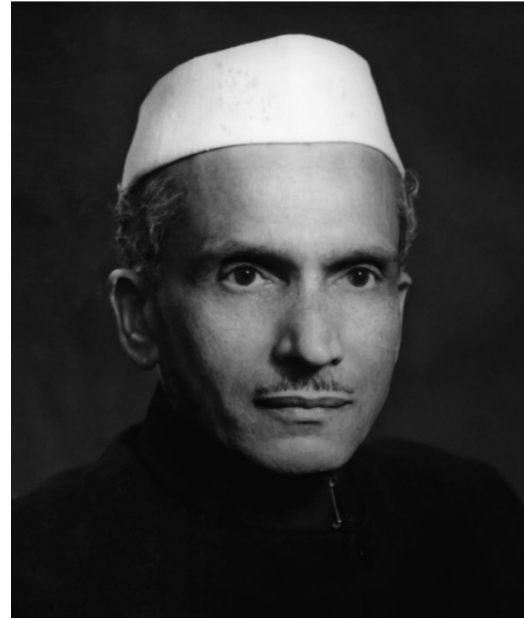
On 18 July 1934 the Girl Guides of Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya of Baroda, India arrived in South Africa and left on 11 November 1934. The principal of the Girl Guides, Pandit Anand Priyaji was a Vedic Scholar. The members of the Girl Guides gave a display of physical culture, sang national and religious songs and through their forceful and impressive speeches spread the teachings of the Vedic Religion.

On 10 June 1937 Professor Yashpal arrived in South Africa and left on 28 October 1937. He was the first exponent to demonstrate the powers of Yoga. For nearly two hours he allowed himself to be buried alive at Curries Fountain thus proving the effects of the mastery of Yoga.

Pandit Rishiram B.A. first visited South Africa on 8 August 1937. His teachings based on the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita were very stimulating.

He launched the Gandhi -Tagore lectureship Trust with a sum of 6000 pounds which he collected. The interest accrued from the capital was utilized in inviting learned preachers on an annual basis.

He made his second visit on 28 June 1945. He delivered many inspiring lectures in Natal as well as in Transvaal and the Cape Province.



Pt Nardev Vedalankar (1913-1994)

Pandit Nardev Vedalankar, a graduate of Gurukul Kangari, arrived in South Africa on 24 November 1947 to teach Gujarati. He successfully spread the tenets of the Vedic Religion. He is considered the father of Hindi Shiksha Sangh which he established in 1948. The Sangh has grown to become an Institution functioning independently, propagating the Hindi Language.

At that time there were about 15 priests engaged in the performance of Sanskaars but there was no official body that coordinated the work of the priests or gave direction in the performance of Vedic Sanskaars. With this view in mind, the APS convened a Conference on 22 November 1952.

On the recommendation of Pandit Nardevji the Vedic Priest Academy came into being. Panditji was elected its first President and served in this capacity till 1985. Panditji served the academy for a period of over 35 years. He was given the status of Chief Priest.



Pt Ganga Prasad Upadhyaya

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha invited Pandit Ganga Prasad Upadhyaya, the General Secretary of the International Aryan League to be the chief guest of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha's celebration of its Silver Jubilee from 15 February to 26 February 1950.

Panditji had been a source of new inspiration and infused a new spirit not only in the Arya Samajis but Hindus as a whole.

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (APS) has been led by South Africans who built the organisation from its formation in 1925. As a central uniting force the APS took on the early work on promoting Hindi, and cultural activity further and set up the Hindi Shiksha Sangh in 1948 as an independent organisation. To develop Vedic Priests the APS set up the Vedic Priest Academy in the 1950s. By the decade of the 1960's the Veda Niketan was established to propagate the Vedas. In the decade of the 1980's the Veda Jyoti was produced as the Journal of the Arya Samaj South Africa.

Within the Arya Samaj there were those who resisted apartheid, some were active leaders in the Natal Indian Congress and activists of the banned African National Congress, and those who collaborated with the apartheid state in the South African Indian Council. There were workers who worked in factories, and those who organised workers in unions. There were small business owners and burgeoning industrialists. There were teachers and office workers. Thus the Arya Samaj took shape in South Africa as a robust body where all views were given space. The central focus was religion and propagation of the Vedas and the protection and preservation of Hindi and other languages and culture.

Following the first Vedic Conference where the formation of the APS was mooted, the second Vedic Conference was held on 3 October 1925 in Ladysmith

with Pt. Bhawani Dayal as President of the Conference. At this meeting important changes in the rules and amendments to the constitution were tabled.

The Third Vedic Conference was held on 31 July 1926 in Pietermaritzburg with Pt. RB. Maharaj as Conference President. An important resolution tabled at this conference was to hold a Round Table Conference of all Natal based Hindu Societies to establish unity amongst Hindus. Another important resolution was the adoption of Hindi as the language in which all future minutes of meeting were to be recorded.

On 11-12 March 1939 the fourth Vedic Conference under the Presidency of Mr B. Bodasingh was scheduled at the Hindu Tamil Institute Hall in Durban. The Conference had notable addresses delivered by Mr T.M.Naicker, Mr B.M. Patel and Pt. Audhbehari on various aspects of Vedic Culture. Again emphasis was laid firmly on the study of Hindi.

At the fifth Vedic conference held on 14 February 1942 with Mr R Bodasingh presiding, and the opening by Babu Padamsing, a paper entitled "Education and Women" was delivered by Mrs A.P.Singh. A debate on equality was initiated at this conference focusing on the education of women and the general welfare of females. On 19 July 1947 the Sixth Vedic Conference was held at the Aryan Hall 21 Carlisle Street, Durban for the first time after its completion. The Hall was a prominent community facility for weddings, conferences, and eisteddfods)



The Vedic Temple & Swami Dayanand Building Containing the Aryan Hall 21 Carlisle Street, Durban

The APS built a solid base of assets. In 1958, through the Group Areas Act a permit was obtained on the property owned. By 1963 the Swami Dayanand Building which consisted of Aryan Hall, the DS Satyadeva Hall, the

Swami Bhawani Dayal Council Chamber and 14 flats were completed. The construction of the Vedic Mandir commenced in 1965 and was completed in 1975 at a cost of R80 000.



Vedic Temple in Carlisle Street in Durban

Due to the movement of people away from the City Centre, the property was sold, and the current Headquarters of the APS is in Overport, Durban.

Professor Satya Prakash an eminent scientist and scholar was in South Africa from 8 August until 5 November 1969. He was the guest during the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Veda Dharma Sabha, Pietermaritzburg. His itinerary also included East London, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, and Johannesburg.

Acharya Vaidyanath Shastri and Acharya Krishnaji arrived on 6 September 1975 and attracted large audiences at their lectures in the country. They were invited as Guests to the Golden Jubilee of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha held from 5 to 12 October 1975. They returned to India on 14 October 1975.



Top row left to right: Messrs: RN Jeawon (Jt Treasurer), S Rambharos, (Jt Secretary), R Boodhay (Jt Secretary), G Bajinath (Jt Treasurer)
Front Row left to right: Pt Nardev Vedalankar, Acharya Krishanji, Mr S Chotai (President), Acharya Vaidyanath Shastri, Mr P Seebran (Vice President)

Acharya Vaidyanath Shastri and Acharya Krishnaji delivered lectures and presided over the Yajurveda Parayan Mahayajna which was continued daily from 5 to 12 October 1975 in the evenings from 19:30 to 21:30.

The Vedic Conference featured a women's session which involved addresses delivered by Mrs S.Pillay, Dr Pramda Ramasar, Prof Fatima Meer and Dr Kastoori Bhana under the chairperson of Dr Ansuyah Singh.

A session on the Revival of Hindu Dharma covered speeches from the Andhra Maha Sabha South Africa, Divine Life Society South Africa, Kathiawad Hindu SevaSamaj, Mission of Etemal Religion, Natal Vedic Society, Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Saiva Sithantha Sangum, Shri Sanathan Dharma Sabha South Africa, Tamil Federation and Surat Hindu Association and the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha South Africa.

An Inter Religious symposium was organised with speakers Mr L.H. Van Loon (Buddhism), Rev D.C. Veysie (Christianity), Prof. S.S.Nadvi (Islam), Rabbi Abner Wessi (Judaism), Dr D.N. Randeria (Zoroastrainism) and Archaya Vaidyanath Shastri (Hinduism).

The 50th Anniversary celebration culminated with the ordaining of fifteen Vedic Priests, five of whom were the first women Vedic Priests.

In December of 1975, a large grouping of Arya Samajis of South Africa attended the Centenary Celebrations of the Arya Samaj at the Ram Leela Bagh in New Delhi, India.



Arya Pratinidhi Sabha officials

As the APS turned 50 years its convening power as a respected organisation in South Africa was evident. It was able to focus on women and equality, uniting the Hindu community and engaging with the inter-faith community.



Late Swami Deekshanand meeting the aged with Late Shisupal Rambharos

Acharya Krishnaji through his meritorious achievements in the field of Vedic Religion, returned to South Africa for the second time as Swami Deekshanand Saraswati on 4 June 1978.

During the month of September and October he conducted classes for women in Pietermaritzburg in the mornings and taught them new bhajans and mantra recitation. During the afternoons he worked on edits to the Veda Niketan Aryan Prayer book. In the evenings he was invited to conduct havans and deliver sermons in many organisations. He conducted an extensive campaign in Chatsworth during the month of November in 1978.

In December he returned to Pietermaritzburg and remained there for several months. He taught yoga at an AYL youth camp in Pietermaritzburg. He ran a "gurukul" for young people who knew Hindi, taught them the basics of Sanskrit. He selected seven youth and took them through the Yajur Veda. In the evening he ran classes on mantra recitation for the men, women, and young adults at the Plessislaer Arya Samaj.

He arranged for 100 havan kunds to be built for a week-long Yajur Veda Mahayajna at the Raisethorpe Arya Samaj grounds. His "gurukul" pupils recited the Yajur Veda mantras at this Yajna and were assisted by Gurukul Kangri graduates Pandit Vedalankar, Pandit Veenaychand and Pandit Harishankar of Agra in India. Many families participated in this auspicious and momentous event. Indeed he rekindled the spirit of "Back to the Vedas" in the Arya Samaj community.

Life was fragmented under apartheid. Most Indians lived in Natal in separate group areas and needed a permit to enter the former Boer republics Free State and Gauteng (Transvaal). Thus with the concentration of Indians being in Natal, the efforts of the Arya Samaj were concentrated in Durban and other towns of Natal. In 2005 the Arya Samaj Gauteng was formed. This followed the move of

many Arya Samaj family members into Gauteng to work in government and the private sector post the first Democratic Elections in South Africa in 1994.

In 1980 Indian students at schools and Universities joined African and Coloured students in the 1980 Schools Boycotts. Although all race groups were educated separately, they were an integral part of the South African society forming one economic unit. Low wages, poor working conditions, high costs of food and transport, lack of healthcare and inadequate accommodation and not having a vote affected both Indians and Africans. Like any other society globally, privileged benefits only reached a small proportion of the community.

Indians relocated by the Group Areas Act lived in large townships and had many difficulties. Unemployment and poverty are probably the main reasons for the Hindu population's declining figures. In 1984 the South African government set up a tricameral parliament where Indians and Coloureds were given a secondary place in the government to conduct their own affairs without any muscle to make any fundamental change to South Africa. In this parliament Africans were excluded. At the outset 92% of the Indian community rejected the tricameral parliament.

Pandit Satyapal Sharma MA (Veda Shiromani-Jewel of the Vedas) arrived in South Africa on 28 March 1983 and remained here as a Vedic Missionary for three months. He initiated a large group of Yajaks and Yajikas (lay preachers). He also encouraged Bal Sabhas (junior clubs).

Swami Sanjeevani Anand Saraswati was invited to present discourses on the Vedas and participate in the Diamond Jubilee Year celebrated in June 1985. She delivered many inspiring talks throughout Natal and conducted satsanghs in many homes.

Thus, for the first 50 years of existence since 1925 the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha in South Africa developed firm foundations on Vedic Dharma, unity in diversity through the Hindu Maha Sabha, promotion of the Hindi language and culture through the Hindi Shisha Sangh and a strong foothold on social service to humanity through the Aryan Benevolent Home.

Under the leadership of Pt Nardev Vedalankar, the publications and examinations of Veda Niketan reached Mauritius, Fiji, U.S.A., Canada, West Indies, U.K., Ghana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.



Pt Charles Ankoh and Pt Nardev

In 1985, Wreston Charles Ankoh, a Ghanian youth was provided with a grant to enable him to travel to Durban to further his Vedic Studies. He stayed in Durban for the year. During this time he learnt the main principles of Hinduism, the performance of sanskaars, and pursued further studies through the Vedic Priests' Academy.

He was inducted as a Vedic Priest. Mr Ankoh was the first Vedic Priest of African origin on the continent of Africa and was actively involved in propagating the Vedic Dharma under the auspices of the Vedic Mission in Accra. An examination centre of the Veda Niketan was set up in Accra.

During the Diamond Jubilee celebrations an International Vedic Conference held in Durban from 13 to 17 December 1985 and in Pietermaritzburg from 21 and 22 December 1985. The General Secretary of the Sarvedeshik Arya Sabha, Shri Omprakash Tyagiji, opened the conference while Swami Satyaprakash Saraswati delivered the keynote address.

For the first time an exhibition bearing the theme "Development of the Arya Samaj" was curated by Dr. C.D. Hemming of the Documentation Centre of the then University of Durban Westville and was opened by Pt. Brahma Dutt Snatak of Sarvedeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of India. The conference had a total of ten sessions with guest speakers from India, Mauritius, and local academics at different venues: Dayanand Gardens, University of Durban Westville, and Pietermaritzburg. This gave the conference its international character.

By June 1986, a national state of emergency was declared as the anti-apartheid community protests had intensified in the country. Detentions were rife.



A prayer meeting at the Vedic Mandir in Carlisle Street saw the Arya Samaj community and political activists of all races gathered to support the Badal family on the detention of Abin Badal. Karuna Mohan and Ujala Satgoor addressed this gathering.

In 1988 Dr S Rambharos (representing the Aryan Benevolent Home) together with Mr S Satgar (representing the Veda Dharma Sabha Pietermaritzburg) joined a group of Indians who met the ANC in exile to discuss the future.

When the ANC and other political organisations were unbanned in 1990, a Thanksgiving Havan was performed by the APS with Late Archie Gumede (the Natal United Democratic Front President) and the Late IC Meer (NIC) participating in the havan.



APS 70th Anniversary in 1995 honoured Dr S Rambharos

The Sabha has achieved resounding success through the various missionaries from abroad, religious activities, examinations, and publications. Furthermore, local leaders were developed and sustained.



Dr S, Rambharos garlands The Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who honoured The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (SA) with his presence during his trip for the Nam Conference September 1998.

The growth of the Sabha from its inception has been phenomenal. This development has been attributed very largely to the magnanimity of various philanthropists and donors, who enabled the objectives of the Sabha to be realised. The recent projects embarked on such as Narian Jeawon Vedic Centre (NJVC), Heal Foundation, the Women's Forum, and Project Tripti attest to this.

An outreach, for families who could not afford to, was the Bahu Kund Yajna in Phoenix. The programme to work with prisoners continued under the label Umuntu Omusha (A New Man).

Under the leadership of Dr B Rambharos and the late Prof Usha Desai, (past Presidents) the Sabha extended its foothold with the establishment of the Gauteng Arya Samaj in 2005.



Vedic Priests at the launch of the Gauteng Arya Samaj 24 September 2005

New audio formats on tapes and compact discs on bhajans, Havan for Me, Vaidika Sanskaaras were produced by Veda Niketan. The Veda Jyoti was produced

with simple material for distribution to households. This continues today as the Veda Jyoti extracts.

The School of Vedic Studies was established to provide lectures for the training of priests and to have refresher courses for Vedic Priests. Thus, the legacy of the founders of the Arya Samaj is kept alive in the 21st Century.



Vedic Purohit Mandal

With the recent humanitarian crisis arising from lockdowns and the devastating effect of the rampant virus causing Covid, the Arya Samaj South Africa stepped in to provide humanitarian relief in India and in South Africa.

The APS is 97 this year. In three years the centenary celebrations will be held. The role of the APS as a convenor, a uniting force, central body representing the Arya Samaj has grown over the years.

Young members who have joined the Arya Samaj can be proud of the legacy. The Arya Samaj South Africa is a modern organisation that can guide all to participate in society.



Dr S Rambharos greeting Deputy President Mbeki

YUVAK ARYA SAMAJ, CLAIRWOOD

“CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE”

Ninety years ago the pioneers of the Yuvak Arya Samaj with scanty means of their own, and meagre support from the outside laid a modest keystone as a manifestation of their faith. This became the arch of the Samaj.

They realised many years ago, what some of us are realising today, that the many facets of our culture are clothed in our mother tongue and no foreign garment can drape the ideas conceived by the great Hindu writers with the same facile dignity and grace.

On 3 April 1932 the voice of the late Mr.R.B. Bhooshun reverberated echoing the need for the revival of Vedic thought and spreading the knowledge of Hindi. The flame of reverberation electrified the somewhat placid world of Hindus of the community to religious consciousness. This call kindled as a modest spark when the late Mr.R.B. Bhooshun established the Yuvak Arya Samaj at his humble cottage.



The room at the residence of the late Mr R.B. Bhooshun where the Yuvak Arya Samaj was established.

This became the keystone on which the future edifice of the Samaj was slowly but surely erected. This was possible with the great assistance of the late Mr. D. Ravibaran and a band of others. The preservation of the names of the pioneers of an institution who formed the first officers may as the years roll on represent faint outlines of mere names, conveying very little of their true worth and value. The names of these pioneers, although not with us any longer, occupy an unblurred and abiding picture of our affectionate memory today.

The late Mr.R.B. Bhooshun and late Mr. D. Ravibaran were the stalwarts of the Samaj who sprung from the

ranks of the humble. Our tribute is due to these great-hearted pillars of the Samaj and of the Hindu community who served with unflinching devotion and loyalty right up to the time of their passing.

The first Office Bearers that earned the distinction to have their names inscribed with sterling appreciation in the records of the Samaj were: R.B. Bhooshun (President), H.D. Persadh and B.G. Teeluk (Jt.Hon. Secretaries) and M. Doorgha (Treasurer). The first batch of members also worthy of mention were: K.D. Persadh, Mr. Bedesi, Dorasamy Peter, P.D. Maharaj and Rambally. They pledged to high ideals which called for great effort.

To conduct affairs of the Samaj, regular meetings were held. The minutes of the Samaj's proceedings were written in Hindi. It was only natural that the adoption of Hindi and interest in classical literature should be aroused.

Propagation of Vedic Dharma and Hindi Education became the fortress objectives of the Samaj. As time passed the scope of the activities of the Samaj became too big to be centred at the residence of R.B. Bhooshun.

Four years later, after much negotiation a plot of land was purchased for the sum of ninety pounds. This was the first great step in their venture of religious pursuit.



The first building of the Yuvak Arya Samaj at 144 Cherry Rd, Clairwood, built in 1939.

By 1940, a building consisting of two rooms with a verandah was erected on this ground at a cost of hundred and forty pounds. A local resident and supporter Mr. Sewpersadh worked on this building at a very low remuneration, and on weekends, he worked together with other members at no wage at all.

As a first step towards inducing a correct attitude to spiritual matters, regular religious services were conducted. Thus, the seeds of Satsang with Sandhya, Havan and Religious discourse were sown. In later years a reading of the Gita was added to the weekly programme of the Satsang.

The humble beginnings of the Hindi School, which was established in 1932 at the residence of the Late Mr. R.B. Bhooshun, was moved after 7 years to 144 Cherry Road, into a two-room building erected for that purpose.

With the rapid growth in enrolment, the Samaj then built a hall to accommodate the influx of students. In the mid 1940's and early 1950's the enrolment of the Hindi School under the principalship of Pt. R.M. Singh peaked to 482, resulting in the Y.A.S. becoming the largest Hindi School in South Africa at that time.



Hall built at 144 Cherry Road

Four pupils, namely, Shiela Baijnath, Nalini Sewnath, Indira Singh, and Sherona Gopal had at different times gained the highest marks in South Africa as candidates sitting for the "PRATHMA" examinations.

The debating team of the Samaj comprised of Pt. N.R. Dayal, Pt. R.M. Singh and Mr. Ganga Singh who were victorious in capturing the "Bhawani Dayal" Floating Trophy on many occasions.



Winners of Hindi Debate 1960 left to right: late Pt N.R.Dayal, late Pt Nardev Vedalankar, Swami Nischalananda, late Pt R M Singh

The Yuvak Arya Samaj Orchestra played a key role in the cultural and social fields. It also helped to unify the diverse Clairwood community by bringing all the people together during the 1960's and 1970's. In addition, the orchestra assisted to raise much needed finances for the day-to-day activities of the Samaj.

Pupils participated in the Hindi Eisteddfod organized by the Hindi Shiksha Sangh annually. The Samaj had the privilege of hosting the regional Eisteddfod on two occasions in Clairwood.

The early foundation in education bore fruit and many ex-pupils distinguishing themselves in various fields. It is not possible to mention all, however, some of the high achievers were: Messrs. N.K. Pattundeen, Lall Singh, H.B. Singh, A.S. Singh, H. Ramessur, R. Gordhan, A. Rajbansi, K. Panday. S. Shrikisoon, U. Shrikisoon, Drs.B. Singh and M.V. Ganesh, and Prof. B. Singh.

The leaders of the Samaj at that time, included: Messrs. A. Brijlal, J. Mungal, C. Ramanund, Pt.R.M. Singh, S. Gangadayaal, G. Baijnath, K. Pattundeen, Bal Ganesh, G. Ramlall, U.R. Singh, S.Ganesh and G.Bhawanipersadh.

The Samaj records the following office bearers who rendered remarkable service: K. Pattundeen (44 years as Treasurer), G. Baijnath (32 years as President, 8 years as Jt. Secretary, and 1 year as Treasurer), S. Gangadayaal (7 years as President and 21 years as Jt. Secretary), Pt.R.M. Singh (1 year as President and 20 years as Jt. Secretary. He also served 14 years at the Hindi School as an Educator and Principal).

In more recent times the following persons have played a pivotal role: Miss Urmilla Singh (Jt. Secretary 19 years), Rishi Singh (Treasurer 26 years), P.D.Basanth (Jt. Secretary 22 years), K.R.Singh (President 26 years and Jt. Secretary 12 years).

The decline in the activities of the Samaj from late 1970 onwards, was a result of the impact of the devastating actions of the then white Durban City Council, declared Clairwood a "FROZEN AREA". They rigorously enforced unjust Apartheid laws of the former regime.

Many families had to vacate their place of birth. They were not allowed to develop their properties which were mainly wood and iron structures, with a bucket system for sewerage and in a state of deterioration. Many community-based organizations were also seriously affected.

Decades of struggle waged by a resilient community finally paid dividends, when the major component of Clairwood was retained as a residential area in 1990, with the adoption of the "Draft Structure plan". In-keeping with the re-development of Clairwood and its future demands, the Samaj purchased two properties adjoining the present building in Cherry Road.

Having secured the land, the committee focused on its development by consolidating both the properties into one unit and embarking on a fundraising drive. To launch this drive, a dinner banquet was held at the Hilton Hotel on 17 July 1999.

The highlight of this memorable evening was the presentation of the lifetime service awards, to two of the longest serving stalwarts of the Yuvak Arya Samaj viz., Mr. Ganesh Baijnath and Mr. Kasieprasad Pattundeen.

The construction of the new building commenced on 5 December 1998 with the laying of the Foundation Stone by Mr. G. Baijnath and Mr. K. Pattundeen. This colourful event was filmed by SABC and broadcasted on 14 February 1999.

The 75th Anniversary of the Yuvak Arya Samaj was celebrated on the 26 August 2007 with equal aplomb, featuring the current and ex pupils of the Yuvak Arya Samaj, in exuberant dance items, pre-recorded displays of the history of the Samaj, with the Chief Guest of Honour for that momentous occasion, being Minister Pravin Gordhan.



Hon Minister Pravin Gordhan being presented with a token of appreciation by Y.A.S President Kishore Singh



Late Dr. Shishupal Rambharos (Past President of APS) at a Samaj function on the occasion of his 80th birthday 27 February 2000 being honoured by Late K.Pattundeen and Late G. Baijnath

10 July 2005 marked a significant milestone in the history of the Yuvak Arya Samaj, wherein, the magnificent edifice Y.A.S. Educational and Cultural Centre was officially opened jointly by Shri K. Pattundeen and Shri G. Baijnath at a glittering function to celebrate the remarkable achievement. This day also marked 130 years of combined service by these two stalwarts.



Struggle veteran and activist late Phyllis Naidoo (third from right) in attendance at the Samaj 75th Anniversary celebration.



Late K.Pattundeen and Late G.Baijnath, unveiling the foundation stone plaque on 10 July 2005, at the official opening of the Y.A.S. Educational and Cultural Centre.

The 80th Anniversary in 2012 celebrated the Samaj's inception to its current achievements, acknowledging its forebears and current administration, with ex-pupil of the Yuvak Arya Samaj, Professor Bhugwan Singh as the chief guest of honour.



Mrs. Beenawathie Rampersadh hoisting the AUM flag at the commencement of the 80th Anniversary function with late Pt Beehadar (Past President of APS) officiating the ceremony.



The contemporary styled Y.A.S. Educational & Cultural Centre built in 2007.

With such an illustrious history, we can only hope that with the divine blessings of Paramatma, the Yuvak Arya Samaj continues to grow in stature, always there in readiness to serve its community at large in years to come.



A colourful dance presentation by ex-pupils of the Y.A.S at the 80th Anniversary celebration.

As the 80th Anniversary is commemorated in 2022 the Yuvak Arya Samaj is still active and running strong. Serving its community at large, with the younger generation being taught the reigns to carry the baton forward.

Hindi, Satsang and music classes are held on a weekly basis. Weekly meals freshly prepared by Swami Vedanand Saraswati ji and his brahmacharis are distributed to the community of Clairwood.

Until recently the Samaj also provided lunch to indigent pupils, once a week to two schools in the area. At the annual Diwali celebration, food hampers are distributed to underprivileged and deserving families.



Rehabilitated Wetland Clairwood Logistics Park with acknowledgement to Rising Sun



New Warehousing Development in Clairwood

Ten Principles of the Arya Samaj

1. **God, His characteristics:** The Primordial Root – the Eternal Unseen Sustainer of all true knowledge and of objects made known by true knowledge – any of all these is the Supreme God.
2. **His Attributes and Worship:** God is Personification of Existence, Intelligence and Bliss. He is Formless, Almighty, Just, Benevolent, Unborn, Endless, and Infinite, Unchangeable, Beginning-less, Incomparable, Support of All, Lord of All, All-pervading, Omniscient and Controller of all from within, Un-decaying, Imperishable, Fearless, Eternal, Holy and Maker of the Universe. To Him alone is worship due.
3. **His Word, the Veda:** The Veda is the Scripture of true knowledge. It is the paramount duty of every Arya to learn and teach the Veda, to hear it, read it and recite it to others.
4. **Truth:** We should be ever ready to embrace truth and forsake untruth.
5. **Righteousness:** All acts should be done in accordance with Dharma after deliberating what is right and wrong.
6. **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.
7. **Love and Justice:** Our conduct towards all should be guided by love, righteousness, and justice.
8. **Nescience and Science:** We should dispel "avidya" (nescience), and promote "vidya (science), spiritual and physical.
9. **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.
10. **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.

Sanskrit words explained

सत्य

Satya

Truth, Reality, that which exists

Sat is the present participle of the verb root as (to be)

Satyagraha is derived from this root.

Meaning holding onto the truth.

Gandhiji instituted a campaign of Satyagraha or insistence on Truth, the most famous example of which was his model of non-violent civil disobedience, in which he incorporated the principle of ahimsaa (non-violence) from the eight limbs of Yoga practice.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, during his second term as the president of the Indian National Congress in 1918, used the slogan 'Satyameva Jayate' - Truth Alone Triumphs.

Following the independence of India, it was adopted as the national motto of India on 26 January 1950, the day India became a republic.

'Satyameva Jayate' slogan is taken from the Mundaka Upanishad (3.1.6)

Satyameva Jayate Na-anrtam - satyena panthaa vitato devayaanah.

Yen-aakramanty-rsayo hyaapta-kaamaa - Yatra tat satyasya paramam nidhaanam".

Meaning:

"Truth alone wins, not untruth. By truth is laid out the divine path, which the seers who are free from desires, reach to the supreme abode of truth".

Announcements

You are invited to send articles to the editorial committee for publication. Please email your submissions to admin@aryasamajsa.org

Acceptance conditions:

1. All submissions must be in word for the attention of the editorial committee.
2. All Sanskrit words must be in Italics
3. Photographs submitted must be in high resolution
4. All references must be cited
5. The limits for articles will be as follows
 - 5.1. Short articles & messages 300 words
 - 5.2. Current issues and social justice 900 words
 - 5.3. Feature articles up to 3000 words
 - 5.4. Secondary articles up to 1500 words
6. The acceptance of articles will be considered based on the following criteria:
 - 6.1. Vedic teachings
 - 6.2. Principles of the Arya Samaj
 - 6.3. Social justice and social action
 - 6.4. Relevance to current issues

To contribute to projects of the Arya Samaj contact admin@aryasamajsa.org
Please send your comments and suggestions to admin@aryasamajsa.org

Rig Veda 9.63.5

कृण्वन्तो विश्वामार्यम् "Krinvanto Vishwam Aryam" Make the World Noble

Yajur Veda 36.18

मित्रस्याहम् चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानानि समीक्षे mitrasyāham chakṣuṣā sarvāṇi
bhūtānani samīkṣe May we all live in friendly cooperation and mutual trust

मित्रस्याहम् चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे

"Mitrasyaham Chakshusha samikshamahe" May we look at all with an
Equal and Friendly Eye

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



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