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August is Women's month in South Africa. It is a commemoration of the 1956 Women's March to the Union Buildings against pass laws. Women in South Africa now have rights enshrined in the constitution and will no longer need to demonstrate for the right to be an equal partner in society.

African women suffered triple oppression based on race, class, and gender. They worked in households and factories leaving their children behind to fend for themselves. Today women still face forms of exploitation and loss of status through gender-based violence which is endemic.

Equal status and respect for women is a key component of the Arya Samaj programme. Education for women, the right of widows to remarry and for women to assume their rightful roles in society are some of the key projects of the Arya Samaj.

This issue focuses on urbanisation. The consequences of urbanisation with informality in living conditions and economic activity affects women in a special way as they bear the brunt of keeping families together.

The article entitled "Urbanisation Cannot be Reversed" provides an overview of the future. "Informal Settlements are a Feature of Urbanisation" covers some aspects of life for informal dwellers.

We thank Aurobindo Ogra a professional planner, an academic and researcher based at the University of Johannesburg for the article on "Urbanisation in South Africa: The Critical Aspects Affecting Communities". The article is an improved version of 'Towards Growth-led Performance Oriented Transformation in South African Cities' published on LinkedIn (Ogra, 2014).

Veda Jyoti Editorial Committee:

Arthi Shanand, Karuna Mohan, Kirun Satgoor, Ressma Rambaros, Shoba Singh, Sudhira Sham, Usha Debipersad.



मागोतायै सहस्रपुत्र मा निदेश द्वेषांस्या कृधि।

Māgotāyai sahasra putra mā nidé 'pa dvéshansyā kridhi.
Rig Veda 3.16.5

May I not surrender to the hatred, enmity, and injustice of anyone!

The ideals of being free of hatred, animosity, antagonism, and hostility are difficult to achieve in the modern world. There is a myriad of injustices that people are subjected to.

7,8 billion people in the world are competing for the limited resources. Power and control of the economy creates division and inequality. Land grabs and annexing land brings about enmity. Some live in comfort while others struggle to survive.

Today, 71% of the world's population live in countries where inequality has grown. These inequalities are experienced day to day, month to month, year to year with rising costs of living. This is an injustice.

According to the World Bank 9.2% of the world live in extreme poverty surviving on less than \$1.90 a day. This too is an injustice. How can we sleep peacefully when millions in our family are hungry? Some responses are to feed the poor, to clothe the poor and to provide shelter.

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Few organised responses empower the poor to resist the injustices meted out on millions in the developing world.

Are people who get raped and abused able to still love and respect the perpetrators of violence on them? One in three women globally experience violence. This pervasive violence against women is at its worst for young women aged 15-24 who may also be young mothers. Is society standing up to this injustice and creating values for women and children to be free of antagonism?

The mantra in the Rig Veda calls on all to develop an inner resolve to be free of hatred, enmity and to resist injustices. When we view the atrocities of apartheid, we salute the masses who resisted apartheid and ended the enmity. Leaders of the Nelson Mandela generation in South Africa paved the way to develop new values of reconciliation in society. Gandhiji led people to resist injustice through ahimsa (non-violence). Rev Martin Luther King leader of the civil rights movement paved a new path by resisting injustices and not surrendering to hatred and enmity.



Urbanisation Cannot be Reversed

By 2050 more than two-thirds of the world's population is projected to be living in urban areas. This rapid increase will take place mainly in developing countries.

The world has moved away from an agrarian economy dependant on land and is now in the phase of industrialisation 4.1, with labour being displaced and technology enabling work.

Thus, more citizens globally are being drawn to urban centres that caters for the new modern world. As more people are attracted to urban centres the configurations of towns and cities are changing.



Sandton above represents a global economic space with spacious suburbs and a wealth of developmental amenities. Alexandra below represents a space of destitution for many that inhabit the township and provides cheap labour for the Sandton Business District and surrounding residential suburbs



It is estimated that nearly 40 percent of the world's urban expansion may be in slums, exacerbating economic disparities due to spatial inequality. Africa and Asia, both still less urbanised than other regions, will have the fastest urban growth rates. Africa's urban population is projected to jump from 40 % in 2017 to 56 % by 2050, and Asia's from 48 % to 64 % (UN, Development Programme, 2017).

One of the most unfortunate aspects of the urbanisation trends in Africa is that most of the growth happening in African cities is taking place in informal settlements that are characterised by poverty, unplanned housing, and inadequate infrastructure.



These conditions do not only provide unhealthy living environments for people but also increase the vulnerability of people to climate change induced climatic shocks and disasters.

However, if Africa prioritises the preservation of biodiversity in cities to maintain biological diversity and improve the wellbeing of city dwellers, the direct dependence on natural systems to meet their basic needs can be managed without the loss of biodiversity. Protecting the biodiversity also acts as an important buffer (by providing protection and reducing vulnerability) against extreme events and slows the onset of disasters.

The reversal of urbanisation cannot happen while the effects of climate change can be mitigated. Innovative and inclusive ways of shaping cities for the future can be instituted to transform the way properties are developed and regenerated.

Demographic and geographic shifts have the potential to propel economies towards renewed growth and economic development. Eighty percent of Global Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) is accounted for by half the world's people living in cities.

Rapid urbanisation gives rise to a host of challenges that could have devastating effects if planning is inadequate. Agglomeration in cities stimulates trade and allows for increased productivity, when planned for.

In contexts of poor infrastructure provision and weak institutions, cities are growing in ways that involve suboptimal land use, poor transport connectivity, dysfunctional labour markets, and harmful environmental impacts. The process of urbanisation presents city shapers with vast opportunities to develop housing, urban amenities, and the built infrastructure.

Rapid urbanisation is also linked to environmental concerns and many cities located in coastal areas or on riverbanks may also be vulnerable to natural disasters such as storms, cyclones, and floods. Likewise, poor urban infrastructure - such as unreliable power systems, congested roads and poor public transport are resulting in cities with reduced competitiveness and economic prospects (UN, Development Programme, 2017).

Well-planned urbanisation should combine, amongst many other interventions, green mobility solutions, building innovations that reduce a city's environmental impact and inclusionary urban designs that fosters community building. Urbanisation is big, but it can be smart too.



City inhabitants have certain interests while private developers may have completely different interests. In all of this, the government has limited time in which to try and balance these competing demands.

Unfortunately, with growth there is also the potential for cities to be the main hubs for creating and engendering unsustainable consumption and production trajectories.

Approximately 70% of global energy consumption and over 70% of greenhouse gas emissions are associated with urban areas thereby making urban infrastructure to be key driver of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (Godfrey and Zhao, 2016).

Africa's urban growth rate is projected to be up to eleven times more rapid than growth rates in Europe (Kometa et al., 2018), meaning that the influence which African cities will have on biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, waste generation, etc. is likely to be different from the Global North experiences.

This therefore means that African city policies, approaches, and strategies for attaining Sustainable Development Goal 11 (sustainable cities) will have to be remarkably different from Global North paradigms.

Sá grāmebhih sánitā sá rathebhīr vidé vísvābhih
krishtibhīrnv àdyá | sá pauthsyebhīr abhibhūr
áshastir má... | Rīg Veda 1.100.10

He alone with His accompaniments is the benefactor. He is immediately recognized by all enlightened persons through the movements of His aura of glory. By His enduring energy. He is victor over the unruly elements. May this resplendent Lord, associated with vital principles be our protection.

Leaders of cities, towns and villages should be well versed in arts, industries, sciences of war and endowed with thorough knowledge and strength. They should find joy in preserving a decent life for their subjects and work to attain victory over adversaries such as urbanisation, energy crises and informality.

Author: Karuna Mohan

Informal Settlements are a Feature of Urbanisation

One billion urban dwellers live in informal settlements in the world. Half of this billion are women. The three main problems experienced in informal settlements are overcrowding, poor waste management and a lack of basic services – clean water, adequate sanitation and energy for heating and lighting.

Inadequate sanitation causes diseases that impact on the lives of those who live in these conditions, more especially women. In Kenya, in the Mathare informal villages 71% of the residents walk more than 50m to reach the nearest toilet.

The results of a survey on this community conducted by the UN Habitat revealed that the women and girls are prone to urinary tract infections and chronic constipation. A high number of women living with HIV/AIDs in the area were prone to frequent diarrhoea and the lack of secure and clean toilets aggravated the situation. Women also cope with their menstrual period in unsanitary conditions. This has also led to vaginal infections.

This story is simply an example of what women and girls experience in informal settlements everywhere. Life in informal settlements increases the health burden on society. Had there been services in place and liveable settlements women and girls would not be at risk.

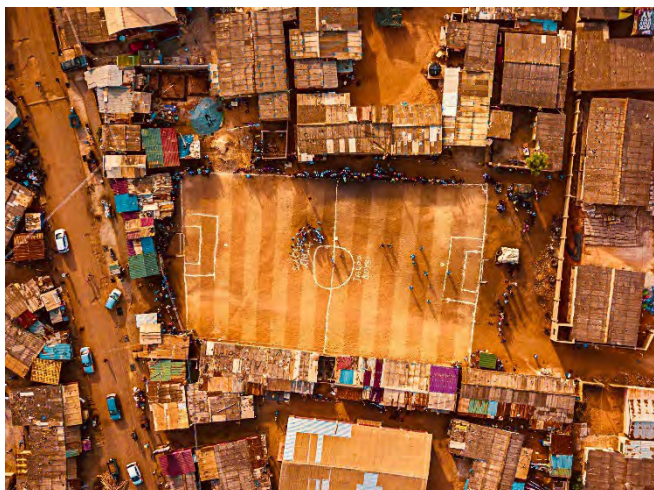


Women and girls are not safe. With no lighting they can be raped, attacked, and molested at night.

Overcrowding means that there is no privacy for adult sexual activities. Young children do not have the opportunity to study, develop and flourish and are exposed to sexual activity at an early age.

Teenagers who are ill equipped to set up home and be parents end up putting up an informal home because this

is only way they can be accommodated. In this way they perpetuate the cycle of informality and informal settlements become permanent.



Most informal settlement dwellers arrive in the city in search of jobs, but unfortunately do not always secure a means of income or are at the mercy of unscrupulous employers and if they do get a job, it is at entry level. Living in an informal settlement means you have no address, which exacerbates the situation.

Throughout the world criminal syndicates use informal settlements as their base and recruiting ground. The poor and downtrodden are victims and vulnerable to recruitment.

Over time informal settlement develop organisations and this sometimes is used to lobby for better conditions and to protect the community.

Author: Sudhira Sham

Urbanisation in South Africa: The Critical Aspects Affecting Communities

The global population has doubled in the last 40 years and cities are home to almost half of the global population. The towns growing into cities, and city expansion has seen bigger impacts than population trends. With increases in population areas change from towns to cities and cities to urban sprawl.

The rapid expansion of the urban population will continue to lead to critical consequences linked to the availability of resources. The high speed of city expansion requires considerable investments, public infrastructure, and services.



40 cities in Africa with a population of +1million

The African continent has more than fifty cities with a population of one-million people. In the next few decades, the continent will face exponential rapid urbanisation and industrialisation and would be subject to chronic infrastructure and service delivery pressures if not addressed and managed appropriately¹.

Cities across the world are rapidly gearing towards the implementation of smart, sustainable, and equitable cities and communities. The planning, management, and governance of cities have witnessed a significant focus on

¹ Cities in the World – A New Perspective on Urbanization, OECD Urban Studies, 2020

the development of digitalisation – the smart way of city planning, development, and management.



Singapore is rated as one of the most advanced in the smart approach to city planning, development, and management

The implementation driven by technology interventions is coupled with other smart reforms in areas of socio-economic, socio-technical, political, environmental, and other dimensions. The smart reforms intend to uplift the performance of cities to be recognised as performing and liveable cities to offer an improved quality of life to citizens and access to world-class infrastructure and service delivery.

The characteristics of reforms touch on multidimensional factors such as sustainability, quality of life, liveability, smartness, urban management, and other factors. Each of these factors and the dimensions thereof have critical linkages to each other and function as pillars in the transition and development of a growth led community focused smart eco-system.

Key Challenges

The African continent is generally lacking in infrastructure and service delivery. There are challenges in addressing the backlogs as well as planning for future development and attracting investments.

The African infrastructure is half to a fifth that of the BRICs with wide variations across countries. Around 80% of the infrastructure projects fail at the initial stages of feasibility and business planning².

In South Africa towns and cities face a gap in own revenue to investment in infrastructure. The irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure by municipalities adds further challenges in meeting the vision and goals as per proposed in development plans³.

Many of the cities are largely constrained on various fronts and require a multipronged approach and

innovative solutions. The availability of data and information is a concern for many of the urbanised and emerging cities in Africa.

The cities are not well-positioned in terms of integrating the evidence-oriented planning through new emerging technologies. They need to take radical measures towards the smart transition and development.

The metropolitan cities continue to attract influx of migrants in search of better opportunities leading to mushrooming of informal settlements around spatial pockets in suburban/peri-urban areas.



Metropolitan cities like Ekurhuleni, Tshwane and Johannesburg in South Africa have 30%-40% population living in the informal settlements. This leads to chronic pressure on municipal infrastructure and service delivery.

The rapid urbanisation, coupled with underinvestment is adding significant pressure on the overall performance of cities. With a range of increasing micro, macro, sectorial and socio-economic factors, economic growth has been volatile further constraining cities.

The National Development Plan (NDP) of South Africa emphasises the fact that young people deserve better educational and economic opportunities. To achieve this in local environments, a robust strategy to guide cities towards a growth-led, performance-oriented transformation is required.

The potential for the development of sustainable cities that cuts across the dimensions of productivity, quality, infrastructure, environment, and equity in a performance-oriented approach exists.

Whilst reports on the broader socio-economic and macro-economic policies and programmes have shown

² World Development Indicators, McKinsey Global Institute (2016, 2020)

³ State of Finances 2018, South African Cities Network, Treasury South Africa, Integrated Development Plans (2018-19).

improvements, especially in basic service delivery, there is a need to continue to look beyond the defined frameworks and guidelines, through sustained innovative approaches in all cities.

Strategic Approaches

The transformation of cities should entail suitable measures to be undertaken in a reform-based approach, driven at national level.

Some of these key interventions include reforms in sectors such as economy, education, energy, environment, finance, urban planning and development, water, and sanitation, among others.

Furthermore, there is a need to embark on municipal reforms which create an environment for municipalities to explore greater public and private community-led participation and sustainable asset creation - leading to job creation and improved quality of life.

Policies aimed at increasing access to skills development opportunities and transforming socio-political inequities as well as the spatial form which promotes functional and integrated human settlements do not fully address all aspects of performance-oriented growth-led development. Local and regional strategies need to be augmented to ensure that true growth-led and performance-oriented transformation is achieved.



Cities have already embarked on this path to performance-orientated transformation and have already achieved remarkable success. However, the question remains – how successful have South African cities been in diffusing and supplementing such practices and have these cities adapted the local experiences to mirror lessons and best practices learned from other developing countries?

The country requires an integrated approach which includes national and local needs. Cities and towns have

strategic visions aligned to the national needs but remain well-grounded in local and regional value chains.



A vision towards zero informal settlements, zero/low carbon footprints, equitable and efficient infrastructure, and service delivery, zero crime, zero poverty, zero unemployment, zero housing backlog among others is needed.

Therefore, one needs to ask how cities can cooperate at a local and regional level to create sustainable infrastructure yet remain aligned to the national needs. Furthermore, how can cities and towns create a multi-sector environment in terms of investment opportunities, job creation, better performance, and good governance, whilst reducing the existing gaps and backlogs? Lastly, how will cities and towns maintain unanimous goal-oriented performance development with private, public and community led partnership approaches?



There is a need to look at a holistic and encompassing strategic framework with guided Key Performance Areas (KPA) that will have a direct impact on the daily lives of the communities.

This framework then needs to be translated into measurable practical implementation plans that should be monitored carefully at local level. Systems should be put into place to facilitate reporting of problems, allowing local leaders and stakeholders to monitor and benchmark

service delivery and progress in terms of their defined development and implementation plans.



Providing incentives for good performing municipalities may also help to encourage local authorities to work with both private and civil society partners focused on community led development.

With the advent of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), the cities and towns can embrace several smart technologies systems and processes to function as part of the 4IR ecosystem and enable high productivity, cost efficiency, resource-efficiency, healthy, and livable sustainable and equitable cities.

Author: Aurobindo Ogra



Sanskrit words explained

गुरु

guru

Guru is derived from the verb root *gri* (to invoke, to praise). It is also an adjective meaning heavy, weighty, serious, or venerable – hence guru literally means “heavy one”. The word may also have a connection to the root *gur* meaning to raise, lift-up or make an effort.

The root *gu* means darkness and *ru* means removal. Thus a guru is a spiritual guide and teacher who has the capacity to pass on wisdom to others, illuminating the spiritual path, removing the darkness of ignorance, and shining the light of understanding.

Ideally a guru also teaches by example - how to live a good an ethical life. Sadly this is not in fact always the case.

When great personalities live and contribute to the greater good with their wisdom and actions, they are Gurus of truth.

This is the Dharma: code of conduct and expectations of a true guru.

Parents, elders, leaders, and teachers through their actions must earn the honour of respect as gurus.



Message from the President

My Dear Readers,

Prem Namaste

This issue of the Veda Jyoti makes one want to sit up and take note of the reality and enormity of urbanisation. Many of us are not even aware of the rapid growth and movement taking place in the urban areas. This being so, we need to accustom ourselves with the languages and cultures of the various communities living around us.

Another important point highlighted in the articles is the impact this has had on the lives of the women. During Women's Month various organisations and social groups will showcase women through breakfasts, dinners, and other events. These will be attended by those who can afford to. My appeal to you is to take your celebrations to the women who cannot afford to.

Hindus throughout the world will be celebrating three important festivals in August. Raksha Bandhan on the 11 August, Shravani, and Krsna Janmasthan on 18 August.

These festivals are about creating a bond of love by the simple adorning of a string. Raksha Bandhan a bond of protection is celebrated on the full moon day of the lunar month of Shraavan (Shravana Purnima). It also coincides with the festival of Shravani or the changing of the sacred thread – the Yajnopavit.

On the day of Raksha Bandhan the love between brother and sister is celebrated. The sister ties a colourful and decorative string on the wrist of her brother and prays for his long life. He in return reciprocates with a gift for her and promises to love and protect her for the rest of their lives.

Rakhis are also tied to the wrists of "brothers" who are not blood relatives; to Gurus by their students or disciples; a wife to her husband. In fact, every member of a family should be tying a rakhi on each other's wrists.



This ritual not only strengthens the bond of love but broadens the boundaries of the family. The tying of a rakhi on wrists of close friends and neighbours underscores the need for a harmonious social life in a community.

This broadens one's outlook beyond one's own family to wider communities of this earth (Vasudha), as one family – Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

Therefore the festival of Raksha Bandhan conveys the message of brotherhood, emphasising the need for respect and nurturing positive qualities, purity in thought, word, and deed.

The festival of Shravani is the bond celebrated between the Guru and his student. On being accepted by the Guru, the student is invested with a sacred thread made of three strands, the Yajnopavit.

This Sanskar, the Upanayan Sanskar is carried out during the Upakarma Vidhi. This procedure is commenced with a hawan. With the invocation of the Vrata Mantra, whereby the student pledges to abide by the Truth and nothing but the Truth. The code of conduct for life is set.

The Yajnopavit is made up of three strands of string which constantly serve as a reminder to all who wear it, that they have three important obligations in life. These are called Rna. They are Pitri Rn – our obligation to our parents; Dev Rn – our obligation to God and His creation; rishi Rn – our obligation to our teachers, institutions of education and all learned and enlightened persons who impart knowledge to us. The basis of the vow taken during this ceremony is Truth and Righteousness.



On the very same basis, Lord Krsna gave us the lessons of life contained in the Bhagavad Gita. When we hear or say Krsna, we immediately think of words such as love, unselfishness, nishkama karma – actions without rewards.

We picture him as a lovable infant, mischievous boy, the upholder of justice on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The question is: Did He want to be worshipped in the human form or did He want to advance the relationship between the individual soul and the cosmic reality?

On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, in the Mahabharata as Arjuna's guide, it was Lord Krsna's duty to address the way Arjuna was giving in to his emotions. The discourse on overcoming emotions and living a righteous life is contained in the Bhagavat Gita.

The teachings explain that there is a physical body which is material and an Atman that is spiritual - the truth that lies within us. This needs to be exposed and developed.

Therefore, the message of Lord Krsna in the Bhagavad Gita one that emphasises the need to look within to find the essence of life on Earth and not be distracted by everything material.

Let us keep these life lessons in mind as we celebrate Krsnasthmi and extend ourselves by following the path of righteousness always.



Pt Arthi Shanand

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 three hundred words,
 - 5.2. Current issues and social justice up to nine hundred words
 - 5.3. Feature articles 1500 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 भूताननि समीक्षे mitrasyāham chakṣuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtānani samīkṣe May we all live in friendly cooperation and mutual trust

मित्रस्याहम् चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे "mitrasyaaham chakshushaa sameekshaamahe" 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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