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This month we focus on Swami Dayanand (1824-1883) a Vedic philosopher, social leader, fearless truth seeker, a maker of modern India.

A source of inspiration for many political leaders in the Indian independence struggle, Swami ji founded the Arya Samaj in 1875 and set the tone for critical thought and action with his extraordinary faculty for reasoning.

His commitment to fulfil his pledge to his Guru led him on a path that revitalised the historic roots of Vedic traditions. This in turn made him one of first leaders in colonised India to call for the British to quit India. It further led him to question idolatry, empty ritualism and man-made social practices that led to inequalities, injustices, and exploitation.

At a Shivaratri vigil, Swami ji began to question orthodoxy and ritual practices, and his death occurred during Deepavali.

A prolific writer, he authored over sixty books and tracts. His message though rooted in Hinduism and Sanathan Dharma attracted people of all faiths and races.

Our feature article is on "Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883)" put together by Pt Ressma Rambaros. "The Relevance of Swami Dayanand's Teachings in the Present Day" was written by Sudhira Sham. We thank Pt Suriyaprakash Singh for covering Shivaratri; Pt Usha Harrikanan for the exposition on the bedtime prayer and Pt Bhagirathi Basdhew for his views on Namaste.

Your contributions and comments are welcomed. Please see the last page for the criteria for articles.

Veda Jyoti Editorial Committee:

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



ओम् अवाचक्षं पदमस्य सस्वरुग्रं निधातुरन्वायमिच्छाम् ।
अपृच्छमन्यो उत ते म आहुरिन्द्रं नरो बुबुधाना अशेम ॥

Aum avācacakṣhaṃ padamasya sasvarugraṃ nidhāturanvāyamicchāman | aprcchamanyāṃ uta te ma āhurindraṃ naro bubudhānā aśema ||

I have discovered His secret and strong place, where He dwells. I have sought the place of that Self-Sustainer. I have inquired from others; and they the leaders, the seekers of wisdom, say, let us proceed to find the Resplendent.

Rig Veda 5:30:2

For years with deep desire Swami Dayanand sought the secret of the formidable presence of the Cosmic Preserver. While searching he asked many saintly people for help in finding God. They all practiced deep meditation and study. But it was his guru Swami Virjanand Dandeesha who showed him how Hinduism had strayed from its historical roots and that many of its practices had become impure. Upon completing his studies Swami Dayanand promised that he would devote his life to restoring the rightful place of the Vedas in the Hindu faith.

This mantra of the Rig Veda embodies the search that we all must embark on to find the truth and to understand the glorious truth.

During the 19th century arose an enlightened soul and fearless leader. He addressed all the social evils such as child marriages, polygamy, sati, superstitions, forced isolation of widows, the caste system, untouchability, and unfair treatment of women. Swami Dayanand rightfully placed an emphasis on education and equality. Swami Dayanand was a visionary who led people to eradicate the social ills of his time.

Author: Pt Shobana Singh



Maharishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824 – 1883)

Can you imagine an excruciatingly painful death borne in silence by a Swami who was given milk laced with fine shards of glass which cut his internal organs to such an extent that survival was impossible and death inevitable. Who was this Swami and why was he wiped off the face of the earth?

Moolshankar (his birthname) was born in 1824 at Tankara in Gujerat in a home blessed with the comforts of life.

His pious father initiated him in the study of Vedic literature. He was able to recite the Yajur Veda (one of the four books containing knowledge imparted to rishis who were in deep meditation) at an early age. His father was a devotee of Lord Shiva.

During Shivarathri – a night spent meditating on Lord Shiva devotees observe a strict fast and pass the night in pious vigil and prayer. Moolshankar obeyed his father and sat with other devotees. He regularly washed his eyes with water to stay awake, as his father said he would see Shiva if he adhered to all the austerities. He sat expectantly waiting to see Shiva. He remained awake whilst the other devotees nodded off.

When all was silent a mouse nibbled at the offerings laid out before the statue of Shiva. Moolshankar was aghast that Shiva whom he was led to believe was omnipotent in the statue was powerless to stop the desecration of the holy offerings.

This was the turning point. He lost faith in idol worship and from thereon he refused to participate in religious rites. This day is viewed as his day of enlightenment (*bodh divas*).

A few years later his sister passed away. He was shaken by this first-hand experience of death. A year later there was another death in his family, that of his dear uncle. He thought, wondered, questioned whether one could avoid or conquer death, or find a means to attain salvation after death. He was troubled and morose. His parents decided to get him married to remove his pensive mood.

Moolshankar had no desire to be in a forced marriage. He ran away from home. He wandered about in search of learned people to find answers to the questions troubling him.

While on this path he was initiated into *Brahmacharya* Ashram - the first of the four stages in life. He set out in search of the God who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Whilst he was at a fair, he was found by a search party led by his father. His father left him in the custody of the guards. He escaped their clutches and was not seen by his father again.

From the stage of *Brahmacharya*, he skipped the *Grihast* stage (marriage) as he went in quest of yogis who could clear the conundrum in his mind - how to overcome death, how to find salvation and how to realise God. Moolshankar took the oath of a *Sanyasin* and was given the name Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

He spent many years travelling to gather knowledge. He learnt about Swami Virjanand Saraswati living in Mathura. This Swami had become blind at an early age but had acquired a great proficiency Sanskrit grammar and Vedic lore.

Under this Swami he studied Panini Grammar and the ancient Vedas. His guru was impressed by his student's intelligence and keen desire to learn. He was convinced that this young student would fulfil his heart's desire for the propagation of Vedic Dharma.

On completion of his study and as he took leave his guru extracted the promise from him that he would consecrate his life to the annihilation of the heresies that had crept into Hindu faith, to re-establish the ancient religious method and to disseminate the truth. Swami Dayanand kept his promise. He spent the rest of his life preaching the knowledge of the Vedas.



Swami Dayanand visited Agra, Gwalior, Jaipur, Pushkar and Haridwar where the *Khumb Mela* (grand fair) was held. Thousands of *sanyasins* and mahatmas (learned people) gathered from all over India.

Swami Dayanand fixed his tent, where now the Mohan Ashram is built. Here, he began his revolt against hypocrisy.

He gave up everything to become a true *Sanyasi*. He toured preaching the new ideology he obtained from a study of the Vedas, condemning idol worship, false Gods, tantra mantra, liquor, bhang/intoxicants, adultery, stealing, and cheating.

He entered into debates with Hindus, Christians, Moslems, and non-believers. He argued for hours against the whole frontline and the reserve of orthodoxy.

A *shastrartha* was held with twenty-one priests in the presence of 50 000 men on the theme of idol worship. The debate ended in pandemonium created by the defeated priests.

Swami Dayanand proved that the prevailing religious practice of the Hindus was opposed to the Vedas. This news spread across the length and breadth of India. Swami Dayanand became known all over India.

On 10 April 1875, Swami Dayanand set out ten principles of the Arya Samaj and founded the first Arya Samaj in Bombay (Mumbai). This date is now commemorated as the founding of the Arya Samaj.



Swami Dayanand continued his lectures, travelling great distances and set up Arya Samaj organisations in different areas. This amazing orator impressed people.

At Haridwar he had an open question and answer session. He held debates with Reverend Scott on topics such as transmigration of souls, forgiveness of sins and the nature of the soul.

Swami Dayanand authored books to elucidate the teachings of the Vedas. An especially important one being Rigveda Bhashya- a commentary on the Vedic mantras.

He wrote Aryodeshya Ratnamala to highlight the beliefs, values, and principles of Aryas. He used simple language to define extraordinarily complex and difficult concepts that were and are still misunderstood in society.

The Sandhya is a book of prayers, fourteen of the eighteen mantras therein are directly from the Vedas. This book is a great legacy left by Swami Dayanand for the followers of Arya Samaj.

Satyarth Prakash translated into Light of Truth is his Magnum Opus which has remained a highly influential text on the Philosophy of the Vedas and clarifications of various ideas and duties of human beings.¹

His other books include: Introduction to the commentary of the Vedas, Ashtadhayi Bhashya, Sanskrit Vakya Prabhodha, Bhranti Niwaran, Gokarunanidhi, Vedanti Dhavan Tamanvaranas, Panch Maha Yajna Vidhi, Advaitamat-Khandan, Bhagvat-Khandan, Ved-Virudh-mat-Khandan, Sanskar Vidhi, Arya Bhavinaya, Arya Darshan Ratna Mala, Chaturved-Vishaya-sukta, Vidan Prakash, Bramochhadanam, Autobiography, Gautam-Ahalya-ki-Katha.

Of these the Sanskaar Vidhi is an important book. This book contains the sixteen sanskaars (sacraments) that are conducted at various stages of a person's life, giving explanations, meanings, direction, advice, and procedures.²

Swami Dayanand was a great reformer. He aroused thinking in India about self-rule. He dispelled superstitious theories and drew people's attention back to the Vedas. He allowed women to recite the Gayatri Mantra which was previously forbidden. He called for the equality of sexes to be recognised, he denounced the caste system and included the "untouchables" in the Arya Samaj. He was bold in his crusade to improve the condition of women. He advocated education for both boys and girls. *Gurukuls* were built for formal learning. He regarded marriages as indissoluble; he admitted the remarriage of young widows.

Swami Dayanand enlightened the entire world with Vedic Knowledge

Author: Pt Ressa Rambaros

¹ The Veda Jyoti September 2022 Issue 9/2022 has a feature article on "The Light of Truth" accessible at <https://aryasamajsa.org/index.php/veda-jyoti/>

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Karam Narain Kapoor, Dayanand: His Life, Philosophy and Works, Sarvedeshik Sabha, 1993

B Makwana, Great Social Reformer, Founder of Arya Samaj Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati

"I preach Vedic truths. I am thus a preacher and do not wish to be anything more than this.... I do not wish to be honoured or have any high position (in any organisation). What I really wish is a great thing (reform in society). Hopefully, I shall succeed in getting this done by the help of God and cooperation and kindness of scholars and good men (and women)."

Swami Dayanand Saraswati - 19 March 1881

² The Veda Jyoti November 2022 Issue 11/2022 has a feature article on "The Sanskaars Relating to a Child from Conception to Graduation" accessible at <https://aryasamajsa.org/index.php/veda-jyoti/>

“Torch-Bearer” by TL Vaswani

In answer, then, to the question: Why do I feel drawn to Dayananda? I would point, first, to his love of reality, his passion for truth, every inch of this man is sincerity. Even when at the height of his fame, he gives himself no supernatural airs. He founds no gaddi (caste, tribe, cult). He refuses to make known his real name and birthplace lest after death one of his relatives be set up as his successor.

He declines to be the dictator of his Samaj. He wants it to be truly democratic. He accepts no title except the simple one of “Updeshaka” ie. “Preacher.” (P143)

“Maker of Indian Nation” by Anand Swarup

And his plan was simple. The fortress of idolatry must be stormed and destroyed and a network of institutions to inculcate the true Vedic religion established; the blessings of the Vedic age be glorified, and national pride roused in the mind of the Hindu masses... The orthodox gentry of Mumbai (Bombay) soon arranged for a public discussion on idol-worship, but their representative failed to show any authority from the Vedas in support of the doctrine. (P187,188)

“Dayanand Saraswati: Man and His Mission.” by CY Chintamani

“For the greatness of Swami Dayananda to be acknowledged and the work of the Arya Samaj to be admired, it is not necessary that a person should become devotee of the Swami or a member of the Samaj. The element of the hero-worshiper is so active in the typical Hindu that it is never superfluous for him to be impressed with the profound observation of Lord’s actions, that absolute devotion to mortal man ought not to exist.” (Page 191).

Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati practised what he preached:

The 10 Principles of the Arya Samaj, formulated by Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati on the establishment of the Arya Samaj, each have their authority and basis in the Vedas, in their respective order as follows:

1	Rig Veda 10.82.3	The source of Truth
2	Rig Veda 6.45.16	Truth of One, Formless, Adorable God.
3	Rig Veda 10.134.7	Scripture of Truth: Veda.
4	Yajur Veda 19. 77	Belief in Truth.
5	Rig Veda 10.124.5	Practice of Truth.
6	Yajur Veda 12.54	Truth of universal good.
7	Atharva Veda 19.62.1	Truth of love.
8	Yajur Veda 29.37	Truth of knowledge and ignorance.
9	Yajur Veda 40.7	Truth of individual and social welfare.
10	Atharva Veda 4.3.7	Truth of freedom and duty.

The 10 Principles of the Arya Samaj by Pt Chamupati M.A.; 2nd Ed; Published by Pt K Jnani, Arya Samaj Madras, undated

The Relevance of Swami Dayanand's Teachings in the Present Day

What is the state of spirituality amongst people in the present time? Sadly, one may say that it has been replaced by a moral, cultural, and social crisis that has been masked by a vigorous show of religiosity.

Greed, corruption, and total obsession with material wealth has alienated humanity from their rightful place in nature as described in the Vedas. How would Swami Dayanand have responded to this crisis?

In his time, Swami Dayanand was recognized as a forward thinker with the ability to see what ills plagued society and what the solution was. At every opportunity he urged people to return to the Vedas, to learn how to live according to the values laid down there. He condemned idol worship and rituals based on superstition.

When he spoke out against the caste system, against untouchability and fiercely urged people to condemn these, he earned the praise of Mahatma Gandhi who recognized and appreciated his efforts:

"Among the many rich legacies that Swami Dayanand has left to us, his unequivocal pronouncement against untouchability is undoubtedly one..."³

Swami Dayanand's interpretation of the caste system as a "crime against humanity" as he had discovered in the Vedas, was that one was free to choose his/her position in society according to his abilities and his aptitude. His condemnation of the caste system angered many of the orthodox Hindu priests and religious leaders as it upset the status quo and power relations in society. He rejected the idea that only the Brahmin caste could study the Vedas and perform Vedic rituals, he often challenged the religious leaders to debates and emerged the winner.

While we may not understand the caste system in South Africa as the experience and sufferings of indenture broke barriers of caste practices and then later being a minority community, we choose to protect our enclave, which was supported by the segregation of apartheid. We

nevertheless suffered discrimination, were second class citizens and looked down upon.

Racism that is emerging today is not dissimilar to the untouchability that existed in the 19th and early 20th century. Racism divides humanity; is unfair and unjust. It creates power relations that perpetuates inferiority and superiority. In addition, there is a lived experience of unfairness linked to not being productively involved in the economy despite having education and expertise.

Equal education for both male and female and children of all castes as well as the study of the Vedas by both men and women of all castes was paramount in Swami Dayanand's plan. The establishment of community schools – *Gurukula* was a crucial step in the programme for eradicating the caste system and bringing back the Vedas. It meant that all children, regardless of their caste could attend schools and the content of their educational programme would be the same. Swami Dayanand's writing in the *Satyartha Prakash* inspired the Gurukuls and DAV (Dayanand Anglo Vedic) school system.

He recognized that women were suppressed in various areas of life whereas their liberation would have been beneficial to society. He also recognized that access to information and different fields of education was of vital importance for the development of a sense of worth of women. Women who were educated were empowered and aware of their rights. He did not believe that women should be restricted in their choice of subjects and openly encouraged women to choose subjects like Mathematics, Science and Accounting. Women were not allowed by Hindu priests to recite the Gayatri Mantra. In 1858, at a place called Karnavas, Swami Dayanand taught a woman the Gayatri Mantra and she recited it at a public event. This was the first time ever in modern India that the Gayatri Mantra was recited by a woman in public.⁴

How has this become relevant today? The Arya Samaj in South Africa has a record number of female priests who perform all the sanskaars. While this may be old news, what is interesting to note is that the Arya Samaj was ahead of many other religions in inducting female priests. These place the Arya Samaj in South Africa in good stead to support the development of women and the girl child and promote the participation of women in all aspects of social life. The collective experience of women in the Arya

³ Swami Agnivesh: Swami Dayanand: Man, Message and Mission, Dharma Pratishthan Publications, 2005 ISBN 81-7871-057-7

⁴ Ibid

Samaj can be shared across the different faiths and can assist to build a non-racial, non-sexist society.

In an address presented at the conference, Swami Dayanand: Man, Message and Mission, Reverend Valson Thampu states: "I consider Swami Dayanand to be a spiritual genius" for three reasons.

"First of all, he represented the triumph of reason in religion. His courage came from his profound spirituality, and he rejected orthodox religious conditioning. Secondly, he called for people to reject obscurantism and (to) go "Back to the Vedas" and third, even as he tried to reform his own religion, he did not overlook what was rotten in other religions. He wanted to reform the idea of religion itself. The spiritual discipline that Swami Dayanand has evolved - to doubt, to debate and, if need be, to dissent – is worthy of universal acceptance."⁵

The question one may ask is, if Swami Dayanand had such a sound and unclouded vision, has the Arya Samaj, which he established with such vigor and enthusiasm, continued to maintain, and update his vision. Has it produced people who could continue the original dream of such a fearless fighter? Are we too lacking in courage to keep that dream alive? Or are the present generations too involved in materialistic activities to devote any time to reviving such a dream.

We salute people like Swami Bhawani Dayal, Swami Vidyawathi, Pt Nardev Vedalankar, Mr D G Satyadeva, Pandit Nayanarajh, Mr SL Singh, Mr B. Bechoo, Mr F. Ramlagan, Mr F. Satyapal, Mr S. Bhugwandeem, Mr D. Lutchman, Mr Heera Singh, Mr Bodh Singh, Pt N Ramdutt, Pt B Behadar, Mr S Rambharos, and Dr B. Rambilass who made great sacrifices to bring people closer to the Vedas by teaching them Vedic Mantras, setting up the Aryan Benevolent Home and keeping tenets of Vedic Dharma alive. We salute those who made the effort to learn. Hopefully, they will continue the tradition that will keep Swami Dayanand's vision alive and relevant.

Author: Sudhira Sham

Swami Agnivesh: Swami Dayanand: Man, Message and Mission, Dharma Pratishthan Publications, 2005

A Great Path-Maker

I offer my homage of veneration to Swami Dayanand the great path-maker in modern India who through bewildering tangles of creed and practices – the dense undergrowth of the degenerate days of our country – cleared a straight path that was meant to lead the Hindus to a simple and national life of devotion to God and service of man. With a clear-sighted vision of truth and courage of determination, he preached and worked for our self-respect and vigorous awakening of mind that could strive for a harmonious adjustment with the progressive spirit of the modern age and at the same time kept in perfect touch with that glorious past of India when it revealed its personality in freedom of thought and action in an unclouded radiance of spiritual realisation....

Rabindranath Tagore

The Maker of Modern India

Swami Dayanand Saraswati is certainly one of the most powerful personalities who have shaped modern India and are responsible for its moral regeneration and religious revival.

The most prominent Arya Samajists are at the same time the most influential nationalist leaders....

Subhas Chandra Bose

⁵ ibid

Views from Our Priests

Shivarathri

The significance of Shivarathri is in the various names of Shiva. The most popular of all the names is Shiva. "Shih" means auspicious. "Va" means inhabitant. Shiva means the auspicious one who resides in all beings (*jivas*) as their very souls. The bright one, the pure one and the one who is the source of bliss and happiness.

Shiva is popularly known as the Destroyer. "Shi" means to cut, attenuate, and make thin or sharp. As the Destroyer of evil, Shiva weakens our egoism (*anava*), cuts away our bonds (*pasas*), removes our delusion (*moha*) and sharpens our intellect, so that we can discern the reality from unreality and truth from falsehood.

Shiva is also the Giver of bliss and happiness (*sham*). Hence he is also known as the one who is bliss personified or the one whose form is bliss (*Shankara*). In the Vedas there is reference to Shiva as Rudra. Rudra means the howling one, which signifies his connection with storms and stormy winds. Rudra also means either the Remover of Sorrows (*ruth*) or the Impeller of Seasons (*ruthus*). *Ruth* also means red. It is a reference to Shiva's association with the dusk and red sky. In the Upanishads He is often equated with breath (*prananath*) and the syllable Aum (*Omkareshwar*).

Maha Shivaratri is celebrated to declare devotion and earn the grace of Shiva. Shaivism holds that no one can attain liberation, however hard one may try, without the grace and blessings of Shiva. The best way to earn that is by surrendering to Him and contemplating upon Him. Fasting is observed on that day as a mark of that devotion and commitment.

Arya Samaj and Shivaratri

14-year-old Moolshankar (Swami Dayanand) was told that the *prasadh* offered on Shivarathri night was for Lord Shiva's consumption. Intrigued by this information he stayed up all night hoping to get a glimpse of God. To his disappointment he witnessed a rodent gnawing at the offerings. It was at that moment that his journey began on seeking Truth and Dharma. His aim since then was to lead people from darkness to light, irrationality to

rationality, irreligion to religion and ne-science to science. He later formulated the ten principles of the Arya Samaj based on truth, justice, and science.

Today we are constantly facing challenges, be it financial, social, health or spiritual identity, we all have some hurdle to resolve. We need to realise truth. Study of our sacred texts help our intellect to think on the path of *Sathya* (truth). We will find that there can only be one ultimate, formless, all pervading, all powerful and all-knowing God (Aum). The search for God begins within oneself. One needs to look within just like the image of Shiva seated in *Padmasan* (lotus pose) contemplating and meditating on God in total silence so too can we experience our Creator, the Ultimate Being (AUM).

Pt Suriyaprakash Singh



The Significance of the Bedtime Prayer

ओं यज्जाग्रतो दूरनमुदैति दैवं तदु सुप्तस्य तथैवैति।
दूरंगमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु॥

Aum yajjāgrato dūramudaiti daivam tadu supatasya
tathavaiti. Dūrangamam jyotiṣām jyotirekam tanme
manah śiva sankalpamastu.

Yajur Veda 34.1

That efficacious entity which wanders far when a man is in his wakeful phase and strolls similarly while he is in his slumber state; and that which traverses far and wide is the light of all organic lights; may that mind be predominated with noble intentions.

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind along with its functions and its behaviour. The Bedtime Prayer explains that man's mind goes far away when he is awake, and it goes further away when he is sleeping. The mind is a source of light. It acts through active senses and perceives with cognitive senses when it is in an awakened state. It acquires knowledge via sensual experiences. In the state of REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, the mind reflects on the objects that it has so far perceived. These objects could have been perceived recently or a long time ago.

'Mind is the light of lights' indicates that there are many lights. These lights refer to the lights of our senses that assist us in perception. A man's arms and legs work outside of the human body. In the process of using our limbs, the mind creates pictures of objects. The soul is connected to the mind, and the mind is connected to the organs, and the organs are connected to the objects that the mind perceives. Without this process, no cognition will take place. This indicates that the mind is the source of light, which lights up objects that are outside of the body. The mind transfers this information to the soul. As a result of the processing of the information, this information is stored in the memory of the brain, which then becomes preserved in the soul. If this process does not take place, then there would be no remembrance of past experiences.

The gathering of information by the mind occurs with or without our control. Since this information is stored in our brains, we must be overly cautious about the information we gather for processing by the mind. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we control our actions, thereby disciplining our minds so that the soul is a storehouse of positivity.

Author: Pt Usha Harrikaran

Reference: Acharya Vaidyanath Shastri, Sciences In The Vedas, Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, New Delhi, 1970

Namaste: The Divinity within Me Salutes the Divinity within Yours!

Of all the greetings in this world the Indian greeting of 'Namaste' is the oldest and the most meaningful and is gaining worldwide acceptance. It would be an honour if the present world population of eight billion would adopt

this wonderful greeting for it not only signifies unity but also respect.

Today the most common greeting in the Western world is, 'Hello!' What does 'hello' mean and what is its significance? It is generally believed that when Graham Bell was testing his invention, the telephone, he would call up his partner whose name was Hello. During his testing he would say, 'Hello! Hello! Can you hear me?' After over a thousand attempts his invention became a reality, which is still an important means of communication today. But, why do we have to imitate Graham Bell by referring to his partner when we are making a telephone call or meeting someone in person?

The other forms of greeting today are, Good Morning, Good Afternoon, Good Evening. Here the one person is wishing the other person a pleasant time, but it can be confusing if the persons concerned are not sure what part of the day it is, in which case it would be advisable to just say, 'Good Day'. But then the meaning is so bland. It has so little significance, if any.

Amongst Hindus there are those who would greet one in the name of their favourite deity, e.g., Jai Shri Raam, Jai Shri Krishna, Jai Bajarang Bali, Hari Bol, Swami Narayana, Om Sai Raam, Om Nama Shivaya, Durga Mata Ki Jai, and so on. But, when meeting someone from a different or unknown sect, it would be wise to simply use the Namaste greeting.



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Message from the President

Dear Readers

Namaste

Swami Dayanand wanted all to acquire knowledge, practice virtue and shun vices. He wanted women to have the same rights and privileges as men.

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of South Africa continuously attempts to realise his dream. Today we have more women priests in our midst who have acquired knowledge and are our foot soldiers who perform the 16 *sanskaars* with proficiency. This is due to our School of Vedic Studies, that provides an in-depth course to students over a 3.5-year period.

To spread the message of the Vedas we have an online monthly lecture programme entitled "Back to the Vedas" as well as this medium of a monthly journal under the banner of Veda Jyoti for debates, discussions and sharing of knowledge about Vedic Dharma.

In taking forward the legacy that Maharishi Dayanand left us, we are keen to build inter-faith unity and understanding.

Our priests and affiliates in Phoenix and Pietermaritzburg have begun this painstaking process. This will in time help to reduce racism, mistrust, and fear. We need to build shared values and a non-racial unity as these are needed for peace and prosperity in South Africa.

On the social support front, we have continued the legacy our forefathers left us of caring for the aged and orphans as well as ensuring that the destitute are fed, clothed, and supported. This wing of our work is in the Aryan Benevolent Home, the Heal Foundation, project Tripti, and the Arya Samaj Clinic at the NJVC.

Going forward I look towards the efforts of all in doing their bit to protect the environment, caring for animals and plants, and living in harmony with nature.

On 12 February the Arya Samaj South Africa will host the Sunday Havan focusing on Shivaratri (which falls on 18 February) as it holds special significance of enlightenment, the search for the truth, and inner resolve. We are committed to continue down the path set out for the Arya Samaj to focus on liberation and social upliftment.

Pt Arthi Nanckchand Shanand

People of all cultural and races accept Namaste as a form of greeting. In 2014 when Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi visited western countries, he greeted everyone with a warm Namaste, and they all reciprocated. When Donald Trump, the then American President visited India, he took great delight in wishing everyone Namaste as his way of greeting. When Rishi Sunak the Prime Minister of Britain met with Narendra Modi at the G20 summit on the Indonesian island of Bali, they both greeted each other with a respectful Namaste.

But what is so special about the Namaste greeting? It creates unity. It is suitable for all people and for any part of the day. It can be used in all circumstances and in any place. It can be used with people known to each other or even with strangers. Its meaning transcends race and religion and hence can be used by all. Because there is no physical contact there can be no fear of transmitting any infection, hence it is hygienic. This noble gesture is a symbol of love, respect, equality, humbleness, discipline, and culture.

What is so important about Namaste? It has been used as a form of greeting from time immemorial. Mention of it is made in the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, and the Puranas. King Janak greeted his preceptors with a gentle Namaste. Raam greeted his wife Sita with a loving Namaste. Arjuna greets his charioteer Krishna with a respectful Namaste.

Why does the greeting of Namaste hold so much importance in an intellectual society? Namaste recognises an important fact that we are not just this physical body, a name nor a number. We are indeed the immortal soul, divine in origin and divine in nature. When someone with palms joined and raised to the chest, and with serenity, humbleness, and a graceful bow of the head, says a gentle Namaste, that person is symbolically saying, 'The Divinity within my body salutes the divinity within yours'. The person greeted would reciprocate with a similar gesture.

What a wonderful yet a meaningful form of greeting. So very profound and creating equality in society. I have always encouraged this form of greeting in the interest of unity. How about you? If you have not already started, would you make that commitment today? Thank you very much for your positivity.

Author: Pt Bhagirathi Basdhew

Sanskrit words explained

व्रतम्

Vratam

Meaning: Vow or Pledge

In Hindi, the word is Vrat व्रत

Vrat is a firm resolution (vow) made to perform a deed.

A vrat is also to observe a period of abstinence from food, water, intoxicating substances and sexual intercourse.

A vrat in the modern world is a vow or an oath.

A vrat is taken:

- When a *brahmachari* (student) begins his/her formal education,
- At the Upanayana sanskaar when the student makes a pledge to uphold the truth,
- When a priest graduates,
- At a Vivah sanskaar (wedding) when the bridal couple promise to observe their marriage vows,
- At a coronation when the king takes the oath to rule the country with integrity,
- By doctors to attend to the sick in a responsible, professional manner through the Hippocratic oath,
- In court when witnesses are required speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth,
- In parliament when elected leaders of a country swear to serve the people.

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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:
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 - 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:
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 - 6.3. Social justice and social action,
 - 6.4. Relevance to current issues.

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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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