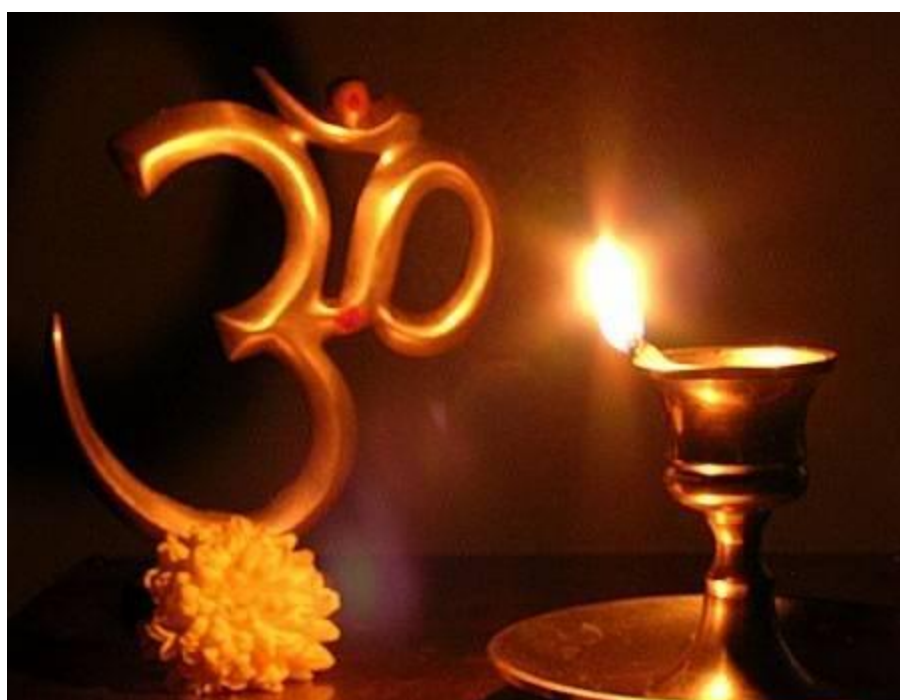


patrika

the voice of the Hindu Centre, Singapore

June 2016



Dear Readers,

Patrika has completed three years! We have kept you informed of HC activities, updates, fundraising events, workshops, lectures by visiting gurus, retreats, pilgrimage trips, and much more! We would not have got here if not for all of you. We hope to make the Patrika more interactive in the coming months. Watch this space for updates!

President's Message

In Focus

Mark your Calendar

Update of Activities

Volunteer Speaks

Want to tell us what else you would like to see in "Patrika", then drop us a note at:
patrika@hinducentre.org.sg
Do forward this newsletter to all your friends and relatives!

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President's Message



Namaste dear friends of Hindu Centre,

2016 opened with a big bang for Hindu Centre with a number of interesting and important activities.

The 8-month teacher training programme came to a close with the graduation of 18 newly-minted teachers who will be deployed for teaching. Attending the graduation ceremony was our partner Purna Vidya Foundation, with Swamini Pramananda Saraswati and Swami Siddhabodhananda in attendance. Similarly, the MITRA counsellors training programme came to a close on 28 May when 11 new counsellors graduated after 12 weeks of training. Meanwhile the Vedic Yoga teacher training course commenced on the same day with a full house.

I warmly welcome all the new volunteers into our Hindu Centre family.

An 18-month long weekly course on Bhagavad Gita commenced on 22 April, again with overwhelming response. On May 7, we held a fund-raising concert by Ms Sushma Somashekar and party, followed on May 8 by our Annual General Meeting.

I'm happy that we have new faces in the Management Committee in Uma Jayaraman and Krishna Sadashiv. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing MC members who have served the HC well and will continue to do so. They are Kesavan Kumaran, S Ravethy, Jeya Aiyathurai and A Karthik. Thank you all.

In May, about 23 volunteers went on a spiritual retreat in the Tapasyalayam Ashram of Purna Vidya along the Ganga in Uttarkashi. They also visited Rishikesh, Haridwar and Gangotri and some went on to Badrinath and Kedarnath.

In the coming months, HC will remake its mission to become more impactful and transformative in the lives of Singapore Hindus. Our programmes will stimulate personal change through a better understanding of Sanatana Dharma in daily living. I hope you will stay with us for this new and exciting journey.

Dr N Varaprasad

President Hindu Centre

In Focus - Retreat to Ma Ganga

In this segment, instead of our regular interviews with visiting gurus and volunteers, we have articles by some members who went on a retreat to Tapasyalayam Ashram in Uttarkashi. The pilgrims have shared some interesting experiences about the retreat and the 'char dham'.

Uttarkashi - Rishikesh -

Haridwar - by Nandini Sadashiv

It was with some trepidation that 19 members of the HC gathered at Changi Airport in the wee hours of May 13, 2016. We were off to Swamini Pramananda's Ashram-Tapasalayam at Netala, Uttarkashi in India. For many of us, it was the first trip to North India.

The scorching heat in Dehradun belied its reputation as the cool hill station, and by the time we arrived at the Paramarth Ashram in Rishikesh, we were all glad to tumble out and take stock of our first view of the Ganges flowing past our window.

The Paramarth Ashram is a unique Ashram with more than 1000 rooms. The rooms we were allotted on the first floor of the Ganga Block were large and comfortable and we were lucky to have a view of the fast-flowing Ganges from our windows.

In the evening, we went to see the famed Ganga Arthi that takes place at the Geeta Bhavan Ghat in front of the Ashram. Apparently there was a huge statue of a seated Shiva in meditation which has since been washed away in the 2013 floods.

The arthi began as the sun set around 7 pm. Young novitiates from the ashram were seated on the steps and began chanting the Hanuman Chalisa as a huge monkey watched benignly from the roof of the temple. Starting with popular bhajans, it went on as a homam was kindled on the river bank and the ubhayakarta went through the familiar steps of the puja.

Finally came the culmination of the puja. Huge ghee and camphor lamps were kindled and to the strains of the Ganga arthi began the rhythmic swaying of the karpuranjanam. A few lucky members got the chance to do the Arthi too. As dusk set in over the Ganges, the priest came around with Gangajal and prasad, little balls of til encased in white sugar.



It would be a sight we would see again and again over the next few days but the first Ganga arthi was indeed thrilling.



The following day, the group set out for Uttarkashi, having been joined by Swami Siddhabodhanandaji and more of our group. This was a 7.5 hour drive, following the Ganga's sharp curves, a pleasure for those intent on sight-seeing and nerve-wracking for those who suffer from travel sickness.

Tapasalayam Ashram, run by Ammaji and Swamiji, is a pleasant group of rooms by the side of the Ganga called Bhagirathi at this point. Ammaji stood beaming at the gate and all of us were hugged warmly and welcomed to the Ashram and then immediately served lunch of rice, dal and a curry. Everyone was ravenous by this time and fell to with enthusiasm.

After a refreshing bath, we were ready to explore. Some went down the steps to the water to find it chillingly cold, some gazed at the views of the hills of the Shivalik range while others explored the Ashram or checked out the temple.

Ganga Arthi was at 6 pm every evening and as the sun set over the river, we would hear the village children sing the bhajans and songs. The children are adorable-the youngest is 3 years old while the oldest is 12 or so. The children sing enchantingly and everyone falls in love with them.

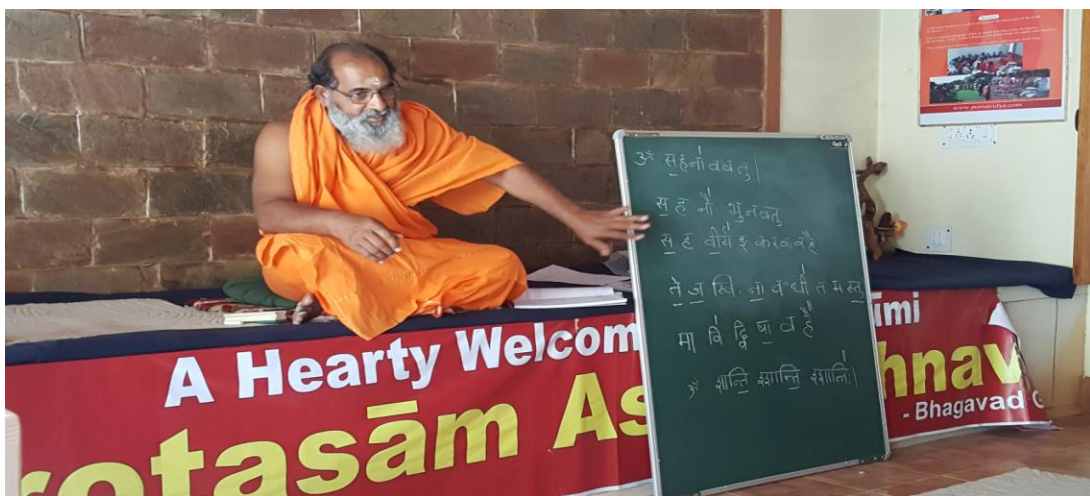


Our daily schedule at the Ashram starts with hot tea at 6am, followed by meditation from 6.30 to 7pm, yoga from 7 to 8am, breakfast, discourse on Chapter 15 of the Gita, followed by chanting class till lunch time. After a simple lunch, self-reflections and group discussions from 2pm till 4pm, when tea would be served again.

Evening prayers would start at 5.30pm, followed by Ganga stotram and Ganga arati and bhajans. After dinner, there would be an evening discourse. Swamiji would give Sanskrit courses for those who would benefit from it, and Ammaji would meet each participant individually to know them better.



There would be many who would just go to Ganga to meditate by themselves or just be awed by the beauty of the mountains.





We also have the chance to walk to the neighbouring villages and meet many of the wonderful local people going about their duties. Adorable and happy children are everywhere, and greet us. We were also fortunate to have a session with the Naga Devata of a nearby village, and the spirit identifies a couple of us for further advice.



Day 7: Gangotri

We all rise early and are ready by 630 am for the Gangotri trip which is the highlight of the tour. The car takes a sharp climb up and we see the Ganga in all her glory flowing below us. Swamiji who is in my car points out the highlights. We reach Gangotri around noon and immediately walked up to the temple. Ammaji's acquaintance with the temple administrators meant we could skip the queues and have a quick darshan. The temple is a simple one of white granite and Gangaji is the main diety flanked by black granite idols of Ganesha, Kartikeya, Shakti and a Shivaling.



Next we went down to the ghat where we could do the pitrkriya. As were short of time, there was no opportunity to do gangasnanam except for Sadashiv who fell in and was spotted hastily drying his phone and camera before drying himself. We managed a quick visit to the Bhagirathshila and Suryakund and back across the bridge visiting the manokalpana Hanuman shrine there.

On Day 8, it was time for the group to break into three parties:

One headed back to Rishikesh and Haridwar; one headed for Kedarnath, and one accompanied by Swamiji set off for Badrinath.

Haridwar

On Day 9, we went to Haridwar. Unfortunately we could not visit the Chandi Devi temple where Chamundi Devi is said to have killed Chanda and Munda or the Manasa Devi temple as waiting time was 5 hours at each place. Instead we went to Raja Daksheshwar temple which is said to be the site for the kund where Sati fell into at Daksh's yagna . It has an impressive statue of Shiva in Tandav position holding Sati and is said to be the site of the original Ganga Devi temple.

After this, we made a beeline for the Hardwar Har ki Pauri or steps of the Hardwar Ghat where the famous Ganga Arthi is held. Two of our group had their Gangasnanam here at this holy site.



Badrinath Expedition - by B Thavamalar

The Badrinath temple, abode of Sri Badri Narayana (Lord Vishnu) is one of the char dhams nestled deep in the Himalayan mountains in the Uttarakhand State of India. The other three sites are Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri.

On 22nd May 2016, a group of HC volunteers set forth for the town of Badrinath led by Swami Siddhabodhananda Saraswati, a spiritual head of the Purna Vidya Foundation. We had just completed a Vedanta retreat at Purna Vidya Foundation's Tapasyalayam ashram at Uttarkashi under the guidance of Ammaji and we headed north to the Himalayan mountains with palpable excitement. It had long been my dream to visit this abode of Lord Vishnu. I hence took this blessed opportunity to visit the Lord's abode in Badrinath as a personal invitation from Bhagavan Vishnu himself and started my journey knowing that I will get to be in his magnificent presence no matter what hurdles came in my way.

As I had suspected, the roads up to Badrinath were rough. We travelled for many miles through landslide-prone areas. Many a time, the roads were rocky, potholed and barely enough for a single vehicle. It was a tiring day-and-a-half drive from Uttarkashi but I somehow managed to sleep for most of it! During the moments of being awake, I refused to look out of the window for fear of seeing how dangerously close we were to the deep valleys on either side. Constant japa of the Lord's name and the firm belief that he would soon give me a darshan of his glorious form also helped allay my fear of heights and landslides.

On the second day of the journey from Pipalkoti to Badrinath, I started taking in my surroundings and was captivated by the breath-taking beauty of the snow-capped mountains. They were verdant beautiful giants cloaked by the intense blue skies. Human dwellings were few and sporadic. The scenery was humbling as it reminded me how insignificantly tiny an individual I was in comparison with the vast *jagat*. Yet it also reminded me that I was part of this jagat, a manifestation of *Ishwara*, and hence, an extricable part of Him.

After arriving in the small town of Badrinath located at 3133m, all of us rested before going to the temple in the evening to get a darshan of the Lord. We saw the powerful Alakananda river snaking around the temple and also the hot springs at the banks of the river where devotees traditionally take a dip before entering the temple for prayers. As it is the start of the *yatra* season, the temple grounds were packed with pilgrims and the queues were long, but the thought of the *darshan* of Lord Vishnu kept us going.

The sight of him is beyond words. I was spellbound by his beauty and immensely grateful to be in his presence. All worries and discomfort faced in my journey faded away into nothingness as I was absorbed in my prayers to the Lord. My joy knew no bounds when I was granted the opportunity to chant the Vishnu Sahasranama for Him. It was a profound and deeply moving moment for me as the many years of practising this prayer culminated in this astounding experience of chanting his glory.

We also had the wonderful opportunity of attending the *Shayana Arathi*, which is the concluding prayers of the day for the Lord before he “retires for the night”. In this prayer, we saw the chief priest, a Namboodiri Brahmin from Kerala, reverently remove all the grand accessories of Bhagavan Vishnu and reveal his core and basic form to us. Even though I had heard that

Bhagavan Vishnu appears in a rare meditative pose here, I was awestruck when I saw Him sitting cross-legged, coated with a layer of sandalwood paste.



While the prayer was going on, one of the priests elaborated about Sri Adi Shankaracarya installing this form of the Lord in Badrinath temple in 8th Century AD, and the form of the Lord with a *Saligrama* comprising his face, his meditative posture and the need to coat his form with sandalwood to quench the heat of the Lord's *tapas*. He also described the other deities present in the. The idols of Lord Kubera, Uddhava, sage Narada, Nara and Narayana flanked His divine presence. Honestly, I couldn't take my eyes off Bhagavan Vishnu, so I just cursorily glanced at the others!

On the following day in Badrinath, Swamiji accompanied us to Mana Village at the border of India and Tibet. *Vyasa Guba*, the cave where sage Vyasa revealed *The Mahabharata* to his scribe, Lord Ganesha is located here. We also visited other sites related to incidents described in *The Mahabharata*. After these wonderful experiences, we were reluctant to make our way down the mountains for the trip back to Singapore.

Seeing the Lord at Badrinath was the perfect culmination of my trip to India. It also made me realize that for the people living in the Himalayas, life was unpredictable due to inclement weather and rough terrain. They probably lived in deep appreciation of all given to them by Bhagavan, and thus accepting everything in life as the Bhagavan's *prasadam*. I saw innocence, simplicity and happiness in the faces of the locals. These are people who are deeply spiritual and connected to the gods of the Himalayas. To me, they embody *Prasada Buddhi*, the enormously mature mind to place trust in Bhagavan and to graciously accept life, a mindshift I am still trying to cultivate in my personal life.

I would like to thank Ammaji for giving us so much love and essential knowledge during the retreat in her ashram in Uttarkashi, and taking time to make arrangements for our trip to Badrinath. And importantly, the trip to Badrinath and immensely gratifying temple visits would not have been possible at all without the blessed presence of Swamiji and his patience with all of us! *Om Namo Narayanaya!*

Kedarnath Adventure - by Selvi

Kedarnath, one of the 12 Jyothirlingam in India, is also one of the Char Dham (the 4 Hindu pilgrim centers) in the Garhwal Himalaya of Uttarakhand, India. Housed amongst the glorious snowcapped mountain peaks, this sacred site is visited by millions of tourists/pilgrims from all over to seek the blessing of the Lord as well as to immerse in the undulating scenery of this region at an elevation of 11,755 ft (3553 m) above sea level. Kedarnath Temple is among the few shrines in northern India that requires an arduous trek to take the blessings of Lord Shiva. The best time to pay a pilgrimage is from May to mid November.

So, when I heard that some of the volunteers from Hindu Center were organizing a retreat to Gangotri, I could not resist signing up! It was an opportunity not to be missed. With the information they provided me, I booked my flight.

That was when I realized that I had a day on my own. With this small window of opportunity, I decided to travel to Kedarnath. There was another team that also took this time to extend their stay in Uttarkashi so that they could visit Badrinath.

With the Lord's grace and blessings from the team including Ammaji and Swamij , I was looking forward to my journey with the trustworthy tour guide. Mr Santosh, assured me that when I reached Kedarnath, I would be able to get my Darshan. Almost everyone who came with me for the retreat was concerned and worried about my decision. I managed to allay their fears by introducing them to the tour guide at the Ashram who ensured them of my safety during the trip.

From the Ashram, it took me an entire day to reach Kedarnath. The tour guide's plan was for me to stay a day in the city of Rudraprayag for a night followed by a two hour drive to the Phata Halipad, the next day to take a helicopter up to Kedarnath.

When I checked into the hotel at Ruthraprayag it started to rain. I wondered if the rain would affect my trip to Kedarnath by helicopter. I wasn't very concerned about the rain, as I believed it would clear up by the next day so that I could take the helicopter up to Kedarnath without a hitch.

That night itself, the guide shared that there would be difficulties in securing a helicopter ride. I was disappointed the moment I heard it. I was really excited to have such a unique transportation opportunity, but unfortunately, we had to decide on an alternative means of transportation. Since I only had one day to do my Darshan, I quickly decided on the alternative mode of transport. I decided to take a mule up to Kedarnath. Yes, a mule. Some other alternatives were the dholi, which were hired by people who were older or too tired to reach the temple. The dholi is traditionally carried by 4 people. So instead of heading down to Phata Halipad, I made my way down to Sonprayag.

When we reached Sonprayag my tour guide told me because of the peak period, there were no animals for hire. He then shared that we had no choice but to walk up to Kedarnath by foot. Undeterred despite the inconveniences, I carried on with my pilgrimage. Little did I realize that the climb up would be a hazardous 14km walk uphill.

I began my climb enthusiastically. About 5km in, I started to feel the ache. It was getting more and more challenging the further up I went. About one hour into my journey, a lady who was walking down after her Darshan handed me her walking stick. I felt really fortunate, and I would have to say that she was like a Devata to me. That walking stick made a difference in helping me to reach my destination safely. I took a couple of breaks in between and managed to reach my destination at 6pm. I went to get my Darshan while the guide looked for a decent place to stay for the night.

The Kedarnath Temple was a sight to behold. The colors were bright and stood out even as the sun was setting. It looked exceptionally picturesque. There was a light mist around the temple that gave it an ethereal look. There were lots of people queuing up at the entrance to get the



Darshan just like me. I quickly lined up behind them so that I could get the opportunity of a lifetime. I queued up behind them with much anticipation. As I reached the Lingam, I had a brief moment to soak in all its glory. Although I wish I could have spent a little more time praying in front of the Lingam, just that split second was still worth my entire trip. It brought me closer to the Lord and my spiritual journey.

Soon after my Darshan, I left the temple to put up at a local B&B. Unfortunately, there was no mobile reception up in the mountains, and this got some of my travel partners from Hindu Centre terribly worried. I made a mental note to give them a call once I reached back down. When I awoke the next morning, the view atop of Kedarnath was fantastic. I enjoyed the freshness of the Himalayan mountain air and the breathtaking view.

As I had paid my heartfelt obeisance to Lord Shiva, I left Kedarnath feeling highly satisfied. In fact, throughout the entire trip, I felt that my most valuable time was spent at the top of the Himalayan mountain in the two days of my pilgrimage to the Lord Shiva.



The legend has it that after the battle at Kurukshetra, the Pandavas went on a journey to Varanasi to seek blessings from the Lord because they felt guilty of killing their own kith and kin. However, Lord Shiva avoided meeting them, thus hiding himself in Guptakashi. When the Pandavas found him, Lord Shiva decided to take the form of a buffalo so that they couldn't recognize him. Seeing them coming closer, the Lord made a decision to become invisible by going underground. While doing that, one of the five Pandavas, Bhima, made a great effort in stopping him by holding on to the legs and tail of the bull. Unfortunately, the Lord dived and evaporated at that place leaving behind his hump that is now worshipped as a lingam at Kedarnath Temple.



Behind the shrine lies Adi Shankaracharya's samadhi, where he is believed to have taken rest after establishing the four dhams at an early age of 32 years. At a visible distance from the shrine also lies an ancient Bhairav Temple.

GauriKund

Located on the way to Kedarnath temple at an elevation of 1982 m, Gauri Kund is a religious place and has an ancient shrine devoted to Goddess Parvati. It is believed that Parvati had done penance here to win Lord Shiva's love.

Mark your calendar

Hinduism Forums

Starting 6 July 2016, there will be bi-weekly sessions on several topics related to Hinduism. All are welcome to discuss the topics that will be raised at each session.

Guru Purnima celebrations

Guru Purnima celebrations will be held on 19 July from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. All are welcome to attend.

Please look at the Hindu Centre website or Facebook page for other regular classes and activities!

Update of Centre Activities

Mitra: Chakra Graduation Ceremony



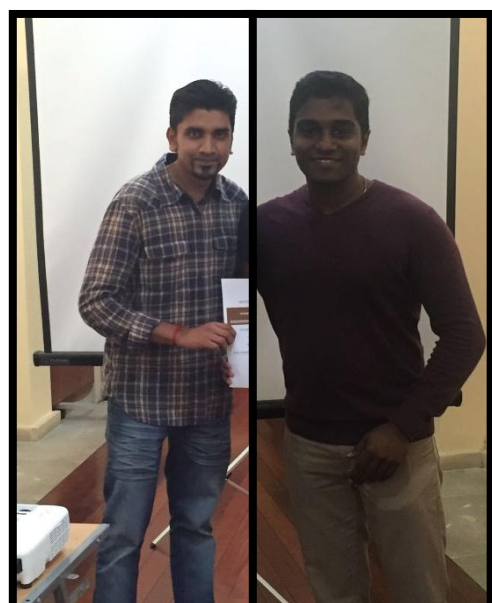
Hindu Centre - Mitra Programme

"May I be able to look upon all beings with the eye of a friend"

Bringing hope and change through Hindu Dharma

On March 18, the third run of the CHAKRA programme since its inception in early 2013, concluded with a graduation ceremony which was held at Hindu Centre to which the parents of the participants, MSF as well as Hindu Centre representatives were invited. CHAKRA volunteers handed out certificates of completion to the seven participants who were present.

The CHAKRA programme is conducted by the Hindu Centre in collaboration with the Ministry for Social and Family Development (MSF). The programme targets to support the Indian Hindu juvenile population (14 to 18 years old) serving their probation under the supervision of the MSF Probation Branch. The overall aim of this programme is to intervene early to enable the young Mitras to break away from a cycle of delinquent behaviour and potential incarceration. The programme essentially aims to give the young probationers a new perspective of values so that they can reflect on the significance of choices and decisions they make in life.



Chakra volunteers Sathis & Karthik



The Chakra participants presenting the programme to their families

Through sessions that adopt experiential learning strategies, the programme aims to introduce values and skills based on the teachings of Hinduism. All sessions aim to generate positive learning experiences which aim to inspire the young Mitras to make long term lifestyle changes.

The CHAKRA programme aims to work on three elements of transformation. The approach is inspired by theories that encapsulate

the Good Lives Model of Offender Rehabilitation, Social & Emotional Learning and the Hindu Centre Correctional Rehabilitative Framework of the *Pancha Kosha*. MSF, which has been financing this programme since its very first run, thanked the Hindu Centre and its volunteers for their unwavering support and the quality of its programme.

Congratulations to all the graduates!

Fund-raising Concert by Sushma Somasekaran

On Saturday, the 7th of May, at the Mini Hall at the PGP Mandapam, Sreangoon road, Sushma Somasekaran entertained the audience by a melodious and perfect rendering of songs in a number of languages. The traditional Carnatic music concert will have an item called “Raga Maaligai”. This concert by Sushma was in fact a “Basha Maaligai”. It was indeed a Nava Basha Maaligai.-with nine songs in different Indian languages.

She started with Sanskrit, and rendered a composition by Mysore Jayasamaraja Wodaiyar, in



Gambira Nattai. That was followed by a piece in Panthuvaraali, in Telugu (saint Thiyagaraja Swamigal) . The subsequent Tamil piece in Mohanam was a composition by Papanasam Sivan. All the sweet melodies of this ever-soothing ragam, were fully brought out in a raga Alapana by Sushma.

Then there was a Hindi Bajan composed by Surdas in Bhagesri, followed by a composition by Jayadeva in Sanskrit, in the raga Suddha Saranga. Sushma then sang a Bengali song composed by Sri Rabindranath Tagore in Charukesi, a composition of Sant Namdev in Marathi in Maruva Behag and finally a Punjabi song of Guru Nanak in raga Suba Panthuvarali. The concert came to an end with the traditional Thillana in Poorna Chandrika.

Sushma was very well supported on the Violin by Bombay Anand and on the Mirudhangam by Sai Akilesh and on the Ghatam by Mahesh Parameswaran.



The concert was attended by Guest of Honour, Sri K.Kesavapany, Adjunct Professor at the LKY School of Public Policy and Special Guest, the High Commissioner of India to Singapore, Mrs. Vijay Thakur Singh. The evening was also graced by Mr R Jayachandran, Chairman of Hindu Endowment Board.



The concert was organized by the Hindu Centre as a fund raising event.

Mr N Varadarajan.

Mitra Batch 10 Graduation Ceremony

On Saturday 28th May, , the 11 trainees of the Mitra batch 10 attended their graduation ceremony at Hindu Centre.



The Mitra Batch 10 graduates.

The Mitra training programme aims to prepare new Mitra volunteers to deliver the programme to the incarcerated populations (the Mitras). The bi-weekly training equips the future volunteers with basic religious knowledge about Hinduism, secular ex-offender rehabilitation skills, an understanding of the Mitra *Pancha Kosha* pedagogy and facilitation skills.

The new graduates will be deployed to Changi Prison in clusters A2 and B4, in Tanah Merah Prison under the Reformatory Training

Programme, at the HEB-Ashram drug halfway house and at the MSF-Singapore Girls' Home.

The Mitra Committee would like to thank Mr Ravi for his presence at the graduation, as well as for all the support brought to the training facilitation and its organization by the Mitra volunteers: Mrs Kamlesh, Mrs Nandini, Mrs Shobha, Ms Dhevani, Mr A K Srinivasan, Mr Anan, Mr Kesavan, Mr Sada, Mr Saravanan and Mr Trivastha.

Congratulations to the graduates, wishing you all the best as you start. May your dedication support the rehabilitation of numerous Mitras!



The long serving Mitra volunteers, celebrating 10 years of seva with Mitra programme. Mrs Thevagi, Mrs Kamala, Mr Manokara & Mr Ramakant Misra.

Ammaji's visit to Cluster A

MARCH 2016

77 Hindu inmates gathered at a multi-purpose auditorium at Cluster A Changi Prison from 2.00pm to 4.00pm on Thursday 31 March 2016 to attend a talk by Swamini Paramanda Sarasvati (Ammaji) the Spiritual Leader of the Purna Vidya Foundation.

This motivational talk was facilitated by the Hindu Centre's Mitra programme with the organizational support of the Singapore Prison Service.



Ammaji receiving a ceramic Yellow Ribbon from the Deputy Commander Cluster A, Singapore Prison Service.

The talk which was followed by a question and answer session was attended by the Deputy Commander of Changi Prison's Cluster A, the Superintendent of Cluster A and Prison volunteers from the Hindu Centre's Mitra programme and Dharma Muneeswaran Temple.

Ammaji's talk at Cluster A focused on the Vedic vision of the goals of human life namely the pursuit of artha (security/wealth) and kama (desires) carried out according to dharma that is right or ethical conduct.

Ammaji shared how man had the capacity to choose how he pursued his security and desires and also had the privilege and capacity to choose right from wrong that is to follow or not follow dharma. When man choses to follow dharma, it can be our lighthouse to guide us to avoid dangers and harm in life. When man aligns himself with the universal order he will gain

happiness which is what every human being seeks in life.

Ammaji gave the Mitras present a simple affirmation prayer to help them focus on their goal to follow a life of Dharma. The prayer shared was to seek Isvara's Grace to "*have the courage to choose what is right, avoid what is wrong and the wisdom to know what is right and wrong*".

The words of encouragement given by Ammaji were "if you decide to change no one can stop you".

The 77 Mitras gave Ammaji their full attention over the 2 hours and subsequently gave feedback that Ammaji's sharing gave them the self-belief if they decide to change no one can stop them. The present and the future were in their hands.



Ammaji with a representative of the Muneeswaran Temple Hindu Counselling, Cluster A Hindu Centre Mitra volunteers and officers of the Singapore Prison Service.

VolunteerSpeak - P Ravi



The Patrika team spoke to P Ravi who joined the Hindu Centre three years ago. He trained at the Centre to be a yoga teacher and began his volunteering service by taking Yoga classes for the members. Throughout the conversation, P Ravi spoke animatedly about his time as a volunteer with the Centre, thanking the Centre from the heart for changing his life and making him a better person.

When asked why he joined the Hindu Centre, he said: 'I am in my 50s, and I am exploring what Hinduism is about. When I was a child, my parents took me to the temple, taught me to pray but could not tell me much about religion. But after joining HC, I have learnt that Hinduism is the most beautiful religion in the world.'

Speaking of his time at the Centre, Ravi shared that God has shown him the way to come to HC: 'Kathiresan, Ravi are good teachers. Are very inspirational and motivating. My life has made a big shift, and I am now a better person- dynamic and positive. By practising Hinduism, I have changed so much that I feel people see me differently. They also notice the change in me.'

Besides being a yoga teacher, he also helps out with the Book Sale. He transports books from the shop to the sale venue, and helps to set up the books for sale. Speaking of the book sale, he said:

I am a very simple person with simple words. I don't have high education. So, I want to volunteer with simple things. In return, I receive knowledge. HC is doing a great thing and we must all support it in whatever way we can.

Ravi shared with the Patrika team that volunteering has changed his life totally:

It is a unique experience for me. By volunteering, we carry Ishwara everywhere. People respect this Ishwara in you. There is a total shift of path for me. I feel blessed to be able to volunteer. My happiness is beyond bounds.

He concluded by saying that people should come forth to volunteer:

If people want to find the change in themselves, change is always from within. Knowledge is vast, volunteering means guiding people. Volunteering helps people to initiate others into a way of life that will change their lives.

For Ravi, the books on Hinduism, the teachers at the Centre, and the very vibration in the Centre are 'beautiful'. For him, coming to the Centre is like visiting a temple.

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