



patrika

the voice of the Hindu Centre, Singapore

December 2016

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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!

HINDU CENTRE
132 Owen Road
Singapore 218935
Tel: 62918540

Write to us:
patrika@hinducentre.org.sg

<http://hinducentre.org.sg>

President's Message

Namaste dear friends of Hindu Centre,

On 29 September, 2016, we received the sad news of the demise of Dr VK Pillay, who was the founder and driving force for the formation of the Hindu Centre, indeed our founding-father.



More than 40 years ago, Dr Pillay realised the need to educate the younger generation of Hindus about Sanatana Dharma, and that parents were ill-equipped to explain the meaning of various rituals and temple proceedings to their children. This alienated them from their religion and birthright, and made them susceptible to evangelists from other religions.

Together with other like-minded persons, such as Prof AN Rao, KS Rajah, S Rajendran, Ishwar Das Sharma, Mr D D Sachdev, Mr Panachand Doshi, Dr T P Paran, Mr H Bhojwani, Mr Sat Pal Khattar, Mr M Gurunathan, the group started meeting at various offices. In 1978, the Centre was registered as a Society.

In the early 80's, the need for a permanent home was realised and once again, Dr Pillay came to the rescue, putting up \$50,000 of his own money to pay the deposit for 132 Owen Road, which was used as a carpet store at that time. Through active fund-raising and arm-twisting as well as bank-loans, the property was purchased. However, more funds were needed to renovate it to be fit-for-purpose. He personally approached the Lee and Shaw Foundations to raise \$500,000 for this plus more from others as well. It must be recorded that this spirit of purpose and generosity also extends to the members of his family who have also raised funds directly and indirectly.

We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. We are indebted to him and his family for leaving a legacy for us, the following generations, to build on.

On 12 November, the Centre held a very meaningful remembrance ceremony which was well-attended by family and friends of Dr Pillay as well as the pioneer generation of leaders. Many people spoke fondly and emotionally of their close relationships with Kanda as he was known to them. Their anecdotes revealed a picture of Dr VK Pillay as a healer, both of the body and the soul. He was Iswara's instrument on earth, bringing love and compassion to everyone.

We are indebted to Dr VK Pillay for his boldness of vision and his far-sightedness and his determination to bring Sanatana Dharma closer to the people. We shall continue to work hard to achieve this.

May he rest now in the abode of the Lord, and watch over the institution that was his child so that we may fulfill our mission and his dream.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Varaprasad'.

Dr N Varaprasad
President Hindu Centre

In Focus

In this issue of Patrika, we spoke to Harshintaa and Nitha, young volunteers in the Mitra programme about what drew them to the Hindu Centre and what motivates them to be active volunteers

Harshintaa, tell us why you chose to be a volunteer with the Mitra programme and how did you know of this programme at the Hindu Centre.

When I was young, I found out that I could understand and deal with complex human issues and deeply troubled individuals. Since then my passion for volunteering became a personal journey, a natural affinity.

I joined the Mitra programme in 2012. This was the time when I was a volunteer guidance officer with Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association. I had been a volunteer for several years when Mitra Programme's advert caught my attention, and I joined them in 2012.

Share with us some of your experiences as a volunteer with the Mitra programme

I began as a Hindu counsellor in Changi Prison Cluster A4. During this time, I attended Mitra Programme's first *Nava Bandhana* at Tanah Merah Prison and one of the Prison's rehabilitative initiatives, the Gang Renunciation Ceremony.



Harshintaa

I became a Mitra Committee member in 2014. Around this time, I had the opportunity to travel to Uttarkashi with other Mitra volunteers. This trip was a memorable learning journey. Further, working with fellow members to make both the Mitra 10th Graduation Ceremony and ICAC Movie and Dinner night successful were interesting and unforgettable volunteering moments. Other experiences include assisting as a Mitra volunteer in Cluster B4 and Ashram half-way house, interviewing new Mitra volunteers, attending weekly Mitra Volunteer Training Sessions, Mitra Graduation Ceremonies, Mitra Caucus and more.

One of the most memorable experiences is related to the launching of the Mitra Bhajan book in July 2015. Putting the book together was indeed a long and time-consuming process but the finished product gave us all immense satisfaction. Besides this, being part of the Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex - offenders (CARE) Network 2015, was a different learning and knowledge sharing experience for me.

In what other ways have you participated in the Mitra Programme?

In 2014, I was invited to attend 2nd Juvenile Awards Ceremony at Singapore Girls Home where I had an opportunity to meet the parents and teachers of the Mitras. In 2015, I was asked to give

a short presentation on Deepavali at Singapore Boys Home. I have also been an SGH Team Coordinator for two years. I also became a Mitra befriender in 2016.

Share with us a challenging moment in your journey as a volunteer.

Writing the first youth schedule and lesson plans for SGH Mitras was one of the most challenging tasks which took a lot time and hard work and I am thankful to volunteers Ms Sumitha and Ms Rajes for their part and priceless contribution.

Nitha, you have been a volunteer with the Mitra programme as well. What kind of challenges have you faced?



Nitha

The girls I have been counselling come from families where they do not get proper guidance, love and care. Thus they were misled into bad habits and bad company. Some of them grew up in a family given to violence, hatred, 'gangsterism'. As a growing child, if you see violence, hatred, gangsterism and do not have the protection of your family, you turn to someone who can protect you. This prompted them join gangs that make them feel that they are important and wanted. Before they knew, they were deeply drawn into the world of crime.

So, what is your attitude to these girls?

I do not think ex-offenders are bad people. They landed in this situation because of lack of proper guidance. What they need is guidance, love and care. They just need someone to hold their hands and bring them into the right track again. The mindset they have is totally different from the mindset we counsellors have. In particular, counsellors are there to help the girls to come out of the habit of hiding in their 'comfort zone', a space which they think gives them an identity but in reality, will destroy them. If they come out of this space, they will be ready to explore the world at a whole new level.

What do you think are the necessary qualities for Seva?

I think the important qualities for Seva are the right state of mind, faith, time, determination and commitment. Without all these, it would be very hard to even be committed to do seva.

What motivates you to be committed?

I think bringing a change in people's life is something that not many can do. The girls I counsel are very young and loving, but misdirected. Just as no matter how naughty the students are, teachers never give up on them, I am committed to helping the girls in my team to do better. To be honest, the only recognition the teachers get is when their students succeed in life. That is how counselling is. To never give up on the people who absolutely trust you.

Mark your calendar



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- Share the teachings of Hindu Dharma thru knowledge, devotion and service
- Kids yoga
- Teach Shloka chanting
- Inspire through storytelling and connect through songs and Puja
- Motivate children to adopt higher, nobler habits and values
- Share the importance of good habits, integrity and guide them in their formative years of growth
- Help improve your child's confidence and self-esteem through class interaction



SIGN UP NOW!

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HINDU CENTRE SINGAPORE (OFFICIAL)

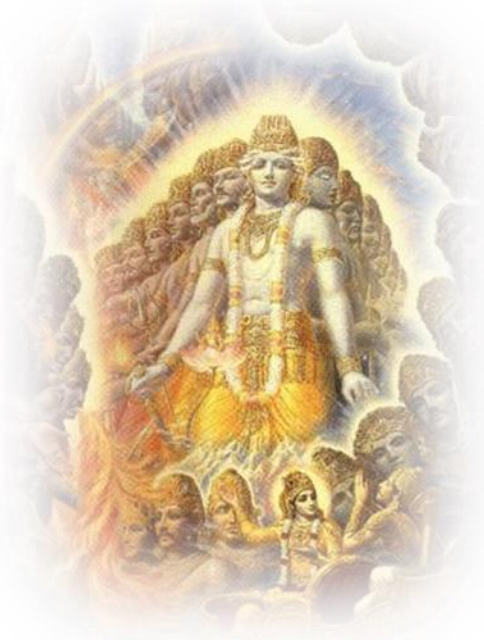


**Starts
Jan 15**

10.00 AM – 12.00 PM
Every Sunday

132, OWEN ROAD, SINGAPORE 218935





Bhagavad Gita Classes

resume in January 2017!

Every Friday from 7.30 to
9.00pm

Come and learn Dharma
from our experienced
teacher Mr S Ravendran.

In preparation for Thaipusam, a festival celebrated on the full moon day of the tamil month of 'Thai' to honour Lord Muruga, the hindu god who represents virtue and martial glory, Hindu Centre has organized the chanting of 'Kandar Sashti Kavacham', a prayer to Lord Muruga.

MASS CHANTING OF KANDAR SHASHTI KAVACHAM

Kandar Shashti Kavacham is one of most powerful hymns in Hinduism. The prayer praises Lord Muruga and seeks his blessings to protect a devotee at mental and physical levels.

The Kavacham will be chanted **Eleven times** which serves as a protective armour. Lord Muruga denotes handsomeness, youthfulness, happiness, fragrance and knowledge and the best way to start the New Year is by praying to Him.

Date: Sunday
5 February 2017

Program

Puja : 9.00 AM
Chanting : 9:30 AM
Lunch : 1.00 PM



Hindu Centre,
132 Owen Road,
Singapore 218935
(Exit Farrer Park MRT exit D)

Enquiries: 9656-8806

Grace us with your presence



APPEAL - Prof AN Rao Memorial Student Award Fund at NUS

Friends and colleagues of late Professor A N Rao have initiated a student award fund at the Department of Biological Sciences, National University of Singapore (NUS).

We are all aware of his status as a world renowned botanist with an unassuming and friendly personality. As a genuine pioneer citizen of Singapore, he was deeply involved in numerous community activities and societies, including his long-term service to the Hindu Endowment Board and Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society.



As Professor and Head of the then Botany Department from 1967 to 1985, A.N. Rao was instrumental in training countless number of students of plant biology in Singapore. Botany Department was the predecessor, along with Zoology Department, of the current Department of Biological Sciences. Hence, a student award to be presented annually through the Department of Biological Sciences, NUS has been planned which is best appropriate in memory of the late Professor A.N Rao (1925 - 2014). This would be awarded to the top student in the field of Plant Biology as selected by the Head of the Department in consultation with a selection committee.

Encouraged by the initial success, the department would like to upgrade the original intent of a student award to that of a Student Bursary (endowed) that will be an award in perpetuity. The latter would only be realized if the minimum sum raised reaches \$150,000. Our fund raising efforts have been ongoing since June 2014. We hope that you will share this enthusiasm and facilitate the additional fund raising to achieve the revised target for this special cause.

All donations may be sent by a cheque made payable to “National University of Singapore” – write the purpose at the back of the cheque (“A.N. Rao memorial student award fund”). Donors are asked to indicate their names and NRIC numbers, which are needed by NUS for tax deductions on the gift received. You may know that your generous gift would be matched by MOE to help build up the Fund.

Address to send contributions is:

Ms. Lisa Lau, Senior Associate Director
Department of Biological Sciences
National University of Singapore
14 Science Drive 4, Singapore 117546
Tel: [6516 5817](tel:65165817) (DID)
e-mail: dbslaul@nus.edu.sg

The fund convenors from the Dept of Biological Sciences at NUS are writing to seek your assistance to reach out to your friends, colleagues and former students who know Professor Rao and spread word on our fund raising efforts. They will be honoured to meet up with you and discuss this in person either in your preferred venue or over an informal lunch on campus as convenient for you.

Thank you in advance for your kind support.

Update of Centre Activities

Deepavali Celebrations at Bukit Batok Home for the Aged

The visit to Bukit Batok Home for Deepavali happened on 13 Novmeber, 2016. This event was coordinated by Ganeshan and Mano, Bandhu and Mitra volunteers respectively.



The team is happy to share a mail that was sent to Ravethy, which is reprinted here:

Dear Ravethy,

Thank you for the visit by volunteers from Hindu Centre yesterday. The elderly really enjoyed the entertainment and snacks catered to them.

Looking forward to your visit again in the near future.



Event News

Patrika attended the press conference of 'Ponniyin Selvan', a theatrical production of the epic novel by the legendary Kalki Krishnamoorthy, on the 9th of January, 2017.

Among other things, Mr D. Muralidharan and Mr Elangovan Kumaran, two of the founder members of SS International, talked about the genesis of the play and underlined the challenges they faced in translating the story from novel to play. Even as they shared the story of their tremendous success in Tamil Nadu, they also highlighted how they hoped to glean the support of theatre lovers, literary art enthusiasts and patrons of the Tamil language in Singapore.

Mr R Rajaram, President, Tamil Language Council, highlighted that this production will introduce the legendary writer, Kalki, to school students who are yet to hear of him.

Ms Akila Iyengar, Director of Artecompass Pvt. Ltd. spoke about her journey of bringing the production from Chennai to Singapore.



The drama will be staged at the Esplanade Theatre on 28th, 29th and 30th April 2017.

Ponniyin Selvan is based on a number of historical characters and incidents from the Chola Dynasty (10th and 11th Century) especially around Arulmozhiarman later crowned King RAJA RAJA CHOLA. The drama has palace intrigue, rights and wrongs of inheritance, patriotism, temptation, the ordinary man's fairy tale dreams of marrying a princess, opportunism, treachery and vaulting ambition.

The tickets will be available through SISTIC from 9th December 2016 and are priced at \$96, \$76, \$56, \$46 and \$36 (excluding S\$4 Sistic fee). Early bird discounts will be applicable till January 8, 2017.

VolunteerSpeak

Featured volunteer: Elavarasi Chandran

VolunteerSpeak caught up with Elavarasi Chandran who became a volunteer when her daughter joined the Centre's Balagurukulam classes. Here's how it all happened!

I was introduced to Balagurukulam classes by my best friend ten years ago. At that time, she was sending her four-year-old son to BG class and suggested that I could do likewise for my daughter who was also four years old then.

I was keen to enrol my daughter immediately as I strongly felt learning about our religion and culture should start at a young age. I brought my daughter to the class and was warmly greeted



Elavarasi Chandran

Ms Shanthi, a Bala Ganesha teacher. I was very pleased with her warmth and loving care to all the children attending her class. I started to notice that my daughter, who was a very timid girl, was looking forward to her new Sunday classes.

I decided to volunteer my time on some of the Sundays as some teachers welcomed my presence. I felt that my daughter will see me as a role-model too. Being a spiritual person since young, I felt this was my opportunity to be closer to God.

From a parent volunteer, I accepted to become a teacher. It has been a meaningful and enriching experience serving HC as a teacher and being a parent these 10 years. Now, I have

2 children attending BG class. My daughter who is

already in Ekatanda class wants to be a BG teacher like me. I think this is a clear demonstration of how our BG teachers and class activities have impacted our students who have passed through the gates of Balagurukulam at Hindu Centre.

About Hindu Centre

The Hindu Centre, Singapore, is dedicated to the spiritual progress of Hindus through the three pillars of **Jnana**, **Bhakti**, and **Seva**. The Centre's vision is to become an institution of authority on Hinduism in the region by teaching the core values of Hinduism, creating a strong hub of devotional activities with a good outreach of attendees, and through strong and sustainable Seva initiatives. The Centre hopes to strengthen the induction and management of youth volunteers by creating a greater sense of ownership and engagement at different levels in the management of these programmes.

For Enquiries/Registration:

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SMS Registration: 8533 0667

edu@hinducentre.org.sg

Please visit our website

(<http://www.hinducentre.org.sg/>) or

Facebook page

**(<https://www.facebook.com/hinducentresg>)
for further details.**