

patrika

the voice of the Hindu Centre, Singapore



Hindu Centre
Jnana - Bhakti - Seva

March 2014-June 2014

President's Message

Namaste Members and Friends.



I am pleased to announce that from July 2014, Hindu Centre will be adopting the Purna Vidya curriculum and pedagogy for our Balagurukulam classes. Purna Vidya is globally recognised and is used wherever the Hindu diaspora can be found. Purna Vidya originated from Swami Dhira Chaitanya and Swamini Pramananda's work with children, and has evolved into a complete and structured teaching resource.

Hindu Centre is seeking to be an authorised PV Centre, which will conduct teacher training and distribution of all resources and materials pertaining to PV in Singapore. Semester 2 of Balgurukulam classes will start on 13 July, weekly on Sundays from 10am to 12noon. For registration, please call Ms Yash at 6291-8540.

These past two months have been busy with many talks and activities. Read about them in the pages in this issue of Patrika.

If you have any comments of feedback, please drop a note to patrika@hinducentre.org.sg
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Happy reading!

N Varaprasad

In Focus

Interview with Mr. Marimuthu Gurunathan

In this second interview of the Pioneer series, the Patrika met Mr. Marimuthu Gurunathan, a pioneer member of the Hindu Centre, who shared with us real stories about the main nuts and bolts of establishing the Hindu Centre. Going beyond conceptualization of a centre for Hindus, he spoke of how the main issue was managing funds for the Centre. In this conversation, he fondly remembers the overwhelming enthusiasm of the Indian community of yesteryears who volunteered their time and effort to the Centre's ideology.

You are one of the pioneer members of the Hindu Centre. Tell us something about how the Centre came into existence.



The Hindu Centre came into existence because of one man's desire to fight the rapid attempts to convert our young, intelligent Hindu students at the universities and colleges by Christian evangelists. That man was Dr V K Pillay, our Patron. He was a professor at the university and later started his practice as an Orthopaedic surgeon with some of his colleagues. Because of his stature in society, he was able to band around him many distinguished people like Prof A N Rao, Justice Rajendran, Mr Satpal Khattar, Mr KS Rajah, prominent businessmen like Mr Doshi, Mr Durgadas Sachdev, Mr Bhojwani, Mr Dayani and many prominent people to support the establishment of the Hindu Centre.

My contribution came about when Dr Pillay called me one day saying, "it must be Bhagawan Sai Baba who has directed me to call and ask you to join the Hindu Centre as Treasurer". That was in 1978.

The constitution was drafted by Mr Rajendran. The interim committee was headed by Dr Paran, a retired university lecturer from Penang. The early committee was made of Dr Pillay, Prof A N Rao, Mr Satpal Khattar, Mr KS Rajah, Mr. Durgadas Sachdev, Mr Doshi and myself and a few others like Mr Krishna who was a prominent engineer from PWD.

Share with us some incident about the birth/establishment of the Centre that has stayed with you over these many years. It could be about what people said or did or both. Or anything else that has stayed with you over these decades.

There are many incidents. At the beginning, the initial problem was to find a place to run the meeting, have a secretariat, and to raise funds. Dr Pillay, together with Mr Doshi and Mr Sachdev, went around High Street and got many of the businessmen to become Life Members or corporate members of Hindu Centre. Dr Pillay and the other prominent members went out to get more life members. The subscription fee was \$1000 for individual Life membership and \$10000 for corporate membership. We raised more than \$80000 to \$100000.

Mrs Dolly Singha, a lawyer and a committee member then, recommended a young lady by the name of Jaya to be considered the post of secretary. I interviewed her and decided her salary. As to the place, I offered my office, with my partner's approval, as the location of the Centre. I was in charge of the accounts. The running cost of the Centre was only the salary paid to Jaya with

CPF. All other costs such as office rent, power, and printing etcetera were covered by my firm, Lee Seng Chan and Co. Public Accountants Singapore.

How did you finally find a place for the Centre?

We were still looking for a place when Mr Kashyap, a life member, offered Dr Pillay his godown at 132 Owen Road for \$360000 or thereabouts. We did not have that much in the bank but Dr Pillay was very impressed with the location as it was near Serangoon Road and close to temples. MRT was not in the pipe line but he had the foresight. He gave \$50000 as deposit and we cleared all the money we had in the bank and also got loans etcetera from Mr Sachdev and others.

So now we had a place but it had to be cleaned, renovated and simple furniture had to be purchased. The front office was in the centre of the present ground floor. The conference room was at the back where the present toilet and back door is. The office was below the present staircase. Sometimes it would rain while we had a meeting and we would get wet. The first structure was officially opened by Mr Rajaratnam our Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister then.

Much later when we felt we needed a more prominent place we considered putting up a four storey building with an attic, but this would have taken a large portion of the frontage. So we decided on the present structure which was to cost around \$800000.

Again, it was Dr Pillay to the rescue. He appealed to two Chinese Foundations, Shaw and Lee foundations. Together they contributed more than \$600000 which together with contributions from existing members and loans contributed to securing the building we have at present.

The Indian Community should be very grateful that we had a person like Dr Pillay who played a great role in establishing a Centre for Hindus.

The initial objective of the Centre was to teach the Hindu way of life to the younger generation of Hindus. How was this achieved?

When the Hindu Centre was formed, it was the foremost Hindu organization. It had all prominent Hindu leaders from important professions, the government, and religious leaders. Hindu Centre was the seed from which other prominent organizations like Chinmaya mission, Amrithamatha grew. In the early days, many of the present organizations did not have a place of their own and some still don't.

Because we were the main organization, Hindu Centre was very well recognized and the youth were very active in many of the activities like sport, seva, balagurugulam, youth camps. I really miss these ways in which our youth participated in those days. The present Centre is devoid of many of these aspects of those days, and we are in dear need of more volunteers to show the enthusiasm the old volunteers had towards Centre activities.

To what extent have the initial objectives been realized over the past years? Did the founders personally participate in conducting these classes or activities?

The main objective of teaching Hinduism has been achieved but how far have we reached to the masses of Hindus is questionable. In the beginning we were fortunate to have with us leaders like Prof A N Rao, Prof Advani, Mr KS Rajah, Dr Paran and many more whose names I cannot recollect who came forward under the leadership of Prof Rao to run study circles, seminars, and

conferences that put Hindu Centre on the map within the region. At that time, our *Omkara* journal was read by many institutions abroad. This is something we need to mull over. Another area we need to improve our presence is in Seva activities.

At present we have many isolated activities for children, youth, adults and the elderly. We should aim to unite all of us under one motivating tenet that can help us to build a stronger community. What should this be?

I feel the centre has lost its vibe.

As a lead Centre for Hindus in Singapore, we have lost that quality. We need to regain that mettle, we need to show other Hindu organizations that Hindu Centre has what it takes. We need to work closely with all other organizations and temples to deliver our original objectives of maintaining Hindu philosophy and values. We also need to bring back the younger generation to the Centre. I know times have changed and youths have different priorities but so do youths of other religions. Don't they show enthusiasm for their religion?

We need to think out of the box.

Mark your calendar

North India Himalaya Yatra in 2014

In the last issue of the Patrika, you read about Haridwar and Rishikesh. Read about Badrinath and Kedarnath in this issue.



Badrinath temple

Badrinath Temple, also called Badrinarayan Temple, is situated in the town of Badrinath in Uttarakhand, India. It is a Hindu Temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The temple and town are one of 'Char Dham' pilgrimage sites. The temple is also one of the 108 *Divya Desams* dedicated to Vishnu, who is worshipped as Badrinath. It is a holy shrine for Vaishnavites.



Badrinath terrain

It is open for six months every year, between the end of April and the beginning of November, because of extreme weather conditions in the Himalayan region. The temple is located in Garhwal hill tracks in Chamoli district along the banks of Alaknanda River at an elevation of 3,133 m (10,279 ft) above the mean sea level. It is one of the most visited pilgrimage centres of India, having recorded 1,060,000 visits.



The image of the presiding deity worshipped in the temple is a 1 m (3.3 ft) tall, black stone statue of Vishnu in the form of Badrinarayan. The statue is considered by many Hindus to be one of eight *swayam vyakta kshetras*, or self-manifested statues of Vishnu.

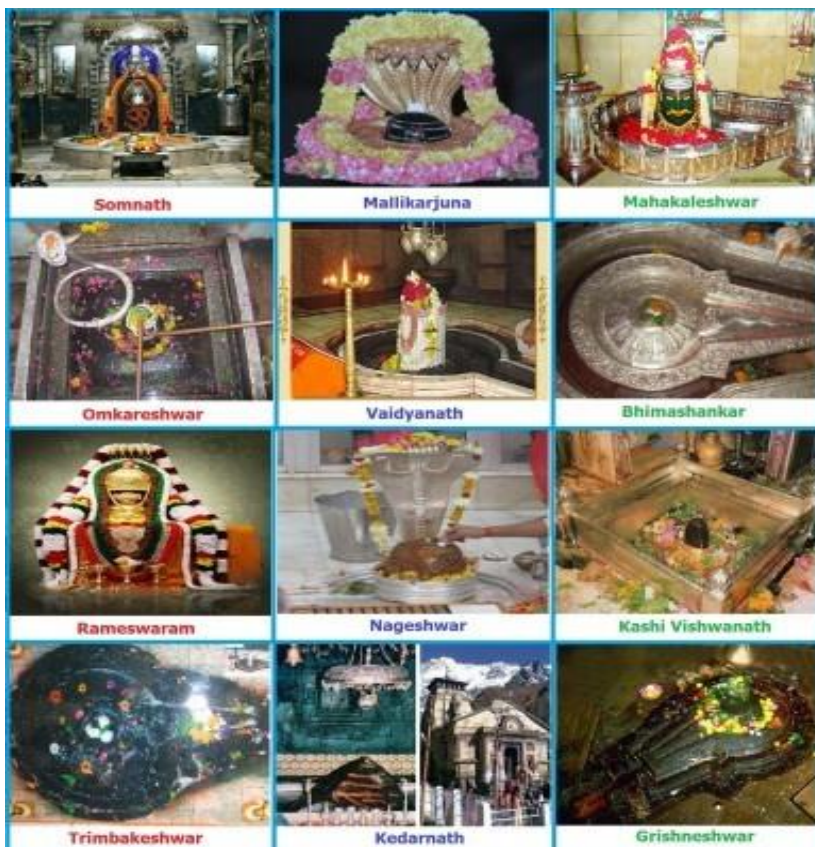
Badrinarayan



Kedarnath Temple

Kedarnath temple is one of the holiest Hindu temples dedicated to the god Shiva and is located on the Garhwal Himalayan range near the Mandakini river in Kedarnath, Uttarakhand in India. Due to extreme weather conditions, the temple is open only between the end of April (*Akshaya Tritiya*) to *Kartik Purnima* (the autumn full moon, usually November) every year. During the winters, the *vigrahas* (deities) from Kedarnath temple are brought to

Ukhimath and worshipped there for six months. Lord Shiva is worshipped as Kedarnath, the 'Lord of Kedar Khand', the historical name of the region. The temple was built by the British in 1880, but is believed to have been built by *Pandavas* and revived by *Adi Sankaracharya*. It is one of the twelve *Jyotirlingas*, the holiest Hindu shrines of Shiva.



Twelve Jyotirlingas

(Pillars of Light)

Bhajans



There will be Bhajans, and this time we get together to pray for the sick.

Date: 25th June

Venue: Hindu Centre

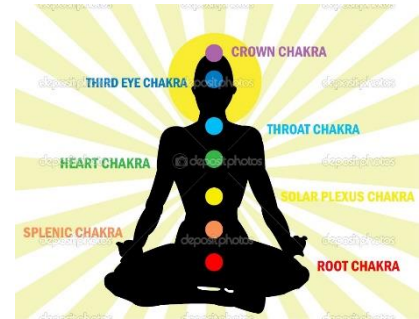
Time: 7 15 pm

Vedic Yoga

Weekly classes every Tuesday at the Hindu Centre from 7.30-9.00 pm.

Fee: \$50.


Weekly classes every Wednesday at the Sri Ruthra Kaliyamm Temple, 100 Depot Road from 7.30-9.00 pm. Fee: \$20



A Tribute to Prof A N Rao

Dear Friends of Hindu Centre

Hari Om
Joint Memorial Tribute to our Spiritual Mentor,
The late Prof A N Rao



You are kindly invited to a Joint Memorial Tribute programme to be held on
Saturday, 28th June, 2014
From 2pm - 4pm
Venue : Sri Sathya Sai Centre,
133 Moulmein Road, Singapore 308083

Please come and celebrate the life of Prof A N Rao & pay tribute to a great soul whose service to society & community was an inspiration to all of us.

Co organised by:
Hindu Endowments Board, Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society, Hindu Centre, Aurobindo Society, Chinmaya Seva Centre, Divine Spark, Gita Ashram, Kannada Sangha, Sai Centre, Singapore Dakshina Bharatha Brahmama Sabha, Friends and Family of Prof A N Rao.

For further information contact - 96568806 / 85118267
All are welcome

It is with deep sorrow that we have to acknowledge the passing of one of our most senior founder members, former President of Hindu Centre, Prof AN Rao on 8 June 2014 at the age of 89. Prof Rao was instrumental in the early growth of the Hindu Centre, its educational programmes, and the founding of OMKARA magazine. Prof Rao was highly knowledgeable in our scriptures and would quote appropriate verses during our AGM. He was a staunch supporter of the Centre and its activities and attended every AGM without fail. A humble man with deep knowledge, he was a spiritual mentor and guide to the Hindu Centre. We mourn his loss and send our condolences to his family and friends. His passing is a great loss to everyone and an irreplaceable loss to the Centre.

Dr. Varaprasad

Update of Centre Activities

Rama Navami Celebrations at the Hindu Centre

Rama Navami was on 8th of April devotion, two | worshipping Lord simplicity. Centre and Ramayana, Raksha Stotram, bhajans on Rama number was small, and those who the ambience



Lord Rama

singing of the lead Bhajan singer. Members are encouraged to attend all such activities and bring their interested friends along!

celebrated at the Centre with great simplicity and hallmarks of Rama, the epitome of Members gathered at the chanted Nama Hanuman Chalisa, Rama and sang devotional & Avatar. Though the devotion was at its peak participated melted into created by the mellifluous

Talks by Nilofer Giri



Nilofer Giri

Nilofer Giri, a disciple of Swami Dayananda, took a series of lectures on Hinduism between May 17 and June 5.

On May 17, she shared the "Glory of *Gayatri Mantra*." The session explained the meaning and the significance of the *Gayatri Mantra* and taught the Vedic way to chant this auspicious mantra. Between May 18 and May 25, she conducted eleven insightful sessions to gain an in-depth understanding of Chapter 1 & 2 of the Bhagavad Gītā for an enhanced personal and professional management.

On June 5, Niloferji gave a talk on the "Art of Parenting" in the context of Hinduism. The talk focused on how we can help ourselves rise up to this grand role entrusted to us by the cosmos.





Amboli

Niloofer Giri has been studying and teaching Vedanta since 1996. She was initially under the tutelage of Swami Parthasarathy and then she pursued advanced studies in Sanskrit and Advaita with Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Notably, this is a link in the long unbroken tradition, from Adi Shankara to the present day. Both Ms. Niloofer and her husband Shribanta Giri conduct regular workshops and retreats on Vedanta, Yoga, Sanskrit and meditation at their Retreat Centre at Amboli, Maharashtra. This Retreat has been entrusted to them by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. They also conduct programs in Mumbai, Pune, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur & Dubai.

Inter-Faith Forum

In tandem with the modernisation of society, aspects of marriage, such as marriageable age, spousal rights, and divorce laws have evolved. The increasing plurality of society has also resulted in provisions for diverse relationship couplings, such as interfaith marriage, cohabitating partners, and same-sex relationships. How has marriage and relationships in your faith tradition,



or secular/civil perspective, evolved over time? What do marriage and relationships mean to you? Let's explore these questions and more. Explorations into Faith (EiF) is supported by the South East Community Development Council (SE CDC).

On 21st June, the Hindu Centre hosted the monthly inter-faith dialogue session titled "Faith, Marriage and Committed Relationships". This was held at the Centre from 9.30 am to 1 pm.

Mundaka Upanishad: special article

In January 2013, a study circle on *Mundaka Upanishad* started at the Hindu Centre. Under the guidance of S Ravenderan, we embarked on a brave journey to explore this Upanishad using the commentary written by Swami Dayananda Saraswati.



Swami Dayanand Saraswati

According to our scriptures the study of Upanishads is reserved for students who have attained the four-fold qualifications, namely discrimination, dispassion, discipline and drive for freedom. Although we may not all have acquired these necessary qualifications, this study circle has been an eye opener on the wonderful philosophy that underpins Hinduism. The royal secret of Vedanta was impressively revealed during the classes where we read and discussed the commentary, which was elaborate yet efficient, guiding us to analyze, ponder and reflect deeply on each and every verse.

We learnt that the this worldly life is the firm and to be established in because of our feeling of seeking freedom from everyone. Instead of world, we should turn "Freedom is where the diverts our pursuit of and hoarding to one of true Self that is complete and full.



antidote for the sorrow we face in understanding of who we really are, this understanding. We are bound being "small and insignificant" and this feeling is a natural urge in trying to fulfill this urge in the our attention inwards to our self. bondage is". The Upanishad freedom from one of acquiring knowing and recognizing the real

We discovered the truth behind all existence, the one truth "which everything is as well known". We learned about *Satya*, the truth or reality and *mithya*, the dependent reality. By changing our

vision and pursuing the truth of our existence in all that we encounter in this world, we achieve freedom to enjoy the happiness which is based on our true self.

As we ploughed through *Pujya* Guru's elaborate explanation, we had ample opportunity to discuss and clarify out doubts. This helped many of us to correct our misunderstanding or fine tune our real understanding. The casual and friendly atmosphere in class provided us the safe environment to raise all doubts no matter how trivial. The interactive nature of the study circle gave everyone a chance to share their views and answer questions raised and comment on the answers given, which in turn led to more questions and deeper discussions.

We really had very fruitful sessions every Monday evenings which lasted for 16 months. At the end of class we are usually mentally exhausted from the 'churning' of the knowledge constantly encouraged during class. However, we left each class wanting to maintain the reflective mood that we had acquired during the class and to hold on to the subtle ideas that we had grasped.

Though the sessions have ended, for many of us, it is the beginning of our personal spiritual quest to be established in this knowledge with utmost clarity. The more we analyse and try to put our learning into practice, the more we realise the importance of being totally prepared for this knowledge. For it is only through a well-disciplined, pure and focused mind can this knowledge be put into practice to benefit us. Hence the importance of the four-fold qualification for an adept student of *Vedanta* is emphasized. We are now sufficiently convinced of what we are seeking, how to get it and where to start. Knowing clearly the end in mind we can confidently embark on our pursuit with *Ishwara's* grace being always there.

VolunteerSpeak

I started off as an Educom volunteer and a Balagukulam teacher in 2007. After I underwent teachers' training program from 2009-2011, I have been teaching Hinduism to adults and children. I am also HC's liaison for interfaith events and an Educom and MC member.

What initially drew me to the Centre was the desire to want to know all about Hinduism; to know if there was more to Hinduism than just temple worship (ridden with many funny misconceptions) and if there were really many gods? And to find out what on earth is this 'Moksha' that kept cropping up in my conversations with various Hindus! The basic Hinduism course opened my eyes, dispelled my misconceptions, strengthened my resolve to always remain a Hindu, and most importantly, to want to find out more about this amazing religion.

Volunteering with HC is an avenue to show my gratitude. If HC could facilitate such a change in me through one course, I wanted to be part of this organization to help bring positive changes to the lives of many others.



My heartfelt message to the youth of today is:

It is easy to be lured into other religions, especially for the young. They seem to be hip or trendy and they seem to know how to say the right things to deal with the difficulties in our fast paced lives. They seem to have easy answers. While Hinduism may not appear to have the facade of cultural 'coolness', what lies within it is a rich, mind-blowing and most importantly, logical tradition of knowledge. There has to be a reason why it has sustained this long right (more than 5000 years)?

It is not as disorganized and superficial as others may paint it to be. This body of knowledge is too vast to be contained in one scripture. This is how rich it is. But it has been beautifully captured concisely in a few books which I will be happy to recommend. While we spend hours or days even scouring for the right University to attend or the right itinerary to plan for a holiday, why can't we put in the same effort to find out more about this religion before making up our minds about it based on hearsay? Please start on this journey of enquiry (perhaps with Hindu centre? :-)) and I promise you that you won't turn back or regret it!

For Enquiries/Registration:

Tel: 62918540 (Hindu Centre)

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.

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.

Drop us a note to patrika@hinducentre.org.sg if you want to tell us what more you would like to see in your "Patrika"!

Please forward this newsletter to all your friends and relatives!