

patrika

the voice of the Hindu Centre, Singapore



July 2014-Sept 2014

President's Message

Namaste.

The recent months have seen a host of activities led by the Hindu Centre as well as at Hindu Centre. The second semester of Balagurukulam started on July 13; launch of the booklet “Why I am a Hindu” on July 20; *Rakshabandhan* on August 10, attended by 800 participants held at the newly renovated PGP Hall; then we had *Ganesh Chathurti* celebrations on August 29, and two evenings of *satsangs* by Swamini Pramananda, spiritual head of *Purna Vidya* Foundation on August 30 and 31. Finally we signed an agreement with Purna Vidya Publications to use their resources and methodologies for all our educational classes. This will widen our scope of education.



On September 13, the graduation of the 9th batch of Mitra volunteers was conducted in Sri Sivan Temple Hall, and on the 14th of September, the second run of the Marriage preparation course for those Hindu couples planning to get married soon was held at PGP Hall.

None of this would have been possible without our dedicated team of volunteers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your dedication and passion to serve.

Hindu Centre has come a long way in its journey to bring *Jnana*, *Bhakti* and *Seva* to Hindus in Singapore. It is purely a volunteer-driven organisation in its scope, from participation, organisation, to governance. Hindu Centre has been a busy place because people from all walks of life have come to energetically focus on projects and services. You have generated an atmosphere of warmth for our patrons and clients to feel welcome.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Hindu Centre from its humble beginnings, and will continue to be so. I thank all of you for your spirit of service.

Tat Tvam Asi.

N Varaprasad

In Focus

Interview with Swamini Pramananda

When Swamini Pramananda visited us in the last week of August, the Patrika team had an opportunity to speak to her. The Swamini shared with us the meaning of complete knowledge and the importance of recognizing our potential for self-realization even while living in the material world and performing all our duties within family and society.

Could you please tell us something about the concept of Purna Vidya?

Purna Vidya literally means complete knowledge. No knowledge is complete. If it was, there won't be research anymore about it. Knowledge opens up new realms of ignorance to dispel which you further need to know and that is how knowledge unfolds itself.

Only when knowledge is complete, it doesn't leave any inadequacy or any lack. Such knowledge is the knowledge of the complete omniscient being. Knowledge which reveals the truth of the omniscient being is complete knowledge. This knowledge is self-knowledge. This is the knowledge of the Divine.



Swamini Pramananda



Signing HC-PV agreement in Dubai, 26th Sept. 2014

Purna Vidya is the knowledge of this Divine. It is called 'advaita vedanta' in classical terms and explores how this knowledge existed in the psyche of people, in the cultural components of the people India. So Purna Vidya attempts to bring back the spiritual heritage so that the people can connect through these forms and practices. We do this through classical modules about spiritual education in the mode of 'gurukula vasa', learn the scriptures, learn the Sanskrit language, and the chants.

Another module that we have adopted is about outreach work, creative programmes of education with cultural thrust but carries the principles of oneness and meant for all age groups.

How is Purna Vidya related to our everyday secular lives?

Our focus is the spiritual dimension. Whether it is environment, healthcare or any other simple village programme, our main work is teaching the philosophy and the metaphysics of existence so that we can reach the Ultimate Truth.

In what ways can we live simultaneously our secular and spiritual lives?

We should be clear about our understanding of secular and spiritual lives. There is a lot to know about these concepts. Why should we even call our lives secular? The person is one. The thought is one. If we observe, we never leave our spiritual life. Whatever the soul does in this conscious

living, it is a spiritual life. Your food, your clothing, all are spiritual. No culture is without the concept of spirituality. In India, culture, religion and spirituality are deeply inter-linked. The metaphysics of life is 'all that is here is One'. All we do is sacred.

If everything around is sacred, is our duty in this life (karma) is sacred too? This bond with family, children, family and friends is desire. Is this spiritual?

Spirituality is not escaping from desire. We need to shed such misconceptions which tie us down to wrong conclusions. Desiring what? This is the main question. What is the desire going to give you? Will it give you something that you don't have? If the solution is with us, why look outside for it? The whole idea of wisdom is to KNOW that what you seek in life is already there with you. What you want is who you are. You are what you want to be. So, just be who you are. The journey is about recasting the mould to know that what you seek will never lead you to your destination. So drop it. Letting go is 'Vairagya' (dispassion).

When we are attached to our children, I think it is good. But we are constantly told not be attached to them. We are asked to be detached. What does this mean?

We should be practical. Do not suffocate your child with your love. Have a healthy balance. What will you gain from something that suffocates you and the others? Detachment will release you to find your own centredness.

Spirituality, Vedanta, self-knowledge are concepts that are learnt thorough contexts and answers are received through the questions that you ask yourself.

Please share with us something about four stages of life. In this day and age, is it possible to follow this philosophy of life strictly?

We are already following this. It is our growth through biological time that we live in these stages. We move on despite ourselves. The life of the 'Brahmachari' refers to the life of education; the life of the 'Grihasta' is one of marriage and family. A time comes when you see your first grandchild. This is the time when you move to the next state of life. Whatever you have done has paid off. You must move on-become more contemplative. What we need to do is to constantly re-cast ourselves depending on the possibilities of our physical body and mental maturity. This is the 'Vanaprastha' phase. The life of contemplation enables one to withdraw from the race of life and meditate upon the name of God. This is 'Sanyasa'.

Why did you leave this active life and become a sanyasin?

Not everyone has to leave. But sometimes the calling is so strong that you cannot go through your normal life. The call of the Soul is important. Nothing else matters. But this is not the normal path. When Sanyasa comes as a second stage of life, it is not a normal rhythm of life. The inner evolution takes time. We may consciously choose this path, or just walk away like prince Siddhartha who became the Buddha.

Is the knowledge of spirituality analytical? Do we need a pedagogy of learning about spirituality?

There is no logical process for this. This is true. But at the same time, our tradition has given us a system of learning- a *Vedic Parampara* (lineage) where we can study about God. The society at large can go through this study and integrate these principles into its own social systems that will bring about an awakening. For this we need a methodology or what you call pedagogy of learning. Hinduism is based on such learning through 'Guru-Shishya' parampara. It is a simple but exquisite journey that leads us to the cosmic embrace of God. We need to proceed in this journey with trust in the strong body of knowledge that has been passed down to us from ancient times.



Pooja at HC

Mark your calendar

Balagurukulam

Day: Every Sunday

Time: 10am -12pm

Venue: Hindu Centre

(Open to children aged 6 to 16)



<http://openbrilliance.com>

Vedic Yoga



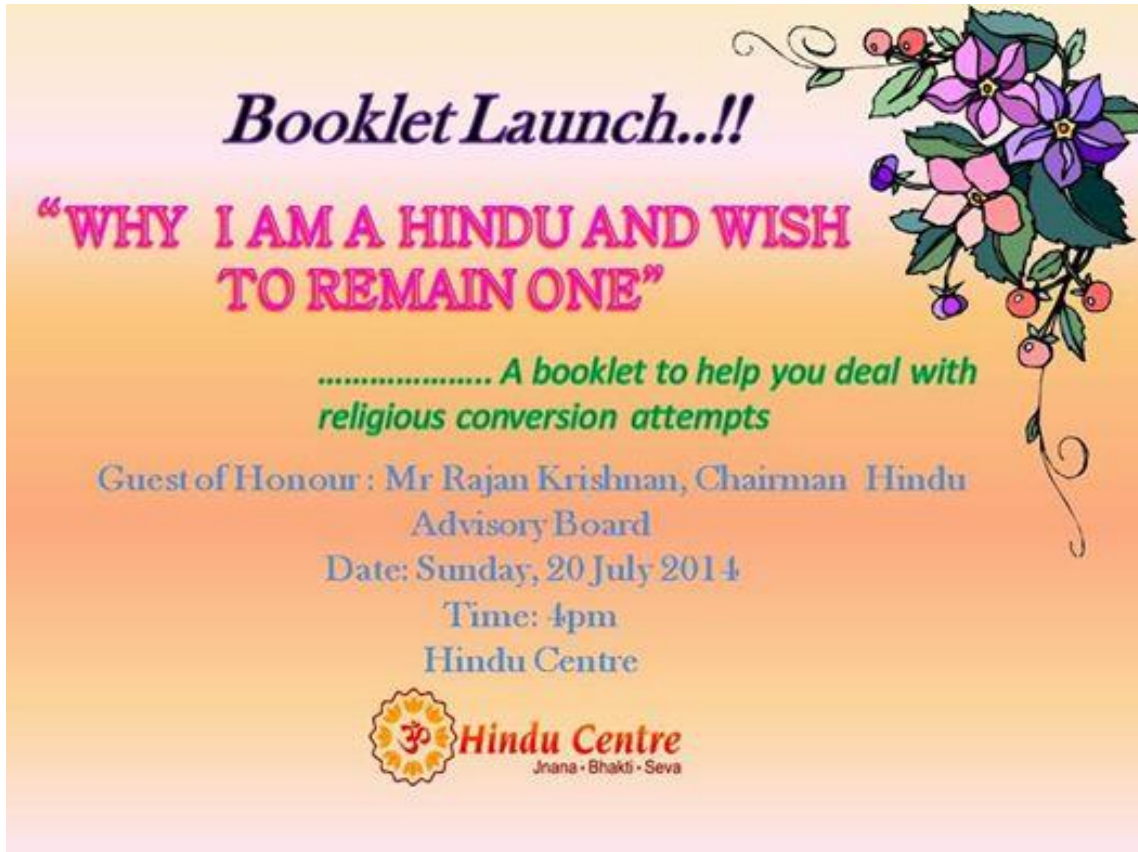
Weekly classes every Tuesday at the Hindu Centre from 7.30-9.00 pm.
Annual Fee: \$50

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

<http://www.yogaroom.com>

Update of Centre Activities

Launch of Booklet “Why I am Hindu and Wish to Remain one”



On July 20, the Hindu Centre launched a booklet titled “Why I am Hindu, and wish to remain One”. Mr Rajan Krishnan, the newly appointed chairman of the Hindu Advisory Board, graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour. The book launch was well attended by notable guests from several Hindu and Indian organisations as well as Hindu Endowment Board and Hindu Advisory Board. At the launch, copies of booklet were given to all the organisations. Members of the community such as Ms Shanthi Rajaram shared their experiences about conversion attempts at the workplace. Mr G Srinivasan, President of the Singapore Dakshina Bharatiya Brahmana Sabha, spoke of attempts that had been made to convert his son.

The booklet provides a very brief and basic outline of Hinduism, followed by debunking of some myths and misconceptions about Hinduism (which are used by other religions), strategies to deal with conversion attempts and finally a short narrative on the beauty of the religion.

Commending the Hindu Centre on the publication of the booklet, the guest of honour, Mr. Rajan Krishnan, said that the publication was a timely and necessary production. He also hoped that the booklet will encourage people to gain a foundation in the principles of Hinduism and motivate them to study the Vedas and the Sastras that show the path of true Dharma.

Mitra Graduation Ceremony



On Sept. 13, the Hindu Centre held the graduation ceremony of its 9th batch of Mitra volunteers at Sri Sivan Temple Hall.

photos by Manogar Kannappan

Mitra Graduates 2014 (names not in sequence): Anand, Dinesh, Namitha, Subhaschandra, Indrani, Krishnakumari, Kunal, Mumiaandy, Preethi, Durai, Rajeshwari, Revathy, Shobana, Sunita, Usha R, Usha A, Vignesh, Yuvaraj, Ashwani, Chidmabaram, Shefali, Ashwaani.

The hour-and-a-half long ceremony was graced by Mr. Sat pal Khattar, Member of the Board of Governors and Founding pioneer of Hindu Centre. Mr Khattar, who was the guest of honour on this occasion, welcomed the new graduates into the team, and commended Mitra volunteers in serving the community with dedication and determination.



Mr Sat pal Khattar



Carnatic performance by alumni of SIFAS

The ceremony opened with a prayer in which all the guests joined with enthusiasm. A Carnatic vocal performance by alumni of Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society followed the opening prayer. The liveliness of the audience and their active participation in the activities of the afternoon was commendable.

Cedric, co-chair of Hindu Centre Mitra committee, congratulated the new graduates and spoke of milestones that the Mitra training programme had achieved since its inception in 2005, and emphasized how the programme would continually evolve to remain relevant and effective.

This year, there were 22 graduates of which 10 were male volunteers. It was noted as the highest number of male volunteers in many years. The team of new graduates is comprised of a noteworthy number of youth as well as senior citizens.

Cedric



Vignesh G S

Speaking of his experience during the 16 weeks of training, Vignesh G S, a student, confessed that it had been an exhausting journey for him as he had to juggle his studies and rigorous training at the Centre. What particularly fascinated him was the learning of the Hindu Sastras and he was amazed at the scientific basis of several Hindu religious practices.

Anand Ramanujam said that the training period had been a journey of self-discovery, and he thanked the committed teachers for giving him this opportunity. He also noted that the pedagogy was most efficiently structured, which displayed that a commendable amount of hard work had gone into it.

Anand Ramanujam



After these speeches, the new graduates gave tokens of appreciation to the Mitra teachers and committee members. The event concluded with bhajans by volunteers.



Mitra Graduates with Volunteers

Marriage Workshop and Mock Hindu Wedding



Mock-wedding ceremony

Deepti and Venkatesh had decided to have a Hindu Wedding and had registered with a temple. But Venkatesh was South Indian and Deepti was from the North. Aside from the fact that they were both Hindus, they had very few rituals in common. This is why they felt that attending the Hindu marriage workshop and witnessing the “mock Hindu wedding”, where the core Hindu wedding rituals would be duly explained, would be a beneficial exercise.

Deepti and Venkatesh were just one of the several couples who were involved in this initiative organised by The Hindu Centre. Conducted over the weekend on Saturday, 13 and Sunday, 14 September, the activities involved a full-day workshop on Saturday, conducted by Dr Chitra Varaprasad, Anuradha, Vasandy and Jeswant followed by a panel discussion on Sunday, where two couples, Mr Shegar and Dr Chitra Shegar and Mr Huren and Mrs Anuja



shared their experiences about the various challenges one is likely to face in marriage and how they need to be overcome. With the willing help of several dedicated volunteers and with The Hindu Centre - *Educom* organising the event, Mr Saravanan Sinnayya and Mr Ravenderan (Vice-President of *The Hindu Centre*) managed the various events with aplomb.



Workshop

One couple observed “what was unique about this event was that it combined counselling in the secular sense with religious mentoring”. The former was achieved by way of initiating discussions about problems of identity, communication, conflict management, emotional and physical intimacy issues, and self-discovery within couplehood.

As Soundarya and Suseendran declared, the latter event, “the Hindu mock-wedding”, conducted authentically with Homam and a priest in PGP Hall, was the culmination of the two day workshop and panel-discussion”. The couples were delighted that many of the rituals which they had hitherto thought of as esoteric rituals had a meaning and actually made infinite sense. They said that their initial scepticism that this might not be very useful was completely overturned. “We will definitely recommend this to our friends who are about to tie the knot” they promised.



Photos by Saravanan Sinaya

It was heartening for the organisers to hear a young girl come up to say “I was debating between a secular and Hindu wedding. But after attending this workshop and realising the rich meaning behind Hindu rituals, I will definitely go for a Hindu wedding.” We hope that in the coming years, many more Hindu couples-to-be will benefit from this event.

The Hindu Centre wishes all the young couples a Very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous wedded life!

From the Region

Ratha Yatra by ISKON in Jogjakarta July 20



courtesy: Dr. Varaprasad

VolunteerSpeak

I was introduced to the Hindu Centre by a relative of mine. This was sometime in April last year. I was interested in joining the Mitra team as a volunteer and I heard about the training that is conducted for all the Mitra volunteers. I underwent sixteen weeks of Mitra's training programme that methodically introduced to me the demands of the venture. After I completed my training, I was attached to the ashram. At the ashram, I attended a programme for twelve weeks that taught about the rituals and practices of Hinduism: for instance, I learnt about the 16 steps of performing daily pooja and singing bhajans. The programme also educated me about the

meaning of Hindu mythology and festivals attached to various gods and goddesses. On a more spiritual level, I learnt about the method and benefits of meditation on the name of God (Japa).

I was also taught the benefits of laughter therapy and the life of non-violence (ahimsa). Among activities organized as part of the programme were temple visits and visiting old people's Home which gave me a new perspective into how we, as volunteers, can usefully contribute to the underprivileged and



Ananda Valli

vulnerable people in society.

It has just been a year since I joined the Hindu Centre and I feel fulfilled. I am very happy that I am reaching out to the society thorough my participation in the Mitra programme and am sincerely grateful to God for showing me this path.

For Enquiries/Registration:

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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 visit the Hindu Centre Webpage for details on Personal Data Policy.

Please forward this newsletter to all your friends and relatives!