

patrika

the voice of the Hindu Centre, Singapore



March 2015- August 2015 (SPECIAL ISSUE)

President's Message

Namaste Dear readers.



Welcome to the 9th issue of Hindu Centre's online newsletter, Patrika.

This year, 2015, we are not only celebrating Singapore's Jubilee year but also the 10th anniversary of our Mitra Seva programme.

To celebrate **SG50**, we are organising a mass chanting of 51 times of Hanuman Chalisa on 12 September, starting at 8am sharp and ending with Aarathi, prasadam and lunch. Please do come and join in the mass chanting, which is also being attended by other Hindu organisations in Singapore.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of Mitra programme, we are organising a fund-raising dinner on 17 October, at Hotel Jen in Tanglin. We have set a modest target of \$50,000, so kindly support the dinner. For individual or table bookings, please contact Maha at tel no. 62918540/ 62978092 or email to mitra@hinducentre.org.sg.

Today, Mitra is the largest Hindu counselling programme in penal institutions, and is present in seven institutions plus the Ministry of Social and Family Development. To commemorate the huge progress of Mitra, this issue is dedicated to the achievements of the Mitra programme.

I hope that with your sustained support, it will continue to grow in reach and scope so as to positively impact the lives of more people and their families too.

Happy reading!

N Varaprasad

In Focus

To commemorate ten years of the Mitra programme, Patrika met two young volunteers from the team, Vicknesh and Ashwani. Both are students of Nanyang Technological University and joined the team of volunteers a year ago. In this conversation, they share with us not only what drew them to volunteering with Mitra but also what they want to do for the less fortunate youth of Singapore.

Vicknesh, please share with us how long you have been with HC MITRA and what is your role in it.

I completed the Mitra Batch 9 training with the Hindu Centre last year and became a volunteer after that. During the training, I joined a team involving Cedric and Dhevani to work with boys aged between 14 and 18 years old. The boys were either in hostel or under probation, and were identified to be 'at risk' youths with previous instances of rioting and petty thefts. The Chakra programme ran for half a year as we worked closely with the boys on a weekly basis and shared with them Hindu ideals and how it would be applicable to them in their daily lives.

After the Chakra programme, I went overseas to study for a semester. I just finished my prison training and will be posted to Changi Prison A2 cluster.



Vicknesh

And how have you participated in the MITRA programme so far, Ashwani?

I joined HC MITRA last year in May/June. I started off with the youth program, Chakra, before being deployed to Changi prison complex. I am currently attached to B3HU1.

I notice that both of you have mentioned Chakra. Could you say a bit more about this?

Project Chakra is a Ministry for Social & Family Development programme targeting youth at risk between 14 and 18 years old. Through the Chakra programme, MSF is looking into addressing issues such as gang affiliation, peer influence, negative influence of an absent parent, alcohol abuse, and emotional issues such as relationships and coping skills. Youth are involved in this probation programme for a minimum of 15 months up to 3 years. It aims to rehabilitate youth via values teaching inspired by Hinduism and engagement with their own community.

The overall aim of the programme is to intervene early to enable the young Mitras to break away from a cycle of delinquent behaviour and eventual incarceration. The programme essentially aims to give Mitras a new perspective on their lifestyles so that they can better reflect on the significance of the choices and decisions they have made in life.

This is challenging work. Vicknesh, Share with us your initial experience of being a part of the team of volunteers.

I was first intrigued by the personal challenge that it would present me with. Having been a sheltered individual my entire life with a nuclear family setting, I believe that I was a very lucky individual. Others were not that fortunate and may have strayed from the path that they would have liked to have been on. I wanted to be part of the change that would make them pause, reflect and want to work on something that would benefit in the long run rather than act towards a short term satisfaction.

I felt that the best way for this to be done is by using our Hindu religion as a guide. Not only was I able to learn more about my religion as an individual, I managed to assimilate its lessons into my daily life and feel its benefits. It is only right and fair to share this with others and share the idea of what more they can be if they are committed to change.

And what was your initial experience, Ashwani?

I was looking for a long term volunteering opportunity. I came to know about MITRA through my friend, Vicknesh. I found it appealing as it was very structured and I would also have a chance to learn more about Hinduism.

How has your participation changed your life Ashwani?

Besides waking up earlier every Saturday, I am now more aware of the social issues affecting the country. Before MITRA I was not aware that drug abuse was such a big problem in Singapore.

Do you also feel that being a part of the MITRA programme as widened your social awareness, Vicknesh?

Yes. And as an individual, I feel that I am blessed to have this opportunity, to have a platform where I am able to provide a positive influence to others. I pause to think before I react and the lessons I learned from Mitra training as well as interaction with Mitras teach me to be more self-reflective.

You have learnt a lot from your volunteering experience. Why do you think that the youth are vulnerable to crime in our society? How do we address it?

I am not able to provide a concrete answer for this due to my limited experience. But I do believe that the youth are largely at risk. Singapore is a highly pressurising environment for the young. Anyone who is unable to deal with this pressure tends to be feel ostracized. For example, the opportunities available to a student who did not do well at primary school are limited because of being sent to a lower stream. It is well possible that this individual may do very well in studies given the right kind of opportunity. Parents are busy at work and unable to notice their child's predicament. I believe these youths are to be looked out for as they do not have proper guidance from their parents and tend to stray. This issue can be addressed by reaching out to them periodically through CCA platforms and teachers so that they feel included.

Well said, Vicknesh. What are your thoughts on this subject, Ashwani?

I fully agree with Vicknesh that the youth, especially those in the early teenage years are the most vulnerable. This issue can perhaps be addressed by more Outreach programs. Getting the message across before they get involved with crime is the key. However the biggest challenge is how to deliver the message so that youth will be receptive to it.

Both of you belong to the young generation of our society. What is your vision for MITRA in 10 years' time? Ashwani?



Ashwani

I hope to see the MITRA programme get more recognition so that more people can know about it. Volunteer recruitment will become easier then. I wish to see the sessions continue to be something the Mitras look forward to attending and hope to see more ex-Mitras come forward to serve. I think a smaller volunteer-MITRA ratio will allow for more discussions and MITRA involvement, which is always good.

That is a profound thought, Ashwani. Vicknesh, what is your vision for the MITRA programme?

My vision for MITRA in the future would be to see more youth take part. While I was working with the boys in the Chakra programme, it was evident that they were able to bond with me due to my age. It would be even more ideal for the MITRA programme to have a larger fleet of youth volunteers as they would be able to cause a greater impact for at risk youths.

Thanks to both of you for sharing your thoughts with PATRIKA



Hindu Centre - Mitra Programme

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

2005-2015 Celebrating 10 years of Hope & Change
2002-2012 Celebrating 10 years of Hope & Change



being with the eye of a friend"

Mark your calendar

What is New!

**FOR INNER PEACE AND GOOD
HEALTH**



AVAHANTI HOMA



"Homa/Havana is said to be created by Lord Brahma
for man's livelihood and attainment of desires"

Avahanti homa is a fire sacrifice
done to receive all dimensions of wealth.

Come and join us to get
Ishwara's blessings on:

Mantras chanted in Avahanti Homa are
found in Taittiriya Upanishad.

*22nd August, Saturday
7am sharp - 9am*

@ 132 Owen Road, Hindu Centre

Benefits of participating in Avahanti Homa:

- ✓ Retention power
- ✓ Wealth & Prosperity
- ✓ Intelligence
- ✓ Fame
- ✓ Spiritual progress



IN CELEBRATION OF

SG
50

HANUMAN CHALISA

*Chant together for the
Well-being and Strength
of Singapore and its people*



Join us in commemorating SG50
with **51 rounds** of Hanuman Chalisa
at Hindu Centre,
132 Owen Road, on
12th September 2015, Saturday,
8am sharp – noon
12 noon: Aarthi
Followed by lunch

All are Welcome!

Chanting *Hanuman Chalisa* will *relieve you of life's hardships*
and you will be *blessed with strength & wisdom.*



Hindu Centre
Jnana • Bhakti • Seva

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Pavana Tanaya Sankat Harana, Mangala Murti Roopa

Ram Lakhan Sita Sahita, Hrudaya Basahu Soor Boopa !



THE 3 PHILOSOPHIES OF VEDANTA

BY SINGAPORE HINDU CENTRE

Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita are well known among the traditional philosophies of Hinduism. However not many of us understand what they reveal. This basic & unique programme aims to showcase the significant details of each philosophy and will highlight key comparisons amongst the three, resulting in greater appreciation of these great schools.

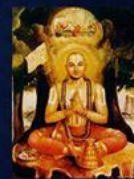
An opportunity to finally understand how God is explained through the vision of the Upanishads by the different traditions!

The programme will be conducted by Shri V. Prabhakar Rao

EVERY WEDNESDAY STARTING

**26TH OF AUG
7.30 – 9PM (4 WEEKS)
FEE – \$30**

PLEASE RESERVE YOUR SEAT WITH THE HINDU CENTRE SOONEST!

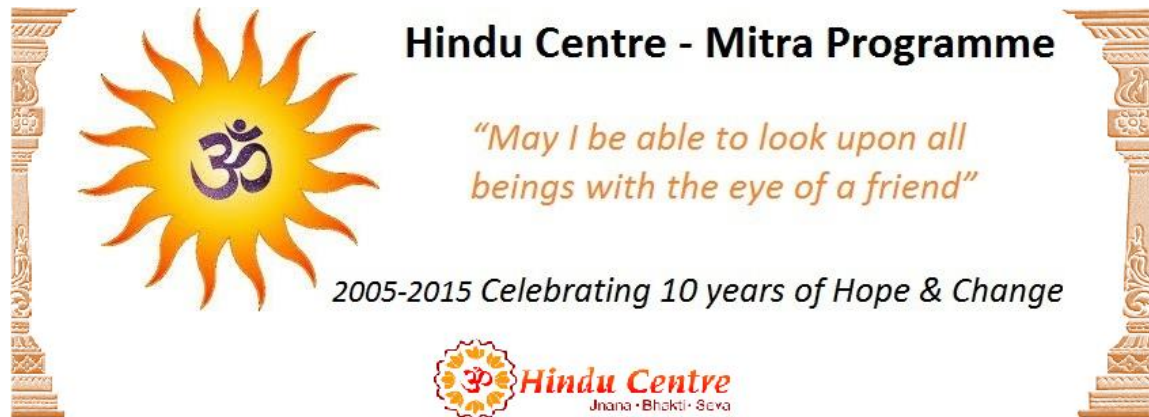


Hindu Centre
Jnana • Bhakti • Seva

Registration(tel) - 62918540
Email: edu@hinducentre.org.sg
Find us at www.hinducentre.org.sg &
www.facebook.com/hinducentresg

Four
weeks
special!

MITRA Anniversary and Fundraising Dinner



HC Mitra programme celebrates its 10th anniversary with an anniversary and fund raising dinner. The funds raised will be used to set up a Mitra Fund for rehabilitation and prevention care programmes, fund aftercare initiatives to augment current community programmes and support families of offenders.

Date: **Saturday, 17 October 2015**

Venue: Hotel Jen Tanglin, 1A Cuscaden Road, The Gallery, second floor.

Guest of Honour: Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Home Affairs and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs

Donation tickets for dinner are available.

Single donations are also welcome.

Please contact the Hindu Centre at mitra@hinducentre.org.sg.

For details on regular activities and programmes at the Hindu Centre, Please visit the Centre's official Facebook Page!

Update of Centre Activities

Family Movie cum Dinner Nite

HC Mitra aftercare, Saturday, 11th April 2015

This first aftercare family programme by the Hindu Centre was possible with a grant from the Indian Community Aftercare Council supported by SINDA.

Invitations were sent out to rehabilitated Mitras with 3 members of their family to watch a movie with Mitra Volunteers followed by a family dinner on 11th April 2015.



This gathering was a part of a series of events organised by the Hindu Centre – Mitra programme to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Mitra programme's launch in 2005.

This first aftercare event was a great success with the response from over thirty five Mitras including their families adding up to an impressive total of seventy people at the event. They were warmly welcomed by Hindu Centre Mitra Volunteers to 'Rex Cinema' to watch a Tamil Movie followed by a sumptuous buffet dinner at Farrer Park River walk Tandoor Restaurant.

All residents of the HEB-Ashram Half Way House also attended with their family members. Hindu centre runs a weekly Mitra Hindu counselling programme for Hindu residents at the half way house.

The dinner setting gave both Mitras and their families an opportunity to interact amongst themselves and Hindu Centre volunteers.

*“It is a first
and we should
have more of
these events!”*
said one of
the Mitra
counsellors.



Several family members wanted to know when Hindu Centre would organise its next get-together. A second aftercare family event is planned for later this year.



Hindu Centre - Mitra Programme

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

2005-2015 Celebrating 10 years of Hope & Change

HC Mitra Volunteers Retreat in Uttarkashi at Uttarakhand

30th May-5th June 2015



HC team at Tapasyalayam Ashram in Uttarkashi: Anan, Cedric, Chitra, Harshintaa, Kamala, Kamlesh, Satiya, Valli and Shanthi

Though the world is full of affordable destinations, when the opportunity to travel to Uttarakhand to study under a highly regarded teacher of Vedanta came, we were all intrigued.

Looking forward to a reviving ashram experience, we set out on our journey and first arrived at Swami Dayananda's Ashram in Rishikesh situated on the banks of Ganga.

The ashram has a small temple Shri Gangadhareswara for Lord Shiva and a bookshop with a collection of books written by Swamiji.

An evening boat ride to watch the beautiful sunset and Aarti at Parmath Niketan was worth the wait, a ritual not to be missed in Rishikesh. As dusk descended, we enjoyed a stroll on the Ram Jhula iron suspension bridge before returning to the Ashram.



Shri Gangadhareswara Shiva Temple at
Dayananda Ashram in Rishikesh

Tapasyalayam Ashram
at Uttarkashi



The following morning, we continued our road journey with a four hour drive, whilst experiencing the enchanting beauty of nature enroute to Tapasyalayam Ashram at Uttarkashi where our retreat was to be held with Swamini Pramananda Saraswati (Ammaji). On our arrival, we were first greeted by the soothing sounds of Ganga Ma flowing alongside the ashram.

We woke up at 4am for the next few days to get ready for our morning prayers, meditation and lessons which included shloka chanting and satsang sessions at the Ashram temple.

The food served at the ashram was sattvic, simple and tasty. At meal times we sat on the floor with legs crossed, saying our prayers and singing the glory of Ishvara before our meals and observing silence whilst we ate.

Each evening we attended temple prayers conducted by the in house priest at the ashram and we looked forward to singing melodious bhajans with the children from the local village.

The Hindu Centre
Team after taking a
bath in the Ganges
at Tapasyalayam
Ashram !



The Hindu
Centre team with
Ammaji at
Tapasyalayam
Ashram in
Uttarkashi

On the third day, virtually shivering from the cold morning temperatures, we took our first dip in the waters of Ma Ganga next to the Ashram. Following that, we spent the morning at the local village visiting a local Sivan temple, a school and the well-known Siror bridge at Netala village.

The next day, we went to Uttarkashi Town to visit Kasi Vishwanath temple, an ancient and popular pilgrimage attraction at Uttarkashi, built by Parasuram. Opposite the Vishwanath temple is Sakthi Temple with a large Trishul, which is revered as the weapon used by Goddess Durga for the restoration of Dharma.



Ma Ganga enroute to Gangotri

On the final day, we visited Gangotri. Though the waters were freezing cold, we took our second holy dip at Gangotri as we knew this would be a special spiritual experience. After our holy bath, we visited the Gangotri Temple to worship Ma Ganga.

Whilst at Gangotri we visited another natural attraction, the Surya Kund waterfalls, located close to the temple, where we had a scenic view of gushing waters thundering down polished rock structures.

Every single day of this retreat was filled with unique and different experiences.

The ethereal beauty of nature, the inspirational teachings on Vedanta, and the contemplative prayer practices helped us experience oneness with Isvara. The soothing sounds of Ma Ganga and bhajans sung by the local villagers will always echo in our minds as unforgettable memories.

HC Home Team Volunteer Award



Kamala Krishnan receiving the Home Team Volunteer award on behalf of Hindu Centre

On Wednesday 5th August, a total of 104 Home Team officers, 12 volunteers and 69 members of the public were awarded the Minister for Home Affairs National Day Awards by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean. During this ceremony, members of the public were also recognised for their acts of public spiritedness in helping to keep Singapore safe and secure.

At this event, Kamala Krishnan received the Home Team Volunteers award 2015, representing the Hindu Centre-Mitra programme for the Singapore Prison Service Volunteers. Kamala was from the second batch of Mitra volunteers to be trained by the Hindu Centre and has been serving since 2006, conducting weekly Mitra Hindu counselling sessions at Cluster A2 at Changi Prison. Kamala is also currently a Mitra mentor who mentors new Mitra volunteers.



Kamala Krishnan with Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean



Kamala Krishnan with Commissioner of Prisons, Mr SOH Wai Wah

Congratulations Kamala!

Thank you for your commitment and support of the Hindu Centre's Mitra programme.

MITRA- CELEBRATING TEN
YEARS OF HOPE AND CHANGE

VolunteerSpeak

This year is HC Mitra's 10th anniversary and second of the three pioneer volunteers Patrika will feature over the year.



Namaste,

The Mitra programme and the teachings are a guide for me in my life.

I have had a wonderful journey with the Hindu Centre all these years.

These experiences have shown me the way to understand the changes in society and how we should prepare ourselves for them.

Without the Teachers and fellow Mitra volunteers who have shared with me the meaning of Hindu religious teachings and the role of these teachings in shaping our thinking, I would not have reached this far. The journey has been a rewarding one and I shall continue.

A heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you!

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Office: 8533 0667

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Please visit our website

www.hinducentre.org.sg

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.