

July 2023

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July 2023

President's Message

Dear Friends and Supporters of Hindu Centre,

July has been a momentous month filled with activities of the Hindu Centre and some good news for the domestic helpers in our midst.

We celebrated Gurupurnima with a puja and bhajans on 3 July, Balagurukulam Semester 2 started on 9 July, Vedic yoga continued its weekly Tuesday session, a Naivedyam making course was held on 16 July, a wonderful talk on Sita Devi and how she managed to deal with Sri Rama by Sri V Prabakhar Rao was held on 21 July, followed on Sunday 23rd July by a full-house Gita Parayan. Also, on all four Saturdays in July, chanting classes on Abhirami Andadi were conducted by Sri Krishna Vairamani.

The 8 intrepid pilgrims aged 35 to 70 returned home safe and sound on July 23rd after what they testified was one of the more enjoyable and spiritually uplifting Yatras of their lives. We will gather their stories from the visit and provide a first-hand account to our readers. There are still some vacancies for our North India Yatra planned for October.

Free saris for domestic workers



As many of you might have known, we had a successful Sari Mela event where beneficiaries were given free saris that we had earlier collected and quality-checked. The remaining saris were sold to the public, raising valuable funds for the Centre to grow and sustain its programmes. We are truly thrilled to have pulled off an event of this logistical magnitude. Both Tamil Murasu and Tabla featured the event. The saris have reached even India and Sri Lanka! In this edition of Patrika there is a specially featured section.

Source: Tabla

With Iswara's bountiful grace, we had a very successful Mela.

Our other efforts to collaborate with like-minded organisations resulted in the Hindu Centre taking part in the Racial Harmony Day celebrations at Indian Heritage Centre. This event was supported by MCCY and National Heritage Board.

Our 58th National Day is just round the corner. It serves as a timely reminder for us to celebrate the togetherness with other communities to create a beautiful Singapore in the spirit of Vasudeiva Kutumbakam.



Read these stories and more in our July edition of Patrika. Join our WhatsApp broadcast channel to find out more about our events, such as a garland-making workshop in August.

May I wish Iswara's blessings upon all of you dear friends with good health, happiness and more Jnana, Bhakti and Seva.

Happy National Day!

Dr N VaraprasadPresident



Sanskrit - Our Heritage: Learn a Mantra

This is a Guru Stotram. Typically, Guru Mantras are chanted at the beginning of any congregation in praise of the Guru, or simply the Teacher. These prayers are chanted to seek the blessings of the Supreme Lord or the Brhman.

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Transliteration

Om Asato Maa Sad-Gamaya |
Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya |

Mrtyor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya |

Om Shaantih Shaantih ||

Word-by-word-meaning

- ॐ (Om): Om, Symbol of Parabrahman; असत् (Asat) = Unreality [of the Phenomenal World];
- मा (Maa): Not; सत् (Sat) = Reality [of Eternal Self]; गमय (Gamaya) = [O Lord] Make me go
- तमसः (Tamasah) = From Darkness; मा (Maa): Not; ज्योतिस् (Jyotis) = Light;
- गमय (Gamaya) = [O Lord] Make me go;मृत्योः (Mrtyoh) = Of Death ; मा (Maa) = Not;
- अमृतं (Amrtam): [Make me go towards the World of] Immortality; गमय (Gamaya): [O Lord] Make me go शान्तिः (Shaantih): Peace



Meaning

- 1: Om, (O Lord) Keep me not in (the Phenomenal World of) Unreality, but make me go towards the Reality (of Eternal Self),
- 2: Keep me not in (the Ignorant State of) Darkness, but make me go towards the Light (of Spiritual Knowledge),
- 3: Keep me not in (the World of) Mortality, but make me go towards the Knowledge of Immortality (of Self-Realization),
- 4: Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.

Note: The Pavamana Mantra (pavamāna meaning "being purified, strained"), is a Shanti mantra introduced in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (1.3.28.)

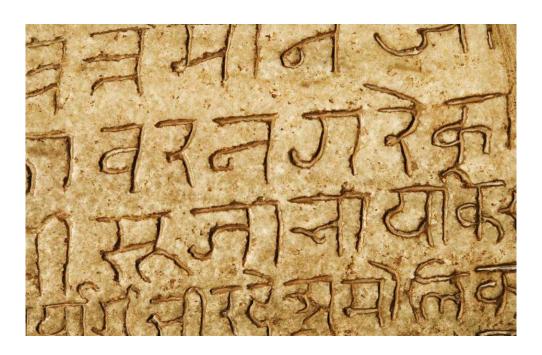
Learn 5 Sanskrit words

suprabhat: Good Morning
 madhyAhna: Afternoon

3. sayamkala or sAyanGkAla: Evening

4. sUrya: Sun

5. chandra or sashanka: Moon





Know Bhagvad Gita: Sankara bashyam

कर्मणि एव अधीकार ते मा फलेषु कदाचन | मा कर्म फल हेतु भू मा ते सङ्ग अस्तु अकर्मणि || 2.47 ||

karmany-evadhikaras te ma phaleshu kadachana ma karma-phala-hetur bhur ma te sango 'stvakarmani

karmaṇi—in prescribed duties; eva—only; adhikāraḥ—right; te—your; mā—not; phaleṣhu—in the fruits; kadāchana—at any time; mā—never; karma-phala—results of the activities; hetuḥ—cause; bhūḥ—be; mā—not; te—your; saṅgaḥ—attachment; astu—must be; akarmaṇi—in inaction

Meaning

You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.

Shankara says:

Your right is only to perform an action and not to the path of knowledge.

Even when performing Karma, let there be no desire for the fruits thereof, nor should you ponder over the fruits of your action under any circumstance.

If you develop an attachment towards the fruits of karma, then that (very thought) will cause you to reap the fruits. Therefore, you be far from being a cause to reap the fruits of karma.

Whenever one is engaged in action, urged by the desire for its result, then one will beget the fruits which is the result of action.

If the results of work be not desired, what is the need of work which involves pain? Let not even this thought govern you and lead you to inaction.



Singapore's 58th National Day



Source: Visit Singapore



Source: Freepik Company

The theme for this year's National Day "Onward together as One" has special significance for the Hindu Singaporean for it evokes the great Upanishadic pronouncement – Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the



world is one family). The original Verse appears in Chapter 6 of Maha Upanishad VI. 71-73 and holds a special place for Hindus all over the world, and particularly in Singapore.

To be clear, those who conceptualised National Day 2023 could not have had this Vedantic dictum in mind. Nonetheless, the timeless philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – the idea of universal fraternity and the interconnectedness of all beings – is reflected in the way that Singapore celebrates its 58th birthday at the National Day Parade (NDP) 2023.

Those fortunate to attend NDP live, or one of its many previews or rehearsals, will witness an intricately woven narrative that celebrates Singapore's cultural diversity through tastefully choreographed song and dance, while emphasising our essential oneness as a country. Indeed, the values that this nation-state holds most dear – a society where every individual is an equal member, regardless of their race, religion, or ethnicity – is also embodied in the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam; that we should treat everyone with kindness, compassion and respect, and strive to live in universal peace and harmony.

NDP 2023 also marks the Parade's return to the Padang for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic. The Padang, which was gazetted as a national monument last year, has special significance for the Indian community in Singapore as the place where Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose addressed the INA soldiers and established the INA memorial in the 1940s. By coincidence, the first word in the INA's own motto is "Unity".

Happy National Day Singapore!

Spotlight Story – The Great Indian Sari Mela

Sometime Sometime in March this year, a Hindu Centre Volunteer was bemoaning the large numbers of saris she had accumulated over time and how her wardrobe had become full. She thought maybe a sari-exchange might a good idea. The idea then expanded to ask people to help clear their wardrobes of used ("pre-loved") saris and donate them to others in need. Meanwhile the much better saris could be sold to raise funds to grow Hindu Centre's activities.

So, in April, we organized two weekends of pre-loved sari collection exercise. The response for the 1st weekend was overwhelming, based on the social media campaign alone. People gave us saris in bags, suitcases, and boxes. Obviously, they had been waiting for a moment like this! We were so inundated that we had to move some of our activities to other places like SIFAS nearby.

Date Pindu Centre, Singapore

It took 3 months of backbreaking work by our wonderful and dedicated team of volunteers to unpack, sort, quality-check, categorise, and repack the saris for distribution and sale. Kudos to all of them! Many damaged saris were disposed at this stage.

Finally on Sunday, 16 July, with the support of Sri Srinivas Perumal Temple management, the true test of this idea's potential was confirmed by the big crowd at PGP Hall. Initially we saw groups of foreign helpers come and collect the free saris. They planned to give it to their friends and relatives. As the morning progressed more and more people started buying the saris, priced from \$5 to \$30. Some were brand-new, still with original labels.



From just one or two, they started to buy in larger numbers as the quality of these pre-loved saris was just too good to miss. Even our own volunteers got into the act! One couple bought about 60 saris!

Everyone was a winner in this exercise – those who donated for a good cause, the foreign helpers who got free saris, and those who bought quality saris at a low price, and finally Hindu Centre, which can



now do more for Singapore Hindus. A good sum was raised in this project to promote the three pillars of Jnana, Bhakti and Seva. This turned out to be a great sustainability project of the 3Rs of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Planet Earth was the ultimate winner in this whole effort!

We wish to thank everyone involved in this project — wonderful volunteers, donors, buyers, temple management, helpers and staff. We have received many queries as to when they can donate more saris as well as salwars. As we regroup and absorb the lessons learnt from this project, it seems most likely that this project will come back in some form soon!



PS – the lady who proposed this idea got so involved, she forgot to donate her own saris, so maybe there's another round coming!







Temples in SG – A walk with our ancestors

- A report by Nitya Menon

The Sri Krishnan Temple at Waterloo Street is one of Singapore's oldest temples. Established in 1870, when Hanuman Beem Singh placed a Krishna idol under a banyan tree, the temple was consecrated in 1989 and gazetted for conservation in 2014.

It is the only South Indian temple in Singapore dedicated to Lord Krishna, who is accompanied by his first wife Rukmini and can be seen in the sanctum sanctorum. The temple also houses several

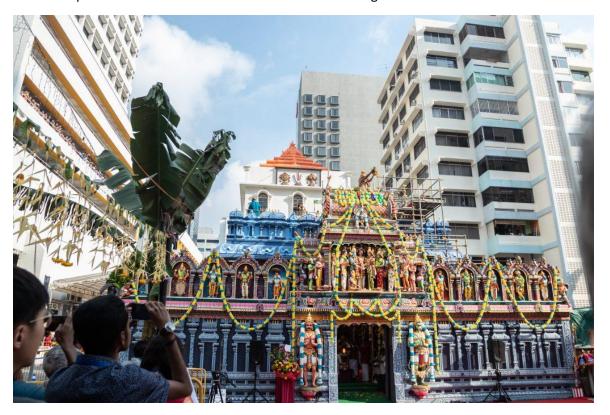


depictions of the powerful Narasimha Bhagavan, Vishnu's 4th avatar, as well as a standalone idol of Dhanvantari.

For Krishna bhaktas, the temple is an architectural delight. Krishna in 64 dance poses adorns the temple pillars, paintings of His leelas cover the ceiling, a relief of the *Rasalila* is on the exterior wall and Mahavishnu reclining on Adishesha is carved into the left outer wall. The latter plays a special role in the nightly *Ekanta Seva* when devotees can put the Lord to bed, which includes massaging the legs of Mahavishnu.

A symbol of multicultural Singapore, a beautiful tradition established over time is for temple visitors to pay their respects at the nearby Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Chinese Temple as well, when visiting the Sri Krishnan temple. Worshipers from the latter also light joss sticks at an urn in front of the Sri Krishnan Temple.

From celebrating various jayantis including for Krishna, Narasimha and Garuda, the temple also conducts special rituals to mark the various Ekadashis and significant dates in the Hindu calendar.



Source: HEB website



Dakshinayanam

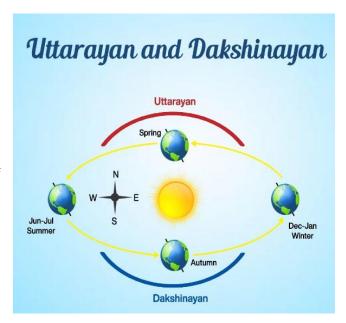
- By Priya Nagarajan

Dakshinayana (summer solstice) is the time when the Sun begins to trace a southward movement in the Earth's sky in the northern hemisphere of the planet. Due to the tilt of the Earth on its axis, the north pole is shifted toward the sun, hence the summer solstice has the longest day in a year.

Dakshinayana (Karka Sankranti) is said to be the nighttime of gods in Hinduism and lasts for six months, till Makar Sankranti.

In 2023, Dakshinayana starts on June 21 for calendars followed in North and Western parts of India, and July 16 in South India. The Uttarayana period starts with Makar Sankranti, and it is regarded as the daytime of Devas. A human year is equal to one day of gods in the Hindu religion.

It is believed that Lord Vishnu goes to sleep during this period. The Ekadasi just before Karka Sankranti is referred to as Devshayani Ekadashi. Devashayani refers to Lord (deva) who is in the shayanam pose (sleeping).



Dakshinayana is associated with the Chaturmas, a period of penance and fasting. It starts with Devashayani Ekadashi and ends with Deva Uthani Ekadashi (when the Lord gets up). The Chaturmas begins with the month of Shravan, dedicated to Lord Shiva, followed by Bhadrapada dedicated to Lord Ganesha and Shri Krishna. This period is followed by the famous Navratri festival which is dedicated to Goddess Durga and Deepavali.

Religious significance

Though this period is full of auspicious days and festivals, people do not perform auspicious events such as weddings and housewarming (Grihapravesh) ceremonies during this time. It is said that when the Gods are asleep, souls of the dead visit their kins on earth. Rituals related to forefathers like Shraadh, Tarpanam are therefore performed during the Pitru Paksha.

Very interestingly, the Singaporean Chinese community observes the Hungry Ghost Festival in the 7th month of the Lunar calendar, which in many years coincides with the Hindu Pitru Paksha. The Hungry Ghost Festival observes the month when the ancestral spirits visit the lower worlds. Taoists and Buddhists perform rituals to propitiate their ancestors similar to ancestral rituals performed by Hindus.



In Tamil Nadu, the month Aadi marks the beginning of Dakshinayana. Aadi Perukku, commonly known as the Aadi Monsoon Festival, is a Tamil cultural festival celebrated on the 18th day of the Tamil month of Aadi. The festival recognises water's life-sustaining in our life and is very important to many framing communities. Nature worship in the form of Amman deities is organized to seek nature's blessings. Many festivities are observed along the water banks and rivers. Many people consider it auspicious to buy Gold on the day of Aadi Perukku in Tamil Nadu.

It was during Dakshinayana that Adiyogi (Lord Shiva) turned south and became Dakshinamurti – he began to transmit yogic science to his first seven disciples, who are now celebrated as the Saptarishis.

Sources: Hindu blog , Isha, Wikipedia, Timesnow

Recent Events at Hindu Centre

Racial Harmony Day

21st July marks the Racial Harmony Day – a day we commemorate the racial riots of 1964. It is also to mark our success as a racially harmonious society and reminds us of the long way we have travelled on this journey as Singaporeans.

This year, the Hindu Centre was invited to represent the Hindu Community at the India Heritage Centre where the IHC Open House was held on 22^{nd} July. This event was supported by MCCY as well as National Heritage Board. The event was led by Dialogue Centre. The theme of the presentation was "Soundscapes" of the various religions in Singapore. Hinduism was represented by the Damru and the Bell. Rig Veda was also mentioned as an ancient text that had sacred sounds. Both the Damru and the Bell are connected with the sound of Om, the Pranava or the primordial sound. The Damru sounds are representative of the rhythm of the cycle of construction and destruction and is held in the hand by Lord Shiva as Nataraja or the Lord of Nata (dance).







Gita Parayanam

As a participating partner organisation in the Gita Jayanti, a Gita Parayanam was held at the Hindu Centre of 23rd July.



This is the **26**th year in succession that Gita Jayanti is being celebrated in Singapore, having started as a community celebration in 1997. Gita Jayanti is organized by the Hindu Endowments Board, Singapore. In 2023 the organizing of events is led by Malwa Cultural Association, Singapore, along with the other Hindu temples and organizations.

The program started with a Krishna Pooja along with Ashtothra Archana. This was followed by Gita Dhyana Slokas, Gita Parayan, Gita Mahatmyam and slokas from Chapter

5, 6, & 7 of Bhagvad Gita were chanted. It concluded with a satsang by Smt. Praveena Anand ji who elaborated on the key ideas propounded by Lord Krishna in these three chapters. Her satsang energised the audience with spiritual energy and this was clearly seen in the Q&A session at the end. She mentioned that the Gita is organised into 3 logical groupings across the 18 Chapters. Chapter 6 concludes the first section that predominantly focused on Karma Yoga and Jnana yoga. Chapter 7 marks the beginning of the Lord's instruction on Bhakti Yoga. The Hindu Centre had a festive



atmosphere on the day and many bhaktas were present. The program concluded with the distribution of the prasadam.





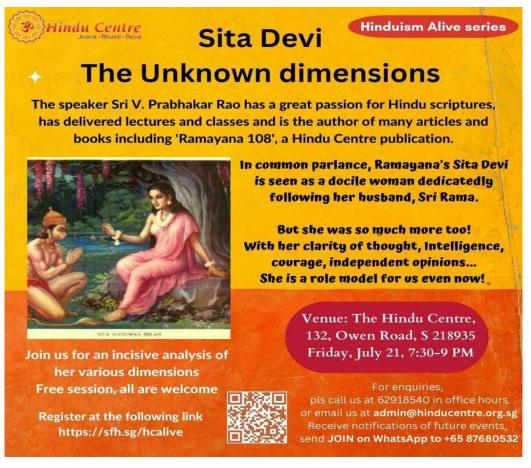






Sita Devi – The Unknown Dimensions

On July 21st Sri V Prabhakar Rao led the group to understand and appreciate the real character of Sita Devi and how she can be a role model for all of us even now!





Naivedayam – The food for the Gods

An enjoyable event where the devotees learned the art of making Naivedyam for the Gods. It was held on July 16th at the Hindu Centre. Here is the report from Smt. Shanthi Ravindran of Hindu Centre.

Offering of cooked and uncooked food to Gods is one of the key steps in a Hindu Puja.

This food is called Naivedyam, Prasadam or Prasad. The food that one offers to Gods comes back to the devotees as blessings. Special care is taken in preparing and partaking in this food. Hindu devotees do not eat this food before offering to the God.

Naivedyam is offered in the daily puja, both at home and in the temples, and on special pujas. Specific food items as naivedyam are associated with specific gods due to the religious significance. Such accounts are often found in the Puranas. For example, some of the food items with such specific associations include Modakam for Ganesha, Panchamrutam with Lord Murgan, Vadai for Anjaneya, Tamarind Rice for Srinivasa Perumal, Kanji for Mariamman and so on. Some Hindu temples too have their unique Prasadam that is given out to devotees. For example, Ladoo in Tirupati, Panchamrutam in Pazhani and Neipayasam in Sabarimala.





Hindu Centre's latest Naivedyam (Food for Gods) workshop featured two sacred offerings – Panagam and Kosambari

Panagam is a drink of water mixed with jaggery and suffused with lime juice, cardamom power and ginger powder. Traditionally it is offered to Lord Narasimha to cool him after he killed the Asura Hiranyakashyapa. It is the main naivedyam offered to Lord Narasimha during the Pradosha period (the twilight period during the thirteenth day of the Hindu calendar). It is also offered to Lord Rama on his birthday which Hindus celebrate as Rama Navami.

Kosambari or Kosumalli was the other naivedyam preparation that was taught to the participants. It is a traditional salad comprising soaked split green beans, cucumber, carrot, green chillies, fresh dessicated coconut and lime juice. This is also offered to Lord Rama on Ramanavami. In addition, it is also a key item prepared in a typical South Indian wedding meal.

Around 10 students participated in the workshop which included a South Korean tourist to Singapore who extended her trip just to attend the workshop. She is currently researching the role of food in all religions.









Ayurveda Bytes – Do we overeat most of the time?

- By Dr. Poorna Menon, a Singapore-based Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine

As per Ayurveda, you should only eat till you are about 3/4 full. 1/2 your stomach should be filled with solids, and 1/4 with liquid (dals, gravies, soups etc. but not water, as it dilutes your enzymes). The remaining 1/4 should be filled with air meaning it should be left empty. This proportion facilitates the natural mixing motion of the stomach during digestion. Think of the stomach as an empty vessel in which you add ingredients. If the vessel is full to the brim, how can you stir it when cooking?

If you follow this simple formula, your body's digestive system will be primed for ideal functioning and even spiritual progress.

Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, 6:16, alludes to principle when he says:

natyasnatastu yogosti nacaikantamanasnatah

Yoga – the union with the absolute – is not for one who eats too much or does not eat at all.

Dietary moderation is therefore particularly prescribed for the spiritual seeker!





Upcoming events at Hindu Centre in August





Request for Volunteers & contributions to the Patrika

The Hindu Centre invites interested participants who would like to volunteer for our various programs either as a program lead or a volunteer. Please register your details at this link https://www.hinducentre.org.sg/volunteer-with-us/

For those that are interested in contributing content to the Patrika, please send us an email at editor@hinducentre.org outlining your interest in one or more areas. We are currently looking for journalist who can interview prominent Hindus in Singapore and others who can contribute articles for the various sections. Editorial support will be provided for all your content ideas including drafting and proof-reading as needed.





Help Us Promote our Vedic Heritage



spiritual teachers, and inter-faith activities.

"Every Little Bit Counts"

Hindu Centre Singapore is dedicated to the spiritual progress of Singapore Hindus through the three pillars of Jnana (Knowledge), Bhakti (Devotion) and Seva (Service). We are a non-profit society run entirely by volunteers. HC depends on the goodwill of generous donors and supporters who believe in our work and mission. Among our many activities are Balagurukulam (Sunday classes for children), Mitra (Hindu counselling for those in prison), Bandhu (elder-care projects), Bhakti (religious functions including mass chanting), Vedic Yoga, basic courses on Hinduism, advanced courses on scriptures, monthly talks, satsangs by visiting renowned

Your generous donations will help us to do more and expand our reach to a broader audience. If you have benefited from our sessions, we invite you to make either a one-time donation or small monthly contributions through the secure form below. Thank you!

If you would like to support our wide range of activities through other means, do feel free to drop us an email (admin@hinducentre.org.sg)

Ask Us Anything on Hinduism

Do you have a question about Hinduism, Sastras, Life in general, Relationships or activities of Hindu Centre? Send us your question at admin@hinducentre.org.sg and our panel of respondents will get in touch with you. Please be assured of protection of privacy, at all times, regardless of the nature of your questions. Please refer to our privacy statement listed at the end of the Patrika or email us at admin@hinducentre.org.sg



The Hindu Centre WhatsApp group

Thank you for reading Patrika our newsletter. Learn more about our events and engage meaningfully with the community by being a part of our WhatsApp group.

If you would like to receive our event notifications by WhatsApp, please send "JOIN" to 8768 0532 and save this number as What'sUp@HinduCentre

