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President's Message

Dear Friends and Supporters of Hindu Centre,

September turned out to be a month of major festivals, Krishna Jayanti for children, and Ganesh Chaturthi puja at the Centre and book sales at the Layan Sithi Vinayagar Temple. We celebrated them with devout fervour and were humbled by the support from the community of devotees.

In addition, for the first time in the post COVID era, we celebrated our Volunteers Appreciation Dinner. It was a celebratory evening filled with songs, dance and a lot of fun that recognised the contribution of our volunteers. Our various partners who had supported us during the year also joined us in the celebration. Read all about these events in this edition of Patrika.

The highlight of October is our Navaratri celebrations on all 9 days at the Hindu Centre. Do join us for this and learn how to set up the Golu and also the reasons behind celebrating it this way. We also have our annual Puratassi book sales, Pustaka book club and an interesting session on Yoga.

Classes such as on Tirupugazh are carrying on as usual.

We look forward to your support as we expand the list of our activities at the Hindu Centre. As always, your feedback and support motivate us to do more. Please keep them coming.

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

Dr N Varaprasad

President



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.

Guru: the root word gu stands for darkness, while ru stands for light. Hence, Guru is the remover of darkness.

अज्ञानतिमिरान्धस्य ज्ञानाञ्जनशालाकया । चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै श्रीगुरवे नमः ॥

Transliteration

Ajnyaana-Timira-Andhasya Jnyaanan.jana-Shaalaakayaa | Cakssur-Unmiilitam Yena Tasmai Shrii-Gurave Namah ||

Word-by-word-meaning

- अज्ञान = Ignorance; तिमिर = Darkness; अन्ध = Blind
- স্থান = Knowledge; आञ्जन = Ointment; যাালাক = a Fire of brush-wood
- चक्षु = Eye; उन्मीलित = Opened, Made Visible
- येन: By Whom; तस्मै: To Him; श्री = Honorific prefix indicating Holy, Sacred; गुरु = The Guru; ए = Addressing the Guru; नमस् (Namas) = Salutations, Obeisance

Meaning

- 3.1: (Salutations to the Guru) Who Removes the Darkness of Ignorance from our Blind (Inner) Eyes by applying the ointment (Collyrium) of the Light of Knowledge.
- 3.2: By Whom our (Inner) Eyes are Opened; Salutations to that Guru.



Learn 5 Sanskrit words

Pancha Maha Yagna are the five daily rituals enjoined upon every householder. They are called the Yajna or sacrifices. These are:

(i) Brahma Yajna, or also known as Veda or Rishi Yajna

Reading the portion of vedas every day or contemplating on the Supreme every day. This can be done by chanting some mantras every day.

(ii) Deva Yajna

Worshipping the Ishta devta or deity of your choice every day – either at home or in the temple

(iii) Pitri Yajna

Ancestral worship in the form of offerings to parents and ancestors thereby taking their blessings every day

(iv) Bhuta Yajna

Reverential attitude to nature by worshipping other living beings. Cow worship, kolam or rangoli (the birds eat the rice therein), upkeeping and praying to Tulasi plant at home are some ways in which this can be done.

(v) Manushya Yajna

Being in service of fellow beings by kind gestures and social work. Donating alms to the poor, helping someone that is suffering etc. are some of the ways.



Know Bhagvad Gita: Sankara bashyam

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् । आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥६.५॥

Uddharet ātmanā ātmānam na ātmānam avasādayet ātmā eva hi ātmana bandhuḥ ātmā eva ripuḥ ātmanaḥ

One should elevate oneself by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself, for the self alone is one's friend and the self alone is the foe.

Shankara says

One who is sunk deep in the ocean of samsara should lift oneself up – meaning one should yearn for attainment of yoga.

Let not a man lower himself, meaning he should not lead himself to downfall.

For he alone is the friend (of himself) and there is no other friend who can raise him up from samsara. In samsara, even a friend is a hindrance to moksha, for friendship creates a bondage of love etc. Therefore, the affirmation, "ātmā eva hi ātmana bandhuḥ - he alone is the friend of himself", is but proper.

He alone is the enemy (of himself). The enemy outside, doing harm, is his own creation. Therefore, the affirmation "ātmā eva ripuḥ - he alone is the enemy of himself" too is proper.

It has been said that "he alone is the friend of himself and that he alone is the foe".

Note: while the masculine form appears in the bhashyam, it is equally implied for the feminine.



Ganesh Chaturthi

-By Deepika Sharma

As the bright fortnight (Shukla Paksha) of the month of **Bhadrapada** commences, it brings on its fourth day, the much-awaited occasion of the very auspicious Ganesha Chaturthi. This year Ganesha Chaturthi started on the **19**th of **September** and marked the beginning of the 10 days long festivities which ended on **28**th **September**.



As per the legend, it was on this auspicious day that Lord Ganesha was born from the sandalwood paste that Maa Durga used during her bath. While versions of this story differ from one holy-book to the other, the story that follows is similar in all versions. That Lord Ganesha's head was cut off and an elephant head was used to replace it and bring him back to life. Ganesha has been bestowed with many great titles too including Remover of all Obstacles (Avighna or Vignaharta), Bestower of success

(Siddhivinayaka) and Granter of Boons (Varaganapati) among other such as God of new beginnings, provider of prosperity & abundance and God of Wisdom.

On Ganesha Chaturthi, Hindus everywhere around the world pray to Lord Ganesha in all these forms.

During this celebration, idols of Ganesha made with clay are kept in houses or in decorated pavilions. Celebrations start on day-one by invoking Lord Ganesha's blessings during the ceremony of pran-pratishtha. In this ceremony, the murti of Lord Ganesha is consecrated by reciting holy verses to invite Lord Ganesha to be a guest and be present in the murti. This is, followed by offering a prayer of 16-rituals called Shodashopachara and culminating in the final ritual of visarjan, or immersion of the idol in water, on day-10. This day marks the farewell of the lord by immersion of the idol in the water. As per the commonly accepted belief, the Lord then leaves for his holy abode in Mount Kailash.

Earliest evidence of the celebration of this festival in India dates to 2 BCE during Satavahana dynasty reigns and continued during the reign of Rashtrakuta and Chalukya dynasties during early CE era. More resplendent celebrations happened during Shivaji Maharaj's time in 1630-80 CE during which it was organised by the state especially as Peshavas were strong devotees of Lord Ganesha. During the British era, however, the festival lost state support and was



relegated to being a private family celebration. Its revival in present form was architected in the 1890s by the great freedom fighter Lokmanya Tilak. He was the first to install big public images of Lord Ganesha in pavilions in Bombay and started the practice of immersing the idols in the sea. Amidst the fervour of festivities and the heady devotion for the Lord, Hindus from all caste and creed united. Given the ban on social gatherings at that time, these celebrations also provided a way for all Indians to come together for exchanging intellectual dialogue on issues facing the nation.

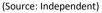
The celebrations continue to this day. Colourful pavilions decorated with flowers, lights and other embellishments host Lord Ganesha idols adorned with offerings of fine material. Devotees prepare Modak, sesame ladoo and his other favourite food as offerings. The fervour of Bhakti continues along with the discipline of various rituals. On 10th day, the idol is immersed in water, it is as much a ritual as is an emotional moment. For many, the wait for the next visit of Lord Ganesha on the next Ganesha Chaturthi, begins that day.

Singapore and Ganesha

In Singapore, various Ganesha Chaturthi celebrations are organised by different Indian communities. Some notable celebrations among these are by Maharashtra (mandal) and by Odia Society of Singapore.

Devotees also throng prominent temples dedicated to Lord Ganesha such as Sri Senpaga Vinayagar temple located at Ceylon Road in Katong and Sri Layan Sithi Vinayagar temple located at Keong Saik Road near Outram Park.







(Source: Singapore Airlines archives on Facebook)



References:

Savaari.com blog; Legend of Shri Ganesha's birth; https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/festivals/ganesh-chaturthi-2023-date-shubh-muhurat-history-significance-and-all-you-need-to-know-about-ganeshotsav-101694169562754.html

Janmashtami

-By Nitya Menon

This year the advent of **Lord Krishna** was celebrated around the world on 6 or 7 September. In Singapore, several temples hosted special prayers for the occasion. For devotees celebrating at home, Krishna janmashtami is a joyous occasion marked with kirtan, Vishnu sahasranama/Bhagavad Gita recitals and offerings of the Lord's favourites: curd, home-churned butter and aval-based delicacies. A highlight in every Janmashtami celebration is a re-enactment of the birth of Krishna. Some devotees create a small jail structure and depict a nativity-like scene of his birth in a Mathura prison, whilst others simply dress their baby Krishna idols in festive wear and hide him in a cradle that is revealed at the appropriate hour.

Beyond the festive or ritualistic aspects of Janmashtami, however, the festival is an annual reminder of the birth of one of the most unique and influential personalities to walk the Earth. Believed to be the **purnavatar** - Krishna was at the same time man and a superman; a fully realised individual channeling the full potency of the universe and thus not bound by the rules of karma. Yet, driven by His own maya to participate in the often-mundane play of existence. Through his seminal discourse with the Pandava Prince **Arjuna** - the **Bhagavad Gita** - Krishna imparted to humanity the profound knowledge of Vedanta in a relatable and practical manner. From Henry Thoreau and Herman Hesse to Robert Oppenheimer and Nikola Tesla, the eternal philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita has influenced human thought far beyond the Indian subcontinent and consequently shaped contemporary history. For the spiritual seeker, by the example of his own life extensively documented in the Puranic itihasas, Krishna demonstrated how to live as both a stithaprajna and sanyasi without retreating from the world. Sthitha refers to steadiness and prajna means the wisdom and hence a it refers to a person with inner equilibrium.

Celebrating Janmashtami is thus a celebration of the birth of the unborn, and a reflection on how we may each attain the highest potential of a human life here and now.





(Source: Newstrack)



Source: Krishna Jayanti celebrations at Sri Krishna Temple, Singapore



Women in Leadership series – Andal the Alvar saint

- By Harini Chari



Sree Andal at Sri Srinivas Perumal Temple, Singapore
(Source: HEB)

Andal was a saint, a revolutionary and a leader who impacted change. Also called as **Goda/Kothai**, she remains the only woman to be considered a part of the spiritually elite 'Azhvars'. She is considered as an incarnation of Bhumi Devi (Sri Lakshmi) by some. Her father, Periyazhwar found her as a baby by the Tulsi plant in his garden much like Sita Devi - who was found while ploughing the earth. Kothai grew up on a diet of spiritual songs, stories and namas. On the surface, she seemed like a little girl from a little town, but events later proved that she had big dreams and even bigger goals.

Here are **3 leadership lessons** from her inspirational life that modern day women can apply.

Authentic- Authenticity should not just remain a claim but more an experience. And for that experience to resonate, it must first start with firm personal conviction. Andal was deeply convinced of her love for Lord Ranganatha/ VadabathraSai (presiding deity of

Srivilliputur where Kothai was raised). It was this transparent love and belief in her Ranganatha that found an expression in her poetry, songs and motivational words. It was also this same blinding faith that fuelled her to boldly claim that she would marry none but the Lord himself!

Andal truly believed that she was His equal, which is probably what emboldened her to try on the lovingly strung garlands that her father made especially for the Lord. Even the Lord claimed that He wanted His Andal to first wear HIS garlands before it came to Him.

She was confident in thought and her beliefs. She was genuine and authentic about her conviction, and both these spurred her towards a higher goal (of marrying her Lord).

We talk about lofty aspects like purpose and goals - but first, one needs to pause and reflect on what one deeply cares about. Once we are convinced, then our words and actions will automatically flow in the same direction and impact others.



Pioneering: Kothai was much ahead of her times. When little girls were blending in the background of their traditional homes and customs, Kothai challenged their thinking. She urged her friends to take charge of their time, their lives, and their destinies. She motivated her friends to 'want to' wake up early during the month of Margazhi to sing the Lord's praises and thus progress spiritually. As a true leader, she knew that a soft approach may not work with all her friends. So, she curated her plea as per the personality of the friend. Sometimes, she rebuked and chided them for sleeping in, sometimes she reasoned and other times she pleaded.

A good leader (and not just one in the corporate world but even at home) is one who knows how to reframe the 'ask' in a manner that lands well with the receiver. For that, we first need to know our audience well enough and then reach out to them in a manner that will trigger positive actions.

Inclusive: In the orthodox 'agrahara' environment where Andal was raised, it was the norm that Vedic studies and 'moksha' (liberation) were not accessible to women folk. The proof to her 'equal' status today, is that her primary work, the 'Thiruppavai' in the Vaishnava sect, is considered 'the seed of the Vedas'.

As leaders, many talk about being inclusive but their actions are sometimes at odds with their talk. However, Andal did not just stop with writing poetry but included everyone around her on this spiritual journey and she set the example. As aspiring leaders, our behaviour, words, actions, body language all must convey and provide cues to others (employees, our kids, our helpers etc) to live a certain way.

Conclusion:

Andal was a rare blend of traditional and modern woman of her times. She embraced tradition yet challenged orthodoxy. She was pious in her devotion but also modern in her thought. Today, we sing her songs, remember her piety, and revere her as a Goddess. At the same time, let us also remember her as a fearless forerunner. Let us imbibe her leadership qualities and salute her for paving the way for women empowerment.



Temples in SG – A walk with our ancestors

-By Nitya Menon

Sri Muneeswaran Temple

The Sri Muneeswaran Temple in Commonwealth is one of just four agamic temples dedicated to this deity in Singapore. The Temple traces its history to **1932** when workers of the Malayan Railway built a simple wooden enclosure - **Muniandy Temple** - housing a small trident and triangular stone beside the railway tracks near Queenstown. The railway workers would pray to Muneeswaran to avoid accidents on the tracks, under their watch and supervision. This aligns with one of the origin stories of Muneeswaran as a *kaval daivam* who provides spatial protection. Today the temple remains the only shrine associated with the railways to remain standing and was consecrated in its present location in 1998 to replace the old Queensway Muneeswaran Temple, which was relocated in connection with a road-widening project.



Source: Wikipedia

Believed to be the largest Muneeswaran temple in Southeast Asia, the temple worships Lord Muneeswaran as a form of Shiva who is also known by other names such as Muniyandi, Muniyappan, Muni Ayya, Ayya. The temple contains sanctums for two other forms of Shiva: Dakshinamurthy and Viswanathan. The temple also houses Karpagavinayagar, Balamurugan and his devotee Idumbar, Krishna, Hanuman, Durga, Mariamman, Ayappan and unusually Prathyanagira Devi - the lionfaced godesss - as well as Shri Nagar Raja and Rani (reportedly the only temple in Singapore with the latter two).

At present, the Temple is undergoing renovations expected to complete in Q1/2024. Until then, the Temple remains open for worship and all its idols are hosted in the dining hall at the Temple's Annex Building.



Recent Events at Hindu Centre

Hindu Centre Volunteer Appreciation Dinner



Volunteers are the heart, soul and hands of Hindu Centre. If there were no volunteers, Hindu Centre would be a mere shell without life or spirit. It was with this truth in mind that an appreciation dinner was recently held for all our volunteers in the various areas of activity within our three pillars of Jnana, Bhakti and Seva.

About 85 volunteers attended the dinner, which was punctuated by performances, games and dinner. It was

a wonderful experience for many as they were able to catch up with friends. Volunteers across the different areas were finally able to meet one another. Every volunteer present was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by HC President, Dr Prasad

Another group of invitees were various partners who have supported our activities in one way or another. They were presented with tokens of our appreciation.

A sumptuous vegetarian buffet was enjoyed by everyone, together with a singing multilingual emcee.

Dr Prasad thanked all the volunteers and assured them that their contributions were deeply appreciated. He asked that they give their feedback on how they can be better supported in future, and to recruit younger volunteers as we continue to grow our activities and extend our reach into the community.











Krishna Janmashtami @ Hindu Centre

-By Deepika Sharma

On 6th September 2023, Hindus all over the world celebrated the festival of **Janmashtami**. The word Janamashtami means birth **(Janma)** on the eighth day **(ashtami)** of the dark fortnight of Shravan month. Significance of number eight also lies in that Shri Krishna was the eighth avatar of Vishnu and was born as the eighth son of his parents, Janaki and Vasudev.

The story of this phase of his life is narrated across various celebrations of **Janamshtami** - Krishna as the naughty kid who stole butter to feed to calves; Krishna as the flute playing lover of Radha; Krishna the teenage rebel who freed villagers from old suppressing traditions and rescued them as their protector when Indra unleashed his wrath upon **Nanda** village. Stories of Krishna's adventures in **Nanda Gokul** are many and timeless. Excitement to tell and retell them never fades among his devotees.

This year, as a special celebration, Hindu Center hosted an event on **16**th **September** for Kids to learn more about Krishna Jayanti and learn to recite mantra to offer prayer to Sri Krishna. Idols of baby Krishna were given to all the children along with tulsi leaves and jasmine flowers which they offered to their idols. Children were also taught Krishna Jayanti Mantra and as the event ended, prasad was offered and children took home their own Krishnas to continue to offer their prayers every day to him. The Hindu Centre had over 50 people and the atmosphere was full of innocent laughter of kids and devotees!









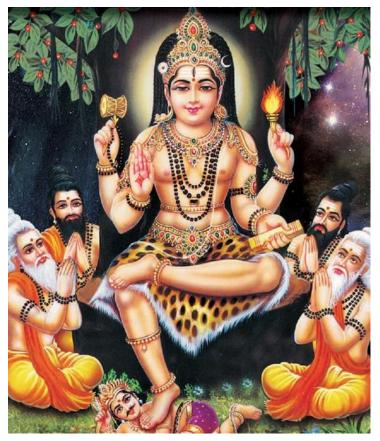






The Hinduism Alive Series in September featured Lord Dakshinamurti – Divine Teacher

-By Karthik Ganeshan



Dakshinamurthi is Lord Shiva's form as a teacher/guru where he guides seekers by giving them intelligence and the guidance of a human guru.

The word Dakshinamurti means he who sits facing the southern direction. The north stands for liberation and the south stands for samsara (life of birth-death-rebirth). The mass of the humanity is in samsara and worshipping Dakshinamurti leads them to liberation.

Sri Karthik cited verses from the Suta Samhita and provided an elaborate description of the form of Dakshinamurti. His hair, ornaments, sitting posture and hand postures were explained.

(Source: Bhagwan ji photos)

The significance of his four students (Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanatkumar, Sanandana) and the demon (Apasmara) under his feet were explained.

Sri Karthik explained that Dakshinamurti's form embodies the five elements, the four Vedas and conveys the destruction of ignorance and attainment of knowledge.

A short prayer to Dakshinamurti was taught where the seeker asks the Lord to give him/her intelligence and knowledge.

ॐ नमो भगवते दक्षिणामूर्तये मह्यं मेधां प्रयच्छ स्वाहा।

Om Namo Bhagavate Dakshinamurthaye

Mahyam Medhaam Pragnyaam Prayachch Swaha







Kids Fest at the Hindu Centre

-By our young devotees, Anjanakrisha 10 and Vijesh Raj 7

Our really young devotees, Anjanakrisha and Vijesh Raj have written a lovely account of the proceedings at the Kids Fest which was held at the Hindu Centre on June 17th 2023. They learnt about traditional dances, drawing and doing Yoga. In this fun fest their parents also joined with them enthusiastically. Below is the un-curated and original writing by our young journalists!

We learnt that Garba is a Gujarati traditional dance. We enjoyed every aspect of the dance.

Yoga session was relaxing and peaceful. We like the part where our body and mind was at the Yoga Nidra mode.

We explored the 6 tastes category. We learnt that we must try all the different kinds of taste in food. It taught us how our diet affects our body, brain and mind. We liked the sour tasting food oranges and gooseberry.

We were proud of our healthy dates laddoos that we moulded by ourselves. We loved the tactile sensory feel when we moulded the laddoos.



We feel encouraged to continue and follow up with the activities learnt from the kids fest class when our teachers gave out the checklist to complete at home.

We are thankful to be part of Hindu Centre. We are looking forward to participate in more activities designed by the Hindu Centre.

Thank you.









Ayurveda Bytes – What's the first thing on your mind?

-By Dr. Poorna Menon

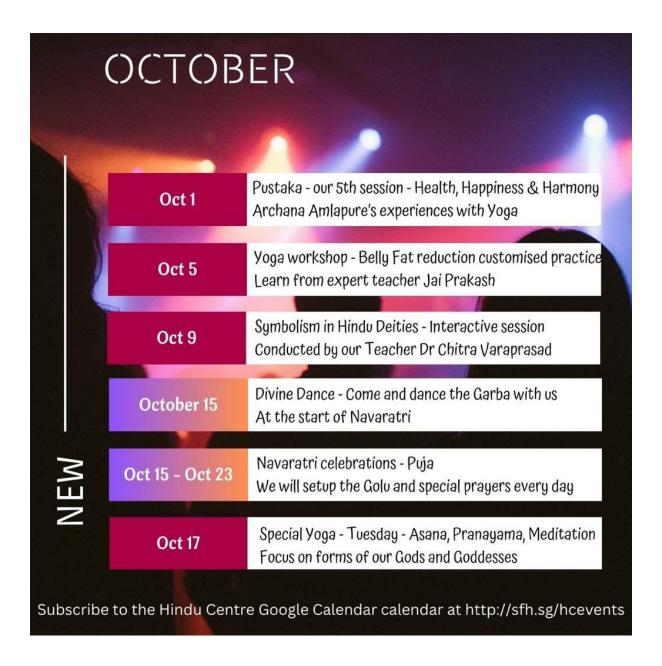
Do you know what Ayurveda says should be your first thought upon waking? You would be mistaken if you guessed: mantra or something spiritual! Instead, your first thought should be to ask yourself how well the food from your previous day's meals has digested. This is because in Ayurveda, healthy digestion is fundamental to mental and physical health, and the creation of ojas — vital energy. On the other hand, poor digestion will accumulate toxins and ama, which will also impede spiritual practice. Indeed, the most natural and healthiest pattern for a human is to have the urge to have a complete bowel movement upon waking. Hence — your first thought should be regarding the digestion of the previous day's food. Do you have a bowel movement upon waking up?

This health tip is contributed in part by By Dr. Poorna Menon, a Singapore-based Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine who has also received guidance in Ayurvedic practices.





Upcoming events at Hindu Centre in October





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



"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.

For more information, please click here https://www.hinducentre.org.sg/donate/

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

