



Editor: Vijai Singhal

Hindu Council of Australia Ltd



17 The Crescent, Homebush, NSW 2140, Australia



Phone: 02 8250 4007

Fax: 02 9746 8944

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः ॐ

May Everybody Be Happy

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NEWS LETTER

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Dear Friends,
I wish you and your members a very happy and prosperous New Year.

This past year has gone very fast. It has been a year of so many natural and human disasters resulting in inordinate loss of human life. We hope and sincerely wish that this new year will bring better news and luck for all of us.

Deepavali 2005

Deepavali Fair at the Sydney Olympic Park on 23rd October 2005 was very successful. We are finding increasing number of people of non-Indian decent attending the fair and enjoying the variety of Indian food and rich cultural experience.

Deepavali celebration at the Federal Parliament House in Canberra was held in the Great Hall on 6th November 2005. A number of federal Parliamentarians and Senators attended the function. Among the chief guests were Hon. Senator Gary Humphries, representing the Prime Minister, John Howard, Hon. John Cobb, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP representing the Leader of the Opposition, and the Indian High Commissioner, H.H. Mr. P. P. Shukla. The high lights of the programme included the traditional Rajasthani dances performed by the Dance troupe specially flown from India, courtesy of the Indian High Commission and the Fire works outside the Parliament House. The Press Release issued by the Hon. Minister John Cobb on the occasion is reproduced elsewhere.

Chritable Donations

Most of the donations we make go to the registered Christian Organisations, where donations are tax-deductible. These organisations do a good job but a large percentage of the funds collected are spent in administrative overheads and the disturbing

aspect is their proselytising (religious conversion) activities to the Christian faith. There are a number of Indian charitable institutions that are doing a remarkable job in India with very little support. We owe it to our privileged upbringing and to the highly subsidised education we have had in India to contribute back as much as we can to support the work of these organisations.

Ekal Vidyalaya is one such organisation that needs our support. The details about their activities are printed elsewhere. I would very strongly urge upon all the member organisations and their individual members to make as much contribution as they can to support Ekal Vidyalaya.

Derogatory Portrayal of Hindu Deities

Very disturbing information has come to our notice. The famous Indian artist, MF Hussain has published a book of his paintings showing Hindu Gods and Goddesses in the nude and indulging in sexual acts. The text is by Dr Daniel Herwitz and the foreword by Mr Rusi Mody, a former Chairman of Tata Steel, the publishers of the book. This is a "willful desecration of religion". Shame on them. They have misused the privileged positions they have enjoyed in the society. It only shows how low they can stoop to the levels of human indecency. We are going to organise a meeting of all Hindu Organisations in Australia to vehemently protest to the President and the Prime Minister of India to ban this book from circulation and to destroy all existing copies.

Inter-faith Activities

This is one of the most important functions of the Hindu Council to represent the Hindu faith in the inter-faith meetings and to take part in the multicultural activities in Australia. Mrs Saroj Arora, a devoted and long time member of the Hindu Council will be representing the Hindu faith in the Women's Interfaith Network meetings in the Western region of Sydney.

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami of Hawaii is scheduled to visit Sydney early in January this year. The Hindu Council along with the Sri Venkateshwara Temple Society have invited him to address the members on 26th January at 3 PM at Sri Venkateshwara Temple in Helensburgh. Bodhinatha ascended to the spiritual seat of Kauai Aadheenam after Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami had attained mahasamadhi on 12 November 2001. Satguru Subramuniaswami was instrumental in the initial celebrations of *Ganesh Visharjana* by joining a number of Hindu organisations. Later on that lead to the formation of the Hindu Council of Australia. I would request Sydney members to try to attend the Satguru's talk and gain spiritual benefit from it.

Holi Mela 2006

Hindu Council is participating with the Holi Sabha of Australia to celebrate the Holi Mela jointly in Sydney with other Hindu organisations on 19th March 2006 at the Fairfield Show Ground. We very strongly feel that the main Hindu festivals should be celebrated jointly by all Hindu organisations to show unity amongst all Hindus. It is very unfortunate that Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan has decided to go on its own way and have a separate celebration.

Once again, I wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year,

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam
Chairman

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The Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation (EVF)



It is an independent non-government global organization that facilitates the development of one-teacher schools to

achieve overall development of the remote tribal and rural villages of India. EVF Australia has been set up to promote and facilitate sponsoring of Ekal Vidyalayas (Single Teacher Schools) in India by Indians residing in NSW and Australia.

EVF has helped over 15 000 villages to set up ekal schools. EVF's goal is to set up 100 000 ekal vidyalayas. EVF Australia was set up in 2004 and currently 85 schools have been sponsored through EVF Australia with kind support from sponsors in Australia.

Support from all persons and organisations with Indian background is very important for

bringing the light of knowledge, inspiration and hope to the underprivileged rural and tribal children of India. Join the Ekal movement. Be a school sponsor. Be an EVF Australia Supporter.

Each Ekal Vidyalaya usually becomes self sufficient within five years of its set up. By donating just \$10 a week, you can sponsor one Ekal Vidyalaya. Villages provide other infrastructure needs to keep cost low.

You can sponsor One School with \$480 per annum, Half School with \$240 per annum and Quarter School with \$120 per annum. Although it is desirable that you continue sponsoring school for five years, it is not mandatory and you can discontinue next year if circumstances change or you change your mind.

For more information on EVF movement, please visit our web site at: www.ekalvidya.org and/or contact:

Jayendra Shah on (02) 9614 4924(ah),
0438 621 590 or Tushar Bhatt on
(02) 9620 7453(ah), 0419 296 183

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Media Release by Hon. John Cobb MP

Australian Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

Festival of Lights Celebrated

1 November 2005

The Australian Government Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, John Cobb today sent his best wishes to Australia's Hindu community who will today begin celebrating Diwali - The Festival of Lights.

'Diwali is celebrated by lighting small oil lamps called Diyas,' said Minister Cobb. 'The lighting of these lamps symbolises the lifting of spiritual darkness, a renewal of life and new lamps are also said to help guide the deceased to heaven.'

'Diwali is also the beginning of the Hindu New Year, and it fosters a spirit of living in harmony. It is the most important and most widely celebrated event in the Hindu calendar,' Mr Cobb said. The Minister acknowledged the importance of this period to Australian Hindus, and said it provided an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate Australia's cultural diversity.

'Diwali is a special period on the Hindu calendar, and as Hinduism is one of the fastest

growing religions in Australia, it is also an important period in Australia's multicultural calendar,' Minister Cobb said.

'Diwali is also an opportunity for all Australians to reflect on the way religious occasions and cultural celebrations can build bridges of understanding between people of different backgrounds and faiths.

'All Australians can embrace the ideals of hope and forgiveness that Diwali teaches us.'

Between 1996 and 2001, five per cent of the people who arrived in Australia were affiliated to Hinduism, and in the 2001 census, over 95 000 people in Australia claimed affiliation to Hinduism.

'I encourage all Australians to learn more about the festivals and faiths of different communities. Mutual understanding leads to mutual acceptance and mutual respect,' Minister Cobb said.

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Delhi's Akshardham Temple to showcase Indian Culture

A pink sandstone and white marble temple complex of the Swaminarayan sect (BAPS) was opened in November 2005. The Swaminarayan Akshardham temple complex, spreading over 30 acres of the Yamuna bank, will be a place for cultural education and entertainment. The temple, which is only a part of the complex, was opened to devotees on February 13, 2003. The centre on Indian culture, exhibition sites and theme gardens forms part of the complex. The unique architecture of the Centre draws inspiration from the temples of Badrinath (Uttaranchal), Somnath (Gujarat) and Konark (Orissa).

An IMAX theatre forms part of the Complex and will show films on Indian culture and spirituality. A 10-minute boat ride will showcase India since the Vedic civilization with its contribution to science, medicine and mathematics. Theme gardens, with lotus ponds and musical fountains, will have 60 bronze sculptures on four themes-- "Courageous children of India," "Inspiring women of India," "Great leaders of India" and "Visionaries of India."

When you go to India next time do make an effort to visit the Akshardham complex in Delhi. You will definitely enjoy the exhilarating experience.

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Go Vegetarian and reduce Global warming

Global warming could be controlled if we all become vegetarians and stopped eating meat. That's the view of British physicist Alan Calver, who thinks that giving up pork chops, lamb cutlets and chicken burgers would do more for the environment than burning less oil and gas. Writing in the *Physics World*, Calver calculates that the animals we eat emit 21% of all the carbon dioxide that can be attributed to human activity. We could therefore slash man-made emission of carbon dioxide simply by abolishing all livestock. Moreover, there would be no adverse effects to health and it would be an experiment that we could abandon at any stage. "Worldwide reduction of meat production in pursuit of the targets set in the Kyoto treaty seems to carry fewer political unknowns than cutting our consumption of fossil fuels," he says.

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Stretching for Jesus - Christian Yoga

TIME Magazine recently carried an article "Stretching for Jesus" that covered the concept of how Christian churches, probably troubled by yoga's growing popularity in the US, are trying to appropriate yoga by replacing all Sanskrit mantras with Christian words and by renaming all yoga *asanas*. Hindu American Foundation (HAF) wrote a letter to the editor making it clear that yoga is integral to the Hindu spiritual tradition while simultaneously affirming our pluralism in that Yogic spiritual practices are available to all without necessarily requiring conversion on the part of the practitioners.

HAF conveying the outrage of the American Hindu community wrote - "Hindu Americans are rightfully outraged by the brazen appropriation of one of their vibrant faith's most lasting contributions to this country's health, well-being and popular culture. Hindus are increasingly sensitive to this intellectual property theft."

Hinduism teaches that yoga, which literally means union of the body and mind in a quest to unite the soul with God, is comprised of eight steps of which the popularly practiced postures are an integral part. Indeed, the ultimate goal of yoga and Hinduism is one and the same: union with God. As a pluralistic and tolerant religion, Hinduism teaches - and every yoga teacher can attest - that one need not become a Hindu or repudiate their own faith to practice yoga and reap its immense benefits. It is a sad irony that some churches seek to

exploit Hindu pluralism, and its gift of yoga, to increase their own legion of churchgoers.

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India Government Moves to Protect Yoga Heritage

MUMBAI, INDIA, October 6, 2005: Yoga has to remain an Indian discipline. It's in this spirit New Delhi's Health Minister has approved a project of almost US\$3.6 million to protect on the international level the patent on the postures involved in this ancient discipline that is an expression of Indian culture and religion, which the West has been trying to get a hold of after it gained worldwide popularity. A team of experts will produce a digital document on the 1,500 *asana* or yoga postures, to be translated in English, French, German, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese, and distributed in 11 countries. Under the supervision of V. K. Gupta - a health ministry expert - the team, which can count on the collaboration of more than 100 members and 15 Indian religious schools, examined 16 Vedic texts (Hindu sacred texts) to illustrate yoga's historical origins and evolution, said patent lawyer K.M. Gopakumar. In the West, yoga generates huge revenues in the range of billions of dollars. Many improvised gurus, of Indian origin, start up their own yoga business. The Indian health ministry has recorded more than a thousand yoga-related websites run by these "gurus" who publicise yoga postures and practices claiming that they are their original creation and therefore protected with an international patent and covered by copyrights. Once the Indian government's document is issued, "the so-called life-style gurus cannot claim copyright and allege infringement by others," said Gopakumar. In the United States, in Europe and Japan at least 150 yoga postures are covered by patents, says the health ministry. In the US alone 2,300 yoga schools and yoga practices have copyrights. Yoga is also connected to health, as underlined by the Indian health ministry's project, which aims to protect this wide religious, scientific and cultural heritage, which includes 75,000 formulas of *ayurvedic* medicine and 50,000 formulas of *unani* herbal remedies.

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Synthetic Fuel

Press Trust of India, October 4, 2005
India, China and the United States are among very few countries in the world which can easily attain energy independence by substituting synthetic fuel obtained from petroleum with coal, an expert has said.

India, the US and China are rich in coal deposits and can easily attain energy independence by producing synthetic fuel from coal, Governor of Montana and soil scientist Brian Schweitzer said in an article in The New York Times.

Synfuel has become very economical in view of soaring crude oil prices. The former soil scientist said the high-performing fuel would cost only \$35 a barrel. The Synfuel process, which is nothing like conventional coal use, removes greenhouse gases as well as toxins like sulphur, mercury and arsenic.

A Synfuel plant can generate electric power, make synthetic natural gas, and produce hydrogen that many, including President George W Bush, believe is the energy source of the future.

Schweitzer also says, "Most people are surprised to learn that we can produce gasoline, diesel, jet fuel and other petroleum products out of coal. Indeed, the process was used in America as early as 1928."

In World War II, 92 per cent of Germany's aviation fuel and half its total petroleum came from synthetic fuel plants. South Africa has used a similar technology for 50 years, and now makes 200,000 barrels per day of synthetic gasoline and diesel, he said.

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Annual Children's Camp

Registration is open for the annual children's camp being organised by Vishva Hindu Parishad. The annual VHP camp provides an opportunity for exposing our children to Hindu dharma through fun-filled activities. The camp dates are 26th to 29th January 2006. The venue is Heathcote Scout camp, Sydney. The camp is meant for children in the age group of 8 to 13 years. The theme for this camp is Scientists of India. Further details and registration form can be obtained sending an email to vhp_camp@yahoo.com.au or by contacting Sri Brijpal Singh on 9484 5204.

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Mahatma Gandhi

"In my opinion the Sanskrit text *Satyam bruyat priyam bruyat, Na bruyat satyam apriyam* means that one should speak the truth in gentle language. One had better not speak it if one cannot do so in a gentle way, meaning thereby that there is no truth in a man who cannot control his tongue."