



Editor: Vijai Singhal

Hindu Council of Australia Ltd



17 The Crescent, Homebush, NSW 2140, Australia



Phone: 9746 7789

Fax: 9746 8944

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः ॐ May Everybody Be Happy

www.hinducouncil.com.au

NEWS LETTER

Vol.3 July-Sept. 2005

Dear Friends,

In this issue our main focus is on education about Hinduism. It is only through education that we can overcome lot of misinformation and prejudices that we encounter in our society. It is an important activity to not only educate our children about the richness of its philosophies, its beliefs, how it helps overcome day to day problems and guides us to live a fuller and emotionally richer life, but also to raise that awareness amongst the overall society.

The HSC syllabus for religious studies has been approved by the NSW Board of Studies, details are given elsewhere. We would like to thank Rev. Ajayaprana Mataji of Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of NSW and Dr Dilip Dutta of Sydney University for their help and guidance. We have to now develop educational material to help students with their studies.

VHP Australia, one of our member associations, has been active in running classes on Hinduism at a number of NSW schools at the primary level. We would be working with them to expand on that program to cover a larger number of schools not just in NSW but we need to expand it to other States for which we would seek help from our member associations in other States.

You will also see an article from Mr Patel of Shri Swaminarayan Temple about the way three young members of that organisation presented Hinduism at the Sydney Church of England Grammar School. Congratulations to them and we would like to encourage more of such activities in other schools.

For activities at the University level, please read the article by Neeraj Aggarwal. It is very encouraging to see that development and

growth. We need more dedicated youth workers to spread the word.

We have also been in constant touch with the Hindu Council UK, who have developed a web-site containing educational material that we can have access to. I have had a long phone discussion with Dr Mihir Meghani of the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), who has been very active in conducting awareness programs in various US cities. They have educational program at governmental level to educate elected officials at the national and local level about Hinduism and Hindu issues. They also have Media Education Campaign for journalists to better report on Hinduism and Hindu issues.

To undertake all these activities, we need knowledgeable and dedicated people and I would request each one of our member Association to come forward to help us in this important task.

UNESCO Conference: I attended the conference entitled 'Religion in peace and conflict' in Melbourne on 12-14th April 2005. Religious leaders from most of the ASEAN countries were represented. At the end of the conference the following statement was issued:

- Promote peaceful coexistence among all people and across faith traditions.
- Accept differences and foster respect for diversity and the right to religious and spiritual practices and traditions consistent with human rights and the law.
- Commit ourselves to work together to address those social, economic and political factors that contribute to violence and promote hatred and division.
- Renounce and condemn misuse of religion and belief to justify violence and discrimination; and

- Pledge ourselves to harness the resources of our faith traditions and communities to bring peace and security to our region.

Buddhist Celebrate Vesak at NSW Parliament

House: The Buddhist Council of New South Wales celebrated Vesak at the NSW Parliament for the first time on the 25th May 2005. The function included a cultural show and an exhibition. Buddhist leaders and the heads of other religious groups were invited. This appears to be a follow up of the Hindu Council's initiative about the celebration of Deepavali at the NSW Parliament house three years ago.

Deepavali Celebrations: As mentioned in the last newsletter, Hindu Council would be celebrating Deepavali in Sydney on the 23rd October 2005 and at the Federal Parliament in Canberra on Sunday the 6th November 2005. All your members are invited to join in the celebrations at these venues. We encourage you to contact your State member of Parliament and get him or her to host Deepavali celebrations at the State Parliament House. How good it would be if all the Parliament Houses in Australia celebrate Deepavali every year.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With regards and best wishes,

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam
Chairman

* * * * *

Study of Religions in NSW Schools

As reported in the first issue of the Newsletter, The Hindu Council of Australia had participated with NSW Board of Studies to develop the HSC Syllabus for the Study of Religions (SOR) in NSW schools. The syllabus covers the teaching of five major religions in Australia namely: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

The HSC courses in both SOR I and II are structured with a core study of *Religion and Belief Systems in Australia post-1945* and two religious traditions in SOR I and three religious traditions in SOR II that focus on the whole religious tradition. There are also additional topics for SOR II, *Religion and Peace* and *Religion and Non-religion*.

Hinduism - Religious traditions study I covers:

Origin

- discuss the civilisation of the early inhabitants of the Indus Valley:
 - the Harappan civilisation
 - the Aryans
- describe the Vedic period
- outline the early development of Hinduism to the era of the Upanishads
- outline Hinduism as the Eternal Religion - Sanatana Dharma
- describe the main features of devotion to the Gods:
 - Vishnu
 - Shiva

Principal Beliefs

- define Atman and Brahman
- examine the principal Gods and Goddesses of Hinduism
- investigate the connection between Dharma and Karma
- outline the importance of Moksha for a Hindu devotee
- recognise union with God through:
 - Karma Yoga
 - Bhakti Yoga
 - Raja Yoga
 - Jñana Yoga

Sacred Texts and Writings

- identify the importance for Hinduism of:
 - the Vedas, including the Upanishads;
 - the Ramayana and Mahabharata, including the Bhagavad Gita
- examine extracts from the Vedas and the Epics which demonstrate the principal beliefs of Hinduism

Ethical systems

- outline the principal ethical teachings in Hinduism
- describe the importance of ethical teachings in the life of adherents

Personal Devotion in Home

- outline puja as celebrated in the home

Religious traditions depth study covers:

Significant People and Ideas

- explain the contribution to the development and expression of Hinduism of ONE significant person OR school of thought, other than the Vedas, drawn from:
 - Shankara
 - Ramanuja
 - Madhva
 - Mirabai (Mira Bai)
 - Bhakti Movement
 - Ram Mohan Roy
 - Ramakrishna
 - Mohandas Gandhi
 - Purva Mimamsa school of thought

- Vedanta school of thought
- another person or school of thought significant to Hinduism
- analyse the impact of this person OR school of thought on Hinduism

Ethics

- describe and explain Hindu ethical teachings on:
 - bioethics OR
 - environmental ethics OR
 - sexual ethics

Significant practices in the lives of adherents

- describe ONE significant practice within Hinduism drawn from:
 - Marriage ceremony
 - Pilgrimage
 - Temple Worship
- demonstrate how the chosen practice expresses the beliefs of Hinduism
- analyse the significance of this practice for both the individual and the Hindu community

The syllabus has now been approved. For full details refer to their web-site:

http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/syllabus2000_lists.html

* * *

Sydney University Hindu Society

Neeraj Aggarwal

2005 has certainly been an exciting year for growth of the Society, with over 170 new students signing up. To maintain the interest of the members, a day-trip to the Sri Venkateshwara Temple at Helensburgh was organised. 35 people made the trek up to Helensburgh. Shri Vasudevacharaya - spiritual guide at the Temple, gave an inspirational and thought-provoking talk on the relevance of temples and took us on a guided tour of the whole temple, explaining the significance of every symbol and deity. The day ended with a scenic bushwalk to the waterfall nearby.

HOLI, the colourful Hindu festival was celebrated on the luscious green lawns of Sydney University, which were quickly transformed into a sea of purple, pink and yellow colours, as revellers pounded one another with bag after bag of colour.

Holding discussion group sessions is an important part of the Society activities. Two sessions are held on Thursdays to meet the increasing demand. The first class has explored the "Basics of Hinduism", and discussed the commonly asked questions, such as 'Why does Hinduism have so many

Gods?', 'What is the Caste system?', 'Do Hindus have a Bible?' and 'Karma' etc.

The other class had explored the "Applications of Hinduism", which seek to use the teachings of Hinduism and apply them to contemporary situations. We began by discussing the Four Stages of Life, and then progressed to discussing the Four Goals of Life - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. For the remainder of the Semester, we discussed the indicators of Dharma - such as fortitude, forgiveness, non-stealing, truth, etc.

The essence of our discussion groups is that we do not try to impose any beliefs on any of the participants. We are quite fortunate to have a cross-section of the Hindu community present in our uni - including followers of Sai Baba, Chinmaya Mission, Ramakrishna Mission and Hare Krishna, and their differing perspectives greatly enrich our discussions. Nor do we foster blind-belief. On the contrary, we do not accept anything until and unless we have discussed, intellectualised and understood it completely. This culture has fostered very fruitful discussions, where participants have derived a lot of benefit. The weekly *satsangh* is the highlight of many.

Ram Naumi was celebrated on 26th May. Shree Gopalji from the Chinmaya Mission performed puja and gave us a talk on Lord Ram. We then sung bhajans of Lord Rama, with the accompaniment of tabla and bells. The highlight of the night was the 1-hour play spectacular on *The Ramayana* play, featuring a cast of over 15 people. We added our own little touch, including songs from Bollywood movies, and a fight scene between Lakshman and Indrajit on par with *The Matrix*.

In light of our experiences, it is simply unbelievable as to how a religion as rich as Hinduism is being completely ignored and flicked-off by so many of today's youth, due to the perception that it is 'uncool' or 'out-of-date'. In reality, it is a religion that not only envisages every conceivable problem in our lives, and provides the solution for it. It gives us a goal, to hold on to - which prevents us from being swept away by the inevitable turbulences of our life. How can we simply ignore this resource?

The good news is that the resurgence of Hinduism amongst youth has only just started in Sydney. USYD HinduSoc was the first university Hindu society of its kind, but there has since been one started up in UTS - called UTSAAHA - which is also travelling along very well. UNSW will also have one started up by Semester 2 - called Pragathi. As for USYD HinduSoc, Semester 2 holds another field of

activity. Janmashtami, Diwali and Ganesh Chaturthi are just a few of the festivals planned, along with numerous Interfaith Conferences, Hinduism Awareness Week, and various other events.

There are virtually infinite amount of activities that we can do. Ultimately, it is one underlying ethos that continues to motivate us, and has not disappointed us so far:

"If the cause is noble, and the motive is pure, then It will happen."

* * *

Young Ambassadors of Hinduism

Virendra Patel

The Sydney Church of England Grammar School invited BAPS (Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha) to deliver a talk on Hinduism to their V-form (year 11) students on 4th May, 2005.

This school was established in 1889 and is regarded as one of the oldest and most prestigious schools not only in Sydney but in whole of Australia. The students at this school come from predominantly Anglo Christian background and belong to families from upper strata of the society like businessmen, political leaders, entertainers etc.

After being advised by few members of the Hindu Council of Australia and having looked at the information on BAPS web page, Rev Matthew Gray decided to request BAPS to send someone to conduct a seminar on Hinduism.

The highly skilled BAPS youth wing took up the challenge. Three young men Kunal, Vivek and Mayank prepared and presented the topic in such a professional manner that everyone present was impressed by the format and depth of their knowledge about Hinduism. The format of presentation was designed to make it easier for a non-Hindu to understand the richness of Hindu heritage and what it has to offer to the world. The topics included various aspects of Hinduism like its origin, its beliefs and their impact on individuals, society and the world.

The school was expecting to see some middle or old aged person. When these BAPS youth representatives turned up at the school, the hosts were surprised to see three young men. As the actual presentation progressed their surprise turned into admiration. The young representatives not only presented Hinduism in its rightful format but were also able to

satisfy the curiosity of their hosts by answering all follow up questions.

The feedback received from Rev Gray indicated that he was very pleased by the presentation and reflected his admiration for the young presenters.

BAPS youth wing has proved that they are capable of presenting Hinduism in its right perspective on any platform in an absolutely professional manner. They are among the true ambassadors of Hinduism and the Indian community.

Congratulations to BAPS youth wing and especially to those three young men who made us all proud.

* * *

Arya Pratinidhi Sabah of Australia

Arya Pratinidhi Sabah of Australia (APSA) is located at the Arya Samaj Centre, 69 Shane Park Road, Shanes Park (near St Marys). It owns five acres of land, consisting of a big hall, a kitchen with cooking and dining facilities. A big play ground also exists.

There are regular Sunday activities based on the Hindu Vedic philosophy.

The following 7 Samaj of different regions are affiliated to APSA:

- North-West Arya Samaj Ph. 9896 2538
- Sydney Arya Samaj Ph. 9825 3827
- Hill District Arya Samaj Ph 9837 5469
- Liverpool Arya Samaj Ph 9721 1151
- Central Arya Samaj Ph 9702 1245
- Gosford Arya Samaj Ph. 0419 258 066
- Victoria Arya Samaj Ph. 9786 8284

The center opens at 8.30 am till 1.30 pm on every Sunday. For booking, contact Mr C.S Gupta on 9625 8220. For more information, contact Mrs Kanta Lamba on 9837 5469 or Mr Pramodh Rai on 9622 6222 .

* * * * *

Planning for Interfaith Forum

Are you interested in connecting with people from different faith groups? Do you want to help create an important event to promote tolerance, understanding and respect within Melbourne's community?

An Interfaith Forum in Melbourne will be held on Saturday, 22 Oct 05. Contact Elizabeth Young at emyoung19@hotmail.com (03) 9529 3285 (ah).