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*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः ॐ

May Everybody Be Happy

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**NEWS LETTER**

Vol.4 Oct - Dec 2005

Dear Friends,

Last few months have been quite hectic. There are a number of activities to report to you.

#### **Victorian Branch of Hindu Council**

On 10 July, I had a meeting in Melbourne with the representatives of a number of Hindu Associations for organising a Victorian branch of the Hindu Council for better coordinating the activities of various Hindu associations for a unified representation on major issues for all Hindus in Victoria. The meeting was well attended and Rev Aniruddah Das of ISCON was elected to coordinate the activities of the State Branch.

#### **Tirumala Hills Protest**

A Christian group in India has sought permission to build a church at the sacred Tirumala Hills, the abode of Lord Venkateshwara. We wrote letters of protest to the Indian Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh emphasising the historic significance of the sacred site. The building of a church on the same spot is nothing but a blatant attack on the sanctity of centuries old Hindu site/s. It is nothing else but harassment and destruction of the Hindu traditions by the proselytizing churches and their elements that are out to destroy all other beliefs and make the Hindus a smaller or non-existent community in India

#### **Derogatory Portrayal of Hindu Deities**

The DNA Magazine on the front cover of its July 2005 issue published the picture of a male model wearing underwear with the picture of Goddess Laxmi. Hindu Council protested to the editor of the magazine to remove the picture and to apologise to the Hindu community for the derogatory portrayal of Hindu Deities. We are pleased to inform that the Editor published the unconditional apology (printed elsewhere) on its website along with

covering the offending picture by a "Censored" sign.

It is heartening to note that while our protests have had the desired effect here in Australia and similarly in Europe, where Lord Rama's picture was printed on shoes, we find it distressing to say that our repeated protests to the editor of the Times of India for publishing the derogatory picture of Lord Shiva in the online issue of the Times of India were completely ignored. What's going on in the name of secularism in India is a sad story for the Hindu majority.

#### **Inter-faith Activities**

One of the most important functions of the Hindu Council is to represent the Hindu faith in the inter-faith meetings and to take part in the multicultural activities in Australia. Mr Vijai Singhal represented the Hindu Council in the meeting called by the federal Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs on 13 July 2005 to discuss a number of issues relating to religious diversity and community harmony in view of the increasing threat of terrorism.

Mr Singhal also spoke on the topic:

*Reconciling my faith with being an Australian* at the multifaith meeting organised by The World Conference of Religions for Peace (NSW) at the Shalom Institute, University of New South Wales campus on 7<sup>th</sup> Sept. 05. Copy of his talk is reproduced elsewhere. Note a strong statement being made against the practice of proselytisation.

#### **Hurricane Katrina**

This year began with the worst natural disaster when tsunami hit the countries of the Asia Pacific region. Now it is hurricane Katrina, which has caused a large-scale destruction in the United States itself. The Hindu Council of Australia extends its sympathy to the victims and their families and encourages people to make donations to the Sewa International

USA, who have been active in providing help to the hurricane victims.

The Indian Government has been one of the first to extend help to the US Government to evacuate and help the victims of the hurricane. Sewa International and Hindu Swamsewak Sangh have been very active in extending help to the victims of the hurricane.

### **Deepavali 2005**

The executive committee is very busy organising the annual Deepavali fair in Sydney on 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct and at the federal Parliament House in Canberra on 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 2005 as reported in the previous issue. All are invited to attend these functions.

I wish you all a very happy and prosperous Deepavali,

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam  
Chairman

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### **APOLOGY TO THE HINDU COMMUNITY**

DNA magazine would like to sincerely apologise to the Hindu community for any offence caused by the image on our latest cover. We would like to state very clearly that it was not our deliberate intention to cause offence, antagonize or show disrespect to people of the Hindu faith. We were unaware that the garment portrayed a specific Hindu deity, for which we apologize. We deeply respect everyone's right to practice his or her religion and will be more aware of this issue in future.

Andrew Creagh  
Editor, DNA magazine

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### **Reconciling my faith with being an Australian**

I am a proud Australian Hindu. I chose to come to Australia 30 years back as a migrant to live a better life for my family and myself. Why I chose Australia? Because it was a land of plenty, offering great opportunities for personal growth. It had abandoned its "White-only" policy and was ready to accept people of Asian origin to its shores and offer equal opportunities to all. I took my chance and I must say at the outset that I have not regretted it. I came here with very little material possessions, but with education, for which I am indebted to my parents and my country of birth, where education is valued and a will to work hard. It has paid off. After 30 years I look back with some sense of satisfaction. I have been able to give best education to my

daughters, two of them are doctors. They are married and well settled and the third one, is not doing badly either in the finance industry. I have just retired after 12 years service in the private sector and 18 years in the public sector.

By and large I have found the Australians as very friendly people. Mateship and fair go are part of strong social ethics. Australians are fun-loving people, who love sport. When I came here in November of 1974, I found the job within a couple of weeks. My boss took me to the Bank Manager and got my Bank account opened, a colleague helped me find a unit to rent. On my first Christmas in Australia, I was invited by another colleague to join him and his family for my first Christmas dinner with his parents-in-law. It was a very nice gesture. That friendship is still alive and we meet twice a year for lunch.

Australia is one of the best countries in the world. It has beautiful climate and now has a multicultural society in which people of some 200 different nationalities of origin live in relative harmony and peace. It provides equal opportunities to all. People are not discriminated on any grounds. They have freedom to practice their own faith. 30 years back there was no Hindu Temple. We used to hire a hall on various festivals and for prayer meetings. Then in 1980 we bought an old Church building and established the first Hindu Temple in Australia, in Sydney suburb of Auburn. Now there are a number of properly constructed temples in almost all the States in Australia. There are a number of beautiful Temple buildings in Sydney itself. Not only people of Indian heritage visit these temples but a sizeable number of people of other European heritage also visit them regularly to appreciate the beautiful architecture of these temples, to enjoy the serene surroundings and to enjoy Indian food. We celebrate major festivals by organising Fairs. Deepavali, the festival of lights is one of the most widely celebrated festivals of Hindus.

The Hindu Council has been organising the big fair in Sydney every year for the past 5-6 years, over 20,000 people attend the fair last year. Deepavali has also been celebrated in the federal as well as in the State Parliament House of NSW.



Mr Vijai Singhal  
addressing the  
multifaith group at  
the Shalom Institute,  
University of NSW

So, as an Australian Hindu, I am proud to be an Australian, because it has given me all the opportunities and freedom that I need and at the same time I am proud to be a Hindu, because it is the oldest and most tolerant of all religions. As Hindus we are taught to respect all religions. We bow down to the prophets of all religions.

Our Scriptures tell us: *Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti* Truth is one, the wise call it by many names.

We believe in pluralism, that's why we have so many Gods. In fact, our scriptures tell us that God resides in every one of us. Every one of us is potentially divine and not a sinner. Our aim in life is to realise that divinity within. Once we are able to do that we become Godlike. We overcome our weaknesses. We commit sins only because of our ignorance of our true nature. Hindus don't believe in proselytization, because it is against the spirit of multi-faith, and multi-culturism. It does not show respect to other religions. We feel very strongly that non-proselytization is the only way to have peace amongst the followers of various different religions.

I would like to end my talk with a universal prayer from our Scriptures:

*Aum sarve bhavantu sukhinah.  
Sarve santu niramayah.  
Sarve bhadhrani pashyant.  
Maa kaschid dukh bhaagbhavet.*

May all beings be happy.  
May all beings be healthy.  
May all beings experience prosperity.  
May none in the world suffer.

Om Shanti! Shanti! Shanti.  
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

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### **Sydney University Hindu Society**

Neeraj Aggarwal

The last few months have been particularly eventful for Hindu youth from various youth groups around Sydney. With the onset of the Hindu festival season, many youth have been actively engaged in organising and celebrating events to express their devotion. The highlight was certainly the Ganesh Utsav festival held on 17<sup>th</sup> September at the State Sports Centre, which involved a strong band of youth in organising and performing the events that took place. There was also a much heavier role of youth in the massive Ganesh Visarjan at Helensburgh Temple, which was held on 11<sup>th</sup>

September. These events have clearly shown that Hindu youth are increasingly willing to undertake more responsibility in organising major Hindu events, and full credit must also be given to elders for reposing such trust and empowering youth in this manner. The Sydney University Hindu Society also celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi for the first time ever, by moulding their own little Ganeshji's out of clay! In the process of moulding Ganeshjis, students were explained the symbolism of Lord Ganesha, and how it may relate to their lives.

The festival season has only just begun. Navaratri and Diwali, are just around the corner.

Swami Tejomayananda has said that the theme of the entire Vedas is reflected in the nine days of the Navaratri festival: in the first three days, Goddess Durga removes impurities and negativities from the mind, in the next three days Goddess Lakshmi bestows noble values and qualities and in the final three days, Goddess Saraswati gives the spiritual knowledge to gain knowledge of the Self. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day, when dandia and garbha dances are performed, it symbolises our spiritual awakening. That puts a rather interesting perspective on some otherwise innocent fun!

As always, there is a plethora of activity being undertaken by all the Hindu youth groups around Sydney. They cater for all different levels of interest in Hinduism, ranging from event organisation, to discussion groups, to *bhajans* and community service.

Hopefully, by the time the next newsletter comes around, the Hindu Youth Council would have put together a resource on its website with details and links of all Hindu youth organisations in Sydney.

Until then, happy *Navaratri!*

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### **Indian Aid to US for Hurricane Katrina Disaster**

Disaster is a great leveller. In a reversal of usual roles following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, India has offered a comprehensive assistance package to the US. The offer was formally communicated to the White House by Indian ambassador to the US, Ronen Sen, on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 05.

Tapping into its experience in combating large scale disasters, India's three-pronged package

attempts to export a combination of materials and expertise. Apart from a US\$5 million contribution to the American Red Cross, India has offered to fly across Army medical teams to New Orleans. Army, rather than civilian, relief teams are being offered keeping in view the worsening law and order situation in the city.

As a leading producer of bulk drugs, India is sending across a large consignment of medicines.

After attending to numerous large-scale disasters, including last December's tsunami and last month's Mumbai flooding, India now has acquired considerable expertise in combating such large-scale disasters.

### **Sewa International Organises Relief for Hurricane Katrina Victims**

Sewa International, a charitable organisation, expresses deep anguish and sorrow at the loss and disruption of life and the property damage caused by hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Sewa volunteers in Texas and Louisiana have begun working with American Red Cross and other organisations to provide immediate relief. Sewa International urges individuals, companies and organisations to donate in order to provide assistance to those who have suffered from Katrina. All donations will be used to sponsor projects such as providing materials and building (or rebuilding) homes.

According to press reports, 100,000 Hurricane Katrina refugees are lodged in hotels and motels in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia and adjacent states. Most of these hotels and motels are owned by Indians.

### **Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA Providing Refugee Relief**

HOUSTON, TEXAS, September 5, 2005: The Houston Chapter of Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA, Inc. ("HSS"), continues to work toward assisting evacuees affected by Hurricane Katrina. With its citywide presence, HSS has been able to offer support to several shelters located away from the Astrodome. HSS branches in Clear Lake, Pearland, and Katy have contributed supplies and volunteers to shelters there. Dr. Vijay Koli, National President AAPI, Dr. Jayesh Shah and Dr. Venkat Srinivasan are in the forefront in providing medical services. Dr. Malathi Koli has started the counselling services to the victims. The whole Indian community has been mobilised with the Hindu Temple of San

Antonio's help to give the relief to these victims on a continuous basis for next few months."

### **Shri Shiva Mandir, Minto**

Located at 201 Eagleview Road, Minto, serves the multilingual Hindu community.

#### **Daily**

Temple hours 8 - 11 am and 5 - 8 pm  
Abhishekham and Pooja at 9 am and 7 pm.  
Special Poojas sponsored by devotees

#### **Weekly**

Friday Bhajans 7:30 – 8:00 pm

#### **Monthly**

2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday	Jalaram Baba Bhajans	3 – 4 pm
1 <sup>st</sup> Saturday	Jain Samaj	4 – 5 pm
4 <sup>th</sup> Saturday	Sai Bhajans	4 – 5 pm
Full Moon Day	Sathya Narayan Pooja	7:30 pm

### **Food Stall and Building Projects**

Saturdays & Sundays 10 am – 2 pm  
Serving Masala Dosai, other delicacies, tea and coffee. All proceeds go to fund the construction of boundary wall.

For further details about Mandir activities, contact the Mandir priest on 02 9820 1094.

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### **Arya Pratinidhi Sabah of Australia**

As reported in the last Newsletter, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabah conducts regular Sunday activities at Arya Samaj Centre, 69 Shane Park Road, Shane Park starting with Yoga classes at 9 am, *Yaj* at 10 am, Hindi classes at 11 am followed by a free vegetarian lunch. All are invited to join in. They plan to develop the 5 acre property with a play ground and a cultural centre for all to benefit from.

Some of the forth coming events are:

25 Sept. Address by Dr Pranav Pandaya of Gayatari Parivar about Ashwamedha Yaj

23 Oct. Hawan at the Deepavali Fair

29 Oct Diwali celebrations at Arya Samaj Centre

5 Nov. Fund raising function at the Centre

26 Nov a Gazal Night

For further enquires please contact Mrs Kanta Lamba on 9837 5469.

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