



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

www.hinducouncil.com.au

NEWS LETTER

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Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to inform you that the Hindu Council of Australia is recognised by the Australian Federal and State Governments and other statutory bodies as the main national organisation representing the Australian Hindus. We are being contacted regularly by various organisations and representatives in matters affecting the Hindu community living in Australia. This is in fact one of the main functions of the Hindu Council of Australia.

Inter-faith Activities

As I have mentioned in previous issues, 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 and the Australasia region.

Regional Interfaith Co-operation for Peace, Development and Dignity

I have recently returned from Cebu, Philippines after attending the Regional Interfaith Co-operation meeting for Peace, Development and Dignity on the invitation of Hon. Alexander Downer, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs. It has been a very rewarding experience and an honour to represent the Hindu community in this prestigious conference, where over 170 delegates from 15 different regional countries took part in the deliberations. A brief summary of the main recommendations of the conference are reproduced elsewhere in this Newsletter. Full details of my report on this conference can be read at our Hindu Council Website.

An Observance for Commonwealth Day 2006 in presence of Her Majesty The Queen

A special service was conducted on Monday, 13 March 2006 at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney in observance for the Commonwealth Day 2006 in the presence of Her Majesty The

Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh. Representing The Hindu Council, Mr Vijai Singhal attended the service and read one of the affirmations. The whole programme was televised by the ABC TV.

Following the service at the Cathedral, Mr Singhal was introduced as the gentleman representing the Hindu community in Australia by the Prime Minister Hon. John Howard to Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II at the reception held at Admiralty House, Kirribilli, Sydney.

World Conference of Religions For Peace

Mr Vijai Singhal also attended the meeting of multi-faith members on 8 March 2006 at the NSW Parliament House as the Hindu representative. The meeting was hosted by Hon. Andrew Tink MP

Community Harmony Reference Group, Ryde

Mr Vijai Singhal attended the Multi-Faith Sub-Committee meeting on 7 Feb 2006 at the Argyle Centre, Ryde NSW. This Group organised a community Harmony festival on 11 March 2006 at Ryde Public School. The Group is planning to organise the International Day of Tolerance on 16 November 2006.

Women's Interfaith Network

Mrs Saroj Arora and Mrs Kanta Lamba attended the Women's Interfaith Network meetings in the Western region of Sydney, as representatives of the Hindu faith. The group meets once a month.

Hindu Council AGM

The Annual General body Meeting of the Hindu Council was held on 10th March 2006. All executive positions were declared vacant and the nominations had been invited from the eligible members of the Council. The following persons were declared elected unanimously for a period of three years as per the Constitution of the Hindu Council:

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam	Chairman
Mr Surinder Jain	Vice Chairman
Mr Vijai Singhal	Secretary
Mr Ashwani Sharma	Joint Secretary
Mr N. Mahadeva	Treasurer

Joint Holi Mela Celebrations

Hindu Council participated with the Holi Sabha of Australia to celebrate the Holi Mela jointly in Sydney with other Hindu organisations on 19 March 2006 at the Fairfield Show Ground. The Mela was a grand success with over seven thousand people taking part in the daylong celebrations. His Excellency P. P. Shukla, the Indian High Commissioner was the Chief Guest. A number of other dignitaries and politicians also graced the occasion.

Hindu Council is proclaimed as Recognised Denomination to nominate Marriage Celebrants

The Hindu Council was proclaimed by the Governor-General as a recognised denomination on 2 March 2006. This proclamation enables the Council to nominate ministers of religion (priests) directly to the State and Territory Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages for authorisation as marriage celebrants to serve their congregations.

Derogatory Portrayal of Hindu Deities

In the last issue of the Newsletter we had reported about the publication of a book of paintings showing Hindu Gods and Goddesses in the nude and indulging in sexual acts by the famous Indian artist, MF Hussain. Lots of protests have been organised against MF Hussain in India and abroad. We wrote letters of protest to the various authorities in India supporting the move to censor Mr Hussain by the Sanatan Sanstha.

To add fuel to fire, the Bombay Art Society had decided to award the prestigious Roodhara Award on 2 February 2006 to MF Hussain. We wrote to the Governor of Maharashtra protesting against that award. We have been informed by the Sanatan Sanstha that ceremony was cancelled due to overwhelming protests received by the Authorities.

We have also learnt that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad filed a petition in the local court at Meerut on March 20 alleging that the artist had portrayed Hindu gods and goddesses in an "objectionable" manner in his paintings. The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate AK Pathak found artist MF Hussain guilty of tampering with the feelings of the Hindu community and asked police to register a case against him.

Cartoon depicting Hon John Howard's face replacing that of Nataraja

On the eve of the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard's visit to India, the Sun Herald published a cartoon on 5th March 2006 replacing the head of Nataraja by that of the Prime Minister. I wrote a strong letter of protest to the Editor against the derogatory portrayal of Hindu deity. The Editor responded by saying that the publication did not mean to denigrate the Hindu community in any way and tried to justify the publication under the freedom of expression enjoyed by the Press.

We have taken up the matter further with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission protesting against the misuse of this so-called freedom of expression. The Muslim community had recently protested very violently against the publication of a cartoon of Prophet Mohamed. We continue to use peaceful means to register our protest.

Picture of Lord Ganesha on Underwear

Dr Dinesh Sharma of Melbourne reported that he saw the underwears carrying picture of Lord Ganesha being sold in the Myre's store. He straight away met with the Manager of the store and complained to him and was successful in getting the item removed from the sale. All self-respecting Hindus need to be vigilant in such matters and bring any such incidences to the Hindu Council's notice to make protest. Well done Dr Dinash Sharma!

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Satguru visited Sydney early in January. The Hindu Council along with the Sri Venkateshwara Temple Society had invited him to address the members on 26 January at 3 PM at Sri Venkateshwara Temple in Helensburgh.

A welcome program of devotional songs and dances by select artists was organised to welcome Satguru Bodhinatha, who was accompanied by Pramacharya Palani Swami and Sadhaka Dandapani. Special welcome speech was given by Sri Vasudevacharya in Sanskrit, which was followed by the welcome address by myself highlighting the historical links with the Kauai Aadheenam in Hawaii and the Hindu Council of Australia.

Satguru Bodhinatha gave a very inspiring talk on the relevance of Hinduism in the present day environment. Vote of thanks was delivered by Mr Vijai Singhal. Full text of his speech can be accessed at the revamped Hindu Council Website: www.hinducouncil.com.au, which was launched on the same day, being a day

having added significance of being both the Australia Day and India's Republic Day. I like to thank Mr Ashwani Arora and his wife Mrs Aparna Arora for their help in designing and hosting the website and Mr Vijai Singhal for providing the contents.

Our activities are increasing and we are getting busier. We can do with help from fellow member associations. Please do keep in touch with us and help us to expand our activities further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam
Chairman

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DECLARATION OF THE CEBU DIALOGUE ON REGIONAL INTERFAITH COOPERATION FOR PEACE, DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN DIGNITY

We, the participants in the Cebu Dialogue on Regional Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, Development and Human Dignity from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam, gathered in Cebu, Philippines on 14-16 March 2006.

We acknowledge:

- the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the promotion of regional peace and security
- the contribution of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the promotion of regional social and economic development and in upholding the principle of the inviolability of human dignity
- the crucial role of education in promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation
- the influence of the media on interfaith and intercultural understanding,

We welcome the statement made by Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation for regional peace and development and supporting the President's view that faith is a primordial need in the human condition offering hope, confidence, courage, and the commitment to lead a good life on which the family, society, and civilization are based,

We welcome the commitment to the regional interfaith dialogue process expressed by the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand, Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, Philippine Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus G. Dureza, Hon. Andrew Robb, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Australia, and Indonesian Foreign Minister Dr. N. Hassan Wirajuda, represented by Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Mangasi Sihombing.

We hereby declare that:

- We will hold local, national, and regional forums to build knowledge, respect, and understanding and to

provide opportunities for dialogue, thereby deepening relationships and friendships among faith communities and enhancing capacity for interfaith cooperation.

- We call on governments to uphold freedom of religion and belief in ways that will encourage interfaith dialogue.
- We call for increased interaction and partnership between governments and religious communities in addressing violence and all forms of terror and in working for peace, development, and human dignity.
- We call on religious groups to recognize pluralism, multiculturalism, and peace education and develop openness, and respect for other faiths, traditions, and cultures; to develop internal mechanisms and resources for responding to violence and intolerance against other ethnic and religious communities; and to be sensitive to the complexities of proselytization, respect all belief systems, and discourage proselytization through inducements.
- We will undertake cooperative efforts to assist one another in times of natural disasters.
- We encourage future interfaith dialogues to focus on programs of practical action, with due respect to those previous interfaith dialogues which focused more on the philosophical aspects of religions, and which have been able to minimize the stereotypical misunderstanding among various groups.
- We will promote interfaith dialogue at the grassroots level to serve as an instrument to promote sustainable livelihoods and community cohesiveness or unity, thus, becoming the basis of civil society to promote the democratization process.
- We encourage governments involved in interfaith dialogues to establish a mechanism for institutional policies and all relevant enabling guidelines to promote and protect human life, dignity, social justice, and the integrity of all creation and call on participants to acknowledge and support the goals and objectives of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
- We call on participants of the Yogyakarta Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation held on 6-7 December 2004 and the Cebu Dialogue on Regional Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, Development, and Human Dignity held on 14-16 March 2006 to support the development of the Yogyakarta International Center for Religious and Cultural Cooperation and the other initiatives included in the Cebu Declaration.
- We will work for the inclusion of values-based interfaith education in the curriculum at all levels, including post-graduate studies, the appropriate training and preparation of teaching professionals, the use of experiential and holistic teaching-learning methods, and the provision of quality resources, towards the goal of interfaith understanding and cooperation.
- We will undertake non-formal educational activities that will bring together youth and adults from diverse faith and cultural backgrounds.
- We support practical initiatives at the regional and national levels by governments, faith communities, and the media to enable and encourage the media to increase their contribution in the achievement of interfaith and intercultural understanding and

cooperation for peace, development and human dignity.

- We call for the development and provision of training for media managers, journalists and journalism students on religious and cultural diversity, in partnership with interfaith experts and national and international media organizations; and encourage the development and review of codes of conduct and standards for the exercise of media freedom with responsibility; and support the establishment and strengthening of processes of dialogue among media executives, journalism trainers and religious and interfaith leaders.

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Hindu Chaplain appointed by the Flinders University, SA

For the first time in Australia Mr Carl Vadivella Belle has been appointed as Hindu Chaplain by the Flinders University in South Australia. It is a voluntary position. The work consists of assisting Hindu students at Flinder University and participating in interfaith dialogue and educational forums.

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State Library collection

Copies of all previous Deepavali souvenirs are available in the serial section of the State Library of NSW.

Also "Let's Know Hinduism" book published by the Hindu Council of Australia has been included in their collection of religious books.

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International President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad is visiting Sydney

Shri Ashok Singhal, International President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad is visiting Sydney.

A general meeting has been organised on Saturday, 13 May, 2006 at 4:30 P.M. at Pennant Hills Community Hall (Library Building), Corner of Ramsay Street and Yarrara Road, Pennant Hills. All are cordially invited to attend a very informative meeting.

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JESUS PRACTISED YOGA

The three wise men who came to worship the Christ child hailed from India and named him *Isa*, or "Lord" in Sanskrit - a name that became Jesus in Bible.

Later, Jesus travelled to India, where he practiced yoga and meditation with the great sages some time during his "lost years" from age 13 to 30, a time of his life scarcely mentioned in Bible.

This is the assertion contained in a newly published book by the renowned Indian Guru, the late Paramhansa Yogananda. The book is being praised as the first detailed interpretation of the four Gospels by a Hindu.

Compiled from decades of Yogananda's speeches and writings, the book is being published by his Los Angeles-based Self-Realisation.

The second Coming of Christ: The resurrection of Christ Within You, offers startling ideas about the deeper meaning of Jesus's teachings and their essential unity with yoga. At 1642 pages, the intricate discourse on various Gospel passages is not expected to be a best seller. But scholars have praised it as a groundbreaking work.

Prof. Robert Ellwood, from University of Southern California and a world religion expert, called it a "bridge-building book" that could change the way people see Jesus.

Los Angeles Times

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India

"If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow - in some parts a very paradise on earth - I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant - I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life - again I should point to India."

Prof. Max Müller (1823 -1900)

Study of Upanishads

"In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life--it will be the solace of my death."

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860),