

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

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## NEWS LETTER

Vol.2 March 2005

Dear Friends,

We are encouraged by the positive response we received from a number of our members to the issue of our first Newsletter. Thank you very much for that.

In this issue we have included the list of all our current member associations for your information and have also included the news from a number of members to be shared around with all the members. We would like to hear from other members too and would like to see that it becomes a useful forum to share information amongst all the different Hindu Societies in Australia.

### **National Day of Mourning for Tsunami Victims**

Prime Minister, Hon. John Howard called Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2005 as the National Day of Mourning for the tsunami victims. All State Governments celebrated that by having multi-faith prayers and floating the wreaths in the ocean.

In NSW, Hon. Bob Carr invited a very small number of VIPs and representatives of different faiths. I represented the Hindu Council. It was a solemn and dignified ceremony at The Bondi Surf Club at Bondi beach. There were Government representative of India, Sri Lanka, Thailand & Indonesia and Local MP. Malcolm Turnbull were present. At 12 Noon wreaths were laid in the Sea of Bondi beach, with the sounding of a loud siren.

Ceremony at the North Wollongong Surf Club was attended by Dr P. Cugati on behalf of the Hindu Council and Sri Venkateswara Temple Association.

Similar ceremony was conducted at the City Beach in Perth, WA. Mr Atul Garg, President of the Hindu Association of Western Australia represented the Hindu community and the young Priest, Sankaran Sivacharyar Subba Battar chanted the Hindu Prayers.

### **Tsunami Donations**

Almost all the Hindu/Indian Associations have collected donations and have passed them on to appropriate charitable Institutions, which is good. However, there are two points that I would like to make about this.

1. Had we organised and combined all the individual efforts, we could have got a substantial amount collected. That would have looked more impressive contribution contributed by the Hindu community. As they say, we should not only be doing good but also appear to be doing good, so that we get appropriate recognition in the overall Australian community.

2. Most of the funds collected have been channelled through the registered Institutions, like the World Vision and Red Cross etc for getting tax-deductibility for the donations. Many of these organisations are Christian organisations and to their credit are very well organised and are doing a good work. However, there are reports that some of the Christian organisations are also engaged in converting the affected people to Christianity, which is not good.

There are a number of reputable Indian/Hindu organisations like the SEWA International and the Ramakrishna Mission etc which are providing help to people affected by the Tsunami disaster. But because the donations to these organisations are not tax-deductible in Australia, they are not getting enough funds collected to support their efforts on the ground. We need to help these Institutions as much as possible in their charitable activities.

### **Deepavali 2005**

Actual Deepavali this year falls on 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. 05. We have booked the venue for Deepavali Fair on Sunday, 23 Oct. 05 at the Sydney Olympic Park Athletic Centre and at the Federal Parliament House, Canberra on Sunday 6 Nov. 05. Please make a note of these dates in your

diaries. We are negotiating with other Hindu / Indian Associations to come and join with the Hindu Council for these functions so as to have a bigger impact on the general community. Towards that aim, the Hindu Council has joined with other Hindu Associations for the celebration of Holi Mela at Parramatta Park on 27 March 2005, to have a big gathering on that occasion. We feel that it is absolutely important that for major functions, we should all come together and celebrate so as to have a bigger impact on the general Australian Community.

### UNESCO Conference

Following up with the multi-faith conference in Indonesia, UNESCO and the International Outlook is organising a world wide conference on *Religion in Peace and Conflict* in Melbourne on April 12-14, 2005.

The object of the conference is to facilitate an exchange on regional challenges to religious harmony and maintaining cohesive and tolerant multicultural societies. Addressing the relationship of religion and conflict and the role of governments and faith communities in preventing violence and overcoming division, it will provide a valuable opportunity for sharing experiences and examining best practice. Sessions will address the role of religion in conflict; delineating government and civil society capacities; best-case examples of preventing and overcoming conflict; and strengthening social cohesion in pluralist societies.

Hindu Council of Australia has been invited to attend. I am forwarding the details of the conference separately to all the members. If any member organisation is interested to participate please let me know as soon as possible. Unfortunately, we cannot provide any financial assistance towards the cost, which will have to be borne by the participants themselves. I will also be interested to get your views on the proposed topics so that I can incorporate them in presenting the Hindu perspective. I will be attending the conference on my own expenses.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With regards and best wishes,

Dr. A. Balasubramaniam  
Chairman

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### Abortion - The Hindu View

Hindu medical ethics stem from the principle of *ahimsa* or non-violence. Hindus believe that all life is sacred because all living creatures are manifestations of the Supreme Being.

The Hindu practice of non-violence is connected to a belief in reincarnation: the repeated re-embodiment of souls in different species of life. The *karma* generated in one's present life determines whether one enjoys a higher or suffers a lower existence in the next reincarnation. All souls are evolving and progressing towards union with God. The individual soul reincarnates evolving through many births and deaths, until all the karmic results, good and bad, are resolved.

Hinduism teaches that abortion, like any other act of violence, thwarts a soul in its progress toward God. Hindu Scriptures and tradition have from the earliest of times condemned the practice of abortion. Hinduism teaches that the foetus is a living, conscious person needing and deserving protection. Hindu Scriptures refer to abortion as killing in the womb and the killing of the undeveloped soul. The Hindu Scriptures condemn abortion a hymn in the *Rig Veda* begs for the protection of foetuses. The *Kaushitaki* Upanishad draws a parallel between abortion and the killing of one's parents. The *Atharva Veda* remarks that the foetus slayer is among the greatest of sinners.

The soul and the matter, which forms the foetus, are considered by many Hindus to be joined together from conception. According to the doctrine of reincarnation a foetus is not developing into a person, but is a person from a very early stage. It contains a reborn soul and should be treated appropriately.

In modern times, India's greatest apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi has written. "It seems to me clear as daylight that abortion would be a crime". Other modern Hindu religious leaders have said that the killing of a foetus is an act that has serious *karmic* repercussions.

Traditional Hinduism and many modern Hindus also see abortion as a breach of the duty to produce children in order to continue the family and produce new members of society.

Views submitted by Dr. A. Balasubramaniam on behalf of the Hindu Council of Australia Ltd. at the multi-faith forum organised by the Foundation for Human Development.

## Member Associations

Following is the list of current member Associations of the Hindu Council of Australia Ltd :

1. Sri Venkateswara Temple, Helensburgh, NSW
2. Shri Shiva Mandir, Minto, NSW
3. Vishwa Hindu Parishad of Australia, Riverview, NSW
4. Sewa International, Cabramatta, NSW
5. Hare Krishna Temple, North Sydney, NSW
6. Brahma Kumari Yoga Centre, Ashfield, NSW
7. Bhraham Vidhya, Stanwell Park, NSW
8. BAPS Pty Ltd (Shree Swaminarayan Mandir), Rosehill, NSW
9. Arya Pritinidhi Sabha Australia, Quakers Hill, NSW
10. Hindu Temple & Cultural Centre, Flynn, ACT
11. The Melbourne Vanayagar Hindu Sangam, The Basin, VIC
12. Hindu Ahlaya Sangam Queensland Inc., Middle Park, QLD
13. Hindu Society of South Australia, Oaklands Park, SA
14. Hindu Society of Northern Territory, Wulagi, NT
15. Hindu Association of Western Australia (Inc), Winthrop, WA

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## Members' Activities

### Hindu Society of South Australia

The Society was established in Adelaide on August 10, 1985 with the following objectives:

- a) To preserve and foster Hindu way of life, philosophy and practices;
- b) To provide facilities for promotion and understanding of Hinduism;
- c) To establish an Educational Foundation for teaching of Hindu philosophy, culture, Indian arts and languages and other related subjects, and
- d) To establish such other foundations providing for charity, social welfare etc.

The Society includes members of Hindu faith from a number of countries including India, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa and the UK and that is reflected in the composition of the Executive Committee itself.

The Society's major achievement was the establishment of a Hindu Temple in 1986. The Temple has shrines for major Hindu Deities

from different regions. A number of festivals are celebrated through out the year.

Activities at the Temple include spiritual, social, religious and educational activities. Monthly Gita lectures are conducted by Ramakrishna Mission Swamiji from Sydney. Regular Vedanta Society and Hindu Samaj meetings, Bhajans, Yoga sessions and special programmes for seniors, language school and dance classes are also held.

Fund-raising dinner was organised to help victims of recent Tsunami and South Australia Bushfire, which was attended by the State Premier including other community leaders.

Mr Siva Selvakulingam is the President and Mr Lakshmi Pathi is the current Secretary. Contact Phone No. (08) 8344 9175.

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### Hindu Society of Northern Territory

The Hindu Society of NT was incorporated in 1988. The Ganesha temple was built on an acre of land granted by the NT Government. The Kumbavisagam was performed in 1993. There is only one temple in Darwin, catering for about 250 Hindus living in Darwin.

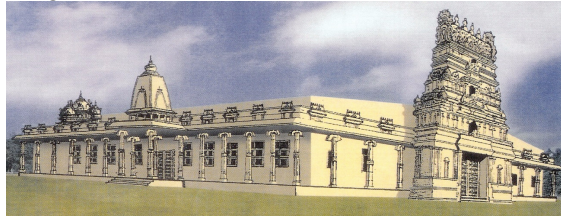
The Society has been running the **Children Saving Children** Programme for a number of years. The main aim of the programme is to raise funds to support the poor children of various countries including India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Cambodia etc. to provide for food, clothing, education and health.

The other important aspect of the programme is to instil in our children, who are growing in comparative privileged position of prosperity, a feeling of caring for the under-privileged poor children of the world by joining hands and collecting small amounts of money eg. 5 children contributing @ \$2 per week amounting to \$40 per month to sponsor a child through World Vision.

Every first Saturday of the month, children in Darwin meet to make decision as regard to the fund raising activities and details of the children to be sponsored etc. Currently 5 such groups are working, that includes some inter-state children groups as well. For further information, contact the President, Mr. Sabaratnam Prathapan at 0402 027 046 or the Secretary, Mr Rajeev Sharma at 08 - 8927 2259 (Home); 08 - 8946 6528 (Work).

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**The Hindu Association of Western Australia Inc** is the biggest Hindu Association in WA. The Association is building a new Temple which is due to be completed later this year. The Association is organising a fund-raising function, 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Food & Cultural fair on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2005. Mr Vijai Singhal, Secretary of Hindu Council who was visiting Perth, attended the Thai Pusam celebrations at the Temple and met with the President, Mr Atul Garg and other Executive members.



The proposed Hindu Centre in Perth

**SEWA International (Aust) Inc.** is presenting **"DURGA BAN GAI GOWRI"** – a musical extravaganza to raise funds for the Tsunami victims on Saturday, 19 March 2005 at Hurstville Entertainment Centre in Sydney. It is a popular play based on the original play by Sulabha Despande, with recorded songs by Asha Bhosle.

### Swastika Controversy

A lot of controversy about the use of the Swastika sign has emerged recently in Europe after the appearance of Prince Harry's picture wearing a Swastika armband to a fancy dress party. Hindu Council UK and the Hindu Youth in Europe are protesting against the attempts to ban the use of Swastika sign, due to its association with Hitler's use of the sign.

Swastika is the second most important Hindu symbol after ☸. Hindus have used it for over 5000 years. It is used in all Hindu *pujas* as an auspicious sign. Swastika is a Sanskrit word, composed of two words: 'Su' meaning 'good' and 'asti' meaning 'to exist'. So the combined meaning of the word is "Let the good prevail".

The Labour Member of the European Parliament, Robert Evans has called for a European campaign on the real history of the Swastika to highlight its importance to Europe's Hindus. "The Swastika was not invented by Hitler" said Robert Evans. "In fact, it has been used for over 3,000 years by many cultures, in particular the Hindu, Jain and Buddhist communities to represent life, sun, power, peace, strength and good luck." "Whilst of

course I understand why some MEPs are suggesting the Swastika should be banned, in reality this would have the effect of discriminating against Europe's one million plus Hindus and deprive them of their sacred symbol."

"The Swastika was adopted by Adolf Hitler's Nazis in 1920. It then became a symbol of all that is evil and was associated with the greatest crimes in the history of mankind." "I completely condemn its use for xenophobic, racial hatred or right wing purposes. However, what is needed now is tolerance and understanding. The Swastika in a different form is very important to millions of Hindus across Europe and the rest of the world." added Robert Evans. "Of course this issue has to be handled sensitively and I am very conscious of the anguish that the use of the Swastika causes to the Jewish Community, but for Hindus the Swastika is a religious sacrament, to express their devotion to God. In London I have seen it in many houses and in Hindu temples." "It must be possible to separate the evil of Hitler and his ideology from the Hindu symbol which actually means almost the opposite." concluded Mr Evans.

Nazis in fact distorted the Hindu symbol. The following pictures depict the two symbols:



Hindu Symbol



Nazi Symbol

"Swastika has been used for centuries by people far beyond India. The significance of Swastika is still prevalent today within Hinduism and other religions. Within Buddhism the Swastika means the 4 L's: Luck, Light, Love and Life. To the people of Mexico and Central America, the Swastika is used as a charm to drive away evil, bring good luck, long life and prosperity. Marks of the Swastika have also been found on coins dated back to 2300 BC.

The Swastika has proved to be a universal symbol which is beyond national boundaries, religion, race and gender.

Personally, I don't think putting a ban on the Swastika is going to stop Hindus using this very sacred symbol during times of religious ceremonies, and neither do I believe Hindus should stop using the symbol they have used for thousands of years as a gesture of 'goodness', says Preeti Raichura, Hindu Youth UK Leicester - Chair.