

# patrika

*the voice of the Hindu Centre, Singapore*



*June - July 2013*

## President's Message

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Namaste Friends of the Hindu Centre,

We are happy to present you with the second issue of Patrika. This is to keep all our friends, volunteers and supporters informed about the activities of the Centre.

On many occasions when we mention the Hindu Centre in conversation, it seems that very few people know about the Centre and what we are about. So I would like to make a special request to every one - please forward the newsletter to all your friends and those who would benefit from knowing about our classes and activities.

An interesting event being planned now is the pilgrimage to North India. More details are inside.

With best wishes,

N. Varaprasad



## In Focus

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### Interview with Swamiji Satprakashananda Sarasvati of Atma Vanam

*In this second part of the interview, the Kuala-Lumpur based Swamiji talks about the different spiritual orders he's been associated with and their activities.*

#### **Q. What did you do in Rishikesh?**

There I was initiated into naishtika brahmachari diksha and given the name of Satyakama Chaitanya. I lived in the gurukulam as a full-time student for about three years to learn more about our scriptures.

Sivananda Ashram is the centre of a very unique organisation. The members dedicate themselves selflessly to seva. There are hundreds of ashrams in Rishikesh and many have medical centres for the poor. But the Sivananda Ashram is the only one which has a 100-inmate centre for lepers at Laxman Jhoola. I was involved in conducting bhajan sessions for them. Before that I helped in earthquake rehabilitation activities in Uttarakashi.

I arrived in Rishikesh on the 1st of September, 1991 and was initiated on 18th October. A few days later a big earthquake hit Uttarakashi which was just seven hours away from Rishikesh by road. 10,000 people affected. Forty of us left on a relief villages, distributing supplies for two Ashram received a lot Chidananda Maharaja the worst affected the main committee construction of 103 houses in the first village. It took one year and we stayed there through all the snow.



died and 400 villages from Sivananda Ashram mission and covered 100 blankets and other basic months. Sivananda of donations so Swami decided to adopt two of villages. Six of us were on to supervise the

In August 1993, with the blessings of Swami Chidananda Maharaja, I went to Poojya Swami Dayananda Saraswati in Coimbatore.

#### **Q. Why did you go to Swami Dayananda Saraswati?**

I wanted to do a deep study of Advaita Vedanta Shastra and to learn Sanskrit including Vedic chanting with proper pronunciation which I did till the end of 1999. An eminent scholar, Swamiji was the founder of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam/Peetham at Rishikesh, Coimbatore and Nagpur in India and in Saylorsburg, USA.

#### **Q. I attended one of your classes at the Hindu Centre and saw how particular you are about the right intonation. Isn't that difficult for lay students?**

(Laughing). This tradition has come down from our rishis through so many generations. When you can recite the mantras, slokas and stotras with proper pronunciation, only then will you reap their full benefits.

**Q. That means people like us who try to chant but cannot do it properly will not get any benefit?**

If you try, it will work. Perfection requires effort. 'Shraddha chahiye'. Most of my students, by the time my classes are through, are able to chant properly. And for the few that are not able to do so, I take them on again.

One of my senior students Vijay, who does Mitra counselling at Changi prison, wasn't fluent in Tamil or Sanskrit. Among my 25 students learning the Shri Vishnu Sahasranama he was almost the last but is now the first because of his dedication. It took him one year but he can now just close his eyes and start reciting from memory.

**Q. Coming back to your life history, what did you do after 1999?**

After 1999, I travelled in India for six months and then returned to Malaysia. I went back to Coimbatore/Rishikesh for another 10 months. I went over whatever I'd studied and also learnt some other Vedanta Prakarana. In 2001, I finally based myself in Kuala Lumpur. Poojya Swami Dayananda Saraswati Maharaja blessed me into the order of Sanyasa in 2003.

In Singapore, I'd started giving monthly classes from 1999 itself. I started my classes at the home of K. Kathirasan (a teacher at the Hindu Centre).



In 2009, I registered the Atma Vidya Vanam in Kuala Lumpur. I now teach at various places. At present, we are conducting our activities from a rented unit at Villa Angsana, a condominium in KL but we want to buy land and open the centre there.

Our main constraint has been the lack of proper premises where we can conduct classes and prayers. Currently, we teach Sanskrit and I also hold classes on the *Kenopanishad*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Dakshinaamoorti Sahasranama*. With our students and devotees increasing in number – about 350 today – it is difficult to accommodate all of them.

We also want to start a day care centre for elderly people which will help working people. They often don't have the facilities or manpower to look after the simple needs of their parents – like ensuring that they get their meals and take their medicines on time - while they are at work. Also, instead of being at home and wasting their lives, the elderly will be occupied at the centre by being engaged in yoga, music, talks. Knowing that their parents are being well looked after, their children will be able to concentrate on their work.

We are looking for donors to help us acquire landed property in Jalan Ipoh, Sentul or any part of KL which would be convenient for dropping and picking up the elderly and also for devotees attending classes.

# Mark your calendar

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## Balagurukulam

Term 2 starts on Sunday **July 14** from **10 am-12.00 pm** at the **Hindu Centre**.

For the upcoming semester, Balagurukulam students will have many exciting events to look forward to. We will be dedicating the entire month of Aadi to celebrating Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi by engaging the students in various meaningful activities to learn more about them. Also, in line with our theme of temple worship, we will be working closely with the temples for our students to take part in their festivities.

The highlight of this semester will be our 10th anniversary celebrations!

Balagurukulam turns 10 this year and what better way for us to celebrate this than to have our own students showcasing their knowledge.

All this and more, only at Hindu Centre's Balagurukulam classes.

**Weekly classes till 29<sup>th</sup> September.**

Fee: \$50



## Vedic Yoga

A unique blend of Asanas (postures), Pranayama (breathing) and Dhyana (meditation) techniques, Vedic Yoga as described in our Hindu scriptures helps attain inner peace and good health.

**Weekly classes every Tuesday at the Hindu Centre from 7.30-9.00 pm.**

Fee: \$50

**Weekly classes every Wednesday at the Sri Ruthra Kaliamma Temple, 100 Depot Road from 7.30-9.00 pm.**

Fee: \$20



## Bhajans

Come join us for an evening of singing in praise of Bhagavan on the **3<sup>rd</sup> of July** from **7.30-9.00 pm** at the **Hindu Centre**.

## 16-Step Home Puja

Have you wondered what the various offerings in a traditional puja mean? Do you want to learn how to do such a puja in your home?



Starting **5<sup>th</sup> July**, there will be **eight** weekly puja classes every **Friday** from **7.30-9.00 pm** at the **Sri Siva Krishna Temple**, 31 Marsiling Rise.  
Registration Fee: \$50

## Mitra

On the **19<sup>th</sup> of July** at **7.30 pm**, Dr **Ganapathy Narayanan**, Associate Professor of Sociology at NUS, will speak to the eighth batch of Mitra volunteer trainees and all serving volunteers on "Understanding gangs as sub-cultures".

Venue: **Hindu Centre**

Training continues for the 8<sup>th</sup> batch of Mitra volunteers.

Classes every **Saturday 2.00-5.00 pm**

Venue: **Hindu Centre**

## Vishnu Sahasranama

The meanings of the Lord's names in the *Vishnu Sahasranama* will be taught through stories from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Come and understand the sweetness, love and grandeur of the Lord's names and learn how to chant them.

Rama Stothram and Gita Dhyanam will be taught during the classes.

Classes begin Thursday **4<sup>th</sup> of July** from **7.30-9.00 pm**.

No. of sessions: **12**

Venue: **Hindu Centre**

Registration Fee: \$55



## Youth '4' Youth Camp IV

Jointly organized by Youthinc, the Hindu Centre, the Hindu Endowments Board and the NUS Hindu Society, this is our fourth camp in the Y4Y series. The 3Day-2Night camp from **aged 14-18**. The camp aims to **June 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>** is for Hindu teenagers increase awareness about Hinduism



among the youth, and to build self-confidence, teamwork and leadership amongst them. A **registration fee** of only **\$15.00** will include air-conditioned accommodation with beds, food and prizes etc.

Highlights of the camp include:

- ✚ A motivational speech by a local celebrity which will emphasize self-confidence and determination and also how Hinduism played a part in his success.
- ✚ Yoga and brain power improving techniques for success in education.
- ✚ Problem solving skills through critical thinking.

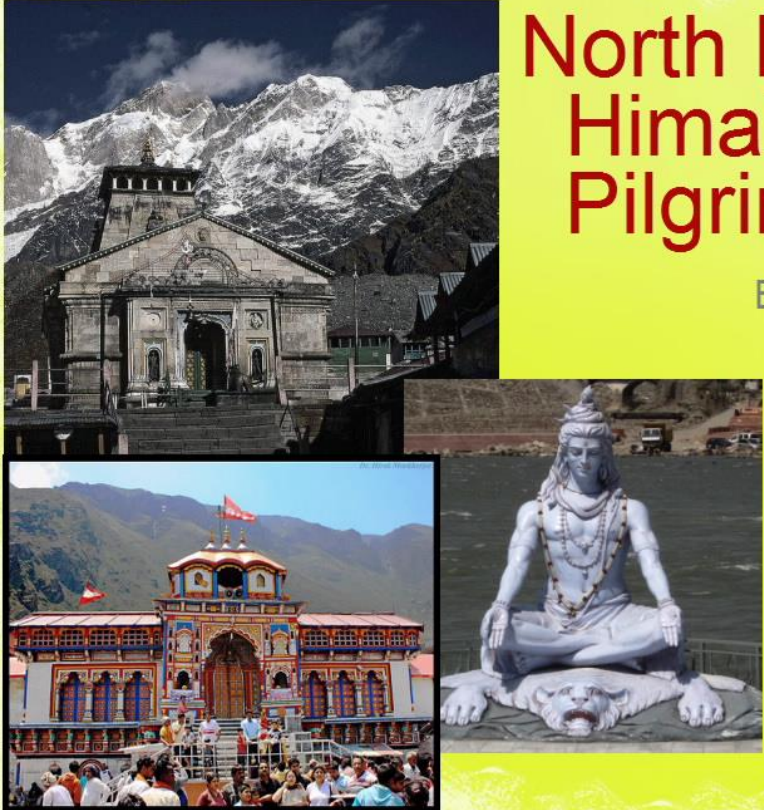
Unlike most youth camps, this camp has been designed such that learning and application of skills is not just for self-empowerment but also to encourage youth involvement in the community. Attention will be given to every participant with discipline and safety being our top priority. It is heartening to note that many of those who attended the past camps benefited significantly and have joined the NUS Hindu Society in later years.

Limited seats are available so please register at <http://bit.ly/joiny4y> by **June 18**.  
If you have any queries, we are easily reachable at **Tel: 97304065/ 90059190** or **email: [y4y@youthinc.sg](mailto:y4y@youthinc.sg)**

We hope to see your child/children at the camp!

## Pilgrimage to India

Oct 15 – Oct 26 2013 (12 days)




# North India Himalaya Pilgrimage

By HINDU CENTRE  
SINGAPORE

Once in a life time  
trip to Rishikesh,  
Badrinath &  
Kedarnath!

**\$2,250**  
per person only!\*

 Hindu Centre  
Singapore

Email: [edu@hinducentre.org.sg](mailto:edu@hinducentre.org.sg)  
Find us at [www.hinducentre.org.sg](http://www.hinducentre.org.sg) &  
[www.facebook.com/hinducentresg](http://www.facebook.com/hinducentresg)

## Gurupurnima

Come join the celebrations on 22<sup>nd</sup> July at the **Hindu Centre** from **7.15-9.30 pm**.

## Update of Centre Activities

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### Bhajans at Dharma Muneeswaran Temple



Some of the Balagurukulam children as lead singers for the Bhajans at the temple!

### Talk

On 1<sup>st</sup> June, Niloofar Giri from Amboli Ashram and a student of Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati gave a talk on “Insights into Communication and Relationships” at the Hindu Centre.



The following day, she separately addressed Mitra volunteers.

### Mitra

The Hindu Centre was invited by Prison Service to speak at its first Care Network workplan event in April on the topic "Mobilising Community for Maximum Impact". The invitation was for the Centre to share how it reached out to the Hindu community to come forward to serve as religious volunteers for the Prison Service. The presentation enabled the Centre to share the

initiatives it has taken since the Mitra programme was launched in 2006 to develop a structured programme to mobilise and maintain community support.

## Bandhu

Volunteers continued their visits on Saturdays to the two homes for the aged at Bukit Batok and Jamaiah. On 27<sup>th</sup> April, residents from the homes were taken to the Sri Ramar Temple at Changi Village where they joined in the New Year celebrations which was followed by lunch.

## Interfaith Forum

Along with our commitment to the spiritual progress of Hindus in Singapore, the Hindu Centre actively reaches out to the wider society. We achieve this via community engagement programs in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), OnePeople.sg, Explorations Into Faith (EIF) and other organisations.

Our primary aims when participating in such programs are to introduce the tenets of Hinduism, present Hinduism's position on modern societal issues such as racial/religious harmony and to establish the Hindu Centre as a recognised organisation for knowledge pertaining to Hinduism.

Recently, the Hindu Centre's teachers shared the religious origin and significance of Pongal and the basics of Hinduism with Madrasah students. Our teachers also participated in an inter-faith conference organised by the South East Community Development Council (CDC).

The Hindu Centre will also participate in events by OnePeople.sg to share Hinduism with educators and students of Singapore Polytechnic and mediators from the Ministry of Law.

Look out for more updates from us on how we are working hard to share Hinduism with Hindus and non-Hindus on a local and international level!

## Book Fairs



There were two book sales in the month of May. The first one was held during the Gita Forum organized by the Sadhu Vaswani Centre on the 5th of May, and the second sale was a part of the Mandala Abhishegam celebrations of the Dharma Muneeswaran temple at Serangoon North on Vesak day on 24th May.

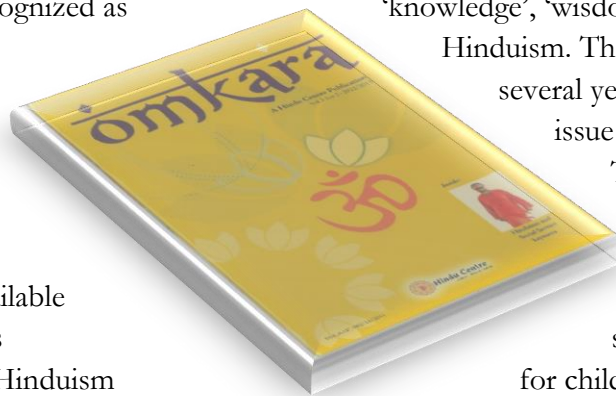
Both sales brought a lot of visibility to the Centre and people who bought the books were delighted with the vast and varied selection of books.



The next book fair will be organized on August 31<sup>st</sup>/September 1<sup>st</sup>, details of which will be announced in our next issue so watch out for them.

## *Omkara*: The Centre's Journal

The Hindu Centre, founded in 1977 and committed to raising awareness of Hinduism and its values amongst Singaporean Hindus, and Hindu youth in particular, conducts educational, devotional and service activities. One such initiative of The Centre is the publication of the journal, *Omkara*, to help spread a vision of Hinduism that places emphasis on the importance of Gnana, which can be cognized as 'knowledge', 'wisdom' or discernment, one of the three pillars of Hinduism. The journal had ceased publication for several years but was revived again and the first issue came out in 2009 in conjunction with The Hindu Centre's 30th anniversary celebrations. We are now on to our fifth issue. Please read our previous issues available online at the Hindu Centre's website. It has sections ranging from crossword puzzles on Hinduism for children and explanations of everyday Hindu rituals to in-depth explorations of the more profound aspects of scriptural insights. Get your hard copy of the fifth issue due to be out before Deepavali 2013, without fail. Also, please support us in whatever way you can to continue to bring you this free journal.



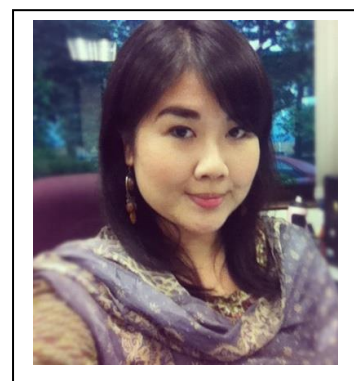
## VolunteerSpeak

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After returning from a trip to India three years ago, I was searching for something which could give me some answers to my spiritual experience from visiting temples. While browsing the Net, I came across the Hindu Centre's website. Upon attending the course on Hinduism at the Centre, I discovered that I could find answers to my questions by becoming a part of the Centre.

Christine Chew

I have since attended various courses organized by the Hindu Centre such as the home puja, Balagurukulam teacher's training in 2011 and the yoga teacher's training in 2012. I have made many wonderful and like-minded friends at the Centre who have encouraged me to take on teacher's training, and it is their



dedication to volunteering that has inspired me to become a part of the Centre's activities.

I am very passionate about my involvement as a yoga and Balagurukulam teacher because I believe that the Mind, Body, and the Soul have to be spiritually nourished from within in a holistic manner. The right morals, values and love for God should also be instilled in children from a young age. The Balagurukulam teachers work very closely as a team to ensure that the children learn about religion in a fun way.

I have met with a lot of doubt and obstacles along the way but I believe that everything can be overcome through perseverance and with God's blessings. I look forward to many more years of giving back in any way that I can.

For Enquiries/Registration:

Tel: 62918540 (Hindu Centre)

SMS Registration: 8533 0667

[edu@hinducentre.org.sg](mailto:edu@hinducentre.org.sg)

Please visit our website

(<http://www.hinducentre.org.sg/>) or

Facebook page

(<https://www.facebook.com/hinducentresg>)

for further details.

The Hindu Centre, Singapore, is dedicated to the spiritual progress of Hindus through the three pillars of **Jnana, Bhakti, and Seva**. The Centre's vision is to become an institution of authority on Hinduism in the region by teaching the core values of Hinduism, creating a strong hub of devotional activities with a good outreach of attendees, and through strong and sustainable Seva initiatives. The Centre hopes to strengthen the induction and management of youth volunteers by creating a greater sense of ownership and engagement at different levels in the management of these programmes.

Drop us a note to [patrika@hinducentre.org.sg](mailto:patrika@hinducentre.org.sg) if you want to tell us what more you would like to see in your "Patrika"!

Please forward this newsletter to all your friends and relatives!