

**Hindu Council of Australia**



**.Tam So Ma Jyotirgamyā.**

**.Lead Me From Darkness to Enlightenment.**



**DEEPAVALI 2022**

*Festival of Lights*

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## Message from the National President of the Hindu Council of Australia



By the grace of Lord Rama and Mata Janaki, we are now in a position to celebrate Deepavali throughout Australia and indeed around the World, on a public platform since 2019. Much has happened since then which we can't pretend to ignore. As humans, we subsume the challenges of pandemics, extremes in weather and natural disasters, and man made wars and offensives; however, the reprieves are that we find refuge in the belief that the Supreme Being will, in spite of sending reminders, continue to Bless us.

Dear all, whilst we contented ourselves with on line celebrations and smaller, less ambitious get togethers, the HCA constituents and Hindus everywhere, have rebounded to celebrate Deepavali with greater enthusiasm and innovative ways. Information received tells us that Hindus in every Australian State and Territory will gather in homes, offices, parks and Municipal, State and Federal institutions to mark this special Festival of Lights. Hindu Council of Australia extend sincere appreciation to all our sponsors, stallholders, participants in cultural programs, the media, VIPS and our dedicated volunteers who worked tirelessly for months to ensure these events run smoothly and successfully.

The Hindu Council is also honoured to announce that His Excellency the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia

The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) and Mrs Linda Hurley will inaugurate and host HCA members at Morning Tea at Government House, Canberra, on Deepavali Day, 24 October 2022.

The Council also will share this joyous Festival of Lights at the Great Hall of Parliament House on Monday 7 November 2022 which includes a luncheon and an evening function to share the joyous occasion with Parliamentarians, Community leaders and the community at large. We shall meet to celebrate the prevalence of light into darkness, the replacement of ignorance through knowledge and the preponderance of good over evil.

I send you the best wishes of the Directors and Executive Members and volunteers of the Hindu Council of Australia to every Hindu, and Australian. May we continue to work together in every disaster effort to assist those affected, with food and shelter, and contribute generously to the advancement of this great multicultural country of ours.

Happy Deepavali  
Prakash Mehta  
National President





## A message from the Governor-General

Linda and I are looking forward to celebrating Deepavali Day and welcoming representatives from the Hindu Council of Australia to Government House.

The Festival of Lights is a special opportunity for all Australians — regardless of faith or background — to reaffirm a commitment to friendship, tolerance, harmony and hope.

These are characteristics that we see reflected in the very best of our community. Linda and I have the privilege of meeting, supporting and getting to know people and organisations from across Australia.

The people we meet come from different backgrounds and work in different areas but are bound by common characteristics: they are selfless, they work hard and they help strengthen our communities. They reflect the values we celebrate during Deepavali and are evidence that Australia's diversity is one of its greatest strengths.

I wish all who observe Deepavali well.

Enjoy this festival of lights and thank you for all you do for your community.

**David Hurley**

Governor - General of Australia



PRIME MINISTER

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

### DEEPAVALI 2022

For so many communities around the world, Deepavali is a season of reflection and renewal. It's a time for harmony and goodwill, and affirming the bonds between friends and family.

Such ideals could not be more powerfully heartfelt as we emerge from the difficulties of the pandemic. And just as the glowing *diyas* of Deepavali recall the triumph of light over darkness, may this special moment be a chance for all of us to rededicate ourselves to building a better future.

The celebration of Deepavali is a testament to the strong and successful multicultural nation that modern Australia represents. It's a demonstration of how our nation is built on the traditions, beliefs and experiences of people from around the world.

Our embrace of multiculturalism speaks to our deepening sense of ourselves as a nation, and shows that cultural diversity and respect can lead to a more peaceful, equitable and fulfilling life for all.

I am deeply grateful to the diverse communities in Australia that celebrate Deepavali for the contribution you have made to our country's success. May this Deepavali bring every joy and contentment to you and your loved ones.

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister of Australia

October 2022



**THE HON PETER DUTTON MP  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

**DEEPAVALI FESTIVAL 2022**

On behalf of the Coalition, I wish all Australians of Hindu faith very best wishes for Deepavali.

Many of you will gather in Prince Alfred Square, Parramatta on Sunday 16 October for the lively and high-spirited Deepavali festival organised by the Hindu Council of Australia. Others will be celebrating at events being held around the country this month.

As is tradition, myths and stories will be recounted, including the ancient epic, the *Ramayana*, which established that wonderful tradition of lighting diyas.

Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, importantly celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. The row of lights lit in households reaffirms harmony and hope.

According to the last national census, more than 680,000 Australians follow the Hindu faith. Indeed, Hinduism is one the fastest growing religions over recent decades, testimony to Australia's multicultural and migration success story.

I thank the Australian-Hindu community for the role it has played in this success story and the contributions individuals and families of Hindu faith continue to make in all fields of public endeavour.

I commend the Hindu Council of Australia for organising Deepavali celebrations this year, for continuing to support the Hindu community in our country, and for championing the values and ideals which make our nation truly incredible.

May you all have a joyous and prosperous Deepavali.

Shubh Deepavali!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Peter Dutton'.

**Hon Peter Dutton MP**  
Leader of the Opposition

12 October 2022





High Commissioner

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AUSTRALIA



October 2022

### Message

On the joyous occasion of Deepavali, I extend my greetings and best wishes to all Indians and Friends of India in Australia.

It is heartening to note that, this year also, the Hindu Council of Australia is organising Deepavali celebrations at the Federal Parliament House in Canberra. Their impressive efforts and commitment since 2004 deserve our gratitude and appreciation.

Deepavali symbolizes the eternal victory of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. This year has an even more special significance as we are celebrating our Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav commemorating 75 years of independent India and our glorious history, our rich heritage and our modern achievements.

Another important milestone this year is the 75th anniversary of the establishment of India-Australia diplomatic relations. These have seen tremendous growth in diverse fields particularly in the last few years. The 720,000 strong Indian diaspora in Australia, growing rapidly, has achieved much success and is serving as a living bridge between our nations, besides enriching the multi-cultural mosaic that is Australia today.

My compliments to the Hindu Council of Australia and to all volunteers and supporters involved in organizing these Deepavali celebrations. May the Festival of Light brighten our world and bring happiness, prosperity and good health to everyone.

A very Happy Deepavali to all!

(Manpreet Vohra)



**Dominic Perrottet MP**  
Premier of New South Wales



## **Hindu Council of Australia Deepavali Festival Celebration**

I am delighted to send my best wishes to everyone attending the Hindu Council of Australia's Deepavali celebrations in Parramatta.

To think that 12 months ago the people of our State had to take extraordinary steps to remain safe in response to the pandemic, including lockdowns and restrictions on important celebrations, it is especially pleasing to be able to come together once more as a community to celebrate this festival in 2022.

While Deepavali's themes of the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance are of particular importance to the Hindu community and people of many different faiths in NSW at this time, these themes also carry great significance and value for all people in our State.

So in joining with you and sharing your celebrations, we are grateful for this opportunity to experience the extraordinary depth and diversity of Hindu faith and culture in NSW – another vibrant thread in the rich tapestry of our State.

On behalf of the NSW Government, I wish you and your family a fruitful and fulfilling Deepavali, filled with light, love and peace.

**Dominic Perrottet MP**  
**Premier**



# **CHRIS MINNS MP**

**NSW LABOR LEADER**

## **MESSAGE FROM CHRIS MINNS MP NSW LABOR LEADER FOR THE HINDU COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA ON THE OCCASION OF DEEPAVALI 2022**

On behalf of the NSW Labor Party, I wish you a happy and prosperous Deepavali.

The significance of Deepavali as a celebration of lights, symbolising victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance, is a celebration we can all learn something from.

After two years of lockdowns, Deepavali's significance with triumph over difficult times is not lost on me. The invitation to bring light into the world as we navigate a world with COVID is something we need. And the Hindu community's spirit of service and the lighting of diyas, is no doubt welcome by the wider Australian community.

I very much look forward to taking part in the celebrations at Prince Alfred Park this Deepavali and thank you to the Hindu Council for their service and support to the Hindu community of Sydney.

On behalf of NSW Labor, I wish you plenty of light and well wishes.

Kind regards

**Chris Minns MP**  
**NSW Labor Leader**





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## Prosperity Through Australia-India Relations

-Vijai Singhal

Let us pray on the auspicious **Deepavali** celebrations for the peace and prosperity of both Australia, our *Karmabhumi* and India or Bharat, our *Janmabhoomi*. Both have very ancient continuous surviving civilisations. Indigenous Australians claim to have lived here for over 50,000 years. Some estimates put it even to 65,000 years. Hindus call their faith *Sanatan Dharma* – the Eternal Religion, ever existing from beginning of time. A study in 2013 at the Max Planck Institute by researchers, led by Irina Pugach suggested that Aboriginal genomes consist of up to 11% Indian DNA which is uniformly spread through Northern Australia indicating a substantial gene flow between Indian population and Northern Australians occurring **around 4,230 years ago**. Some changes in tool technology and food processing also appear in archaeological records around this time, suggesting some migration from India. Steven Ross, an Australian Aboriginal person has told me recently that there are a lot of Aboriginal families living along the Murray with Indian ancestry.

There is some very vivid description of Australia with names like *Astalid*, *Ashtalika* mentioned in Hindu Scripture *Shiv Puran* according to Shri Prem Mishra of Sri Mukti-gupteshwar Mandir, Sydney (*SBS/Hindi/the Storey Untold Aboriginal Australian Indian Links*). Like the *Vedic* people, they also worship the Mother Earth, the Fire and the Rainbow Serpent. There are a number of spiritual similarities between the Indigenous Australians and the Hindus, as highlighted in the **Brochure (HCA website)** which was released at the time of **Signing of the Uluru Statement by Heart** by the leaders of the multi-Faith organisations at Cutaway, Barangaroo, NSW on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2022 for the Constitutional recognition of the Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The new Australian government is keen to hold a referendum on a First Nations voice in the Constitution in its first Term of Office.

**Recent developments** – A sacred ceremony was conducted by the Aboriginal elders Aunty Peggy and Aunty Cathy to welcome Prakruthi Mysore Gururaj, a Fijian Indian lady as



their traditional family member into Gunggari Nation. She was given a traditional name 'Bua Bua' which means butterfly and hence will be called a 'Butterfly lady' in the Gunggari culture. The Ceremony was witnessed by many multicultural groups present at the Harmony Day event on 21 March 2021,

This is in continuation of the initiative taken by the **Sydney Sanskrit School** in 2013 in collaboration with Dharawal Elder (Late) Les Bursill OAM to translate Dharawal rhymes into Sanskrit, resulting in 'Yabun' – a bilingual sing along CD. The project was sponsored by Multicultural NSW. Classical Indian dance *Bharatanatyam* was choreographed to welcome to the Aboriginal Country theme.

Mrs Asha Bhatt, OAM in Albany, WA has received an Order of Australia Medal in recent awards for her work with indigenous community in WA. She has found much commonality with our (Hindu) culture and First Nations Cultures in terms of family values, dealing with loss and grief, using informal ways of working etc. while talking with Indian Link.

Another article published in Indian Link; July 2022 issue is about bringing Yoga to the students in WA's Ngaanyatjarra lands.



The Indigenous students in remote Western Desert communities are being introduced to the ancient Indian practice of Yoga with a specially designed, culturally informed programs.

**Inter Government initiatives:** An academic Chair in **Ayurveda** has been established at the Western Sydney University by signing the MoU between All India Institute of Ayurveda under the Ministry of Ayush with the objective to manage academic and collaborative research activities in Ayurveda, including herbal medicine, yoga, as well as designing academic standards and short-term/medium-term courses and educational guidelines.



Further research on the similarities of the Aboriginal “Bush Medicine” and Ayurvedic Herbal medicine can be initiated.

**Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)** is the partnership of Australia with India, Japan and the United States. The QUAD has a positive, practical agenda to respond to the region’s most pressing challenges, including COVID-19 vaccines, climate change, infrastructure, critical and emerging technology, cyber security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, space, maritime security, countering disinformation, and counterterrorism. Prime Minister Albanese, just after taking oath of office attended the QUAD meeting in Japan with the Indian Prime Minister Modi, US President Biden and Japanese PM Kashida on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Subsequently a Foreign Ministers meeting was held in Melbourne. The QUAD countries also participated in the joint Malabar naval exercises off the coast of Guam from August 26-29, 2022. India’s Prime Minister Modi ji is expected to visit

Australia in 2023 to attend the next QUAD meeting to be held in Australia.

**Australia-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)** – a virtual summit in June 2020 was held between previous Australian PM Morrison and India’s PM Modi. Both countries decided to work together in the areas of mutual cooperation as per the following:

- **Enhancing Science, Technology and Research Collaboration:** Both countries jointly decided to work together in the areas of digital economy, cyber security and critical and emerging technologies as identified by the Framework Arrangement on Cyber and Cyber-Enabled Critical Technology Cooperation.

- **Maritime Cooperation for an Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific,** including ASEAN, to enhance capacity for sustainable management of marine resources and challenge in maritime domains. Both sides agreed to share technologies and resources to support the health and sustainability of oceans and water resources.

- **Defense Cooperation** - provides a framework for growing collaboration between the defense science and technology research organisations of both countries. Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense Richard Marles visited India on 20-23 June 2022 and met with the Indian defense minister Rajnath Singh to advance ties across Indo-Pacific Region.

- **Regional and Multilateral Cooperation** - Both sides commit to continue to work together through various plurilateral mechanisms, including trilateral meetings with Japan, trilateral meetings with Indonesia and

consultations on COVID-19 with Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam, and the United States.

- **Terrorism** - Recognising that terrorism remains a threat to peace and stability in



our region, both sides strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

- **Economic Cooperation** - committed to encourage expanded trade and investment flows to the benefit of both the economies. Making Australian businesses aware of opportunities through India's "Make in India" program and the Smart Cities initiatives, and that Indian companies are aware of investment projects in Australia. India and Australia jointly decided to explore the possibility of launching the **Indian RuPay Card** in Australia.

- Mr Piyush Goyal, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food, and Public Distribution and Textiles, and Mr Dan Tehan MP, Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Government of Australia, have formally launched the resumption of negotiations on the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

- **Innovation and Entrepreneurship** – fostering collaboration between entrepreneurs in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) for developing innovative products.

- **Agriculture Cooperation and Water Resources Management** - continue building on mutually beneficial agriculture relationship through negotiations to market access issues. Water security is a critical challenge for both countries, and it was jointly decided to deepen policy and

technical cooperation on mutually agreed activities to improve water management.

- **Education, Culture, Tourism and People-to-People ties** -

Education, research and skills are a central component of the relationship underpinning the progress and growth through exchange of students and academics between the two countries.

The Indian diaspora in Australia is now the fastest-growing large diaspora. It is a source of fully educated skilled workforce to cater for the needs of Australia. In recognition of the growing contribution of Indian Australians through community-level contacts:

- Both countries have jointly decided to continue their regular interactions under the **Foreign Ministers Framework Dialogue (FMFD)**.
- Both sides jointly decided to enhance their partnership in the domain of education through the **Australia-India Education Council**.

**Australia India Institute** – was established in 2008 to forge a stronger and enduring relationship between the two countries. Australia-India Leadership dialogue, a forum for "informal diplomacy" was held in Delhi on 6 Sept 2022, which was attended by business leaders from both countries, including Australian Billionaires Mike Cannon-Brookes and Andrew Forrest, Business Council of Australia Chief Jennifer Westcott and former Prime Minister Tony Abbott and others. Economic links between the two nations was given a major boost with the signing of the Australian-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) in April. Mike Cannon-Brookes through his venture Atlassian has increased its Indian operations rapidly and now has 1400 employees, which was driven by availability of talented pool of employees in India. India's Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr S. Jaishankar and Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong addressed the meeting via video link.

All this augers well for a very healthy and prosperous relationship between the two countries.







## Hindu Council Main Activities This Year

-Prakash Mehta, National President of HCA



It has been a very busy year. We have strengthened our activities in all the mainland states with dedicated team. We have total 56 member organisations from every state and we have an active team and working contacts in every state of Australia.

We made representations with various state and federal government bodies on various issues such as migration program, international students issue, , increasing Hinduphobia, Swastika issue, Hindu refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, Special religious Education, religious freedom bills, atrocities on Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Census , Crematorium for last rites for Hindu etc. HCA also provided advice to various state multicultural departments on Hindu religious matters.

HCA raised concerns about the atrocities on Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh , Pakistan and Afghanistan. HCA protested against abuse of Hindu images (On several occasions HCA has taken steps to counter the anti-Hindu image by media and / or the business community).

HCA has been an active member of NSW Dept. of Education's committee on Religious education, Police Commissioner's committee on community safety and State Chaplaincy services.

Hindu Council is also registered as an SRE provider to provide volunteer teachers to teach Hinduism in NSW state schools. Hindu Chaplaincy has been an important activity as it provides spiritual guidance to people in distress. HCA continue to provide chaplaincy services in NSW and VIC.

HCA signed and participated in the declaration of **"Joint Resolution on the Uluru Statement from the Heart"**

HCA support and strengthen links between Hindu organisations throughout Australia by creating effective communication and collaborative networking. Provided active support to all temples as well. HCA also actively associated with APRO an ARCC.

Specific activities carried out this year are as follows:

Deepavali Public Events at Perth, Sydney, Adelaide & Canberra. Participated in Deepavali events with other member organisations at VIC, NT and WA during Oct/ Nov 21

Online Deepavali Rangoli Competition where more than 300 person participated. events for five days from Dhanteras to Bhai Duj. Every day thousands of people watched these programs.

Ramayana Olympiad online competition  
Ramayana dolls exhibition in various places in

Sydney and Melbourne  
Gargi Award presentation ceremony for women who have done outstanding work.

International Yoga day was celebration at various location in Canberra, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Gold coast.

Janmasatmi as well as Ganesh festival celebrated on line in associations with various Hindu Temples.

Facilitated Rathayatra festival at Canberra with Hindu Temple and Cultural Centre.

Facilitated Hindu Priests to become marriage celebrant.

Feetition event for community leaders, councillors, Front line workers and OAM's

Organise Saraswati Pooja online competition in association with BONGO Sanskritic.

Organise Walk2Temple or paad Yatra from Murugan temple in Westmead to SVT in Helensburgh about 60kms twice every year to promote Hindu culture and values.

Webinar on United Nations Human Rights Day – Chingari -Voice of suffering of women of minority religions in Pakistan.

Webinar -Commemoration Event – in memory of the Victims of 26/11 Mumbai Terror attack.

Webinar –Dr Rajni Raman Jha on "Ram dawat Sita ka Nirvasan Evam Sambuka Vadh – Total lie"

**Counsellor of Hindu Tradition** "a 9 months education course equivalent to Graduate Diploma Course commenced in association with HCI, USA. 40 participants have completed the course in July 22. The second batch commenced in Oct 22 with 30 registration.

**Graduate Diploma in Hindu Culture and Studies** – One year Traditions course commenced in collaboration of Gujarat Technical Institute and Bhisma institute in July 22 with 40 participants.

Emotional well-being & mental health seminar – HCA Perth SEP 2022

Religious queries about Hinduism answered about 18 students over the years who were studying Hinduism subject at school.

Workshop on Vedic Mathematics at Canberra Hindu Temple on 6 Oct 22.

This year Hindu Council of Australia is presenting Deepavali 2022 as public events in all the major cities of Australia.

HCA is working for common Hindu Cause and supportive to other Hindu organizations and it is not working in competition with other Hindu organization



and has no role in operation of any member organisation.

Let us work together to achieve united Hindu society and spread our message of वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्

Details of major Deepavali events are as follows:

### Sydney

- 15-16 Oct 22 Prince Alfred square Parramatta (Public Event)  
11 am - 9 pm - two days
- 22 October 22 Rouse hill Town center 10 am to 5 pm (Public Event)
- 23 October 22 Cherrybrook Shopping Centre

- 20 October 22 NSW Parliament (By invitation)
- 29 October 22 North Sydney Bradfield Park 3.00pm to 8.00pm (Public Event)

### Adelaide

- 15 October 22 Adelaide showground 12.00 pm to 9.00 pm (Public Event)

### Perth

- 6 November 22 Cannington Showgrounds 2.00 pm to 9.00 pm (Public Event)

### Canberra

- 7 November 22 Federal Parliament (By invitation)  
12.00pm to 2.00 pm and 6.00 pm to 8.30 pm.

## Hinduism in Australia

Hindus in Australia are spread across all the states and territories. The latest data available from census 2021 shows that population of Hindus increased 55% compare to 2016. Tables below shows how historically numbers of people of Hindu faith increased and also shows state wise Hindu population.

Historical Hindu Population in Australia	
Year	Population
1986	21500
1991	43580
1996	67270
2001	95473
2006	148123
2011	275534
2016	440300
2021	684002

Hindus in Australia - State and Territories	
State	Population
New South Wales	273780
Victoria	214058
Queensland	69520
Western Australia	52055
South Australia	38105
Australian Capital Territory	20505
Northern Territory	6236
Tasmania	9724





# HINDU BENEVOLENT FUND

Hindu Benevolent Fund is an integral part of the Hindu Council of Australia to provide 'Benevolence'. 'Benevolence' is the desire to help someone. It can be an act of kindness or a gesture of goodwill toward others. The 'Benevolent Fund' helps support: Bereavement Cases | Emergency Situations  
Domestic Violence Victims | Victims of Natural Disasters

## Hindu Benevolent fund serving the community during Covid & Flood





# Acknowledgement & Thanks

## ( Deepavali Event - Parramatta)

Hindu Council of Australia wishes to thank a number of Associations and individuals for their help and support in many ways. It is not possible to thank all of them individually. Some of them who have made substantial contribution are listed below.

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Decoration: Royaale Event

### Volunteers

Event Director: Suresh Vashisht  
Event Coordinator: Jaydeep Panchal, Vikrant Pahuja  
Cultural Coordinator: Nitin Jayaraman, Anand Manickam, Anil Yadav  
Stall Coordinator: Varun Malhotra, Jaydeep Panchal Mahendra  
Projects Plans : Nikhil Nigam  
Infrastructure : Renga Rajan  
Event Promotion: Dharmendra Modi, Achut Chalise  
Puja Stall Coordinators : Pt Sameer Vyas, Pt Shekhar, Parth Patra  
Photography: Evergreen Memories  
Photo Booth : Sanjay Pradhan  
Rangoli Coordinator : Shilpi Rao, Rashmi Raavan  
Production & Logistics : Ajay Khanna, Yogesh Mehra, Suresh Vashisht

Cultural Team: Sweta Sharma, Birju Bhatt, Parnita Tandon, Rajiv Jain, Surekha Rami Shetty, Sanjay Kumar, Sharina Jadhav  
Event Management Team: Anshuman Sharma, Sakshi jain, Bharathi Rengarajan, Priyan Rajaram, Sreenaadh, Rahul Rawal, Sanjay Pradhan,  
Finance: Rajendra Jalpota

### Special thanks to:

NSW Police  
Parramatta Council  
Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Government of India for organising Margham Group (Gujrati Folk Dance) artist to perform in Deepavali

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## Karma, duty and Yama, the Lord of Death

-Karthik Subramanian

At an age where mankind has reached the moon and sent probes to distant planets thoughts of Karma are often dismissed off as a nitwit's fatalistic fantasy, impeding human progress. Afterall, scientific progress hasn't been achieved by doing nothing, has it?

At an age where mankind has reached the moon and sent probes to distant planets thoughts of Karma are often dismissed off as a nitwit's fatalistic fantasy, impeding human progress. Afterall, scientific progress hasn't been achieved by doing nothing, has it?

Over a decade back I was at Vipassana Meditation retreat in Blackheath. Observing noble silence, we would walk along the serene gardens savouring the scenic Blue Mountains. During one of such sojourns, I was sitting by a pond watching fishes swim, butterflies savouring honey, birds chirping and spider weaving its trap. I noticed a little butterfly fall to the water and struggle to make it to the closest leaf without much chance for survival. I rescued the poor butterfly with a dry leaf, proud of my noble deed I gently let the leaf down on



dry ground hoping the butterfly would be able to fly out after its wings were dry.

Almost instantly a much larger creature emerged from the tiniest of holes nearby grabbed the butterfly and disappeared underground. I was stunned at the turn of events, at the violence in such benign serenity. It made me think and realise that

the process of creation, sustenance and destruction must go hand in hand to restore balance in nature and about the laws of Karma and one's duty.

It is the law of Karma that the insect had to have its food that moment, that had to be the butterfly, no one could have changed it, my delusion was in thinking that I was a saviour I was but an instrument in the universal cycle. Upon reflection, I realised that I had done my duty to rescue the butterfly, the fruits of the action was the end of the butterfly, though I would have preferred it to fly away, it provided a meal to the insect underground.

This episode gives me a greater understanding of the verse in The Gita where Krishna urges Arjuna do "do his duty without bothering about the fruits of the action." This has long been misappropriated as if the Gita prescribes a fatalistic approach to life promoting passive acceptance and dereliction of one's duty. I realised my duty was to rescue the poor insect, irrespective of the consequences which are beyond me, or for that matter humanity.

कर्मण्ये वाधिकारस्ते मां फलेषु कदाचन ।  
मां कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः मांते संडगोस्त्वकर्मणि"  
॥

karmany evadhikaras te  
ma phalesu kadacana  
ma karma-phala-hetur bhur  
ma te sango 'stv akarmani

(Bhagwat Gita: Chapter Two verse 47)

### TRANSLATION

You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself



*to be the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.*

The pertinence of this, in modern society, to a student stressed over exams, an aspirant at crossroads of a career path, a government evaluating over difficult decisions or even a soldier in the battlefield, the clarion is for discharge of one's duty and not for the results.

### **Yama: the example of duty**

Coming on the heels of Karma, is often questioning "*an all-loving God*" about the untimely death of a loved one. How could a most compassionate God be so cruel, how can he take one away at such a young age or one who had young children to take care of, so on and so forth. The concept of an all-loving God can, at best offer a feeble explanation that He took them away because he loved them, triggering more questions than answers. Karma, duty, and reincarnation, offer a more plausible reasoning.

Hinduism, perhaps, is the only widely practiced faith that has a concept of "*Yama: The lord of Death*". It beggars' belief that there could be a God for Death, after all, death is cruel, treacherous, and

not the act of a "loving God" so how could there be a presiding deity for death?

The characteristics of Lord Yama, throws light on this. Yama is a symbol of righteousness, does not deviate a path from his duty, is un-wavered by emotions, impartial and goes by the book of Karmic balance. His compassion is in carrying out his duties without being distressed by the consequences of his actions, does not over analyse if a child would lose its mother or if a person too young to depart. He neither lets emotions nor logic cloud His duty, does not switch the life of a child with that of a nonagenarian on his last legs to "feel good". They say death and taxes are the only two certainties in life. The concept of a "loving God" sparing death is the imagination of an infantile mind if one imagines a world without death since inception.

The agony of losing a beloved, ahead of their normal expected lifespan is traumatic no doubt, an understanding of the concept of Karma, Duty and Lord of Death could perhaps ease the pain.

The concept of the life, immortality is best explained in Kata Upanishads story of Nachiketa and Yama giving an understanding of the Supreme Brahman, the Atman (the Self), unity of Brahman and Atman; the separation of Atman and the body showing the path to liberation.



## **TRANSFORMATION OF KASHI VISHWANATH CORRIDOR**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday 13 December 2021 inaugurated phase 1 of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor in Uttar Pradesh's ancient city Varanasi. Before inaugurating the corridor, Prime Minister Modi greeted the labourers who were involved in the construction of the project with flowers. He expressed his gratitude to all the labourers who worked hard in the construction of the grand complex despite the challenges posed by Covid.

The Prime Minister's vision was to facilitate the pilgrims and devotees, who had to encounter congested streets and surroundings with poor upkeep, when they practiced the age-old custom of taking dip in the holy river, collecting



Ganga Jal and offering it at the Baba Vishwanath temple.

To realise this vision, Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham was conceptualised as a project to create an easily accessible pathway to connect Shri Kashi

Vishwanath Temple to the banks of the River Ganga. The foundation stone of the project was laid by the Prime Minister on 8th March 2019.

Phase 1 of Shri Kashi Vishwanath

Dham, constructed at a cost of

around ₹339 crores (\$68M). A total

of 23 buildings were inaugurated in phase

1 of the project.

Buildings will provide a variety of facilities



to the pilgrims visiting Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, including Yatri Suvidha Kendras, Tourist Facilitation Centre, Vedic Kendra, Mumukshu Bhavan, Bhogshala, City Museum, Viewing Gallery, Food Court, among others.

The project is now spread over a massive area of about 500,000 square feet, whereas earlier premises was limited to just around 3,000 square feet.

The project involved purchase and acquisitions of more than 300 properties around Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple. The rehabilitation of around 1400 shopkeepers, tenants and homeowners were done amicably.

The Prime Minister's vision was also to ensure that all heritage structures be preserved during the course of development of the project. During the process of destruction of the old properties, more than 40 ancient temples were rediscovered. These temples have been restored and beautified, while ensuring that there is no change in the original structure.

**Highlights of the Kashi Dham Transformation Project**

Earlier the temple area was only three thousand square feet but now has become 5 lakh square feet.

Now 50 to 75 thousand devotees including senior citizens and Divyangs can come to the temple easily.

- Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor project was designed at a cost of Rs 800 crores, including 390 crores compensation to acquire area for the



complex.

- 314 properties were acquired and 1,400 people were rehabilitated without single litigation in court.
- Over 27 ancient temples that reappeared during excavation were preserved in the corridor and restored to former glory.
- Gateways and structures leading to the temple were built with stones using traditional craftsmanship.
- The capacity of pilgrims complex increased from a few hundred to 50,000.



- The temple can now be accessed through the river Ganga by steps and escalators via a disabled-friendly corridor.

- Apart from the Godolia and Saraswati Dwar entries, devotees can also reach via the riverfront



using the new jetty to dock boats.

- Temple complex will host 27 structures including prayer halls, museum, rest areas, guest house, food court, security, and information zones.
- The Temple corridor will be secured with 300 CCTV cameras and baggage scanners.







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## How Holy Swastika protected in Victoria?

By Makarand Bhagwat, Director and Chair of VIC, HCA

Religious vilification and hatred incidence against the Jewish community members by Neo Nazi groups is an issue faced globally where there is Jewish population especially in the western world. Australia is no exception to this, and such case often get reported in the local media.

In Victoria, on 12 September 2019, the Legislative Assembly agreed to a motion "That the house refers, an inquiry into current anti-vilification laws, their possible expansion, and/or extension of protections beyond existing classes to the Legal and Social Issues Committee for consideration and report no later than 1 September 2020"

A 300-page report was submitted to the Victorian Government containing 36 recommendations. The report is quite comprehensive and if one reads through it can be found quite distressing in terms of the sufferings of our Jewish brothers and sisters faced due to the vilification activities.

Victorian Government spent no time in supporting/accepting 35 of 36 recommendations of this report in March 2021, and later announced that it will prioritise amending the current anti-vilification law by introducing and amendment to implement recommendation no. 24 which reads as follows:

That the Victorian Government establish a criminal offence that prohibits the display of symbols of Nazi ideology, including the Nazi Swastika, with considered exceptions to the prohibition".

Under the consideration of this recommendation, the Government noted that it will consult extensively with the Victorian Jewish community, the Aboriginal community, multicultural organisations, LGBTIQ+ organisations, enforcement agencies, creative industry, and educational stakeholders to ensure the offence is appropriately targeted to address the significant harm caused by the display of these symbols.

Unfortunately, the Government failed to mention the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain communities in this consultation.

Hindu Council of Australia (HCA ) Vic immediately wrote a letter, endorsed by over 35 Hindu temple and other organisations, addressed to the Hon Premier, expressing our disappointment in the Govt failing to recognise the religious and cultural usage of Swastika symbol. As a result, the Vic Govt then amended their public statement to include a consultation process for Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain communities.

HCA strongly objected to associating the word Swastika with a Nazi connotation and provided a presentation to the Attorney General Hon Jaclyn Symes informing the historical evidence and current usage of the Swastika symbols in a wide range of Hindu religious and cultural setting. Ms Symes also visited Sri Durga Temple for her to personally assess and understand the religious significance of the symbol for Hindus.



**Victorian AG Jaclyn Symes worshipping Swastika at Sri Durga Temple**

A core consultative group was formed by the Govt including HCA, Buddhist Council of Victoria, Jewish Community Council of Victoria and Shwetambar Jain Mahasangh and a series of meetings were held in discussing the wording of the legislation amendment. There were 7 meetings held with this group by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. HCA strongly advocated for following 2 aspects to be included in the legislative amendment.

- Definition of the Nazi symbol without using the word Swastika



-Identification of clearly worded exceptions for public display of Swastika for religious and cultural usages.

HCA Victoria also formally sought a legal advice from a senior QC to achieve these 2 objectives and is thankful to Julian Burnside QC who provided wording inputs to the amendment. As a result, HCA Victoria was successful in compelling the DJCS to use the word “Hakenkreuz” to define the Nazi symbol instead of Swastika. Following is the wording for symbol definition from Section 41(J) of the amendment.

**Nazi symbol means-**

- (a) A Hakenkreuz. Being a symbol of a cross with arms bent at right angles in a clockwise direction; or
- (b) A symbol that so nearly resembles the symbol referred to in paragraph (a) that is likely to be confused with or mistaken for that symbol;

(c) Example

A cross with the arms bent at right angles in a counter clockwise direction.

The DJCS also agreed to clearly define the exceptions to the usage and public display of the symbol for Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain communities and following wordings were added under Section 41(K) of the amendment.

**41K Public Display of Nazi symbols.**

(1) A person must not intentionally display a Nazi symbol if-

- a. The person knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the symbol is associated with Nazi ideology; and
- b. the display –

i. occurs in a public place, a non-Government school or a post secondary education institution; or

ii. occurs in sight of a person who is in a public place, a non-Government school or a post secondary education institution.

Penalty: 120 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or both.

(2) A person does not contravene subsection (1) if the person establishes that the display was engaged in a reasonably and in good faith 0

- a. For a genuine academic, artistic, religious, or scientific purpose; or
- Examples: A person of Hindu faith displays a swastika in front of the window of the person’s shop as a symbol of good luck  
A person of Jain faith draws a swastika on the person’s new vehicle before using it as a symbol of good fortune

A person of Buddhist faith displays a sculpture of Buddha with a swastika on the chest, as a symbol of auspiciousness, at a Buddhist temple

b. For a genuine cultural or educational purpose

Examples:

The floor of a shop is patterned with swastikas in the hope of bringing prosperity  
A member of the Hindu community wears a T-shirt in public with a swastika on the front as a symbol of peace

A bookshop display for sale an educational textbook on World War II, which has a Hakenkreuz on the cover.

**Community Education for Swastika:**

Hon AG, while presenting the legislation, stressed that a wider education campaign is necessary before it is implemented and as such a period of 12 months was announced for implementation date. Unfortunately, when the legislation was presented in the Lower House for debate, this duration was reduced to 6 months from obtaining royal assent. The amendment passed the Upper House and royal assent was obtained on 28 June 2022 meaning this legislation will take effect on 28 December 2022 in Victoria. HCA Vic has consistently followed up with the Vic Government since June to get an understanding of the education campaign. We are informed that the proposal was prepared and presented to the Multicultural Minister in September 2022 for approval. At the time of writing this article, HCA Vic still does not have clarity on the proposal and continues to seek more information.

**Conclusion:**

The legislative amendment has set a strong precedence in Australia to prohibit public display of Nazi symbols to prevent vilification of Jewish community by neo-Nazi groups. At the same time, it has successfully acknowledged the religious and cultural usage of the Swastik, by not including the word in the symbol definition and clearly defining exceptions in the legislation for usage by Hindu community. For the upcoming Diwali celebrations, Hindu Council of Australia (Victoria) appeals to all Hindu community members to proudly display Swastik on their home decorations, rangolis, and display it proudly on the glass windows of grocery shops without having any apprehension.

\*\*\*\*\*



## Differences Between Sri Valmiki Ramayan and Sri Ramcharit Manas

-Jagdish Chawla

**B**oth versions of Sri Ramayana are popular. Albeit they narrate the same story there are subtle differences in the story narrated.

Some of the differences are below briefed. First paragraph refers to Sri Valmiki Ramayan, second to Sri Ramcharit Manas.

### Author

Sage Valmiki in the Treta Yug.

Saint/poet Sri Tulsidas in Kaliyug, around 1600 AD

### Language

Sanskrit

Awadhi – the folk language/dialectic of the community at the time of composition.

### Layout

Composed of seven chapters - Balakandam, Ayodhyakandam, Aranyakandam, Kishkinda kandam, Sunder kandam, Yuddha kandam and Uttara kandam.

Also composed of seven chapters but Tulsidas changed Yuddha kandam to Lanka Kand.

### Format

Slokas/verses

Chaupais (four liners)

### Number of wives of the king Dashrath

350 out of which three principal wives were Kaushalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi. Four of the sons were born by these three wives.

King had only three wives named above.

### Species of Sri Hanuman

Human depicted as a vanar

Vanar (monkey)

### Swayamvar

There was no formal organization of the Swayamvar by the King Janak, father of Sita Mata. Sri Ram visited Mithila with the sage Vishwamitra. Sri Ram was shown the bow of Shiva/Parshuram. Sri Ram lifted the bow and snapped it without any strenuous effort. King Janak decided to marry Sita with Ram. King Janak advised Sri Vishwamitra to bring King Dashrath to Mithila for wedding Ram and Sita.



King Janaka had organised a Swayamvar for the marriage of Sita. To tie the knot with Sita any participant – kings and princes, had to lift the bow. Only Ram could lift the bow and snapped it for wedding.

### Lakshman Rekha

There is no mention of Lakshman Rekha in the Aranya Kaand that is linked to the kidnapping of Sita. Lakshman folded his hands before Sita and ran to Ram who was shouting for help. In the absence of both brothers, Ravana appeared before Sita asking for alms. Sita invited him inside the hut to serve food. Ravana proposed Sita to accompany him to his kingdom for luxurious life. Sita refused strenuously after which Ravana dared kidnapping Her.

### Kidnapping of Sita

Real Sita Mata was kidnapped by Ravana.

Ravana did not kidnap real Sita but Her clone. The real Sita was handed over to Lord Agni by Lord Rama before Sita was kidnapped.

### Agni Pariksha (examination by the fire)

Sita was required to prove Her chastity before the fire god (Agni)

Agni Pariksha was simply an act to swap real Sita with Her clone that was kidnapped.

### Number of fights between Ram and Ravana



Ravana faced Ram twice in the battlefield. In the first round Ravana was abysmally defeated but was allowed to retreat by the grace of Ram. In the second round Ram defeated Ravana again and killed him.

Ravana fought with Ram only once towards the end of war. Ravana was killed in a single fight.

### Ram's virtues

Ram is described as a human with exceptional virtues and conduct – Maryada Purshottam.

Ram is described as an incarnation of Sri Vishnu to establish Dharma by destroying the evil.

Ram returns to His abode

Ram drowned his physical body in the Saryu river after the loss of Sita and drowning of Lakshman.

Does not mention death of Lakshmana and disappearance of Sita, concludes Ramayan with the birth of Luv and Kush.



## Legend Behind the Bow Sri Ram snapped To Wed Sita Mata

According to Sri Valmiki Ramayna (Balkaand Sarg 66) the bow belonged to the King Devrat of Nimike, ancestor of King Janaka, father of Sita Mata. Sri Shiva used that bow to destroy the Yagna of the King Daksh who had not invited Shiva. Shiva then returned the bow to the King Devrat. Valmiki mentions that 5,000 men placed the bow in a metal box and dragged it to the King Janak's palace in Mithila.

When Sri Ram visited Mithila accompanied by the sage Vishwamitra King Janak showed the bow to Sri Ram. If Sri Ram could tie the string on the bow He would marry Sita to Him. Although Sri Ram was to tie the string only but in fact he could lift the bow so effortlessly that He snapped the bow. Pleased with Sri Ram's strength, King advised the sage to bring King Dashrath to Mithila for wedding.

Valmiki does not mention any Swayamvar organized to lift the bow contrary to Ramcharit Manas that it was.



Sri Ram looking at the bow to be lifted.



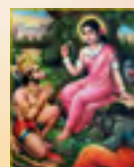
Sri Ram snaps the bow.



### Hanuman Offered to Sita Mata to fly out of Sri Lanka without a war!

When Sri Hanuman traced Sri Sita Mata at Ashoka Vatika, He offered Her to fly out of Lanka on His shoulders. Sita Mata refused the offer that She would not be able to bear of the momentum of the

speed with which Hanuman would cross the ocean. Instead She insisted that Sri Ram come to Lanka to rescue Her.



(Valmiki Ramayana)

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