

Overview of Hindu SRI



What is SRI?

Special Religious Instruction (SRI) refers to religious instruction program to state government school students by authorized providers.

SRI consists of weekly 30-minute group sessions.

SRI is not compulsory; it is an optional class, which requires parent's written consent for their child to attend.

SRI is also not taught in all schools. Check with your child's school to see if there is a SRI program available.

Who is providing Hindu SRI?

Hindu Heritage Foundation of Victoria (HHFV) is offering Hindu Special Religious Instruction (SRI) classes in state primary schools since 2010. Hindu SRI is administered by the multifaith secretariat of Religions for Peace Australia. Religions for Peace Australia (RfP Australia) is contracted by the State of Victoria, through the offices of the Department of Education and Training (DET), to oversee the provision of Hindu religious instruction in government schools.

Objective

The objective of Hindu SRI is to provide Hindu students an opportunity

- To learn about Hindu religion and heritage
- To learn from material designed for children in Australia
- To look at the world as one big family, respecting the principle of "Unity in diversity"

These enable them to grow as confident and responsible citizens with attitude to lead a harmonious and balanced life.

This document presents an overview for Hindu SRI in Victorian schools, based on the model followed in United Kingdom and NSW, taking into consideration the requirement of local Victorian Hindu community.

Hindu SRI in other countries

Hindu community is living in many commonwealth countries since colonial times. For example in the United Kingdom nearly four generations of Hindus are well settled. With the experience in UK, Hindu SRI program material was developed based on the book "*Hindu Dharma – A teachers Guide*", a comprehensive guide to teach Hinduism to primary and secondary levels.

Role of HHFV as Hindu SRI provider

Traditionally teaching children religious values has been the responsibility of families. In India, with extended family system it was a regular and every day event to teach and follow religious practices. However, in overseas countries where both

parents are working, instruction in religious practices has become a community responsibility.

In Melbourne, the population of Hindus started to increase from late 1980s. The number of young families with both parents working is on the rise. Children with little or no religious knowledge, values and practices are caught up in the identity crisis and suffer the consequences. With this background, HHFV responded to deliver Hindu SRI in Victorian schools and is the accredited Hindu SRI service provider.

The Hindu SRI program material has the approval of Victorian Hindu Community.

About Hinduism

Hinduism is unique among the religions of the world in not having a beginning, a founder nor a central authority or an organisation. Hindus call their religion '*Sanatana Dharma*' meaning '*eternal spiritual path*'. Hinduism is a way of life and philosophy focussed on seeking the divinity within.

Hinduism has a huge range of family, local and regional variations and a wide variety of different sects who worship different forms of God. The diverse deities, beliefs, doctrines and way of life of Hindus may appear contradictory and confusing to followers of other faiths. However, such diversity of religious practices is not considered inconsistent within Hindu faith. This diversity is taken into consideration in developing the program outcomes.

What does Hindu SRI teach?

The program material is age appropriate covering year levels 1 - 6.

Hindu SRI outcomes

The philosophy and the practices of *Sanatana Dharma* set guidelines to material and spiritual way of life under four sections *Dharma* (righteousness / values), *Artha* (acquiring wealth guided by *Dharma*), *Kama* (enjoyment of wealth guided by *Dharma*) and *Moksha* (liberation). These four aspects set the framework for the program material and the outcomes are in line with these aspects.

In the primary classes, stages I, II and III, the focus is mainly given on basic concepts, religious symbols, celebration of festivals and values. The depth of the concepts is extended throughout the primary years.

The following are examples of term wise outcome for stage I.

Term I outcome

Concepts: God is one, but has many forms

Religious symbols: *Aum*

Festivals: *Pongal, Shivarathri*

Values: Respect for mother, father and elders

Term II outcome

Concepts: *Avatars*

Religious symbols: *Rangoli, Namaskar*

Festivals: *Ram Navami*

Values: Good habits, kindness and compassion

Term III outcome

Concepts: Law of *Karma, Dharma, Guru*

Religious symbols: Lotus flower, *Tilak*

Festivals: *Ganesh Chaturthi, Gokulashtami, Guru Purnima*

Values: Truth and honesty

Term IV outcomes

Concepts: Goddess – *Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Durga*

Religious symbols: Hindu Worship

Festivals: *Navarathri (Dasara), Diwali (Deepavali)*

Values: Eating Healthy food, good habits

For later stages concepts like creation theory in Hinduism, concept of time, Bhagavat Gita are introduced. Finally moral values, family and social responsibilities are discussed.

Prayer with *Sanskrit* chanting and meditation are integral part of all Hindu SRI classes.

Content outline

- Stories and concepts from *Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavat* and *Panchatantra*
- *Sanskrit* slokas
- Significance of Hindu festivals and practices

Why Hindu SRI

- Children learn from the teachings of *Sanatan Dharma*, irrespective which *Guru* or practices. The SRI material is

taught to respect all ways of worship and is not associated with only one particular thought or way rather encourages children to learn from various sources.

- Hindu SRI program strives to contribute towards the enrichment of Australian society in shaping intellectually, philosophically and emotionally well-rounded future generation Australian Hindus.

How Hindu SRI is offered

- Complements the multi faith environment of Victoria
- Encourages an all inclusive view of Hindu faith
- Class is open to children of all background
- Delivered by trained and registered SRI Instructors
- Is at no cost to the school or parents
- 30 minutes per week during lunchtime, or in the hour before or after school
- School year is from March to November

The moral and spiritual development of a child is considered as an essential part of a child's overall development, and the Hindu SRI classes raise awareness not only in students, but also parents and teachers about the Hindu spirituality.

Who are the Instructors?

The instructors are volunteers from Victorian Hindu community who have received prescribed training from the Hindu Heritage Foundation of Victoria (HHFV).

The relevant legislation and DET policy requirements of SRI are adhered to in delivering Hindu SRI. This means that Instructors are required to:

- Be trained, accredited and approved
- Have completed Working With Children Checks
- Instruct from an approved program material

Before the Instructors can deliver SRI, the HHFV obtains the approval of the principal of the school to deliver SRI at the school.

Which schools offering?

At present Hindu SRI is offered only in few of Victorian government primary schools. To find out if Hindu SRI is offered at your child's school, contact the school or HHFV.

Is Hindu SRI compulsory for my child?

Hindu SRI is not compulsory.

Parents must consent for their child to attend SRI classes at school by completing the CFMD141 Consent Form and use this consent form to select the faith that they wish their child to be taught. The consent forms are available from the school or can be downloaded from the website of the Department of Education and Training (DET). The school will ask parents to complete the consent form when they enrol their child or when SRI is introduced at the school. Schools also require parents to complete SRI consent forms on a yearly basis.