



HINDU YOUTH AUSTRALIA

Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia Inc.

VHP Children's Camp 2023

Commencement, Thursday, 6 July 2023

After a three year hiatus due to the coronavirus, the VHP Children's Camp was finally back with significant expectations from parents and children in 2023! Being centrally coordinated by Hindu Youth Australia - NSW Chapter (youth wing of VHP Australia) for the first time, there was a steep learning curve for the core team of Carmila and Manikkam (Co-Lead Coordinators) and the rest of the HYA team, Ananya, Amish, Sachita and Sushyanth. The mentorship of Shilpa Ji provided great guidance for the team to follow, built on her experience through many previous camps which enabled the team's success right from planning to the execution stage. Following the camp check-in at 5 pm by Amish and Ananya, parents and children were provided a volunteer briefing by Carmila after which children bid farewell to their parents amidst a lot of excitement! They subsequently went through their first ice-breaker activity led by Amish where they got to know each other and were then marshalled to their dormitories to set up their bunk beds and drop their bags. The Kitchen Team led by Anitha Ji had a wonderful dinner of vegetarian biryani, raita, pappadums and laddu for dessert. Children were given an extended time post-dinner to get to know their fellow dorm friends and settle in for the first night. Room and night wardens kept a watchful eye through what was an exciting first night for the kids.



1: Preparing for registration



2: Baden-Powell Campsite – Outdoor green



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Friday, 7 July 2023

A sunrise wake-up call got the already excited children up to get ready for early morning yoga at 6:30 am run by Devika Ji. Following an hour-long yoga session that was intense and challenging, kids completed their showers and proceeded to breakfast with a spread of cereals, milo, tea, pongal and chutney. Getting into the core activities of the day, Carmila led a session titled “The Pasta Tower Challenge” where kids were split into groups and provided basic materials to construct a free-standing pasta tower within 20 minutes. A dramatic finish saw two teams tie on towers both 25 inches tall however one team’s marshmallow peak was higher giving them the win!



3: The Pasta Tower Challenge



4: Yoga

The drama continued in the next session, “Game Theory - Split or Steal” run by Manikkam, where kids in their groups had to take on a gauntlet of trust or deception against other groups. Given one minute to discuss and negotiate, they had to decide to split or steal, with a split-split decision leading to prizes being split between groups, a steal-steal decision leading to no prizes, and a split-steal decision leading to one group taking the prizes. With negotiation and trust proving challenging, only two groups managed to secure prizes by way of deception with a split-steal outcome. Breaking for a short morning tea of fruits and juice courtesy of the Kitchen Team, the kids were back into an intense physical session of “Bharat Yatra” run by Kiran from HSS. In groups, they were provided a starting city and using clues around the campsite, they had to unlock their journey (yatra) of 40 cities around India. What ensued was lots of running and piecing clues together to uncover their unique journeys with a few teams completing their yatras, however only the first was the winner!



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5: Game Theory



6: Bharat Yatra

After an intense session, the kids refuelled with a great lunch spread of chapathi, veg kurma, rice, dhal, curd rice and ada pradhanam for dessert! After lunch, we went into a session of Team Bingo led by Ananya where participants had to find friends who own pets, like the same colour, born in the same month, among a diverse bingo card with 25 total tiles with a row, column or diagonal needed to make a bingo. This ensured the kids continued to find out more about their fellow camp participants and develop greater friendships through commonalities.



7: Some members of kitchen team



8: Lunch service



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9: In anticipation for bingo



10: Fruit prep

The final session of the afternoon presented quite the challenge with group vs. group debating! Split into groups of like ages, each pair of groups were presented a topic for their age group to argue for or against in a structured debate format with the topics ranging from Karnan's good deeds versus association with Duryodhana, to that of a soldier's duty in the Pandava army facing their family and friends in the Kaurava army, to the devotion of Kanappa Nayannar to Lord Shiva. This session led by Sushyanth proved quite a surprise as under his expert direction, all teams formulated strong arguments and debated each other with great passion! To wind down for the evening, there was a short afternoon tea break followed by a bit of free time where the kids could relax and socialise amidst some games with each other.

The evening session kicked-off with Art of Living run by Gayathri Ji which re-engaged and settled the kids for dinner. Thanks to the Kitchen Team led by Anitha Ji and supported all four days by Prakruthi, the kids had a great dinner of Arrabiata pasta, garlic bread and green salad which went down a treat! Friday night was movie night and the iconic animated film, 1992's Ramayana was in session and despite being over 30 years old, the film did not fail to engage both kids and volunteers who thoroughly enjoyed the night session, which was further enhanced by an intermission popcorn and milo break! After what was a long and eventful day, the kids were quickly eased into their dorms for the second night under the watchful eyes of Sudhir Ji, Uma Ji, Shilpa Ji, Vani Ji and Manoj Ji.



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11: Art of Living



12: Movie night

Saturday, 8 July 2023

Following the usual sunrise wake-up call and yoga routine, the Kitchen Team had a spread of sandwiches, milo and tea for breakfast which everyone enjoyed! Jumping into the morning session, the children were split into an older group and younger group with concurrent sessions of Vedic Maths (by Ravindra Ji) and Sanskrit Uno (by Shalini Ji) being run where the groups alternated from one session to the other after 45 minutes. Vedic Maths proved to be a useful tool with both older and younger kids fully absorbing the unique tips and tricks it had to offer while Sanskrit Uno was quite the fun session where the game was given an added layer of complexity with the colours and numbers having to be said in Sanskrit!



13: Vedic Maths



14: Sanskrit Uno



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Following a short afternoon tea break, the kids went into a "Public Speaking - Pechakucha" session run by Manikkam. "Pechakucha", meaning to chat in Japanese, is a novel presentation style that using 20 out of 26 letters in the alphabet enables anyone to create a simple 5 minute presentation while also taking away the stage from stagefright. After an "A-Z about me" presentation from Manikkam, the kids were split into groups of their peers and given 30 minutes to create a similar presentation about themselves. The kids each subsequently presented to their small groups with significant positive feedback being received as the children felt comfortable and the fear of public speaking was slowly demystified. A great feast of rice, aviyal, rasam, beans paruppu usli, pappadums and carrot halwa was relished for lunch!



15: Public speaking - Pechakucha style



16: Scavenger hunt

The much anticipated Scavenger Hunt, run by Sachita, was next. Provided with a clue-sheet and with some tips from Sachita, the children had to put their wits to the test scouring the campsite for clues to the scavenger hunt with a goal to unlock the final code and win the session! The outdoor activities continued in the afternoon with traditional sports and games run by Kiran Ji from Sewa Australia, supported by Karthik and Ajit. After an activity filled afternoon, the kids had a quick fruit and juice break followed by free time where games between friends continued!

Saturday's evening session kicked-off in similar style with Art of Living after which a dinner of Bisibelebath, Bagalabath and banana chips were served. The night session titled "Storytime Discussion" was run by Harshini Ji where she took the children through the story of Bhagvan Vishnu's Dashavataram and facilitated a spirited discussion. With a big final day ahead of them, the children were led to their dorms for their final night under the guidance of our wardens.



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17: Sports by Kiran Ji

Sunday, 9 July 2023

There was a special buzz in the air on Sunday morning as the kids anticipated an exciting final day culminating in presentations and showcases followed by lunch with their parents. The morning routine of yoga led by Devika Ji was well established by now with the Kitchen Team having a breakfast of Sevai and chutney ready for all to enjoy. After tidying up their dorms and packing their bags, the children went into a session of “Reflections” run by Manikkam, Amish and Ananya. During this session, they made groups with others who had a similar favourite session to them during the camp with a goal to explain and showcase their experiences and learnings from that particular session. What emerged was an eclectic and inspiring set of showcases ranging from dance choreographies to an explanation of Dashavataram and its links to evolutionary biology, just to name a few. An outdoor showcase of kho-kho was conducted as the parents and VIPs arrived under the sunny Sunday skies. After an outdoor morning tea, everyone headed into the main hall for the final presentation.



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Commencing with the showcases, the children wowed everyone with their talent and there wasn't a hint of nervousness in sight as parents watched on in amazement! We were joined for the presentation ceremony by VIPs Sewa Singh Ji (Association of Haryanvis in Australia), Councillor Sreeni Pillamarri Ji (Hornsby Shire) and Arunesh Ji (Hindu Mahasangh). Along with VHP Australia's very own Venkatraman Iyer Ji (National Treasurer), Akila Ramarathinam Ji (General Secretary), and Subramanian Ramamoorthy Ji (VHP Australia President), each child was presented with a certificate and fruits for participating in the camp.



18: Children's showcases

After recognising the children, it was the all important volunteers recognition and vote of thanks with each volunteer, from the Kitchen Team, to the marshalls, room and night wardens, activity and general support, being called up on stage and acknowledged by Akila Ji and Subramanian Ji. The final vote of thanks was from Manikkam and Carmila who noted the contributions of all, especially the HYA group including Amish, Ananya, Sachita and Sushyanth who had for the first time led the delivery of the VHP Children's



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Camp to great success! After a sumptuous lunch of chapathi, chole, rice, dal makhani, salad and pineapple kesari and fruit salad for dessert, it was finally time to bid farewell!



19: Volunteers recognition

END OF REPORT