



The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies

Board of Governors Report 2005

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Foreword

The OCHS is constituted by a trust deed and its objects are the advancement of education in the field of Hindu Studies.

Happy students, good facilities, and excellent scholarship are what we aspire to at the OCHS. With the help of our friends and benefactors we have been able to achieve these goals over the past eight years.

The OCHS has developed into an important centre for Hindu Studies, offering tutoring and supervision for higher degrees in Oxford, accredited adult education courses in five cities in the UK, and nationally acclaimed research projects. We also run a Hindu Studies book series in partnership with RoutledgeCurzon.

The process of developing and promoting the field of Hindu Studies has gone from strength to strength in the last year. The Centre has continued to develop its core academic programmes and projects, accepting new students, new visiting scholars, and arranging lectures, seminars and tutorials. The presence of Prof. Narayanan, lecturing and giving seminars at the Centre, did much to develop fruitful links with the University of Florida.

In memoriam: Dr David Patterson, CBE

Dr David Patterson, CBE, founder of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (OCHJS) and close friend and mentor of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, passed away in Oxford on 10 December 2005, aged 83.

In the early days of the OCHS, Shaunaka Rishi was advised by Prof. Keith Ward to seek David's guidance and learn from his experiences in first starting and then expanding the OCHJS.

He gave the solid advice and perspective needed to find our way through the intricate infrastructure – or sometimes lack of it – and politics of Oxford University. He showed true generosity of heart in adopting the OCHS so

quickly and so readily helping us to establish clear principles, which, he often said, were born of the mistakes that he had made and that he hoped we would not make.

He became a member of our Board of Governors, came to our meetings, spoke on behalf of the OCHS at the House of Lords, and took Indian business and community leaders on tours of the OCJHS.

David consciously helped us appreciate that what the Jewish community achieved at Oxford could also be achieved by other faith communities. He was our guru and we were his disciples in the process of establishing a centre.

David always expressed his concerns and advice with dignity, grace, and a parental affection.

He will be sadly missed by his friends and family, and by all at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. Our debt to him is immeasurable.

David Patterson is survived by his wife José, two daughters, and two sons.

Academic year

Lectures, seminars, and workshops

Hilary Term, January–March

Hinduism One: Introduction

A series of lectures by Dr Pratap Kumar, OCHS Academic Director 2005. These lectures introduced Hindu themes and history for students of theology and religion. They focused on Upanishadic teachings, dharma, *Ramayana* and Manu's Laws, God and the Goddess, Shaivism, Hindu society, gender, and concluded with an assessment of brahmanical Hinduism.

Shivdasani Lectures

This term's Shivdasani Visiting Fellow was Prof. K. Maheswaran Nair from the Department of Sanskrit, University of Kerala. He gave three lectures including one delivered in Sanskrit.

- Advaita: Vedantic and materialistic
- The dvaita–advaita controversy
- Advaita-tattvam (delivered in Sanskrit)

The Majewski Lecture

Hinduism and women: Uses and abuses of religious freedom

Ursula King (Professor Emerita, Senior Research Fellow and Associate Member of the Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Bristol. Professorial Research Associate, Centre for Gender and Religions Research, SOAS, University of London)

Trinity Term, April–June

Hinduism Two: Bhakti through vernacular traditions

A second set of eight lectures by Dr Pratap Kumar, OCHS Academic Director, 2005. These lectures examined the history of *bhakti* in India and *bhakti* in various locations and philosophical schools.

OCHS Shivdasani Lecture Series

This term we had two lectures from our Shivdasani Visiting Fellow – Prof. Ashok Aklujkar, of the University of British Columbia, Canada. He spoke on,

- Lewis Carroll’s *Jabberwocky* and Sanskrit,
- Philosophy’s linguistic turn: The case of Naagarjuna and Bhartrihari.

Michaelmas Term, October–December

Hinduism One: Themes and textual sources

Our new Academic Director, Prof. Gavin Flood, offered a thematic and historical introduction to Hinduism for students of theology and religious studies. Focusing on the brahmanical tradition, he explored the textual sources, categories, practices and social institutions that formed that tradition. Primary texts in translation provided the basis for reflection on philosophical and social issues such as dharma, renunciation, caste, and concepts of deity. The course also gave rise to theological and cultural questions about the relation between reason and practice, person and world, and society and gender.

The Majewski Lecture

Rationalism, atheism, and Hinduism in ‘Dravidian’ India, c.1920–90

Dr David Washbrook (St Antony’s College, University of Oxford)

Shivdasani Lectures

This term’s Shivdasani Lectures were delivered by Dr Himanshu Prabha Ray of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Colonial knowledge, archaeological reconstructions: The discovery of the Hindu temple in 19th–20th century India

The first lecture in the series traced the beginnings of the archaeology of religion in 19th–20th century India and highlighted the trends that emerged in the study of the Hindu temple as a result of this intervention.

The shrine in early Hinduism: The changing sacred landscape

This lecture countered the linear view of religious change in South Asia, which suggests that the Hindu temple came into its own after the decline of Buddhism in the fourth–fifth centuries AD. Instead, this presentation showed that the temple form was part of a common architectural vocabulary widely used from the second century BC onwards, not only for the Buddhist shrine, but also for Hindu and Jain temples and several local and regional cults. This makes a case for plurality of religious beliefs and practices in ancient South Asia as opposed to the prevailing view that these local and regional cults

were gradually subsumed under the mantle of Sanskritisation starting from the 4th–5th centuries onwards.

Appointments

The Appointments Committee, including official representatives from the Theology and Oriental Studies faculties, appointed Professor Gavin Flood to the post of Academic Director. Until his appointment, Professor Flood was Professor of Religion at the University of Stirling, Scotland.

Prof. Pratap Kumar, our previous Academic Director for 2005, was called back to South Africa because of a re-organisation in his parent institution. This was a loss for us and we thank Prof. Kumar for his work here.

Fellowships

Shivdasani Visiting Fellowship

Each term, OCHS offers a faculty fellowship in Hindu studies. Awarded to a recognised scholar of Indian nationality, the Shivdasani Fellowship affords the recipient access to the University of Oxford's academic resources and the association of a wide range of scholars and students at the University and the Centre. The Shivdasani Fellowship is offered to support study in any area of the arts, humanities, or the social sciences that has relevance to the study of Hinduism.

K.Maheswaran Nair, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Hilary Term

Prof. Nair hails from Kerala, (Southern India) and was Professor, Department of Sanskrit, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, and also Hon. Director of the Centre for Vedanta Studies of the University of Kerala. Previously he worked at Govt. Sanskrit College, Thiruvananthapuram and Thrippunithura, and also as Editor of the Dept. of Cultural Publications, Kerala. He has been teaching Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy for over three decades. His areas of research include dialectics in Vedanta and materialism, Patanjali's Yogasutra, the renaissance movement in Kerala, and manuscript studies. He has published a number of articles and authored a number of books in Sanskrit, Malayalam, and English which include, *Advaitasiddhi: A Critical Study*, *Advaitavedanta Dialectics and Indian Philosophy*, *Manuscriptology*, and *Chattambiswamikal: Jivithavum Krithikalum*. He obtained his Ph.D. in Sanskrit from the University of Kerala and also holds a Masters Degree in Russian.

Ashok Aklujkar, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term

The author of *Sanskrit: an Easy Introduction to an Enchanting Language*, Ashok Aklujkar received his MA degree in Sanskrit and Pali from the University of Poona and his Ph.D. degree in Sanskrit and Indian Studies from Harvard University. He has been teaching courses in Sanskrit language and in the related mythological and philosophical literatures (occasionally also in Indian belles-lettres in general) at the University of British Columbia since 1969. His published research is mostly in the areas of Sanskrit linguistic tradition and poetics. For the last several years he has been engaged in the ambitious project of preparing critical editions of the works of Bhartihari, a

grammarians-philosophers, and of the commentaries elucidating those works. Advanced students have worked under Akhujar's guidance in the areas of Buddhist and brahmanical philosophy, religion, and mythology.

Himanshu Prabha Ray, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Michaelmas Term

Himanshu Prabha Ray has degrees in Archaeology, Sanskrit, and Ancient Indian History and teaches at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In her research she adopts an inter-disciplinary approach for a study of the archaeology of religion in South Asia.

Her major publications include *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Satavahanas*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986; *The Winds of Change: Buddhism and the Maritime Links of Ancient South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994 (reissued as Oxford India Paperbacks, 1998, 2000); *The Archaeology of Seafaring in Ancient South Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; and edited volumes titled *Tradition and Archaeology*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1996 (with Jean-Francois Salles); *Archaeology of Seafaring: The Indian Ocean in the Ancient Period*, New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research Monograph I, 1999; *Archaeology as History in Early South Asia*, New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2004 (with Carla Sinopoli).

The series of lectures and seminars at Oxford draws on her ongoing research on 'The Archaeology of Sacred Space: The Hindu Temple in Peninsular India (2nd-1st century BC to 8th century AD)'.

Students and awards

Degrees awarded

The following students successfully completed their theses and were awarded degrees from Oxford University.

Manav Ratti, Linacre College

Awarded a D.Phil. in Philosophy and English with emphasis on postcolonial South Asian diasporic fiction, the religious discourses of Hinduism and Buddhism, and post-modern French philosophy.

Christopher Wallis, St Edmund Hall

Awarded an M.St. in Oriental Studies.

Creating the Hebrew Gita, by Ithamar Theodor

Prior to coming to Oxford to read for an M.Litt. at the OCHS, my three years of MA at the University of Tel Aviv were devoted to work on the *Bhagavad-gita*.

The MA degree is a larger project in Israel than at most universities internationally, and the thesis was to be about 80,000 words long – the size of a Doctorate at Oxford or Cambridge. I decided that, in essence, my main thrust would be to articulate the composition of the *Bhagavad-gita*, showing that it does indeed have a well-defined structure that is conceptually quite coherent.

Many scholars see the Gita as an aggregation of various ideas penned by various authors, put together in order to supply a 'Hindu' answer to the rising influence of Buddhism. The approach that I took was philosophical as opposed to linguistic. In the search for coherency, rather than examining the linguistic structure of the Gita, I looked into its conceptual structure. It had occurred to me that the concept of reality in the Gita is primarily hierarchical, and that opened out the possibility of a better understanding. On this basis, I searched the text for the means by which one could promote oneself up the ladder of actions leading from the lower to the higher stages. This 'ladder' of salvation is a traditionally accepted idea, and I have intertwined it into my study.

The result was an articulation of the Gita's clear and coherent structure. Now what was left was for me to offer was a full verse translation from Sanskrit into Hebrew, along with a commentary demonstrating how the text fits onto this ladder-like structure. The translation was accepted for my degree with honours, and was subsequently accepted by a leading publisher under governmental auspices and published in 2002. Today, it has become the standard academic *Bhagavad-gita* edition for University courses in Israel.

Ithamar Theodor completed an M.Litt. on Vedanta and the concept of 'Rasa' at Oxford University and the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in 2004. He currently teaches Indian thought at the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Haifa, Israel. His Hebrew translation of the Bhagavad-gita is available from Carmel Publishers.

Discovering ancient societies in Hindu temples

Our Shivdasani Visiting Fellow for Michaelmas term, Dr Himanshu Prabha Ray, took a term away from the Centre for Historical Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi to explore the archaeology of ancient Hindu temples in her talks at the OCHS.

With degrees in Archaeology, Sanskrit, and Ancient Indian History, Dr Ray was well equipped to give an inter-disciplinary perspective on much neglected aspects of the ancient Indians' experience of everyday life.

In past publications, from *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Satavahanas* (OUP, 1986), to *The Archaeology of Seafaring in Ancient South Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), Dr Ray has revealed the infrastructure of travel and commerce that underpins the life of the sub-continent in every century. She pioneered this approach in a new field during her stay at OCHS, with an exploration of the archaeology of sacred space in Hindu temples.

'Temple architecture is an important indicator of interaction with diverse interest groups, such as worshippers, ritual specialists, patrons, and artisans', she writes. Dr Ray used her OCHS lectures and seminars to demonstrate how modern archaeology failed to see temples in the light of their religious and philosophical context. In addition she explained how interpretations that highlighted the cultural pluralism of Indian temples were replaced with more monotheistic religious identities as a result of twentieth-century legislation.

She also demonstrated how the classical themes of Hindu religion, exemplified in such literature as the *Ramayana*, provided a rich thread of continuity throughout.

Dr Ray's lectures, in audio format and with extensive notes, can be downloaded from the OCHS website.

Library

We would like to thank the following donors to our library:
Prof. Ashok Aklujkar, Dr Guy Beck, Prof. Mandakranta Bose,
Prof. John Brockington, Shaunaka Rishi Das, Anuradha Dooney,
Shirley du Boulay, Martin Gansten, Dr Kimmo Ketola, Peggy Morgan,
Prof. Joseph O'Connell, Amar Parekh, Neeta Prakashan,
Dr and Mrs. Rajagopalan, Dr Himanshu Prabha Ray,
Dr Kenneth Valpey, Priya Viswanath, and Dr Charles S. J. White

Publishing

Routledge Hindu Studies Series

The Routledge Hindu Studies Series, in association with OCHS, is going from strength to strength under the auspices of new editor, Prof. Gavin Flood. Developed to bring the depth and originality of current scholarship into the public sphere, this Routledge-OCHS partnership brings ancient Hindu traditions into dialogue with the latest trends in contemporary thought. New and forthcoming titles explore new horizons for understanding India's religion, history and culture.

Samkara's Advaita Vedanta: A Way of Teaching, J. G. Southren Hirst

Samkara (c.700 CE) has been regarded by many as the most authoritative Hindu thinker of all time. A commentator on the sacred texts of the Vedas, Samkara was also a great brahmin and teacher in the Advaita tradition. Based on a ground-breaking approach to Samkara's seminal texts, Hirst shows us the profound inter-relationship between text and practice in the life and works of the first great Vedantic thinker. Interwoven into his philosophy, Samkara's teaching method leaves its mark, intended to draw pupils skilfully towards that knowledge which is beyond words. This book is of importance to all those interested in the relation between language and that which is held to transcend it.

Attending Krishna's Image: Chaitanya Murti-seva as Devotional Truth, Kenneth Valpey

Hindu Devotionalism (*bhakti*) is increasingly understood not only as a system of beliefs, but as a spiritual practice performed in the presence of God. As a result, scholars are learning to understand sacred images as embodiments of the divine. This book considers these issues in modern Hinduism, looking at the images and worship of Krishna in India and the West. In particular it

focuses on the Chaitanya Vaishnava tradition as it makes its home in different cultures and different ages by actively participating in the presence of Krishna.

Download OCHS lectures and seminars in MP3 format

The OCHS web team has launched a section of our website devoted to lecture downloads. Presently we offer downloads in MP3 format but we are also developing the facility to listen online and to subscribe to podcasts.

These lectures and seminars are offered mainly as reference material for scholars and students interested in the topics covered. We offer the service in an effort to help develop the field of Hindu Studies and make good scholarship more accessible. The recordings are unedited so there may be some discrepancies in quality of sound. We hope to develop this as an important resource for anyone interested in Hindu culture, its philosophies, literature, art, history, and societies, in all times and every part of the world.

Continuing Education Department

The OCHS Continuing Education Department is flourishing in cities around the country, and has won praise and support for OCHS from its students.

We have added Birmingham and Cambridge to the venues for our Hindu Studies Course. Our students, who come from every age group and background, greatly appreciate being able to study Hinduism in a scholarly way. We plan to expand the programme to the north of the country in 2006.

In 2005 the work of our Continuing Education Department again focused on offering the Certificate in Hindu Studies at new locations across the country. Classes have continued in Harrow, Ilford, and Leicester, and in January 2005 the course started in a new venue in Birmingham. At present we have over eighty students registered on the Certificate Course, engaged in university-level study of Hindu traditions and culture.

Their studies are accredited by the University of Wales, Lampeter, and for many students the rewards are both intellectual and personal. To date, students have explored issues of Hindu identity; the Vedas and Upanishads; *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavad-gita*, and Puranas; *bhakti*, *advaita*, *samkhya*, and yoga; and the ethics and lifestyles encompassed by the Hindu tradition.

Since its inception in September 2003, the programme has met with remarkable success. The number of students maintaining their studies is much higher than the national average for Adult Education, and our courses have met with an overwhelmingly favourable response from the student body.

The Continuing Education Department is a non-profit project that fulfils a vital role in the Centre's mission of promoting a broader understanding of Hindu scholarship.

According to Dr Nicholas Sutton, the department's Director:

British Hinduism is in a state of rapid change and it is vital that the community finds ways of understanding its own ideals so that they can be effectively passed on to a new generation. Young British Hindus ask searching questions and it is important that as many people as possible are able to provide effective answers to the questions they ask. I have been delighted and inspired by the response to this course from within the community and I really believe that we are providing a very important service.

The study modules offered are all based on the highest standard of academic research but at the same time participants are constantly invited to reflect on the real significance of the topics considered, both in a general sense and in their own lives.

Dr Sutton concludes:

Writing and researching this course has probably been the most demanding and immensely rewarding academic work that I have ever undertaken. I never cease to be impressed by the dedication that our students bring to their studies.

It is anticipated that in 2006 the Continuing Education Department will offer further study-modules leading to a university diploma or possibly even a BA Honours Degree in Hindu Studies. This would be a major step forward, and we continue to be the only academic institution in the country offering even a Certificate level course exclusively in the study of Hinduism.

Development activities and achievements

The Middle Way: an Evening with Sir Mark Tully

On Thursday, 26 May, Sir Mark Tully, the BBC's longstanding correspondent in India, addressed an audience of 450 at an evening dinner organised by the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.

After a reception and a fine Indian meal, Lord Dholakia introduced Sir Mark in the presence of His Excellency the Indian High Commissioner, many of London's leading Indian businessmen, and other distinguished guests.

In his lecture, Sir Mark highlighted the need for modern India to avoid the two extremes of fundamentalist religion and fundamentalist secularism. He argued that the Indian tradition has the intrinsic resources to find the 'middle way' – a healthy balance between religion and secularism in the contemporary world. An engaging question and answer session followed the talk.

The event, called 'The Middle Way: an Evening with Sir Mark Tully,' was held to raise awareness of the activities and achievements of the Centre. Dr Ravi Gupta, one of the Centre's first Ph.D. graduates, welcomed the guests and highlighted the achievements of the Centre. 'The OCHS is the only Centre of its kind in the world. We benefit from the highest standards of academic excellence and provide all of Oxford University's teaching in Hinduism. With our network of scholars from around the world, we are able to share the Hindu tradition with the broadest possible audience.'

Ranjit Sondhi, CBE, launches OCHS in Leicester

On Friday, 18 November 2005, the OCHS held 'An Evening with Ranjit Sondhi, CBE' at the Leicester Stage Hotel. The impetus for the dinner, prompted by the Sir Mark Tully Dinner held in London, in May, came from Mr Vijay Thakrar. A team of our Leicester friends organised, managed, and executed the evening wonderfully.

The evening was part of the OCHS Awareness Raising Campaign and a regional launch to the business community in Leicester and it was a tremendous success.

Ranjit Sondhi, a BBC Governor, very kindly agreed to share his thoughts on being a British Indian. The main sponsors were ICICI Bank and Yorkshire Bank and we had 270 people who came to enjoy the evening. We held a raffle and an auction, which made the evening profitable, exceeding our expectations. Everyone seemed to have a great time and the feedback forms confirmed this.

The talks began with the spirited oration of eleven-year-old Devarshi. Explaining that he was from the 'Why? Generation', Devarshi said, 'many children of my age agree that not enough is being done to teach them the basics of Hinduism. This leads to problems and embarrassment for us.' His talk was followed by Priti Raichura, Chair of Leicester Hindu Youth UK, and Shaunaka Rishi Das launching the OCHS, explaining our achievements, our relevance to society, and our need for support.

Ranjit Sondhi's presentation, 'The Middle Way: On Being an Indian in Britain Today', was very well received. His talk included questions from the floor and sparked an engaging dialogue. Ranjit began by observing that, 'Our lives are now more complexly constructed than ever before. We struggle to reconcile tensions between choice and constraint, freedom and security, individual aspiration and collective provision, enterprise and equity, risk and guarantee. The search for a middle way has become more and more pressing and urgent.'

Musical entertainment was provided by the dulcet tones and wonderful artistry of Chandubhai Mattani and band. We are indebted to Chandubhai for his kindness to the OCHS and for satisfying the hearts of our audience.

One of the notable successes of the event was the development of such a strong and committed OCHS Midlands team led by Vijay, and including Bhikhubhai Hindocha, Raj Chauhan, Jagdish Ghelani, and Manish Thakrar. We had a team of about twenty members of Hindu Youth UK who were kind enough to take care of all the setting-up and practical arrangements.

OCHS Friends Programme

This year the Centre launched its 'Friends' programme. This was led by an invitation from Lord Dholakia of our Patrons Council to the public to join the 'Friends of the OCHS'.

The Centre has achieved great academic success. But to ensure that the OCHS achieves its full potential we need the generous support of private and corporate sponsorship.

This is a great opportunity for those who are passionate about the education of young people and the preservation and promotion of Hindu culture. Together we can help define and develop the subject of Hindu Studies.

We can inspire and enthuse young scholars to become the thinkers, spokespersons, and planners for future generations of Hindus in this country. Our work opens up dialogues for greater understanding and respectful relationships.

High Commissioner of India visits OCHS

On 17 February, we had the pleasure of entertaining the High Commissioner of India, Mr Kamlesh Sharma, along with his wife, Mrs Babli Sharma, and his Special Assistant, Mrs Kulkarna.

Scholars, students, staff, and the Oxford Hindu Student Society gathered to meet the High Commissioner, who took the time to discuss Hindu Studies with those present.

Prof. Richard Gombrich, Boden Professor of Sanskrit in Oxford for almost 30 years, presented the latest translation of a major Sanskrit text to the High Commissioner as a token of our shared commitment to the unique treasures of Indian culture. The gift was received with thanks and the High Commissioner recognised that there is a pressing need to make this ancient heritage more accessible to modern Indians at large.

Over lunch the High Commissioner chatted with the Chairs of the Theology and Oriental Studies Faculty Boards about exploring ways of attracting more Indian Students to Oxford. The High Commissioner noted that there was a need for intensified exchanges with Oxford both at the levels of students and faculty, and all means should be explored towards this end. He also said that subjects such as the study of modern Indian languages in Oxford should be strengthened, in addition to the technological fields.

Shaunaka Rishi Das, Director of OCHS, agreed: 'If we can use Oxford as a model to develop a first class South Asian Studies programme it will be of great benefit internationally, and it will greatly help in developing understanding of India in the global context.'

When the last cup of tea had been drunk and the last word said, the High Commissioner left with the OCHS Director to make a very particular pilgrimage to the grave of Prof. Max Muller, one of the West's first great Sanskritists.

Board of Governors Dinner

Scholars, students, and community leaders from across the country came together for the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies seventh annual Board of Governors Dinner.

Guests at this year's dinner included Alfred Ford, great-grandson of Henry Ford; Veena Bhal, the UK Government's Ethnic Health Advisor; and Richard Cross, Chairman of the Faculty Board of Theology.

At the Dinner, Professor Keith Ward, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University, stressed the integral role of Hindu Studies in modern self-awareness, and Jessica Frazier, one of the Centre's Research Fellows, reflected on the range, depth, and enormous success of the Centre's research into Hindu traditions throughout history and the international diaspora.

The dinner has become a very prestigious event, drawing together people from diverse backgrounds committed to exploring the rich history and present of Hindu Culture. Students from Oxford University and the OCHS Continuing Education Departments in Birmingham, Leicester, and London thanked scholars for their inspiring, devoted teaching of Hindu Culture. The Centre's academic programmes, book series, research projects, and links with universities worldwide are bringing Hindu Studies to an ever-increasing international community.

Alfred Ford, an enthusiastic supporter of the OCHS said: 'I sincerely believe that by fostering a deeper understanding of Indian consciousness, we will do better in politics and economics, and improve our societies throughout the world.'

OCHS Academic Director wins top seat at Harvard

Francis X. Clooney, one of the world's leading comparative-theology scholars, has followed his stint as Academic Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies with a new post as Parkman Professor of Divinity and Professor of Comparative Theology at Harvard Divinity School.

'The Parkman Professorship was established in 1814 and is one of the Divinity School's most venerable chairs,' Harvard Divinity School Dean William A. Graham said in announcing the appointment. 'The last incumbent was John Braisted Carman, and it is gratifying that HDS has been able to attract yet another acclaimed scholar whose work naturally flows between theology and the comparative history of religion.'

Francis X. Clooney, a Roman Catholic priest and a member of the Society of Jesus, has devoted his work to the relationship between Hinduism and Christianity, and is the author of many books in that area. Clooney earned a doctorate in South Asian Languages and Civilisations from the University of Chicago in 1984 and has since enjoyed a rich career exploring diverse aspects of Hindu Studies. He was the first president of the International Society for Hindu-Christian Studies and Coordinator for Interreligious Dialogue for the Society of Jesus prior to his appointment as Academic Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies from 2002–4.

'I am grateful for this appointment as the Parkman Professor of Divinity, and I look forward to joining the Divinity School and Harvard University,' said Clooney.

'Today's world is witnessing great changes in the study of religions as the great faith traditions revive and renew themselves, while contemporary

pluralism creates unprecedented challenges and possibilities for all believers. Needed more than ever are theologians who are conversant in their own traditions, yet willing to cross boundaries and learn from the faith and practice of people of diverse faiths.

‘Harvard Divinity School, in conjunction with its Center for the Study of World Religions, and the University’s Committee on the Study of Religion, offers unparalleled resources for the study of classical and living traditions. As a Roman Catholic comparative theologian who studies Hindu religious traditions, I look forward to sharing in a great conversation that will shape theologies, the study of religions, and ministerial practice, in the decades to come.’

We wish Prof. Clooney great success in his future studies under this prestigious new appointment.

OCHS student wins Oxford’s Clarendon Scholarship

This year, Master Gopal Gupta from Boise, Idaho, arrived at OCHS to pursue an M.St. in Science and Religion. In recognition of his excellent work to date, the University of Oxford awarded him a full Clarendon Fund Scholarship to support his studies at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. The highly sought-after Clarendon Scholarship, which is given to encourage work in important and often ground-breaking fields, covers the fees for Gopal’s Masters and Doctoral degrees in the emergent field of Science and Hinduism.

Gopal came to Oxford fresh from having completed BA and MA degrees at Boise State University at the age of 19. Achieving straight A’s there, his Masters work focused primarily on artificial intelligence, winning him the United States Achievement Academy National Engineering Collegiate Award.

‘There are two great forces that influence people,’ says Gopal, ‘science and religion. These two disciplines have inspired the world’s greatest individuals, events, and architecture. It behoves us to see how they work together. The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is a wonderful asset to the field. The Centre provides me with an opportunity to explore the relationship between science and religion in ancient and contemporary India.’

‘Hinduism’s wisdom in science and cosmology are largely hidden to the world. Yet Hinduism’s contributions to science are magisterial in scope, rich in detail, and intellectually stimulating. I hope that my time here at Oxford will provide me an opportunity to delve deeper into this subject and make it more accessible to the modern world.’

Listings

Trustees

Dr Kenneth Valpey and Mrs Amanda Mills-Wahlstrom, M.St., retired from their posts as Trustees this year. The OCHS thanks them for their commitment and conscientious service to the Centre and wishes them every success in their future endeavours.

The new Trustees, joining Mr Shaunaka Rishi Das, are the current members of the OCHS Board of Governors: Mrs Sharmila Bhattacharya-Ford, Mrs Neerja Sethi, Prof. Keith Ward, Prof. Richard Gombrich, and Peggy Morgan. This synchronises the Trustees and the Board, a positive move in the development of the Centre and its management. The Board also accepted a new member, Dr Bettina Schmidt, who was appointed by the Theology Faculty as their official representative

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Prof. M. N. Narasimhachary

Benefactors and friends

In March 2005, the OCHS Development Council called together a broad group of benefactors to consider how the work of the Centre could be safeguarded and expanded. This meeting, held at London’s Regency Hotel, was attended by 25 benefactors who committed funds to ensure the immediate future of the Centre and undertook to work towards achieving long-term financial stability for the Centre.

Members of this group of benefactors met again in April and May to develop marketing strategies. This meeting was kindly hosted by Herinder Singh at his Radisson Edwardian Hotel. There was also a general strategy development session held at the Regency Hotel in May.

In July 2005, further meetings were held to formulate a Corporate Development Plan. This meeting was kindly hosted by Akbar Mowalla.

The Development Council held its last meeting in June 2005. The expanded group of benefactors, which will now meet regularly, had its first official meeting in October 2005, again at the Regency. This meeting was held to table the results of the marketing, corporate development, and general strategy meetings and to recommend these to the Board of Governors as OCHS policy.

The OCHS owes much to the members of the Development Council who sacrificed much of their time and gave of themselves generously at a crucial time in the Centre’s development. Without their commitment and business acumen we would not have been able to progress successfully.

Special thanks

We would like to give special thanks to the kind benefactors who have made all the events described in this report possible.

This includes Harish I. K. Patel for leading the organisation of the Mark Tully dinner and Vijay Thakrar for leading the organisation of our Leicester launch.

We would also like to thank Ramesh Shamdasani who, as well as giving his friendship and encouragement, has donated ten excellent new computers to replace our ageing fleet and provided new signage for the front door. Ramesh has also been very generous in sharing his business skills in helping us to develop and refine our administrative infrastructure in a series of meetings from May 2005 to May 2006.

Volunteers and interns

The OCHS has received great value in voluntary services from a range of supporters of the Centre's aims. For example, everyday life in the Centre is underpinned by the valuable support of volunteers in cooking, serving, and cleaning for the popular weekly lunches, and the dinners and receptions that the Centre holds in order to promote scholarly association and public awareness.

The Internship programme has been particularly successful, bringing us a number of bright and committed interns. We were very fortunate this year to gain the services of Miss Judit Bajusz as Administrative Secretary.

The OCHS also received the free professional services of two law firms – Bowling & Co, London and Manoj Ladwa & Co, London; a designer – Mr Rasik Varsani; a web designer – Mr P. Tusler; and accountants, Macilvin Moore Revers.

Stagprint Services and Quest Software have contributed photocopy paper and computer server maintenance. An estimate of these cost savings would be in the region of £ 7,000.

We have also been fortunate to receive the voluntary services of Dave Smith from Washington, USA, who has supplied and maintained our local servers and web-servers, saving us considerable time and expense.

All of these contributions continue to be of enormous value to the Centre, helping to facilitate our success and greatly reducing costs.

We would also like to acknowledge the following companies and individuals for their financial support.

The Trustees of the Jalaram Charitable Trust, Manek Investments, Vascroft Contractors Ltd, E-Merging Markets Group UK Ltd, IK Foundation, ICICI Bank, Golden Tours, Yorkshire Bank (Clydesdale Bank), Lornamead Ltd, Radisson Edwardian Hotels, Ware Moss Ltd, Sear Investments, Per Pro Satyam Investments, Mostyn Hotel, Laduma Dhamecha Charitable Trust, Islay Holdings Ltd, Ernst and Young, Arpan Insurance, Agenda 21 Architects, Kagdadia and Co., and Belvoir Sportswear.

Azad Shivdasani, Vijay Thakrar, Ramesh Shah, Todd and Amanda Wahlstrom, Prashun Popat, Dhansukh Lad, Hasu Manek, Jayesh Popat, Kamlesh Patel, Ramesh Kansagra, Pramod Thakkar, Arjan Vekaria, Shailesh Govindia, Vinit and Hema Patel, Anuttama Das and Rukmini Devi, Harish I. K. Patel, Subhash Thakrar, Nitin Palan, Mahaprabhu Das, George Jatania, Ramesh and Monica Shamdasani, Bheeshma and Jayalakshmi Rajagopalan, Sushil Wadhvani, Jayesh Mamtora, R. C. Uduhiri, M. P. Brothers, Suden Bhayani, K. Patel, Jayanti Chandarana, J. A. and A. J. Patel, Divyesh Tailor, Suresh Gohil, Babu Chandarana, Ashwin Kagdadia, and Prakash Bhojani

Accounts and finance

Our landlord of one year sold the Magdalen Street building during this period and the Centre negotiated a new lease for its offices, expiring in July 2011.

The Special Finance meeting of Benefactors, called by the Development Council in March 2005 expanded the circle of concerned friends of the OCHS. By opening up our need for stronger financial stability to a broader group, the Centre attracted more energy in planning, marketing, and financial pledges. The October meeting of Benefactors further helped consolidate this developing concern. This is a very encouraging development.

Our audited accounts show that although our income has risen from 2004, our expenditure for 2005 exceeded our income by £4,948. Our assets and liabilities were in deficit by £2,847. This does not take into account pledges for 2005 realised in early 2006, totalling more than £12,000.

What isn't shown in the audited accounts is the contribution to the Centre from voluntary work and 'in kind' donations, which have amounted to more than £130,000 in this period. These considerable savings must be noted as contributions adding great value to the Centre.

Of significant note is the ratio of direct charitable expenditure to administration costs – £120,526 and £11,887 respectively. This represents excellent value for donors with direct expenditure on core educational activity being 91% on total income.

Mr Upendra Kalan has started training Miss Judit Bajusz as OCHS book-keeper, with this responsibility to pass from Mr Bharat Bhundia in September 2006. Our audit continues to be done by our accountants, Macilvin Moore Revers, London.

The Board has been successful in maintaining the sound financial management of the Centre and its responsibility to ensure the true charitable nature of the OCHS. The struggle to attain financial stability for the long term goes on and the Board remains hopeful of reaching this goal.

Although there is no legal requirement for the OCHS to have its accounts audited, the Board has always considered it important to do so. Such prudence is important to inspire trust from the public, our principle source of support.

Audited accounts are available on request from the Director.

Approval

This report was approved by the Board of Governors and Trustees on 30 June 2006.

and signed on its behalf by Prof. Keith Ward