

THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR VAISHNAVA AND HINDU STUDIES

Trustees Report for the period ended 31st December, 1999

The trustees present their report and accounts for the period ended 31st December, 1999.

Trustees

The trustees named on page 1 have served throughout the period. Appointment of trustees is governed by the Trust Deed of the charity. The Board of Trustees is authorised to appoint new trustees to fill vacancies arising through resignation or death of an existing trustee.

Investment powers

The Trust Deed authorises the trustees to authorise any investments comprised in the trust fund to be held in the name of any clearing bank, trust corporation or stockbroking company which is a member of the Stock Exchange as nominee for the trustees, although no such investments are presently held.

Constitution, objects and policies

The Charity is constituted by Trust Deed and its objects are the advancement of education in the field of Vaishnava and Hindu Studies. In order to achieve these, the Charity has focused its attention on developing academic support, establishing close links with Oxford University, providing a lecturer on Hinduism as part of the University's World Religions course, attracting students and its fund development campaign.

The policy of the Charity continues to be to seek additional support and finance in developing its educational programmes as funds permit. The Charity also plans to undertake several library and archive projects to complement its core objects. In both cases, the 'Future Developments' section below should be noted.

Development, activities and achievements

The trustees consider that the performance of the Charity this year has been very satisfactory. The Centre appointed Prof. Tom Hopkins from Franklin and Marshall College in the USA to conduct an eight week introductory course in Hinduism at Oxford University as well as providing personal tutorials to students of the University.

In September, the Charity welcomed its first intake of four students, three of whom are undertaking Master of Studies degrees at Oxford University.

In respect the Charity's complementary projects, the inaugural meeting of the Library and Archive Committee, which will develop and oversee all the Charity's archive projects and sub-committees, was held in May. Following discussions arising from this and a subsequent meeting held in October, the Charity has applied for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake its Oral History Project, which will record and maintain an archive of the memories and experiences of first generation Indian migrants to the UK. The HLF's decision on this is expected in February 2000.

In December the Charity co-hosted with the Lord Dholakia, a meeting at the House of Lords, to discuss its future development. Participants included prominent Hindu businessmen, community and religious leaders; members of the academic community; students and the media. The outcome was very encouraging both in terms of consolidating support for the Charity and also furthering its fundraising campaign.

The Charity has been fortunate in securing many resources and facilities at little or no cost. This includes that fact that two members of staff continue to work on a voluntary basis, library books and shelves have been acquired without cost and scholars have been willing to serve at very low cost.

Financial review

The Charity suffered a financial setback in August when one of its major donors could no longer offer support, leading to an intensive fund development campaign during the latter part of the year, culminating in the House of Lords meeting in December. As a result of this, however, the trustees are confident of the long-term financial future of the Charity.

During this time, the trustees also had to take out a number of short-term loans totalling £16,243 to cover overheads. The largest outstanding debt at the present time is rent arrears amounting to £14,760 owing to Coats Viyella, from whom the Charity leases its office space. Although this debt is of concern to the trustees, they are confident that it will be repaid in the near future.

Future developments

The Charity will continue to provide lecturers in Hinduism to Oxford University up to the end of the current academic year (June 2000). From January to March lectures will be jointly undertaken by two Oxford-based academics, Dr. Sanjukta Gombrich and Peggy Morgan. From April to June 2000, Prof. Joseph O'Connell from the University of Toronto will be running an eight week introductory course in Hindu literature as well as three additional lectures in Caitanya Vaishnavism and conducting tutorials.

Discussions are also underway with Oxford University's Music Faculty for Dr. Guy Beck from Tulane University in New Orleans to conduct an eight week course on Indian classical and devotional music. In addition, the Charity hopes to run its own course in spoken Sanskrit in the near future.

If the Charity is successful in its application to the Lottery Heritage Fund, it is planned to commence the Oral History Project during the latter half of the year.

Statement of Trustees responsibilities

The trustees are required to comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1992 (or any statutory or modification of that Act) with regard to:

1. The keeping of accounting records for the Charity
2. The preparation of annual statements for the Charity
3. The auditing or independent examination of the statements of account of the Charity
4. The transmission of the statements of account of the Charity to the Commissioners.

The Trustees are also responsible for the preparation and submission of an annual report and return to the Charity.