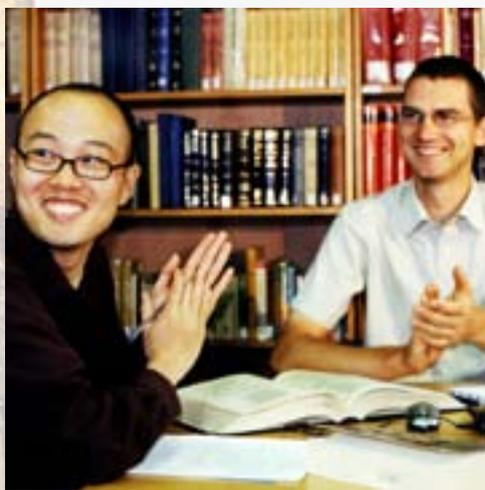


The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies Board of Governors Report 2005-6



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Foreword

Prof. Keith Ward, FBA, Emeritus Regius Professor of Divinity (University of Oxford), Chairman OCHS Board of Governors

The progress of the Centre for Hindu Studies since its inception in 1997 has been quite breathtaking. In the last academic year it has been given the title of 'Recognised Independent Centre of the University of Oxford'. This is a real distinction, only given after close academic scrutiny by the University. What it means is that the Centre has the full backing of Oxford University – a guarantee of the Centre's status as a leading British academic institution. It is a major step forward in the recognition of the great part the Centre is playing in raising the profile of the study of Hinduism. It will be good for the University, which has a good history of Indian studies, but which has not focused especially on Hinduism. And it will be good for the integration of Hindu studies into the intellectual life of Britain, and indeed of other English-speaking countries and Europe.

I would like to pay personal tribute to the outstanding and self-sacrificial work of Shaunaka Rishi Das, who has made the Centre into a vibrant and important part of Oxford University life. And it should not go un-noticed that Professor Gavin Flood, one of the leading scholars of Hinduism in Britain, has accepted the post of Academic Director, thus ensuring that the Centre will be a place of real academic distinction. The programme of lectures and academic events available is astonishing. The Majewski and Shivdasani lectures have already become Oxford landmarks, and the Theology and Oriental Studies faculties, in particular, are grateful to the Centre for its contribution to Oxford life.

I think that the full recognition of the Centre by Oxford University is a truly important event, and I congratulate all those who have worked so hard to achieve it. I also extend my thanks, on behalf of the University, to those who have contributed financially to make this possible.

Dating of reports

Until this report, the OCHS Board of Governors Reports covered the calendar year. In keeping with the nature of the Centre, it was decided that the activities reported should cover the academic year.

The financials will continue to be reported according to our financial year; in this case, January–December 2005.

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 OCHS.

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.

Who speaks for Hinduism?

This is the text of the 2006 Board of Governors Dinner speech by Dr Ravi Gupta, OCHS alumnus and presently Lecturer in South Asian Studies at Centre University, USA.

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening! It is a great pleasure to be present in such a distinguished gathering of individuals. This is a homecoming of sorts for me – I studied at Oxford for six years and then went off into the real world, as they say. Now, after a year of full time teaching at the University of Florida, it is great to be back with friends at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.

My first year teaching in the United States brought many surprises, but one of the most interesting was the experience of teaching young Hindus about Hinduism. When I walked into class on the first day, I was surprised to find that nearly one third of my class were second generation Hindus – children of Indian immigrants – who have lived their lives so far in the United States. Now they were sitting in class at the University of Florida hoping to learn more about a religious heritage that they claim as their own but perhaps are not entirely comfortable with.

This makes for an interesting dynamic in class: for these students, the classroom is much more than a place to gain information about foreign religions and distant lands. It is a part of their search for identity, a study of something that is close to home and yet far away at the same time. Their presence is of course very enriching for the rest of the class, for it helps the American students to understand that Hinduism is not simply an exotic, mystical religion of snake charmers and naked yogis but a tradition that is lived and practiced by normal people with day-to-day concerns much like their own. When the American students hear one of their classmates say, 'Yes, my mother fasts on Mondays and my father eats only once on Tuesdays,' that does more to bring Hinduism home than any amount of lecturing can do. It adds experience to the textbook.

The Hindu students, on the other hand, have firsthand experience of the subject matter, but they need a way to make sense of that experience. They sometimes come to me after class and say, 'I thought what we did at home was it – that was Hinduism. But now I see that there is a whole world of philosophy and ritual out there.' In the classroom, these students find themselves in a challenging and sometimes awkward position – they are seen by their classmates as representatives of a tradition that they know very little about.

The situation becomes even more interesting by the fact that their professor is also a second generation Hindu born and bred in the United States. This means that my role is much more than that of an academic instructor. Of course, everyone expects academic integrity and objectivity. But besides conveying information about Hinduism, the students also hope I will interpret the tradition for them – 'Can you tell me what it means to be a Hindu in the West?' 'Am I a good Hindu, even though I don't want an arranged marriage?' 'Can you explain the caste system to my friends?' They hope I will stand up for our religion, defend it, and make it look reasonable in front of their classmates.

This classroom dynamic is played out repeatedly in universities across the United States and Britain. Usually, the professor is not Hindu himself, complicating the situation even further – Hindu students seeking knowledge and guidance from teachers who are not Hindus themselves, but clearly know far more about the tradition than they do. All this raises a pressing question: who speaks for Hinduism? Who represents Hinduism? Is it those who come from Hindu backgrounds, even if they know little of the history and diversity of their tradition? Or is it scholars of Hinduism, who may not practice the tradition but have spent their lives studying it? Throughout the Western world, both scholars and practitioners are asking themselves this question – who speaks for Hinduism?

The question was not always this complicated. There was a time when Hindus kept to themselves, happy to stay in India and do what Hindus do. Outsiders were 'unclean foreigners', who clearly had little understanding of the beauty and sophistication of their traditions.

Similarly, Western scholars also kept to themselves, happy to theorise about the origin and development of Hinduism from an outsider's perspective. Max Muller, the Oxford scholar who helped found Indian studies in the West never saw the need to visit India. More recently, a well-known European scholar studied Sanskrit his entire life before finally deciding to go to India. It is said that he was disappointed and disillusioned, for India on the ground did not live up to the India of literature.

But those days are now gone. An American or British Ph.D. student of Hinduism can hardly expect to get his or her degree without travelling to India at least once. Scholars spend extended periods of time living on the subcontinent and becoming fluent in local languages. Similarly, Hindus now find themselves living in every part of the world, mixing with the people and cultures of those regions. This has led to cultural adaptations and compromises that might have surprised or even shocked earlier generations but are commonplace today. With many Westerners becoming Hindus, and Hindus becoming more Western, the question 'who speaks for Hinduism,' becomes more difficult and more urgent than ever before. An American professor once described how he is sometimes approached by his Indian students after class, 'Do you think we are good Hindus? What do we have to believe in to be Hindus? What is the essence of Hinduism?' His reaction is initially one of panic. Help! This is not part of my job description! It is not my job to evaluate my students' faith! But job descriptions mean little in today's globalised world. Any professor, Indian or Western, possesses knowledge, and with knowledge comes the responsibility to ensure its proper application.

Usually, the relationship between practitioners and scholars of Hinduism is friendly and harmonious. Scholars deeply appreciate the tradition they study and often become personally involved in its preservation and dissemination. Similarly, Hindus are generally grateful for the work scholars put into understanding, interpreting, and teaching their traditions.

Sometimes, however, the relationship becomes strained, and each side becomes suspicious of the others' motivations. Such was the case in the recent California textbook controversy. Several Hindu organisations in the United States objected to what they felt was a distorted and unbalanced picture of Hinduism found in sixth-grade textbooks. The resulting debate swept up Hindus and scholars of Hinduism from around the United States. What constitutes distortion, and what is simply fact? To what extent does a textbook about religion need to conform to practitioners' self-understanding? What aspects of a religious tradition do eleven-year-olds need to know? Lawsuits were filed, and accusations became heated. Some scholars firmly opposed the changes proposed by the Hindu organisations, while others lent a quiet nod of approval. The debate was observed carefully by educators across the country – because California possesses one of the largest school systems in the nation, other states often follow its norms.

One thing that became clear, however, was that both sides were largely speaking past each other. Members of the Hindu community had valid points of contention, and had reason to complain about the hard-nosed approach of

some scholars. But the community had little idea of how to voice their objections in a way that would stand up to academic scrutiny, using mainstream academic sources. This is because few representatives of the Hindu community are trained in the academic study of religion or have an understanding of the ethos and principles upon which it operates. At the same time, some of the scholars who opposed the changes lacked sensitivity to the concerns of practitioners and an understanding of how academic ideas can sometime perpetuate fictitious impressions. Throughout the controversy, our question became ever more pressing: who speaks for Hinduism?

Clearly, both the practitioner's and the scholar's perspectives are useful for understanding a religious tradition. In fact, I would argue that both perspectives are necessary for gaining a well-rounded understanding. Let me give you an example. Suppose you are presented with a well-decorated cake. There are two ways of understanding the gift you have received: one is to find out everything you can about the cake – who made it, what ingredients went into it, what theme was used to decorate it, how much it cost, how it was brought here, and so on. The other is simply to cut a slice and eat it.

Both methods of understanding the cake are useful and necessary. Tasting the cake provides a direct experience that no amount of description or analysis can provide. At the same time, while experiencing the wonderful flavour, a person may become oblivious to questions of context and history. This requires some distance from the object itself, and academic study can provide that dispassionate distance.

What is required is a dialogue of the two perspectives, a meeting of the practitioner and the scholar. If each were to confer with the other, and pay attention to each other's insights, we could approach a fuller understanding of the subject matter. This is a challenge, for each side is naturally suspicious of the other. For the practitioner, the academic approach is dry, tasteless, and boring. What does a man who has never tasted a piece of cake know of its contents? For a scholar, the practitioner's perspective is hopelessly biased and lacking in context. What can a person who is busy licking the plate clean tell me about cake-making? Dispelling these suspicions and initiating dialogue is a challenging task by any standard, but it must be done if we are to operate in a world where boundaries are increasingly fluid and the encounter between these perspectives is inevitable.

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies represents a unique opportunity to bring the perspectives of the scholar and practitioner together in a forum that respects the integrity of both. The Centre is a meeting point for Hindu scholars and scholars of Hinduism, Hindu students and students of Hinduism, a place where they may exchange ideas, listen, and teach one another. The Centre builds bridges across the academic world, hosting scholars and students from India, North America, and Europe. Now, with official affiliation with Oxford University, we are able to accomplish more than ever before. Let us not miss this opportunity to invest in the future of Hinduism. Indeed, it may be our only opportunity to have our cake and eat it too.

Academic year

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.

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.

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 (second century BC to eighth century AD)'.

Prof. T. S. Rukmani, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term

Prof. T. S. Rukmani has a distinguished academic record and has been teaching and researching mainly in the areas of Hinduism, Advaita Vedanta, and Sankhya-Yoga for the past forty years. She has taught in India; South Africa, where she held the first Chair for Hindu Studies and Indian Philosophy at University of Durban, Westville; and joined the Department of Religion, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, as Professor and Chair for Hindu Studies in 1996. Since the establishment of Delhi University 80 years ago, she is the only academic in its Department of Sanskrit to have been honoured

with the highest degree of D.Litt. In 1972, she was awarded the Ida Smedley International Fellowship to work as a post-doctoral fellow on comparative philosophy, under the guidance of the late Prof. B. K. Matilal, at Toronto University. Prof. Rukmani has won many awards and her four-volume work on Vijnanabhiksu's *Yogavarttika* and her two-volume work on Sankara's *Yogasutrabhasyavivarana* have been widely acclaimed in scholarly circles as significant contributions to the furtherance of Yoga Philosophy. She has also written and edited seven other books dealing with different aspects of religion and philosophy and has published many research papers in academic journals, both in India and in other parts of the world. Prof. Rukmani has been active in Women's Studies and programmes connected with women. She was President of the University Women's Association of Delhi for two years and was a member of the International Federation of University Women's Fellowship Committee in Geneva for three years.

Prof. Mandakranta Bose, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term

Prof. Bose studied Sanskrit in Calcutta (Smṛti and Mimamsa) and in Oxford, focusing her research on the Natya-sastras. She taught religion and gender studies in the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Among her many publications are: *Classical Indian Dancing: A Glossary* (1970), *Movement and Mimesis: The Idea of Dance in the Sanskritic Tradition* (1991), *Nartananirnaya: A Critical Edition* (1991), *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern India* (2000), *Speaking of Dance: The Indian Critique* (2001), *The Ramayana Revisited* (2004). Her most recent work, a critical edition, with translation, of *Sangitanarayana*, is in press. One of her recent research projects focuses on performances of the *Ramayana* and she continues to work on editing Sanskrit *Sangitasastra* texts. Prof. Bose is the former director of the Centre for India and South Asia Research at the University of British Columbia, and is an Emeritus Professor there. She is at present teaching as a Visiting Professor at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada.

Tamal Krishna Goswami Visiting Fellow

Graham M. Schweig, Tamal Krishna Goswami Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term

Associate Professor of Religion and Director of the Indic Studies Program at Christopher Newport University; he is also Visiting Associate Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Virginia. Schweig is the author of *Dance of Divine Love: India's Classic Sacred Love Story: The Rasa Lila of Krishna* (Princeton, 2005).

New students

Abhishek Ghosh, India, Pembroke College

BA in English (Honours), University of Calcutta, India, 2004. M.St. in the Study of Religion, Oxford University, 2006.

Shubhangi S. Gokhale, India, Hertford College

Shubhangi is studying at Skidmore College, USA, where she is majoring in Government and East Asian Studies. She came to Oxford to study Hinduism and British foreign policy. Shubhangi plans to return to Oxford University as a graduate student to do further study in International Affairs and Hinduism.

Melanie Mader, Germany, Wolfson College

BA (Hons) in Philosophy and Religious Studies from the University of Stirling, Scotland, 2005. Her dissertation topic is 'The Nyaya-Darsana and its Relation to Western Logic and Scholarship'. Currently doing an M.St. in Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford, focusing on Sanskrit and Indian logic, particularly the Nyaya system.

Angela Quartermaine, UK, Keble College

MA (First Class, Hons) Religious Studies, Edinburgh University. Currently reading for the M.St. in the Study of Religions, University of Oxford. Interests include methodological issues in the study of religions and religious law, particularly eleventh-century Hindu (Dayabhaga) law and modern Islamist ideas; also interfaith dialogue, particularly Hindu-Muslim relations. President of the Religious Studies Society in Oxford.

Daniel Bender Saver, USA, Lady Margaret Hall

BA in Religious Studies and Urdu, School of African and Oriental Studies, London, 1993.

Daniel is studying at the University of California, Berkeley, USA, where he is majoring in Religious Studies and Classics. He is a visiting student to Oxford studying Hinduism and Latin literature during his stay.

Degrees awarded

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

- Melanie Mader
- Abhishek Ghosh
- Angela Quartermaine

Awards for OCHS students

Thanks to kind donations from friends of OCHS, two new awards have been established to recognise OCHS scholars for their academic excellence and outstanding achievements.

Asvatta Narayana Scholarships

Drs Bheeshma and Giri Rajagopalan have funded two annual bursaries of £500 to help two needy students each year. To qualify, students must have passed a first level Sanskrit course and be undertaking academic study in major areas of Hindu Studies. The donors have named the grant of the Asvatta Narayana Scholarships in honour of Bheeshma Rajagopalan's father.

Krishnavarma Silver Medal

A silver medal has been offered to the OCHS to reward scholars or students for excellence in the study of Sanskrit or Hindu Studies. The Hindu Swatantryavir Smruti Sansthanam, Milton Keynes, has asked the Centre to select candidates for this annual award. The medal is in memory of Pandit Shyamaji Krishnavarma, the first Indian lecturer in Sanskrit and oriental languages in Oxford and a personal assistant to Sir Monier Monier-Williams, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University.

The first recipient of this award was Kiyokazu Okita, a Doctoral student from Osaka, Japan. Since arriving in Oxford, Kiyo has excelled in his scholarship, particularly in the study of Sanskrit.

Lectures and seminars

Michaelmas Term, October–December 2005

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 nineteenth–twentieth-century India

The first lecture in the series traced the beginnings of the archaeology of religion in nineteenth–twentieth-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 fourth–fifth centuries onwards.

Hilary Term, January–March 2006

Hinduism Two: Yoga, bhakti, tantra

Prof. Gavin Flood

These lectures examined conceptions of liberation and paths leading to liberation in the history of ‘Hindu’ traditions. After an introductory lecture that raised some of the theological questions about the relation of path to goal and the importance of ritual and asceticism in the history of Indian religions, we began with an examination of Samkhya, the philosophical backdrop of Yoga, and moved on to the opening *Yoga-sutras*, their ideal of liberation as isolation (*kaivalya*), and the means of achieving that goal. We traced the development of devotion (*bhakti*) and examined *bhakti* and yoga in the *Bhagavad-gita* before moving into the medieval period. Here the lectures described some developments of *bhakti* in vernacular literatures, focusing on texts that advocate devotion to iconic forms and the later texts that advocate devotion to an absolute without qualities. Here we also examined the importance of ritual texts and the relation between ritual, devotion, and yoga. Lastly, we traced the themes of ‘liberation and path’ with examples from selected tantric traditions within Vaishnavism and Shaivism.

The Majewski Lecture

The adequacy of language: Re-evaluating Shankara’s understanding of the Veda Dr J. S. Hirst (Manchester)

If ultimate reality is beyond language, how can language comprise the only valid method of acquiring knowledge of it? And if no language whatsoever can describe ultimate reality, what guarantee could there be that what Vedic language purports to disclose is anything other than a chimera?

These are problems that lie at the heart of Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta, but occur, in different guises, in a wide range of religious traditions. They are problems that raise questions about text and interpretation, about ‘revelation’ and the ways in which language is held to work. They require us to reflect on how we know what we know. They challenge us to define in what senses, if any, the ultimate may be said to be ineffable.

In this lecture, Dr Hirst examined the work of the famous Indian non-dual commentator, Shankara (c.700 AD), who held that ultimate reality (*brahman*) is beyond language and who frankly admitted that the Veda has no authority once *brahman* is known. He challenged interpretations of his work that assume that language is inadequate to its task and so locate knowledge of the ineffable either in some kind of mystical experience or in the secondary or poetic use of language. Dr Hirst further argued that, in Shankara’s view, the language of the Upanishadic Vedic texts is precisely adequate to its task,

given the epistemological and hermeneutical strategies the Veda provides for the Advaitin commentator to deploy.

Religious studies reading group

This informal reading group was oriented towards staff and graduate students and met weekly during term time to discuss a book or selected chapters of a book. It aimed to find readings of interest to a wide range of students and researchers in the study of religions and to see whether or how shared themes develop in the discussions.

Sanskrit readings

Readings in the *Jayakhya Samhita* led by Prof. Gavin Flood

Theories of the text seminar series

Prof. Gavin Flood

OCHS in association with the Theology Faculty

The study of texts is fundamental to theology and religious studies. The aim of this series of seminars was to examine some theories of the text over the last fifty years that have arisen within the human sciences and to examine their implications for the study of religions. These developments have broadly occurred within what has become known as the 'linguistic' turn and 'postmodernism' along with reactions to it. As we now move beyond these intellectual movements ('beyond theory' to coin a recent term by Terry Eagleton) we need to reassess the role of the text, particularly the religious text, and examine the kinds of reading practices that are available to us.

Questions concerning the nature of texts, the nature of reading, the importance of narrative, the relation of sign to symbol, the relation of text to author, and of text to reader or community of readers are fundamental to any understanding of religion and culture.

The seminars provided a preliminary overview of developments within phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics, and narratology. Perhaps the most pervasive theme that the seminars touched on concerns the question of the subject of the text, which itself entails questions about agency and reception. Also considered were the implications of broadening the concept of text to include oral texts.

Religion and film seminars

A new series of seminars combining talks, clips, and lively discussion to explore the many manifestations of religion in film. Speakers discussed the ideals and the realities of religion, as it shapes public consciousness through one of our most powerful and popular art forms.

Action movies and American ideals: The growth of Buddhism in Hollywood.
Jessica Frazier, Divinity Faculty, Cambridge, and OCHS.

The neo-Islamicisation of public space in Egyptian cinema and television.
Dr Walter Armbrust, Middle East Centre, St Anthony's College, Oxford.

The mediator: The priest in film.
Prof. George Pattison, Theology Faculty, Christchurch College, Oxford.

Shouting at Shiva: Religion in the films of Amitabh Bachchan.
Jessica Hines, Author and Biographer.

Text, context, and interpretation seminar series

A series of seminars broadly focusing on texts, their interpretation, and the relation of text to wider cultural, social, and philosophical concerns.

The poetics of sovereignty in early Vedic liturgies
Dr T. Proferes (SOAS)

Recently there has been a general interest in the relation of religion to kingship in the history of Indian religions. In the context of this interest, the seminar examined the relationship between power and ritual by showing how sovereignty is expressed in Vedic liturgies.

Interconnecting parallel times: Notions of time in the Caitanya tradition of Hinduism
Dr Angelika Malinar (SOAS)

While the idea that ancient Indian cultures lack a sense of history has been questioned and even rejected in recent years, the notion of cyclical time is still regarded as the concept of time prevalent in Hinduism. This paper examined this view by dealing with Mircea Eliade's understanding of cyclicity and eternal return. It was argued that time is not only in Western religions, but also in Hinduism, conceived of as a complex, multi-layered phenomenon. This was shown in a case-study of the Caitanya tradition.

Shivdasani Seminars

Images and ideas of the Goddess in the Hindu tradition
Prof. Mandakranta Bose (Emeritus Professor, Centre for India and South Asia Research, University of British Columbia, Canada)

The idea of Devi, the goddess on whom all creation depends for both protection and nurture, is fundamental to the Hindu way of life. This profound philosophical idea found powerful expression in Hindu myths from early times, influencing both religion and culture in South Asia. This lecture noted the intensely emotional impact of the idea of the goddess figure in Hindu thought and traced how through the ages it has been reworked into the rich fabric of South Asian literature, art, and the performing arts.

Value ethics in the early Upanishads: A hermeneutic exercise
Prof. T. S. Rukmani (Professor of Hindu Studies, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada)

The general view amongst scholars, and Western scholars in particular, is that there is not sufficient attention paid to ethics in Hinduism. While no one

holds that view seriously these days it does surface in discussions on Hinduism even today. This presentation tackled that issue from the point of view of the early Upanishads. The main argument is that moral theory and ethical behaviour is culture specific and there cannot be a uniform standard moral theory for all cultures. Moreover, it is axiomatic that no culture, particularly one that has survived thousands of years like that of the Hindus, could have survived without a moral code. Moral theory grows in consonance with the values that each society considers of ultimate importance. This paper looked at a number of the early and middle Upanishads to build a behaviour pattern based on the twin concepts of dharma and *moksa*. The conclusion drawn is that there is a close connection between moral behaviour and the realisation of what it means to be human.

Women poets of Hinduism

Prof. Mandakranta Bose

Poetry by women can be traced back in South Asia to the sixth century BCE, when Buddhist nuns recorded their joy at finding freedom from the drudgery of everyday life and at achieving not merely social but spiritual liberation in religion. Centuries later, from the ninth century onward, a more durable and powerful tradition of poetry appeared in songs by the women poets of devotional Hinduism, which afforded space to people on the margin, such as, women, lower castes, and outcastes, and sparked a cultural awakening that retains its vitality even today. Women, powerless and silent in many domains of community life, found strength in their sense of the divine and their own voice in poetry and songs. Against this historical background this lecture introduced the poetry of Antal, a ninth-century Vaisnava poet; of Akka Mahadevi of the Virasaiva sect from the twelfth century; of Lalla, a fourteenth-century Shaiva poet; and songs by the sixteenth-century Vaishnava princess, Mirabai. Understanding the intensity of their approaches to the idea of the divine aids us in appreciating how these works have affected the people of India and continued as a living tradition of women's spiritual quest.

How much of Yoga did Shankara accept in his formulation of Advaita Vedanta

Prof. T. S. Rukmani

Shankara opposes the dualistic Yoga as much as the Samkhya in his Brahmasutrabhasya and other works. But one clearly sees that his opposition does not extend to the methodology of Yoga. He generally speaks favourably of yogic practices and even accepts the *siddhis* of Yoga. Sankara mentions the threefold *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana* as of paramount importance for brahman-realisation. While *sravana* is translated as hearing and studying the relevant sacred texts and *manana* as reflection on what one has learnt from the texts, *nididhyasana* is usually translated as *samadhi* as well as *dhyana*. *Samadhi* and *dhyana* are already well defined terms in yoga philosophy and one struggles to find a proper understanding of the word *nididhyasana* in Advaita Vedanta. Sankara tries to define *nididhyasana* but is not able to convincingly point out the distinction between *dhyana/samadhi* and *nididhyasana*. It is this difficulty that makes one, like Sadananda, the

author of the Vedantasutras, define *nididhyasana* in a two-fold manner as *savikalpaka* and *nirvikalpaka samadhi*, and blur the difference between yogic *samadhi* and Advaita Vedanta *nididhyasana*. This paper discusses these various issues.

Graduate Seminars

A way to relate Hinduism and science
Jonathan Edelmann (Harris-Manchester College)

The place of devotion and grace in Shankara's soteriology
Jean-Marie Schmitt (St Cross College)

A cherished gem or a bitter fruit? Renunciation in Kavikarnapura's Caitanya-candrodaya-nataka
Rembert Lutjeharms (Blackfriars)

Trinity Term, April–June 2006

The Majewski Lecture

Playing around with Sakuntala: Translating Sanskrit drama for performance
Dr W. Johnson (Religious and Theological Studies, University of Cardiff)

This lecture considered possible strategies for translating the conventions and aesthetic of Sanskrit drama for a modern English-speaking audience. It took the form of a case-study of Dr Johnson's own translation of *The Recognition of Sakuntala* for Oxford World's Classics, and reflects on some unintended consequences.

The Wahlstrom Lecture

The Bhagavad-gita: Innovations and challenges in its translation
Graham M. Schweig (Dept. of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Christopher Newport University, Virginia, USA)

Many translators of the *Bhagavad-gita* resort to an informationally accurate prose translation that sometimes loses the poetic power and expression of the original verse. Others resort to constricted verse translation dropping important and nuanced meanings of the text. Schweig is developing a way to translate Sanskrit philosophical verse that is both loyal to the meaning of the text while conveying something of the poetic power of the text in what he calls 'dedicated free-verse translation', without falling prey to the weakness of either approach. Schweig presented some of the discoveries on which he is writing for his forthcoming introduction to and translation of the *Bhagavad-gita* for Harper Collins / Harper San Francisco.

Workshop: Towards equality: Writing/reading gender in texts of Hinduism

This workshop addressed the question of how women are represented within Hinduism and the question of women's agency in the history of the Hindu traditions. These issues are closely linked to broader questions of power in the history of Hinduism and roles within clearly demarcated boundaries that go against the spirit of modernity.

Towards equality: Women neither as goddess nor as victim

Dr Sanjukta Gupta

This talk introduced the theme of the workshop and addressed the problem of traditional representations of women as goddess or victim and provided a historical overview of the problem.

Texts of Hindu sacred law and the construction of women's lives

Prof. M. Bose

In India the treatises of law founded upon the sacred books of the Hindus had a far-reaching and defining influence on social life. As foundational documents of the Hindu way of life that codified social relations as well as personal belief as religious imperatives, these texts have exerted the deepest influence on the lives and conduct of women through history and their teachings have not yet entirely lost their force. In this lecture we considered some of the provisions in Hindu sacred law that moulded the lives of women, as derived from the writings of Manu and other ancient Hindu lawgivers, as well as some later writers.

The concept of nivr̥tti as translated in the lives of women in Hinduism: A survey

Prof. Rukmani

Nivr̥tti denotes disengagement with worldly conventions. Of course it is used more in the context of *sannyasins/sannyasinis* in connection with the pursuit of *moksa* (liberation). But this paper intends to release the word *nivr̥tti* from this narrow application and look at it in a wider context. The paper will examine the instances in the texts which have representations of women who go against the conventional mother/warrior image. For instance, is the *brahmavadini*/scholar woman like Gargi for instance, discarding by choice the role of a married woman and opting for a life of scholarly/spiritual search? Again, is Savitri exerting her independence and opting to marry Satyavan in spite of her father's advice? Sulabha again could be someone who did not want to marry anyone because she was far superior to all those who wooed her. She makes the deliberate choice to become a *bhiksuni*. There are any number of these examples in Sanskrit texts which form the basis of the talk.

Religious studies reading group

An informal reading group oriented towards staff and graduate students met weekly during term time to discuss books or selected chapters of books.

Library

We would like to thank the following donors to our library:

The Study Society, Swaminarayan Hindu Mission, Prof. Mandakranta Bose, Prof. John Brockington, Shaunaka Rishi Das, Satyaraja Dasa (Steven Rosen), Anuradha Dooney, Shirley du Boulay, Jonathan Edelmann, Lisa Hamling, Dr Elizabeth Asa Hole, Rembert Lutjeharms, Peggy Morgan, Amar Parekh, Neeta Prakashan, Dr and Mrs Rajagopalan, Dr Himanshu Prabha Ray, Prof. T. S. Rukmani, Dr Frederico Squarcini, Ithamar Theodor, Pavel Tomanec, and Dr Kenneth Valpey

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.

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 and its philosophies, literature, art, history, and societies, in all times and every part of the world.

Continuing Education Department

At present the Continuing Education Department is providing classes in six locations, two in Leicester, in Harrow, in Ilford, in Birmingham, and in Oxford. We have about one-hundred students registered for courses with over seventy in total attending classes each week. Centres in Leicester, Ilford, and Harrow will complete the Level 1 Certificate course at the end of this academic year.

Although many of the students decide not to complete the course work that leads to the Certificate from Lampeter, there are several now almost in a position to graduate at the end of this academic year.

The centres in Leicester (Gayatri Parivar), Birmingham, and Oxford will continue to work on the existing modules in the 2006–7 academic year provided student numbers remain adequate. In the other three centres decisions on future provision will be made after consultation with existing students and internal discussions of future viability.

At present, Nick Sutton is responsible for the writing of courses and modules and steering them through the validation process with Lampeter. Anuradha Dooney is responsible for administration and shares responsibility for the marking of coursework with Nick Sutton. The teaching of the courses is undertaken by Nick Sutton, Anuradha Dooney, and Jessica Frazier, with other tutors from the OCHS contributing to the Oxford classes. Rembert Lutjeharms and Gavin Flood have also contributed to the teaching.

Further direct funding from external sources has not been forthcoming to date and overall finances remain precarious. The strength of the project in terms of provision and student numbers does, however, attract support from the wider community.

Development activities and achievements

OCHS gains ‘Recognised Independent Centre of Oxford University’ status

In 2006, Oxford University gave its official seal of approval to OCHS by awarding it with the newly created status of ‘Recognised Independent Centre of Oxford University’ – a self governing academic institution that works in harmony with the University to enrich its field of study.

OCHS is one of the youngest institutions to receive this stamp of approval from Oxford. It is a formal endorsement of the relationship that the two institutions have developed since the Centre’s establishment in 1997. This development reflects the need for objective perspectives on the major religions in the UK and recognises the OCHS’s role in providing this.

The Chancellor of Oxford University, Lord Patten of Barnes, said, ‘The new official association provides a platform for the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and Oxford University to move forward together in teaching, research, and publishing. It will also help students and researchers gain further access to the wonderful Indian resources held in Oxford.’

The OCHS now provides most of Oxford’s teaching on Hinduism, giving students access to some of the world’s best scholars in the field.

Dr Gavin Flood, Academic Director of the Centre, spoke of the significance of the new designation: ‘With the new Recognised Independent Centre status, for the first time the words “of Oxford University” have become part of OCHS’s title. This is a phrase that we will feature proudly in all of our literature, in the media, in our fund-raising, and all of our work with the public. It is an official recognition by Oxford University that we are its principal provider in the field of Hindu Studies, and a thus a duly constituted member of the University’s community.’

The new development is a response to the increasing range of research centres and independent academic institutions that are arising to advance their respective fields through independent programmes of research. The growing number of partnerships between independent centres and higher education institutions is helping to inject new resources and perspectives into the academic world. This comes at a time when funding commitments to higher education are a national and international concern.

The Indian High Commissioner, His Excellency Kamlesh Sharma said, 'The rising profile of India and the remarkable success of the worldwide community of Indian origin has increased interest in the foundations of India's culture and traditions. The affiliation with Oxford advances the work of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies in providing serious academic focus on Hindu culture and its depth of wisdom and creativity through teaching, research, and publishing for a wide audience. It is a significant gain for Oxford University.'

Board of Governors Dinner

The University's recognition of the OCHS was particularly well-timed for this year's Board of Governors Dinner, held at the Oxford Town Hall.

The announcement of the recognition was met with a sustained standing ovation from the guests. The Dinner, generously sponsored by Lalji Vekaria of the Stanton Group, was also an opportunity to welcome back one of the Centre's brightest and best scholars, Dr Ravi Gupta, now lecturer in South Asian Studies at Centre University in the US.

Dr Gupta gave the keynote address on the topic: 'Who Speaks for Hinduism?' Reflecting on his experience as a Hindu teaching Hinduism, he spoke on the problem facing those who wish to study Hinduism or engage in dialogue with Hinduism. Who represents Hinduism? Is it those who come from Hindu backgrounds, even if they know little of the history and diversity of their tradition? Or is it scholars of Hinduism, who may not practice the tradition but have spent their lives studying it?

Scholars and practitioners are asking themselves this question – who speaks for Hinduism? Dr Gupta spoke of the need for a dialogue between these perspectives as a prerequisite to understanding the tradition in its fullness.

The full text of Dr Gupta's talk can be read or listened to at www.ochs.org.uk/bg2006.

Guests at the Board of Governors Dinner included the Indian High Commissioner, His Excellency Kamlesh Sharma; Dr Peter Oppenheimer, President of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies; and Dr David Browning, Registrar of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

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.

Friends update

The OCHS Friends Campaign is aimed at involving the OCHS's friends and well-wishers in the work of developing awareness of the Centre and its value to the community.

As the Centre renews its lease on the current buildings in Oxford, the Friends Campaign is continuing to strengthen its foundations by developing new friends and benefactors.

On 27 January, Yaksha and Kamlesh Patel held the first of 2006's programmes at the Royal Society of Arts. This was the fourth such event Yaksha and Kamlesh have organised in the last two years. Others have included lectures at their home.

The evening at the Royal Society was centred around Dinker Mehta, a Gujarati stand-up comedian who provided the audience with a hilarious time. Jessica Frazier and Shaunaka Rishi preceded Dinker with presentations about the Centre and a call to support culture and education. We thank Kamlesh and Yaksha very much for all the hard work they put into making this evening a success, and the Regency Hotel Group for their generous contribution on the night.

Rasik Varsani, our friend and graphic designer, arranged another occasion at the meeting place of the SSSS Mandal Kum Kum UK, in Stanmore, on 3 March. We had an audience of 150, including many young people, to listen to a talk on the *Shikshapatri*, a text sacred to the Swaminarayan community, and how it is interpreted today. It was a very successful evening and ended with an overview of the Digital Shikshapatri Project, in which the Oxford Centre has played an important part.

Our Friends Dinner programme was launched on St Patrick's Day by Harish I. K. Patel and Bharat Bhundia. Harishbhai, his wife Gitaben, and Bharat were wonderful hosts for the evening, exemplifying generosity, hospitality, and grace. They created a very warm and friendly environment that complemented the presentation and discussions that ensued, and the food was just great. We have had a very positive response from the dinner and some participants have joined our community of Friends while others have joined the Hindu Studies courses in London.

On 10 June, Harish and Bharat arranged for an evening of the play 'Lottery' to be performed at the Waterman's Theatre in London. This event was staged for the benefit of the Online Hindu Studies Course. The play, in Gujarati, was a very funny take on the issues surrounding an Indian family who win the lottery. The evening was sold out and more than £1500 was raised for the online learning project.

On 9 June, Subhash and Rekha Thakrar arranged a wonderful dinner in the garden of their home, in North West London. More than sixty people attended, including friends and associates of the family and some old Friends of the OCHS. Shaunaka Rishi outlined the aims and successes of the Centre and the challenges we face for the future. Aside from any digestive problems caused by the presentation, the participants enjoyed a lovely evening, very good food, and good friends.

June 21 marked an interesting development in OCHS history as thirteen golfers gathered in London to enjoy a fine course, have a great time, and give the proceeds, amounting to less than the usual course fee, to the OCHS – a classic win-win. The day raised £600 for the OCHS. All had such a good time that members want to bring more of their friends to start a golf society, regularly playing and contributing to a good educational initiative. Bharat Bhundia and Rasik Varsani pulled this group together and anyone interested in participating in future games or replicating the model in their area please write to bbhundia@compuserve.com.

On 9 July, 100 students from our Hindu Studies courses, along with their friends, came from Leicester, Birmingham, London, and Oxford to visit the

Centre. The day, blessed by sunny weather, included a tour of Oxford (including a chance to see where Harry Potter was filmed), a discussion with feedback on the courses in the Town Hall, and a lovely picnic, provided by Vijay Thakrar, our friend from Leicester. It was a great day for all and helped to draw the community of students and friends closer together. We hope to make this an annual event.

OCHS Friends become part of the life of the Centre, receiving updates, invitations to OCHS events, and information on the international issues and topics with which the Centre is concerned. As Friends begin to adopt projects at the Centre and advocate its value to their friends we are able to expand our community of support and our programmes.

Listings

Trustees and Board of Governors

The Trustees are also the current members of the OCHS Board of Governors. In addition to our previous Trustees, Dr Bettina Schmidt was appointed by the Theology Faculty as their official representative and Lord Dholakia was invited to join and kindly accepted the invitation.

Board of Governors

Dr S. Bhattacharya-Ford
Lord Dholakia, OBE, DL
Prof. Richard Gombrich
Peggy Morgan
Shaunaka Rishi Das
Dr Bettina Schmidt
Mrs Neerja Sethi
Prof. Keith Ward, FBA

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Academic Director – Prof. Gavin Flood
Development Officer – Dr Jessica Frazier
Administrative Secretary – Miss Judit Bajusz
Archivist – Miss Angela Burt

Fellows

Dr Gillian Evison
Dr Sanjukta Gupta
Peggy Morgan

Continuing Education Department

Dr Nicholas Sutton
Anuradha Dooney

Senior Associate Fellows

Prof. Francis X. Clooney, SJ
Prof. Thomas Hopkins
Prof. Joseph O'Connell
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 – Mr Bharat Bhundia, Shaunaka Rishi Das, Mr Sanjay Gadhvi, Mr Hasu Manek, Mr Nitin Palan, Mr Harish I.K. Patel, Mr Jayesh Popat, and Mr Subhash Thakrar – 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 Vijay Thakrar for leading the organisation of our Leicester launch, and Lalji Vekaria for sponsoring the all-important Board of Governors Dinner.

We 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

Consistent with its tradition of keeping costs down and encouraging voluntary service, the Board has continued its success in ensuring the true charitable nature of the OCHS. The OCHS Director and other administrative staff continue to work on a voluntary basis, saving in the region of £94,000 per annum.

The OCHS also retained the free professional services of a law firm, Bowling & Co, London; a designer – Mr Rasik Varsani, London; a web designer – Mr P. Tusler, Wales; and a photographer – Mr Pavel Tomanec, Oxford. Savings from these kind donors have amounted to nearly £13,000.

Other friends and businesses have been kind to the Centre by charging very reduced rates for services. These include our accountants, Macilvin Moore Reverses, Harrow; our printers Aartus Ltd, Leicester; our computer consultants and stationary suppliers Quest Software and Stagprint, London. Savings from these sources amount to £6,600.

During this period, benefactors, such as Harish I. K. Patel, Vijay Thakrar, Ramesh Shamdasani, Upendra Kalan, Pramod Thakkar, and Nidhi Dalmia offered their own valuable time and worked hard to save expense, and the time of OCHS staff.

Other significant voluntary service has been very gratefully received from Dr Nicholas Sutton (teaching and curriculum development), Anuradha Dooney (teaching), Meru Ostlund (cooking), Dave Smith (web-servers), Lal Krishna (editing), Bharat Bhundia and Aleksandra Miacz (book-keeping), Ravi Gupta (fund development), Sanjay Gadhvi (mobile phone contract), Kiyokazu Okita (organising Wednesday student lunches), and Prafulla Raja (CED Administration).

All these contributions are saving us considerable time, effort, and expense. Their service has been invaluable because of their heartfelt offering to the cause of good education and thousands of pounds have been saved and donated to the OCHS by their thoughtfulness and commitment.

Donors

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

PJH Investments, Syntel Europe Ltd, Emerging Markets Group (UK) Ltd, The Trustees of the Jalaram Charitable Trust, Manek Investments, Popat Vaishnava Heritage Trust, Arpan Insurance, ICICI Bank, Yorkshire Bank (Clydesdale Bank), Jan Kshatriya Sevak Mandal, DT Group, Sai Investment, Johar and Co., Kagdadia and Co., Belvoir Sportswear, and HSBC Bank.

Alfred B. Ford, Rajesh Somani, Neerja Sethi and Bharat Desai, Azad Shivdasani, Shailesh Govindia, Ramesh Shah, Dhansukh Lad, Hasu Manek, Todd and Amanda Wahlstrom, Pramod Thakkar, Prashun Popat, Jayesh Popat, Vinit Patel, Kamlesh Patel, Suresh Gohil, Subhash Thakrar, Vijay C. Thakrar, Bheeshma and Jayalakshmi Rajagopalan, Pyarelal Patel, Upendra Kalan, Sushil Wadhvani, Jayanti Chandarana, Divyesh Tailor, Jay Pabari, Ashwin Kagdadia, Deepak Johar, Prakash Bhojani, Ramesh Shamdasani, and Harish I. K. Patel

Accounts and finance January–December 2005

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.

Also 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 Reveres, 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

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Think Hindu Culture, Think OCHS

The world's leading institution dedicated to education, research and publishing in the field of Hindu Studies.

We focus on exploring, explaining and preserving Hindu Culture, making it more accessible to a global society.

As a "Recognized Independent Centre of Oxford University", OCHS maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and excellence.

Our commitment to good scholarship promotes mutual respect and understanding between communities, and brings new insights into the wonderful heritage of Indian history and culture.

