

# The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies Board of Governors Report 2006–7



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## **Chairman's report**

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The academic year began with the Centre gaining Recognised Independent Centre (RIC) status from Oxford University. The importance of this achievement cannot be underestimated – it was acknowledgment of the Centre's academic status by one of the world's great academic institutions.

RIC status bore witness to the tremendous academic growth of the OCHS in a short space of time. It also leaves us with the responsibility of consolidating this growth and providing a platform for future growth. This means cultivating friends and attracting funds.

2006–7 saw years of consultancy with many of our supporters, particularly those in the Indian business community, bear fruit. These supporters gave freely of their creativity and experience to advise on marketing, fundraising, infrastructure development, and communications. All of this fed into the Centre's vision of a firm foundation for future growth. It helped the Centre formalise and flesh out that vision with a plan and helped in the development of a fundraising structure to fulfil the plan.

We prepare for the academic year 2007–8 a more functionally efficient body. We see the beginnings of a strengthened infrastructure, marked with the arrival of new support staff whose goal is to make the Centre more effective. Alongside this, we see a commitment by our Friends and Benefactors to support the Centre financially with five-year pledges to make all this possible.

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is now a national institution that deserves our respect and support. I thank all the sincere people who have made the Centre's vision their own and have brought it to where it is today.

The RIC status was a major step in our growth, structural developments were the next logical step. With these we can confidently approach the next academic year with an aim to consolidate and grow and to play a larger role in public discourse – to engage constructively with government, media, and education, in the challenges of the new millennium.

***Lord Navnit Dholakia, OBE DL***

***Chairman of the Board of Governors, OCHS***

## **Dating of reports**

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The OCHS Board of Governors Report covers the academic year. The financials are reported according to our financial year (January–December).

## Academic Director's report

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Who speaks for Hinduism? Even defining the term 'Hinduism' is a difficult if not impossible task.

Some would say that the term denotes the religion of the majority of people in India and Nepal and some communities in other continents. Some would claim that Hinduism has an essence that can be articulated, such as belief in the Veda as revelation or the unity of an absolute reality with different aspects. Some would offer a sociological definition that to be a Hindu is to be born into a particular segment of Indian society. Yet others claim that there is no such thing as Hinduism, that the term 'religion' cannot be applied to it, that it is purely a construction of the colonial era – the projection of a unitary entity onto a vast array of diverse traditions.

At the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies these and other vital issues are addressed in an open manner in the spirit of dialogue, critical enquiry, and the search for truth and knowledge. The function of the OCHS is the academic study of Hinduism (however complex that term is), to promote a critical enquiry into Hinduism, and to allow for the articulation of intellectual enquiry by Hindus.

At the OCHS we approach Hinduism from a number of perspectives and disciplines: from Indology (the philological and critical study of texts), from Philosophy (reasoning about life), Theology (the enquiry into what is regarded as revelation), from Anthropology (the study of the human person in communities), and from Religious Studies (the historical and descriptive account of what it is to be a Hindu).

To study Hinduism we need multiple tools and we need to draw on a number of academic disciplines in order to understand the many layers of the tradition.

At the OCHS we seek understanding within a framework of critical, although sympathetic, enquiry. We believe that one of the functions of OCHS is to create the conditions for critical enquiry into the tradition from within the tradition itself; in other words the development of Hindu theology from within the tradition as well as from perspectives outside of the tradition.

This is not to say that OCHS promotes a particular view of Hinduism, it does not, or that it is confessional in its approach, it is not that either. Indeed, far from promoting a particular view of Hinduism, we actively encourage our students to become exposed to as many intellectual influences as possible and to pursue rigour in their work. Our students not only study the philosophies of Shankara, Ramanuja, or K. C. Bhattacharya, or the practices of yoga and devotion, but they might also study the theories of Freud, Marx, or Weber, and even feminist, post-structural enquiry in the work of Julia Kristeva and others.

At the OCHS we are proud of the students who have passed through our doors, some of whom have gone on to hold academic positions at respectable universities and other institutions of higher education. The academic values that the OCHS adheres to, of open minded investigation, tolerance of diverse views, and friendship, are present in all our avenues of study. Indeed, this somewhat intangible spirit or ethos is central to the success of OCHS and has been remarked upon by students and visiting scholars alike.

As well as academic enquiry, part of the remit of the OCHS is to address broader public and governmental concerns about Hindu communities, especially in the UK.

The issue of the legitimacy of religion in the public sphere is of vital contemporary importance and is highly politically sensitive. There has been much discussion in recent years about the notion of citizenship and how or if people can maintain cultural identities while functioning as citizens in contemporary liberal democracies. There are practical issues at stake here, for example, the issue of the desirability of faith schools. OCHS can provide information that contributes to these debates and can raise questions about the relation of religious law to secular law and what happens when they conflict (as in the case of open air cremations).

We are developing the OCHS as a source of intelligent commentary focussed on the kinds of questions outlined above, within an ethos of critical, creative and engaged dialogue. This has led to initiatives including scholars at the Centre acting as consultants for the Dow Jones Dharma Index, acting as consultants for the National Health Service, the BBC Web Services, the All Faiths and None project, the Church of England, and the UK Punjab Heritage Association.

We have been interviewed for three TV documentaries, two radio news items, six Prayer for the Day broadcasts on Radio 4, and two BBC Radio documentaries during the academic year of 2006–07.

We gave advice for enquiries from schools, to TV companies, newspapers, magazines (including *Time* and *National Geographic*), and to radio broadcasters. We have also provided expert opinion in three legal cases involving interpretation of Hindu culture and tradition. We have provided expertise for the Dutch business consultancy programme, Avicenna, and have written contributions for *Keesing's Yearbook*, *The Guardian*, and Asian newspapers.

Over the next five years OCHS intends to see that all these core activities continue and develop in the future and that we also develop in new directions in order to become the world's foremost centre for the study of Hinduism.

***Prof. Gavin Flood***

***Academic Director***

## **Academic report**

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### **Appointments**

The Academic Appointments Committee is pleased to have secured the services of Prof. Gavin Flood as Academic Director for a further five years.

Dr Jessica Frazier has moved from the post of Development Officer to Academic Administrator, working closely with the Academic Director and the Director to ensure the smooth administration of all academic committees, programmes, scholarships, fellowships, and research projects.

### **Teaching**

One of the main functions of OCHS is to provide teaching for Track III of the Theology degree, along with the supervision of M.St., M.Phil., and D.Phil. students. Along with Hinduism I and II Prof. Flood has offered seminar series 'Introduction to Tantric

Traditions’ and ‘Theories of the Text’, and the lectures, seminars, conferences, and symposia hosted by the Centre also contributed to University-wide teaching on these subjects.

Now that Prof. Flood’s position as Academic Director has been secured for the coming five years it will be possible to develop a number of new teaching directions. Along with Hinduism I and II, in future years Prof. Flood intends to offer courses within his areas of specialisation and in broader fields. Thus in the Michaelmas term 2007 he will offer a seminar series ‘Readings in Phenomenology’ that complements the ‘Theories of the Text’ seminar series offered in the Michaelmas term 2006. He also intends to develop ‘Hindu scriptural reasoning’, which involves the reading of key scriptural sources in translation, and discussing those texts in small groups. This is based on the model of scriptural reasoning developed at the universities of Cambridge and Virginia where texts from three scriptural traditions are read alongside each other.

From next year Prof. Flood will be the director of the M.St. (Master of Studies) in the Study of Religions and this will continue to attract students interested in studying Hinduism to our programmes. He has also been involved with developing a joint honours programme in Theology and Oriental Studies although it remains to be seen whether this will materialise.

Both the Academic Director and the Director have been pleased with how OCHS students have been developing in the last two years and that many are now moving on to establish their place in the world.

## **Research**

There are two general trajectories that we intend to pursue, theology and philosophy on the one hand and Hinduism in the public sphere, on the other, and we intend to facilitate research in both areas. The Academic Planning Committee regularly meets to invite, explore, and develop new projects, and is happy to consider proposals from staff and students. While some projects grow organically out of research being carried out by OCHS members, the OCHS also aims to develop a wider range of projects in conjunction with other scholars and institutions (such as archaeology and text) that fall within the remit of the Centre. One such project is ‘Religion as Reading’ which the Centre is intending to pursue in collaboration with Kings College.

## **Conference: Desire in Christianity and Indian Religions**

The ‘Desire in Christianity and Indian Religions’ conference was held at Regents Park College on 9 November and was hosted by Regents Park College and co-organised with the OCHS. There were opening addresses by Prof. Paul Fiddes, Principal Emeritus and Professorial Research Fellow of Regent’s Park College, and OCHS Academic Director, Prof. Gavin Flood.

Proceedings were launched by Prof. Keith Ward who opened up the issues in an engaging and entertaining way with a lecture on desire and responses to desire in Christianity. This was followed by Dr Ulrike Roesler speaking about desire in Buddhism and broadening the topic to a general consideration of emotion and human want with particular reference to Mahayana Buddhism.

Dr Dermott Killingley spoke about ambivalent attitudes toward desire in Hinduism. Dr Killingley brought out these attitudes with reference to particular texts and traditions.

Each of the three speakers formally responded to a paper followed by general questions and discussion.

The Conference was a key event in the OCHS's engagement in Comparative Religion, one of the most important developments in contemporary academics.

### **Global partnerships**

The development of Hindu Studies is now a global concern, yielding affiliations that bring together scholars, students, fresh perspectives, and new insights, in a common appreciation of Hindu culture and its importance for the world.

#### **Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda**

Scholars and public figures have expressed concern that India is losing appreciation of its religious history due to a lack of objective study of Hindu culture in colleges and universities. The Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU) of Baroda, one of Gujarat's largest universities, has embraced this challenge.

In 2006, the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies welcomed Mr Manoj Soni, the Vice Chancellor of MSU, to Oxford, to discuss ways to enrich the study of the Hindu tradition in Indian higher education. That discussion has resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and MSU, stating their shared aim to 'foster and facilitate a collaborative relationship to enrich and expand studies related to Hindu culture, religion, languages, literature, philosophy, history, arts, and society, in all periods and in all parts of the world.'

The OCHS anticipates Oxford scholars visiting India and new Shivdasani visiting scholars from Baroda bringing their unique perspective to Oxford as a result of this agreement.

OCHS is also making plans for a Joint Consultative Group comprising representatives of MSU, OCHS, independent scholars, and philanthropists.

There are also plans for an international conference of senior scholars from Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard with Indian scholars to look at the idea of religious studies in India from an interdisciplinary perspective.

#### **University of Florida**

The OCHS has also agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Florida.

In 2005 Professor Vasudha Narayanan, the University of Florida's Distinguished Professor of Religion, came to the OCHS as a visiting scholar. After two months of discussion, discovery, and earnest exchange, she carried the Centre's unique vision back to Florida with her.

One year later the Centre for the Study of Hindu Traditions (CHiTra) was born at the University of Florida in Gainesville, aiming to 'enrich the understanding of Hinduism within the academic community and among the general public'.

The Centre in Florida embraces Hindu diaspora studies, Indian arts, and collaborative learning.

### **Future programmes**

We aim to build on the success of local and national symposia with an international

conference organised in conjunction with Dr H. Prabha Ray (JNU). The OCHS conference on 'Archaeology and Text' will be held in Oxford during Michaelmas term 2007. We also intend to develop a regular programme of conferences and colloquia and have begun discussion on a conference developing our philosophy-theology direction on the idea of the gunas. This conference is intended to be inter-disciplinary and to attract interest from Philosophy, Indology, and Theology.

## Fellows and students

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### 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 (JNU), New Delhi. In her research she adopts an inter-disciplinary approach for a study of the archaeology of religion in South Asia. 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)'.

Following her work at Oxford, she is organising the 'Archaeology and text: The temple in South Asia' colloquium in Oxford on 20–21 October 2007. This colloquium is an attempt at bridging the gap that exists between textual studies and archaeology with a focus on the Hindu temple. The OCHS has invited twenty leading scholars from India, Canada, the USA, Russia, France, Germany, and the UK to this international event.

#### ***Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term***

Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar is Professor in Sanskrit Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University and specialises in Nyaya-Vaisesika. She has published widely in this field over the past thirty years and has particular interest in the idea of consciousness in Nyaya, as well as the early history of the school.

During her stay at the OCHS she delivered two lectures and presented two seminars (see details in Lectures and Seminars section). Besides these, she delivered a talk to the Continuing Education Department, a talk on the *Kathopanisad* and on 'Vedic yajna: From ritual to spiritual'.

She held classes with the research scholars of the Centre helping them with the intricacies of Sanskrit language and the subtleties of the philosophical concepts involved.

She also held two weekly classes with the students of the Centre on Sanskrit Language and Tarkasamgraha.

While teaching the latter course, she found she couldn't recommend a suitable

reference on the subject and noted the lack of an introductory, comprehensive book on Vaishesika. Encouraged by her students and the Director and Academic Director, she is preparing a proposal to author such a book with Routledge for publication under the Hindu Studies Series. Meanwhile, she has prepared a first draft of the book.

As well as the facilities Oxford offers, including the Indian Institute Library and seminars and lectures at the Centre and University, Prof. Kumar greatly appreciated the atmosphere at the Centre: 'During my eight week stay I never felt that I was away from my home. The Centre is very warm and friendly.'

***Dr Sangeetha Menon, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term***

Dr Sangeetha Menon graduated in Zoology, and then took her postgraduate degree in philosophy from the University of Kerala, with a thesis entitled 'The Concept of Consciousness in the *Bhagavad-gita*'. A gold-medallist and first rank holder for postgraduate studies, she has been a fellow at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, since 1996.

As a Shivdasani Visiting Fellow at the OCHS for the Trinity Term, Dr Menon focused on her work on 'Emotions, Experience and Consciousness: A Comparative Study of Darwin, Ekman, and Natyasastra'. She is working towards a monograph that looks at the implications of the current trends in the study of emotions, their empirical correlates, and how the contemporary psychological/philosophical models could be presented with models from Indian psychology and dramaturgy with particular reference to *Natyasastra*.

This study will also contribute to her book *Consciousness, Agency and Spiritual Experiences*, which looks at 'agency' in the context of three forms of spiritual experiences with their bases on love, knowledge, and aesthetic experience.

Dr Menon's Fellowship at the OCHS, and her exposure to the scholarship at the Centre and in Oxford has greatly contributed to the academic inputs for this study. For details on Dr Menon's lectures at the OCHS, please see the 'Lectures and Seminars' section of this report.

## **First among firsts**

Claire Robison, our first ever undergraduate student, completed her degree with a First that placed her first in her year in Oxford University's Theology Faculty. She also received the Denyer and Johnson prize, awarded on the recommendation of the examiners in the Final Honour School of Theology.

Claire's study was a combination of Christian and Biblical studies and the study of Hinduism, particularly Vaishnavism.

During her stay in Oxford, Claire served as the undergraduate representative of the Religious Studies Society in Oxford. She was awarded the Horton Davies Prize by Mansfield College in 2006 for being the most outstanding second year theologian.

Next year Claire will be studying for a Masters Degree at Cambridge in Theology and Religious Studies, focusing on Hindu traditions and touching on Indian Buddhist traditions.

## New students

### Mrinal Kaul, India, St Cross College

BA (Hons.) Sanskrit, St Stephen's College, University of Delhi; Certificate Course in Manuscriptology, Center of Advanced Study in Sanskrit, University of Pune; MA Sanskrit (with specialisation in Nyaya), University of Pune; An advanced course in the Indian Grammatical Traditions, Center of Advanced Study in Sanskrit, University of Pune; MA Sanskrit, (with specialisation in Indian Philosophy) St Stephen's College, University of Delhi. Mrinal is currently pursuing an M.St. in Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford. His major theme of research is Kashmir Saivism. He plans to research his doctoral thesis at Oxford.

### Sadhu Paramtattvadas, UK, Mansfield College

MA in Sanskrit, from Karnataka State Open University (Mysore, India), 2004; Acharya (MA equivalent) in Vedanta; Shastri (BA equivalent) in Nyaya (Indian Logic); and Shastri (BA equivalent) in Vyakarana (Sanskrit Grammar), all from Shri Yagnapurush Sanskrit Vidyalaya (Sarangpur, India), 1998–2003. Currently pursuing an M.St. in The Study of Religion.

### Bhavisha Tailor, UK, Mansfield College

B.Sc. Sociology, University of Bath and M.Sc. Development Studies, London School of Economics. Currently pursuing M.St. in the Study of Religions (specifically Buddhism and Hinduism), University of Oxford.

### Jessamine Dana, USA, Wolfson College

Jessamine has an M.Phil. in Material Anthropology and Museum Ethnography from the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford University. She is currently enrolled as a D.Phil. student in Social and Cultural Anthropology studying ritual anthropology of the senses, religious politics, phenomenology, and Buddhist and Hindu Studies.

### Trent Moyer, USA, Hertford College

Trent is a visiting student of religion and political change from George Mason University in Virginia. At Oxford he is studying Hinduism and Buddhism. His research and life interest is the intersection of religious traditions and social movements in the contemporary political scene.

## Degrees awarded

### Mrinal Kaul

M.St. in Oriental Studies. Thesis topic: *Causality and Ontological Hierarchy in the Tantraaloka*

### Sadhu Paramtattvadas

M.St. in The Study of Religion. Thesis topic: *The Ontological Distinction between 'Brahman' and 'Parabrahman' in the Swaminarayan Vedanta Tradition*

**Claire Robison**

BA Theology

**Bhavisha Tailor**

M.St. in the Study of Religions. Thesis topic: *The Way of Bhakti in the Nirguna and Saguna Sant Traditions*

**Awards for OCHS students****Ashvatta Narayan Bursary**

Mrinal Kaul  
Jonathan Edelmann

**Denyer and Johnson Prize**

*Awarded by Oxford University School of Theology*  
Clare Robison

**Gupta Dan Bursary**

Clare Robison

**Horton Davies Prize (Mansfield College)**

*For most outstanding second year theologian*  
Claire Robison

**Jiva Gosvami Bursary**

Rembert Lutjeharms

**Pundit Abaji Bursary**

Param Tattva Swami

**Library**

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The OCHS Library works closely with Oxford's Indian Institute Library. It currently holds approximately 5,000 titles, mostly in the fields of Vaishnavism and Vedanta. There are plans to expand the Purana section and Comparative Theology section. The Library has received numerous donations, notably a sizeable library and archive collection from the estate of Rev. Murray Rodgers.

Other donors for 2006–7 include Shaunaka Rishi Das, Meru Ostlund, Prof. M. Narasimhacharya, Kenneth Valpey, Rembert Lutjeharms, Jonathan Edelmann, Lal Krishna, Anna-pya Sjödin, Guy Beck, O. P. Gupta, Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar, Dr Sangeetha Menon, Sandy Bharat, and Willy Pfändtner.

## Publishing

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### Routledge Hindu Studies Series

The Routledge Hindu Studies Series, in association with OCHS, is going from strength to strength under the auspices of its 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.

***This year's titles are:***

*Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata:* Editors - Simon Brodbeck, Brian Black

*The Chaitanya Vaishnava Vedanta of Jiva Gosvami: When Knowledge Meets Devotion:* Ravi M Gupta

*Self-Surrender (prapatti) to God in Shrivaisnavism: Tamil Cats or Sanskrit Monkeys?:* Srilata Raman

*Classical Samkhya and Yoga: An Indian Metaphysics of Experience:* Mikel Burley

*Advaita Vedanta and Vaisnavism: The Philosophy of Madhusudana Sarasvati:* Sanjukta Gupta

Please see appendix for further details on each of these titles.

### Journal of Hindu Studies

The OCHS is in discussion with Oxford University Press regarding the publication of a bi-annual Journal of Hindu Studies.

The Journal would focus on 'critical connection' themes that address issues of theory and method in Hindu Studies. It will aim to create a forum for constructive interdisciplinary discourse by linking eminent scholars with the wider community of researchers.

### 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 and the facility to listen online or subscribe to podcasts. We currently have more than 15,000 subscribers.

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

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Over the last twelve months the Continuing Education Department has taught courses on Hindu Studies in five locations – Leicester, Harrow, Ilford, Birmingham, and Oxford – with approximately 110 students enrolled. All courses are validated by the University

of Wales, Lampeter, with the option to pursue a Certificate in Hindu Studies.

In Leicester, Harrow, and Ilford, twelve modules have been completed and courses at a higher level were offered. However, it seems that these more advanced courses are less popular with our student group and hence the decision has been taken to revert to the courses already available and to repeat these modules with the new students. In Oxford and Birmingham we will continue and complete the Certificate modules.

We are currently working on rewriting the existing modules in a distance-learning format so that the course can be made available internationally by means of a web-based package. This will be launched when five modules are written and available.

The departure of a key member of the teaching staff, Anuradha Dooney, has led to the decision being taken to reduce the level of taught provision for the upcoming academic year. For this year we propose to launch the course again in Harrow, where there is the greatest student demand, and to continue with the Certificate course in Birmingham and Oxford. For this year there will be no provision in Ilford and Leicester. This will give us the opportunity to improve the course materials, to publicise the courses, and identify suitable teachers so that the Certificate Course can be re-launched in Leicester and Ilford for the 2008–9 academic year.

## **Development activities and achievements**

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### **Board of Governors Dinner**

The 2007 Board of Governors Dinner was held on 22 June at Oxford Town Hall. It was an excellent opportunity for supporters of the Centre to meet and share good food and good company. Highlights of the dinner, generously sponsored by MP Bros., were talks by Lord Dholakia, Chair of the Board of Governors, and Prof. Gavin Flood, our Academic Director. These Dinners have become a favourite fixture in our calendar.

### **OCHS in the public sphere**

We receive many enquiries from media and religious and government institutions to arrange speakers, writers, and commentators on issues relating to Hindu culture. Building on the ethos of academic integrity at the Centre we can help students and academic staff find their voices. Through our enquiries we are able to arrange opportunities to broadcast, lecture, and write, thus challenging their thinking and sharpening their presentations. We want to develop experienced, articulate, and broad-minded commentators on issues of Hindu culture and traditions.

Students and scholars of the Centre:

- Acted as consultants for the Dow Jones, the National Health Service, BBC Web Services, the All Faiths and None Project, the Church of England's Education Division, and the UK Punjab Heritage Association;
- Were interviewed for three TV documentaries, two radio news items, six 'Prayer for the Day' broadcasts on BBC Radio 4, and two BBC Radio documentaries;
- Gave advice for 36 enquiries to schools, TV companies, newspapers, magazines, and radio broadcasters. This list includes enquiries from *Time* magazine and *National Geographic*.

- Provided expert opinion in three legal cases involving interpretation of Hindu culture and tradition;
- Wrote contributions for published articles in *Keesings Yearbook*, *The Guardian*, Asian newspapers, and a letter submitted to *The Times* regarding Hindu temples and eroticism.

Included among extracurricular lectures, seminars, and presentations by OCHS members are:

- ‘Hinduism is Not the Truth’, Manchester Metropolitan University
- ‘Idols, Strange Gods and Caste: How Do We Understand Hindus?’, Cambridge Student Methodist Society
- ‘Jesus and Krishna’, with Rev Marcus Braybrooke, The Abbey at Sutton Courtenay
- Four separate lectures and workshops on ‘Hinduism and Leadership’, organised by Avicenna International
- ‘Encountering Other Faiths’, Regent’s Park College and Mansfield College
- Interfaith panel discussion, Oxford Town Hall
- Two presentations to the Oxford Hindu Students Society (HUM)
- Workshop for the Youth and Community Work and Applied Theology course, Brookes University
- ‘The Future of Hindu Archives’, The Religious Archive Group Conference 2007
- Seven presentations at temples and communities around the country

### **Dow Jones consultation**

In October 2006, we were approached by Emerging Markets Group (EMG), London, to help advise on the development of a formal proprietary document of Hindu principles and values that could be used to guide ethical investment with the ultimate intention of creating a series of Hindu equity indexes in collaboration with Dow Jones, a leading international provider of Indexes. It is expected that this family of Indexes will be known as the Dow Jones Dharma Indexes.

The OCHS has since organised consultations with senior scholars from the UK, US, and India, and as a result of this process expanded the brief to include Buddhism in the project. The consultative group formulated a document of guiding principles to be taken into consideration when deciding if an investment is Hindu- and Buddhist-friendly or not.

EMG further asked OCHS to propose a Supervisory Board for the ongoing monitoring of the constituency of these Indexes and on which OCHS would retain a permanent seat. Broadly – the Board’s role is to determine which companies and business sectors conform to the accepted guiding principles, and to further interpret borderline cases. The Supervisory Board will be assisted in this endeavour by another body proposed by the OCHS, the Religious Advisory Council, a council of revered spiritual leaders, who will support and bless the initiative and who may be consulted in extraordinary cases.

The Dharma Index project is very important as it will represent the first time that Hindu/Buddhist values will be incorporated into a form of financial security allowing for ethical investing. It will grant wide access and publicity to Hindu and Buddhist perspectives on non-violence and care for the planet, and hopefully encourage a wide audience to consider sound ethical investment. This done in association with Dow

Jones, one of the most respected firms in the world of finance, allows for significant exposure and credibility for OCHS.

The OCHS will continue as principal academic consultant to EMG for this index which is expected to be launched globally by Dow Jones and EMG in December 2007.

### **House of Lords press conference**

In July 2006, Lord Dholakia hosted a press conference at the House of Lords aimed at bringing our Recognised Independent Centre status to the wider public attention.

As well as presentations by Lord Dholakia and Prof. Gavin Flood, there was a statement by the Indian High Commissioner, read by his assistant, Dr Kulkarni.

### **Deficit campaign**

At the end of 2006 there was a budget shortfall of £40,000 for the year. To help resolve this situation, a special meeting of OCHS Benefactors and Friends was called on 16 November. The resulting Deficit Campaign was very successful and raised pledges for £41,500. The campaign was co-ordinated by Dr Ramesh Shamdasani. The other Campaign Team members were Harish I. K. Patel, Kamlesh Patel, Jaimin Patel, Jai Vadhar, and Patrick Tusler.

### **Fund development strategy**

The purpose of this strategy is to achieve financial security and future development for the period 2007–11. This is part of our two-pronged Friends and Funds programme for Friend-raising and Fund-raising. Full details of this strategy are available on the web at [www.ochs.org.uk/bg/downloads.html](http://www.ochs.org.uk/bg/downloads.html).

The first phase of the Centre's development was realised with the granting of Recognised Independent Centre status by Oxford University.

The second phase of OCHS development is to ensure that our annual revenue matches our current operating budget. The Annual Revenue Campaign, chaired by Lord Dholakia, will be the vehicle used to realise this goal. We are seeking £250,000 per year for 2007–11. So far more than half of this amount has been pledged.

The third phase of development will be the launch of our Endowment Campaign. Our long term financial stability rests on our ability to achieve significant endowments for lectureships, scholarships, research, and publishing. This campaign is aimed at high-net-worth individuals and corporations. The first and second phases provide the most credible basis for us to launch this campaign. We are aiming to raise £8m with this campaign.

We will also encourage Annual Appeals for special projects, developed and run by OCHS Benefactors. This can include distinct campaigns for areas such as scholarships, library expansion, IT, or student accommodation.

### **Launch of Annual Revenue Campaign**

Having received official recognition from the University, the next step in our development is to consolidate our finances for at least the next five years. This is the aim of the Annual Revenue Campaign which seeks to raise £250,000 per year for five years (2007–11). This will enable us to make the essential academic and administrative appointments necessary to maintain our educational ethos and develop our ability to

facilitate gifted students and scholars.

Although only launched in December 2006, this campaign, headed by Lord Dholakia, has reached more than half its target.

## **Infrastructure development**

Infrastructure developments are aimed at improving efficiency, accountability, and smooth succession. All three of these aims will be assisted by the development of a series of administrative handbooks, strategy documents, and reports listed below.

### ***Governance***

- OCHS 01 Declaration of Trust (completed)
- OCHS 02 RIC Agreement (completed)

### ***Strategy***

- OCHS 03 Academic Strategy (in progress)
- OCHS 04 Business Plan (in progress)
- OCHS 05 Friends and Funds Strategy (completed)

### ***Reports***

- OCHS 06 Annual Report (this document)
- OCHS 07 Audited Annual Accounts (completed)

### ***Handbooks***

- OCHS 08 Board of Governors Handbook (completed)
- OCHS 09 Friends and Funds Manual (completed)
- OCHS 10 Administration Handbook (in progress)
- OCHS 11 Staff Handbook (in progress)
- OCHS 12 Student Handbook (in progress)
- OCHS 13 Visiting Scholars Handbook (completed)
- OCHS 14 CED Student Handbook (completed)

### ***Support Publications***

- OCHS 15 OCHS Brochure (in progress)
- OCHS 16 Friends and Funds Case for Support (completed)

## **Staff**

Dr Jessica Frazier has moved from the post of Development Officer to Academic Administrator, working closely with the Academic Director and the Director to ensure the smooth administration of all academic committees, programmes, scholarships, fellowships, and research projects.

We have also appointed a Development Administrator, Lal Krishna, whose main roles are database development and supporting the Director in fund development.

Two important roles that remain unfilled are Bursar and Administrative Secretary.

## **British Council and Royal Commonwealth Society**

In November 2006, OCHS worked with the British Council and the Royal Commonwealth Society to organise a panel debate bringing together top scholars in Indian history, religion, and philosophy to discuss 'The Hindu phenomenon: Perspectives on India's Past, Present, and Future'. A wide range of thought-provoking questions from the audience turned the lecture into a lively discussion touching on topics from Hindu ethics to India's present economic success.

## Diwali at the Ashmolean Museum

We held a Diwali event in association with the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, where members of the Centre explained the festival, told stories, and held a special event for children.

## Friends events

At a meeting of benefactors in May, it was suggested that each of our Benefactors Council organise one event to aid the OCHS every three years. That would mean a calendar with one event per month. This would benefit the OCHS greatly in terms of finance and profile-raising and would not be too taxing on members.

The first of these events was a Golf Day on Thursday 7 June 2007. Thanks to Bharat Bhundia for coming up with the idea, Rasik Varsani, Jayesh Popat and Dinesh Hirani for inviting guests, and Mansuk Jivraj for supplying snacks during the day. We would like to see this become a regular event.

Preceding events held by friends inspired this development. These include Rajesh Somani and Ash Unadkat organising a *bhajan* evening with the Sangeet Sarita Group at the Watersmeet Theatre in Rickmansworth; Vinit A. Patel, a long time student in our Hindu Studies class in Harrow, and his wife Hema, organising a lovely evening in their home and inviting 40 of their friends for dinner and a discussion about the need for education in the community; and Neha Datta and Shruti Shah organising 'Raas ki Shyaam', a night of *garba*, *dandiya*, and colour to celebrate Holi 2007 and raise funds for the Centre.

## CED visit

On 9 July 2006, a hundred students from our Hindu Studies courses, along with their friends, came from Leicester, Birmingham, London, and Oxford to visit the Centre. The day included a tour of Oxford, a discussion with feedback on the courses in the Town Hall, and a picnic, provided by Vijay Thakrar, our friend from Leicester.

## IIT visit

In July 2006, we hosted the annual outing of the IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) Alumni UK where we had 50 participants. Since their first visit to the OCHS in 2004, several IIT members have become Friends of the Centre helping push forward its vision in very practical ways.

## Dubai visit

Rajesh Somani, from London, organised a visit to Dubai by the Director. Rajesh arranged travel and accommodation for Shaunaka Risihi to go and make presentations about the Centre and establish new connections in a new world.

## Benefactors and friends

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### Benefactors Council

Our Benefactors are meeting to suggest proposals for the formation of a Benefactors

Council, similar to many of the established Friends organisations attached to Oxford institutions. It is hoped this will be the beginning of a process that will result in our Benefactors convening our biannual Benefactors meetings, establishing an annual Benefactors dinner, and other responsibilities.

## **Volunteers**

In keeping with our tradition of encouraging voluntary service and keeping costs down, we are safeguarding 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 £145,000 per annum.

The OCHS also retained the free professional services of a law firm, Bowling and Co, London; a designer – Mr Rasik Varsani, London; a web designer – Mr P. Tusler, Wales, who upgraded the whole of the site this year; and a photographer – Mr Pavel Tomanec who also produced a nine-minute promotional video for the Centre. Savings from these kind donors have amounted to nearly £21,000.

Other friends and businesses have been kind to the Centre by charging greatly 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 £7,500.

During this period, benefactors, such as Harish I. K. Patel, Ramesh Shamdasani, Kamlesh Patel, Upendra Kalan, Pramod Thakkar, Bharat Bhundia, Dinesh Hirani, and Rajesh Somani offered their 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), Sanjay Gadhvi (mobile phone contract), Gopal Gupta (organising Wednesday student lunches), and Prafulla Raja, Kyati Acharya, Neha Datta, and Sruti Shah (CED Student Secretaries).

All these contributors 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 like to thank Ramesh Shamdasani of the Shamdasani Foundation for funding the student's house renovation and MP Brothers for doing a first class job at a reduced rate. The house itself has been provided rent-free by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust for the past decade.

MP Brothers also contributed to the renovation work at our offices in Magdalen St. Danny Patel and Showki Anwar Aziz of Quest Software replaced our file server and five of our computers.

This year we would like to give special thanks to the Jalaram Charitable Trust who have generously supported the Centre for the past four years. It is particularly encouraging to see a Hindu community recognising the cause of education to be a solid investment in its future. It is an example we hope more communities will follow.

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

Azad Shivdasani, Alfred Ford, Todd Wahlstrom, Ragini Patel, Greg Stein, Hari Hariharan, Ramesh and Monica Shamdasani, Divyesh Tailor, Rajesh Somani, Prashun Popat, Lalji Vekaria, Sunil Gadhia, Vinit Patel, Arjan Vekaria, Hasu Manek, Jayesh Popat, Akber Moawalla, George Jatania, Danny Patel, Shailesh Govindia, Ravji M. Hirani (on behalf of Madhavpriya Dasji Swami), Nitin Palan, Vijay Thakkar, Bheeshma and Jayalakshmi Rajagopalan, Ashwin Kagdadia, Ravi Gupta, Subhash Thakrar, Jayesh Patel, and Nitin Sodha.

Jalaram Charitable Trust, Rags and Svets Ltd, Benjamin Toys Ltd, Popat Vaishnava Heritage Trust, Leila Creations, Brittanica Commercial Ltd, Vascroft Foundation, Manek Investment Management, Swaminarayan Hindu Mission, Quest Software, Emerging Market Group Ltd, Golden Tours, and AGK Ltd.

## **Accounts and finance January–December 2006**

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Our audited accounts show an increase in income of more than 25% from 2005. However, our expenditure for 2006 exceeded our income by £12,456. Our assets and liabilities were in deficit by £5,452.

The Centre has continued to benefit greatly from voluntary work and ‘in kind’ donations – these have amounted to more than £145,000 in this period – which add great value to the Centre.

Also of significant note is the ratio of direct charitable expenditure to administration costs – £164,060 and £10,741 respectively. This represents excellent value for donors with direct expenditure on core educational activity being 94% on total income.

Mr Upendra Kalan with Miss Judit Bajusz were our book-keepers for 2006. Our audit continues to be done by our accountants, Macilvin Moore Reverses, 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 work to attain financial stability for the long term goes on and the Board is encouraged by the current Annual Revenue Campaign undertaken by Friends and Benefactors of the Centre.

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**

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This report was approved by the Board of Governors and Trustees on 22 June 2007 and signed on its behalf by Lord Navnit Dholakia, OBE DL.

## **Appendix one: Organisation**

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### **Organisational structure**

#### **Director**

Mr Shaunaka Rishi Das

#### **Academic Director**

Prof. Gavin Flood

#### **Finance Administrator**

Mr Upendra Kalan

#### **Academic Administrator**

Dr Jessica Frazier

#### **Development Administrator**

Mr Lal Krishna

#### **Administrative Secretary**

Miss Judit Bajusz

#### **Domestic Bursar**

Meru Ostlund

#### **Book keeping**

Syama Dasi

### **Fellows**

Dr Gillian Evison

Prof. Gavin Flood

Dr Jessica Frazier

Dr Sanjukta Gupta

Mr Rembert Lutjeharms

Peggy Morgan

Dr Kenneth Valpey

### **Continuing Education Department**

Dr Nicholas Sutton

Ms Anuradha Dooney

### **Senior Associate Fellows**

Prof. Francis X. Clooney, SJ

Prof. Thomas Hopkins

Prof. Joseph O'Connell

Prof. M. N. Narasimhachary

## **Board of Governors**

Mr Shaunaka Rishi Das  
Lord Dholakia, OBE, DL  
Dr S. Bhattacharya-Ford  
Prof. Richard Gombrich  
Prof. Martin Goodman, FBA  
Peggy Morgan  
Dr John Muddiman  
Mr Harish I. K. Patel  
Mrs Neerja Sethi  
Mr Pramod Thakkar  
Prof. Keith Ward, FBA

## **Patrons Council**

HE The Indian High Commissioner  
Baroness Prasher, CBE  
Dr L. M. Singhvi, MP (India)  
The Maharaja of Jodhpur  
The Maharaja of Puri  
Mr Ranjit Sondhi, CBE

## **Academic Council**

Prof. Gavin Flood (Chair)  
Dr Gillian Evison  
Dr Jessica Frazier  
Mr Rembert Lutjeharms  
Peggy Morgan  
Prof. Polly O’Hanlon  
Prof. George Pattison  
Shaunaka Rishi Das  
Dr David Washbrook

## **Academic Advisory Council**

Dr N. J. Allen  
Dr Rohit Barot  
Prof. John Brockington  
Prof. Judith Brown  
Prof. F. X. Clooney  
Dr Gillian Evison  
Prof. Bob Jackson  
Dr Dermot Killingley  
Prof. Ursula King  
Prof. Kim Knott  
Prof. Julius Lipner  
Prof. Eleanor Nesbitt  
Prof. Malory Nye

Prof. Ceri Peach  
Prof. Lord Bikhu Parekh  
Dr Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad  
Dr David Smith  
Dr David Washbrook

## **Friends of OCHS Inc (USA)**

### **Directors**

Shaunaka Rishi Das  
Dr S. Bhattacharya-Ford  
Mr Todd Wahlstrom

### **Book keeper**

Mr Pierre LeMieux

## **Appendix two: Lectures and seminars**

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### **Michaelmas Term, October–December 2006**

#### **The Majewski Lecture**

*It's a Kind of Magic: The Powers of Yoga and Their Interpretation*

*Dr Angelika Malinar*

Flying through the air, the remembrance of former existence, being insensitive to pain - all these phenomena are known as the 'powers' of Yogins and are usually regarded as signs of a successful practice of Yoga. Already in the oldest texts, such as the Mahabharata (400BCE–400CE) and the Yogasutra (4th–5th CE), they are called *bala* (power), *siddhi* (achievements) or *vibhuti* (manifestation of might).

In academic contexts these powers were rather neglected since they have often been interpreted as an expression of 'magical thinking'.

Dr Malinar's discussion of some of these academic views was followed by an analysis of the description and interpretation of Yogic powers in the Yogasutra and the Mahabharata. It was shown that the authors of these texts used their own philosophical framework for explaining the 'conquest' of the objects of Yogic practice.

Dr Malinar is a renowned scholar who teaches in the Department for the Study of Religions, SOAS. She has done important work on the *Bhagavad-gita*, placing the text in a political context and showing the centrality of notions of kingship within it, and on the Jagannatha temple in Puri. She has published a number of books and articles.

#### **Hinduism I**

##### **Prof. Gavin Flood**

This course offered a thematic and historical introduction to Hinduism for students of theology and religious studies. Focusing on the brahmanical tradition we explore the textual sources, categories, practices and social institutions that formed that tradition. Primary texts in translation provided the basis for reflection on issues such as dharma,

renunciation, caste, and concepts of deity. We then moved on to some of the major philosophical developments of the tradition, with particular emphasis on the Vedanta. The course raises theological and cultural questions about the relation between reason and practice, person and world, and society and gender. Prof. Flood concluded with a consideration of Hinduism and modernity.

### **Sanskrit Reading Group**

#### **Dr M. Narasimhachary, OCHS Shivdasani Visiting Fellow**

Dr M. Narasimhachary read Sanskrit with interested students at the Intermediate Level. The text for the readings was the *Ishavasya Upanishad*.

### **Religious Studies Reading Group**

This informal reading group is oriented towards graduate students who meet weekly during term time to discuss a book, paper, or selected chapters of a book. The books and papers are germane to current debates in the study of religion.

### **Desire and Responses to Desire East and West: A one-day conference**

#### **Dr Ulrike Roesler, Dr Dermott Killingley, Prof. Keith Ward**

Desire in its widest sense is fundamental to human existence and has been the focus of much discussion in religious traditions over the centuries. Desire has been seen as a negative quality that keeps people in bondage, as generally in Buddhism, but desire for a greater good has also been seen as a positive force in different traditions. This conference explored the idea of desire and its understanding in Christianity and Indian religions and generated discussion of comparative philosophy and theology across traditions.

### **Beyond the Classical: Tagore and Modern Dance in Bengal**

#### **Dr Prarthana Purkayastha**

This seminar addressed Rabindranath Tagore's contribution to dance performance and the evolution of the Bengali dance-drama genre in Bengal in the early twentieth century in relation to the religious, cultural, and political milieu of that time.

### **Personhood and Aesthetics in the *Bhagavata Purana***

#### **Dr Ithamar Theodor**

Dr Ithamar Theodor is from the University of Haifa. He has done work on the *Bhagavata Purana* and has research interests in Vaishnavism, the *Bhagavad-gita*, comparative theology and comparative religion.

### **Understanding the Pancaratra**

#### **Prof. M. Narasimhachary and Prof. Gavin Flood**

This seminar explored issues of text and interpretation by focusing on texts of the Pancaratra corpus.

## Graduate seminars

### ***Baladeva Vidyabhusana's Premeya-ratnavali and the Issue of Lineage*** ***Kiyokazu Okita***

This seminar presents an account of the Vaishnava philosopher Baladeva Vidyabhusana and his place in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition. The paper addressed the problem of lineage and raised questions about authenticity, authority, and the legitimacy of practice claimed by tradition.

### ***The Teleology of Meditation***

#### ***Christopher Wood***

Drawing from a range of examples, this seminar presented a thesis on the ways in which the goal of meditation within specific spiritual traditions affects practice. It raises questions about the nature of meditation and other spiritual practices and about individual and communal experience.

## Theories of the Text Series (in association with the Theology Faculty)

### **Prof. Gavin Flood**

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 that have arisen within the human sciences over the last fifty years 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 borrow 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.

#### ***Intention in the Text: Phenomenology***

This seminar introduces the basics of phenomenology from Husserl and raised questions about intentionality, bracketing, and subjectivity. The suggested reading by E. D. Hirsch exemplifies the application of a Husserlian perspective to literary study and raises the question of author's intentionality and the act of interpretation as the uncovering of authorial intention which contrasts sharply with the idea of the death of the author. This theme will be broadened beyond literary texts to religious texts as well.

#### ***Sign in the Text: Semiotics (and Deconstruction)***

Moving away and responding to phenomenology we have semiotic approaches to text that recognise the structure that a sign refers to a signified for someone or some group. Kristeva was a particularly important thinker in developing the idea of the sign in the text and we shall focus on her work on sign in relation to symbol in this seminar. The semiotic understanding the text will be contrasted with the phenomenological and we examined the sign-signified relationship with respect to sacred text (of what is sacred text a sign, for whom is sacred text a sign, and how does sacred text signify)?

#### ***The Text in Action: Social Science***

This seminar raised the question of the relation of text to social action. Can social action, as Ricoeur claims, be understood as being like a text? We examine Ricoeur's claim in the context of his broader thinking and extend the question to ask to what extent is text the fundamental category of culture? We also raised the question of the ways in which religious text pervades religious action and examined the importance of text for liturgical action.

### ***The Text in the Reader: Theories of Reception***

A text is read or received by someone or some group. Here we examined in more detail the third aspect of the semiotic triangle, those for whom the text signifies. After presenting some account of reception theory (as in the work of Iser and Jauss), the seminar discussed Stanley Fish's famous paper and its relevance for religious text reception. This latter question was taken up in relation to the work of Paul Griffiths and Peter Ochs.

## **Hilary Term, January–March 2007**

### **Hinduism II series**

#### **Prof. Gavin Flood**

In these eight lectures we examine concepts of liberation and paths leading to liberation in the history of Hinduism.

After an introductory lecture that raised theological questions about the relation of path to goal and the importance of ritual and asceticism, we examined Samkhya, the philosophical backdrop of Yoga, and moved on to the Yoga-sutras, their ideal of liberation as isolation (*kaivalya*), and the means of achieving that goal. We trace 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 examine 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 Vaisnavism and Saivism.

While the lectures place texts in their historical contexts, the course doesn't examine texts in a strictly chronological sequence, the stress being on theme. Throughout, we raise critical, theological questions through engaging with texts in translation and raise the question about the extent to which liberation is a rhetoric that overlays other cultural forces.

### **The Distinguished Majewski Lecture**

#### ***The Subhasita as a Social Artefact: Notes Toward the History of Ethics in Medieval India***

##### ***Dr Daud Ali***

*Subhasitas* are Sanskrit sayings that generally make a moral point. This lecture examined the role of 'eloquent speech' in the formation of social and political relationships in medieval India, showing the role of *subhasita* in the formation of ethics.

##### ***Icon and Murti***

#### ***Dr Ken Valpey (OCHS) and Matthew Steenberg (Greyfriars)***

This seminar series examined the issue of representation of the divine in Christian Orthodoxy and Vaishnava Hinduism. Given that God is unknowable and beyond all representation in these traditions, questions were raised about how a transcendent reality can be represented, the function of such representations, and the degree to which such mediations are thought to be required by tradition.

The first two seminars offered theological backgrounds to Orthodoxy and Vaishnava Hinduism and the remaining two examined in more detail conceptual and historical

problems in the history of the traditions.

***What did Ramakantha Contribute to the Buddhist-Brahmanical Atman Debate?***

***Dr Alex Watson***

In attempting to refute the Buddhist doctrine of no-Self, Ramakantha absorbed many features of Buddhism. For example, he sided with Buddhism against Nyaya and Vaisesika in denying the existence of property-possessors (dharmins) over and above properties (dharma), and in denying a Self as something that exists over and above cognition. For him the Self simply is cognition (*jnana, prakasa, samvit*) and so he has to prove that cognition is constant and unchanging. Dr Watson presents those arguments of Ramakantha's that strike him as his strongest and most original, and he will spend at least the first ten minutes of the talk introducing, and giving an overview of, the Buddhist-Brahmanical atman debate.

**Graduate Seminars**

***A Super Gift or a Conduit: The Place of a Daughter in the Indian Marriage Exchange***

***Pulane Lizzie Motswapon***

Hindu law books taught that merit arose from giving (*dana*) and from marriage and that the giving away of a daughter (*kanyadana*) was particularly meritorious.

By giving away his daughter a father was assured of spiritual merit. The marriageable girl (*kanya*) was regarded as a supreme or 'super' gift and all the other gifts accompanying her were secondary. Indeed, marriage gifts continue to form an integral part of the modern marriage system in the form of the dowry. The girl continues to be given away but her role is subsumed by the property she carries with her to the marital family. This shift in the status of the daughter from supreme gift to conduit or vehicle that facilitates the dowry custom has affected the status of women in contemporary Indian society.

This paper examines this issue and compares and contrasts the role of the daughter in the exchange while taking into account factors that may have contributed to this shift in the status of *kanyadana*.

***Towards a Comparative Theology of the Person: Neo-Vedantic and Byzantine Convergence***

***Nicholas Bamford***

Comparative theology is an important area of research in the contemporary world. This paper develops the idea of the person as a fruitful category for comparative theological enquiry. The seminar raised questions about the person as an ontological category and its possible future development with particular reference to Saiva theology in dialogue with Orthodox Christianity.

**Religious Studies Reading Group**

**Convener: Prof. Gavin Flood**

This is an informal reading group oriented towards graduate students. We meet weekly during term time to discuss a book, paper, or selected chapters of a book. The books and papers will be germane to current debates in the study of religion.

This term's reading was from Roy Rappaport's *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (CUP 1999).

## Trinity Term, April–June 2007

### The Majewski Lecture

#### ***Making Room for the Goddess: A Theology of Sri in Fourteenth Century South India***

**Prof. Francis Clooney**

While Vedanta Desika (fourteenth century, South India), as a Srivaishnava Hindu, was a member of a tradition with the greatest respect for the Goddess Sri, in his era there was still lively debate about her precise status in relationship to the supreme deity, Narayana.

In his *Srimad Rahasyatrayasara*, Desika pushes for a complete acceptance of Sri as the eternal consort of Narayana, an indispensable equal participant in the divine work of enabling human salvation.

Though in many ways a theological conservative and defender of traditional orthodoxy, Desika here shows himself to be radical and innovative in his defense of Sri. Comparison and contrast with debates over the identity of Jesus in early Christian theology and over the role of Mary, mother of Jesus, as co-mediatrix of redemption, clarify Desika's theological method and contribution to the theology of Sri.

### The Wahlstrom Lecture

#### ***The Power of Divine Beauty: A Study of the Saundaryalahari***

**Dr Nilima Chitgopekar**

Among the varied ways of worshipping a goddess, the chanting of her eulogy is favoured by many a devotee and the existence of a wide range of such litanies are part of India's religious tradition.

The Saundaryalahari, of the 9th–10th century, probably falsely attributed to Shankaracharya, is one such grand prayer. Can the explicit delineation of beauty, rampant in this text, be a path to *mukti*? In this case what are the ramifications for the worshipper? The Saundaryalahari deals with esoteric cults such as Srividya and its technicalities. However despite the Tantric nature of this text, it has been 'appropriated' by large numbers of city dwelling self-confessedly, 'non-tantric' women, who chant it regularly.

Besides embarking on an exegetical study, this talk shared some of the explorations the speaker has been able to make through interviews held in major cities in India. The lecture examined the way beauty has been delineated in this text and how it has been entwined with *bhakti*, both from the view of the goddess herself as well as the worshipper.

### The Shivdasani Lectures

#### ***Neurons, Experience, and Being: A Discussion on Consciousness***

**Dr Sangeetha Menon**

The lecture presented Indian theories of consciousness and experience in the context of some of the current discussions on consciousness and brain.

#### ***The Dance of Emotions: Faces, Gestures, and Movements***

**Dr Sangeetha Menon**

A comparative study of emotions, facial expressions, and gestures in the Natyasastra, Abhinayadarpana, and the works of Charles Darwin and Paul Ekman.

### ***The Concept of Dharma in Vaisesika***

**Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar**

This lecture examined various aspects of dharma as suggested in the Vaisesika system, namely its historical, metaphysical, and moral aspects. The concept of dharma is so central in Vaisesika philosophy that Kanada begins his discourse with an aim of explaining dharma.

### ***Twentieth-Century Sanskrit Commentaries on the Vaisesikasutras***

**Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar**

This lecture highlights five Sanskrit commentaries on the Vaisesikasutras that have been written and published in the last century. The commentaries are: (i) Vaidikavritih, by Pt. Hariprasada, Nirnayasagar, 1951; (ii) Rasayana, by Sri Uttamur Viraraghavacharya, Madras, 1958; (iii) Brahmamunibhasyam, by Swami Brahmamuni, Baroda, 1962; (iv) Vedabhaskarabhasyam, by Pt. Kashinath Sharma, Himachal, 1972; (v) Sugama, by Desika Tirumalai Tatacharya, Allahabad, 1979.

### **The Dancing Shiva as a Focus for Teaching Cultural Diversity: Dance, Myth, Images, DVD Dr Anne-Marie Gaston**

This seminar examines representations of the deity Shiva, and explores the possibilities of the image of the dancing Shiva as a pedagogical focus in teaching cultural diversity.

### **Comparative Theology as Intellectual and Spiritual Practice**

**Prof. Frank Clooney**

The study of great religious texts demands much of the scholar, in part because such texts require professional linguistic and historical expertise, familiarity with the tradition in which the text arose, and a sense of the wider and often unstated context. But such religious texts also make demands on the reader, drawing him or her into thinking and feeling in specific ways about the topics discussed in the text. The reader then has to make choices about where, if anywhere, to draw a line between scholarly detachment and engaged participation. If the reader comes from a religious tradition, then he or she also brings the expectations of that tradition to the reading process, complicating even the initial scholarly learning practice. Prof. Clooney will illustrate the complexities of this learning with respect to his current study of the *Srimad Rahasyatrayasara* of Vedanta Desika (fourteenth century, South India).

### **Shivdasani Seminars**

#### ***Consciousness and Cognition in Vaisesika***

**Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar**

This seminar discusses the nature of consciousness as expounded in the early system of Vaisesika, which deals with the problem of consciousness in relation to the process of cognition in general. In other words, knowledge is an adventitious attribute that inheres in the substance called *atman* (soul) only when it is embodied. During this seminar, the various implications and formulations of this view in Vaisesika sources were examined.

#### ***Sabda as Pramana in Vaisesika***

**Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar**

Prof. Kumar examines the nature of *abda* in the Vaisesika system which has been

discussed there both as a *guna* of *akasha*, and as a *pramana*. The former is expressed in the ancient Vaisesika tradition, from Kanada up to Udayana, whereas the latter is explored in the later tradition, starting from its amalgamation with Nyaya and opposition to Buddhism. This seminar covered both these aspects, with an emphasis on the role of *sabda* as a *pramana*.

***Beyond Love and Love Beyond: Hindu and Western Ideas of Love***

***Dr Sangeetha Menon***

An examination of Hindu ideas of love and the idea of divine love ('love beyond'). The seminar pays particular attention to the Narada Bhakti Sutras.

***The Concept of Hindu Philosophy***

***Dr Sangeetha Menon***

This seminar discussed the concept of 'philosophy' in the Hindu context and examined foundational concepts as well as exploring their psychological and spiritual import.

**Graduate seminar**

***A Super-Gift or a Conduit: The Place of a Daughter in The Indian Marriage Exchange***

***Ms Pulane Lizzie Motswapong***

Ancient Hindu lawgivers have always viewed spiritual merit as arising from the spirit of *dana*. Marriage *dana*, especially *kanyadana*, has been considered as such.

A father, by giving away his *kanya*, was assured of spiritual merit. In ancient India the *kanya* was designated as the super-gift and all the other gifts that accompanied her were secondary. Marriage gifts continue to form an integral part of modern marriage system, (in the form of dowry); the *kanya* continues to be given away but her role is subsumed by the property she carries with her to the marital family and as a result she is reduced to a conduit.

The shift in status of the daughter from super-gift to a vehicle that facilitates the dowry custom has closely and significantly affected the status of women in contemporary Indian society. The practice has spread all over India and its wider ramifications are visible in the spate of cases of bride-burning, suicides, and harassment. This paper compares and contrasts the role of the daughter in the exchange while taking into account factors that may have contributed to this shift in the status of a *kanyadana*.

**An Introduction to Hindu Tantrism**

**Prof. Gavin Flood**

This short seminar series is a thematic and historical introduction to Hindu tantric traditions. Beginning with a survey of general features such as systems of mantra, ritual, cosmology, and yoga, we go on to examine particular tantric traditions focused on Shiva, Vishnu, and the Goddess.

The seminars mainly explored the medieval period and examined tantrism in the context of political systems of the time, folk religion, traditions of brahmanical learning, and knowledge systems. Part of the seminars focus on the study of particular texts and reasoning about them with an emphasis on understanding their theological concerns.

***What is Tantrism?***

While the term 'tantrism' can be unhelpful in understanding medieval religion in India there are nevertheless texts and traditions for which 'tantra' is part of their self description. Indeed, tantric traditions might be defined by the mantra system that

they use. In this introductory seminar we will examine the broad parameters of tantric traditions and look at ritual and ideas they commonly share.

#### ***Shaiva and Shakta Traditions***

Traditions focused on Shiva and the Goddess in what can be called the *mantramarga* are prototypically tantric. The Shaiva Siddhanta provides the normative, orthodox tradition in the context of which the more extreme cults of the Kula and Krama need to be understood. The later Sri Vidya develops out of these earlier traditions and illustrates a process in which marginal cults become absorbed by the mainstream, brahmanical tradition.

#### ***Vaishnava Traditions***

Tantric Vaishnavism or the Pancaratra developed alongside the Shaiva and Shakta traditions with its own texts regarded as revelation. This tradition was a major influence on Sri Vaishnavism, both in theology and ritual procedures. Later Vaishnava traditions such as the Sahajiyas are also tantric in orientation in their emphasis on the male-female polarity as a structuring principle in the cosmos and systems of soteriology.

#### ***Kerala Tantrism***

In Kerala, tantric Hinduism is normative and Nambudri Brahman families have been the holders of tantric ritual knowledge for generations. Kerala Tantrism is a synthetic tradition that develops in the late middle ages and is formed in two traditions based on the Tantrasamuccaya and the Ishanashivagurudevapaddhati.

## **Appendix three: Routledge Hindu studies series**

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### **Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata**

**Editors – Simon Brodbeck, Brian Black**

The Sanskrit *Mahabharata* is one of the most important texts to emerge from the Indian cultural tradition. At almost 75,000 verses it is the longest poem in the world, and throughout Indian history it has been hugely influential in shaping gender and social norms. In the context of ancient India, it is the definitive cultural narrative in the construction of masculine, feminine and alternative gender roles.

This book brings together many of the most respected scholars in the field of *Mahabharata* studies, as well as some of its most promising young scholars. By focusing specifically on gender constructions, some of the most innovative aspects of the *Mahabharata* are highlighted. Whilst taking account of feminist scholarship, the contributors see the *Mahabharata* as providing an opportunity to frame discussion of gender in literature not just in terms of the socio-historical roles of men and women. Instead they analyse the text in terms of the wider poetic and philosophical possibilities thrown up by the semiotics of gendering. Consequently, the book bridges a gap in text-critical methodology between the traditional philological approach and more recent trends in gender and literary theory.

### **The Chaitanya Vaishnava Vedanta of Jiva Gosvami: When Knowledge Meets Devotion**

**Ravi M Gupta**

The Chaitanya Vaishnava tradition is famous for its depth of devotion to Krishna, the blue-hued Deity. Chaitanya Vaishnavas are known for having refined the practice and

aesthetics of devotion into a sophisticated science. This imposing devotional edifice was constructed upon a solid foundation of philosophical argument and understanding. In this book, Ravi Gupta sheds new light on the contribution of Chaitanya Vaishnavism to the realm of Indian philosophy. He explores the hermeneutical tools employed, the historical resources harnessed, the structure of the arguments made, and the relative success of the endeavour. For most schools of Vaishnavism, the supporting foundation consists of the philosophical resources provided by Vedanta. The Chaitanya tradition is remarkable in its ability to engage in Vedantic discourse and at the same time practice an ecstatic form of devotion to Krishna. The prime architect of this balance was the scholar-devotee Jiva Gosvami (ca. 1517–1608). This book analyses Jiva Gosvami's writing concerning the philosophy of the Vedanta tradition. It concludes that Jiva's writing crosses 'disciplinary boundaries', for he brought into dialogue four powerful streams of classical Hinduism: the various systems of Vedanta, the ecstatic *bhakti* movements, the Puranic commentarial tradition, and the aesthetic *rasa* theory of Sanskrit poetics. With training in and commitments to all of these traditions, Jiva Gosvami produced a distinctly Chaitanya Vaishnava system of theology.

### **Self-Surrender (prapatti) to God in Shrivaisnavism: Tamil Cats or Sanskrit Monkeys? Srilata Raman**

Filling the most glaring gap in Shrivaisnava scholarship, this book deals with the history of interpretation of a theological concept of self-surrender – *prapatti* – in late twelfth- and thirteenth-century religious texts of the Shrivaisnava community of South India. This original study shows that medieval sectarian formation in its theological dimension is a fluid and ambivalent enterprise, where conflict and differentiation are presaged on 'sharing', whether of a common canon, saint or rituals or two languages (Tamil and Sanskrit), or of a 'meta-social' arena such as the temple.

Srilata Raman, a member of the Shrivaisnava community, argues that the core ideas of *prapatti* in these religious texts reveal the description of a heterogeneous theological concept. Demonstrating that this concept is theologically moulded by the emergence of new literary genres, Raman puts forward the idea that this original understanding of *prapatti* is a major contributory cause to the emergence of sectarian divisions among the Shrivaisnavas, which lead to the formation of two sub-sects, the Tenkalai and the Vatakalia, who stand respectively, for the 'cat' and 'monkey' theological positions.

Making an important contribution to contemporary Indian and Hindu thinking on religion, this text provides a new intellectual history of medieval Indian religion. It will be of particular interest to scholars of Shrivaisnava and also Hindu and Indian religious studies.

### **Classical Samkhya and Yoga: An Indian Metaphysics of Experience Mikel Burley**

Samkhya and Yoga are two of the oldest and most influential systems of classical Indian philosophy. This book provides a thorough analysis of the systems in order to fully understand Indian philosophy. Placing particular emphasis on the metaphysical schema which underlies both concepts, the author adeptly develops a new interpretation of the standard views on Samkhya and Yoga.

Drawing upon existing sources and using insights from both Eastern and Western

philosophy and religious practice, this comprehensive interpretation is respectful to the underlying spiritual purpose of the Indian systems. It serves to illuminate the relation between the theoretical and practical dimensions of Samkhya and Yoga. The book fills a gap in current scholarship and will be of interest to those concerned with Indology as well as philosophies in general and their similarities and differences with other traditions.

**Advaita Vedanta and Vaisnavism: The Philosophy of Madhusudana Sarasvati**  
**Sanjukta Gupta**

In Indian philosophy and theology, the ideology of Vedanta occupies an important position. Hindu religious sects accept the Vedantic soteriology, which believes that there is only one conscious reality, Brahman from which the entire creation, both conscious and non-conscious, emanated.

Madhusudana Sarasvati, who lived in sixteenth-century Bengal and wrote in Sanskrit, was the last great thinker among the Indian philosophers of Vedanta. During his time, Hindu sectarians rejected monistic Vedanta. Although a strict monist, Madhusudana tried to make a synthesis between his monistic philosophy and his theology of emotional love for God.

Sanjukta Gupta provides the only comprehensive study of Madhusudana Sarasvati's thought. She explores the religious context of his extensive and difficult works, offering invaluable insights into Indian philosophy and theology.



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