

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies Board of Governors Report 2012-13



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A RECOGNISED INDEPENDENT CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

1. The Academic Year 2012–13

THIS academic year has witnessed a number of developments at the OCHS. We have seen a large increase in student numbers from 45 last year to 68 in the current year. These are all students registered for a degree at Oxford University and come from various faculties including Politics, Philosophy, Oriental Studies, Theology and Religion, Economics, History, Engineering, Law, and Literature. These students use the library, attend the Wednesday lunch, and generally engage with activities at the Centre. Some of the undergraduates are considering pursuing further degrees in Oxford. Almost all students who applied for bursaries were awarded something.

We have two new research fellows: Dr Kiyokazu Okita who is an Oxford graduate and Prof. Himanshu Prabhu Ray who is general editor of the OCHS Archaeology and Religion series with Routledge (India). There is also a new research project on the Gosvamis proposed by Drs Okita and Lutjeharms.

Trends that might be observed are towards India and the development of education programmes there, especially with the development of the Ashoka University that the OCHS is helping with. There has also been the development of a strong postgraduate culture with postgraduates taking the lead in organising seminars and facilitating cross-disciplinary discussion. This is an ethos that the OCHS wishes to encourage.

Apart from these developments, the OCHS has continued with its research and teaching programmes, offering core teaching to the Theology and Religion Faculty, teaching for the joint degree in Theology and Oriental Studies, and supervising postgraduate students in Theology and Oriental Studies. The OCHS is developing research in Hindu Studies with a number of publications coming out by members of staff and research projects developed.

Teaching

In the current academic year the OCHS offered the teaching of Hinduism 1 and 2 for track three of the Honours School in Theology and Religion. The OCHS also offered Sanskrit Prelims.

The OCHS offered additional seminar series. Dr Lutjeharms taught Intermediate Sanskrit. Prof. Flood taught Readings in the Netra-tantra and the well-attended postgraduate seminar on Phenomenology, and Hindu

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Scriptural Reasoning. Professor Flood also delivered lectures on Religion and the Human Person based on his forthcoming book and the importance of religion based on his last book.

Apart from undergraduate teaching and non-core seminars and lectures, Prof. Flood has been supervising or co-supervising postgraduate students (seven D.Phil. students in Theology and Religion, one D.Phil. student in Oriental Studies, two Ph.D. students registered at other universities, and four M.St. students in Theology).

Dr Frazier offered four lectures in a series entitled 'Mapping the Mystical Self' all of which were well attended. These lectures culminated in the Mapping Mysticism conference at the University of Kent.

A full listing of the year's lectures and seminars can be found in Appendix Two.

The Continuing Education programmes are taught online with Dr Nick Sutton, Dr Rembert Lutjeharms, and Lucian Wong and a number of speakers delivering regular teaching at Leicester, London, and Birmingham.

Research

The OCHS has a number of research projects within the four OCHS research areas as follows:

Hinduism and Modernity

Under this general heading the OCHS is developing a project on Bengali Vaishnavism in the Modern Period. This project, under the direction of Dr Ferdinando Sardella, a Research Fellow at the OCHS from the University of Uppsala, is undertaking to map, collect manuscripts, edit, and translate literature and other relevant material concerning Caitanya Vaishnavism in Bengal from the 18th century to the modern period. The project aims at generating research in theology and philosophy, history, sociology, and anthropology and a conference is planned for 2014. Dr Sardella himself has published a well-received biography of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and is developing research on him and his context. OCHS student, Lucian Wong has joined this project and other younger scholars are being attracted to this research cluster.

Dr Jessica Frazier's Global Hinduism project is gathering pace, with preliminary fieldwork in Bali and completion of fieldwork and interviews in Thailand. She



plans to do similar work in Trinidad and Mauritius. This project explores how Hinduism responds to new situations in global contexts around the world.

Classical Hinduism

Under this category the OCHS has three current projects.

The Shakta traditions project is being done in collaboration with the University of Aarhus and is led by Bjarne Oleson from that university. This is a sustained research project that hosted a conference in Oxford on September 2011 and that will result in a publication with Routledge in the Tantric Studies Series. The next conference will be in Aarhus in November 2013.

The Bhagavata Purana project, led by OCHS alumni, Drs Kenneth Valpey and Ravi Gupta, aims to develop research on the Bhagavata Purana which has been relatively little studied compared to its popularity and textual status. The project will promote research in the text's history and philosophy. A book on the Bhagavata Purana and its reception, edited by Ravi Gupta and Ken Valpey has been published by Columbia University Press this year. Their second book with this project, a collection of selected translated texts, is in production.

Drs. Lutjeharms and Okita are developing a new research area, the Gosvami Era: The Founding of Gaudiya Vaishnavism in Early Modern South Asia. The early modern period in North India was one of the most socially turbulent and yet culturally vibrant times in its history. It saw the rise of several new religious groups and devotional theologies, such as the Gaudiya Vaishnavism inaugurated by Krishna Caitanya and developed by his principal disciples, the Gosvamis. This project, managed by Dr Kiyokazu Okita (Kyoto University) and Dr Rembert Lutjeharms (Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies), aims to research the Sanskrit theological, ritual, poetical works of the first followers of Caitanya. The core of the research project will consist of studies, translations and critical editions of the most prominent early Gaudiya Vaishnava works, but will later branch out into pre-Caitanya authors who influenced the school's theology, and the reception and interpretation of the Gosvamis works by later theologians writing both in the vernacular and in Sanskrit, as well as in performative arts and material culture.

Comparative Philosophy, Religion, and Theology

Gavin Flood and Dr Jessica Frazier have both worked on books on comparative religion. Prof. Flood's *Importance of Religion* (Wiley-Blackwell) came out in 2012 and his *The Truth Within: A Comparative History of Inwardness*

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in Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism will be out with OUP in November 2013. Dr Frazier's *Religion and Experience: Models of the Self in the Study of Religion*, is forthcoming in 2014.

Historical Perspectives on Hindu Cultures

This research group significantly overlaps with Classical Hinduism and the projects on the Shakta traditions, the Bhagavata Purana, and the Bengal Vaishnava project could be categorised here as well.

In relation to this general project Prof. Flood is the general editor of the OUP series on the History of Hinduism. Nine volumes are projected and the project is in process.

Himanshu Prabhu Ray is the general editor of a book series with Routledge (India) on Archaeology and Religion.

Shivdasani Fellowship

During this academic year we have continued to support scholars through the Shivdasani Fellowships. In Michaelmas 2012 Dr Svarupa Gupta (Calcutta) presented seminars and lectures on Hinduism and cultural nationalism. The Shivdasani Fellow in Hilary 2012 was Dr Arcana Venkatesan who presented two lectures and two seminars on Tamil devotional poetry.

Named lectures

Three Majewski Lectures were held for the academic year. The Majewski Lectures were presented by Professor Fabrizio Ferrari and Dr Imre Bangha. The Inaugural IK Foundation lecture was delivered by Prabhu Guptara at the Nehru Centre, London, and the Wahlstrom lecture was delivered by Prof. June McDaniel.

A full listing of all lectures can be found in Appendix Two.

Publishing

A number of books have been published with the OCHS Hindu Studies Series with Routledge, often in the area of Hindu philosophy and theology, and the series is growing. (www.ochs.org.uk/publications/hsbs_routledge)

We now also have the Archaeology and Religion Series in partnership with Routledge (India) under the editorship of Himanshu Prabha Ray. Proposed book titles currently include: *Negotiating Sacred Space: Locating Early Medieval South Asia in a Trans-cultural World*; *Archaeology and Religion in Early Historic Punjab*; *Archaeology of multi-religious centres such as Varanasi and Mathura*; and *Archaeology of Buddhism in South Asia*.

The *Journal of Hindu Studies* under the editorship of Dr Jessica Frazier and Dr Rembert Lutjeharms is flourishing with three editions per annum. (www.ochs.org.uk/publications/jhs_oup)

OCHS Leadership Programme

The OCHS Leadership Programme was formally launched in October 2012 when the Attorney-General Dominic Grieve QC was hosted for the first of the programme's lectures.

Run by students, for students, the programme aims to educate participants in the art of leadership. Seminars with guest speakers who are leaders in their fields – be they in politics, business, academia, or entertainment – provide an opportunity to explore what influences and inspires great leaders. Guest speakers talk not only about how they have achieved what they have done, but also offer their insight into the essence of leadership and how it can be successfully exercised, and learnt.

The programme is guided by a belief that leadership skills are impartible, and that the best way of acquiring them is under the close guidance of those who are leaders themselves. As such, the seminars are intimate and dinner with the speakers afterwards provides an opportunity for participants to follow up discussions on an even more personal level. The parallel internship programme is guided by the same belief in the importance of personal tutelage from leaders themselves. The placements will provide an opportunity for students to shadow the sponsoring individuals and learn how they exercise good leadership not only from what they say on the subject but from observing how they act. This year the internship programme has begun amassing sponsors and will next year be able to begin providing the first placements to the programme's participants.

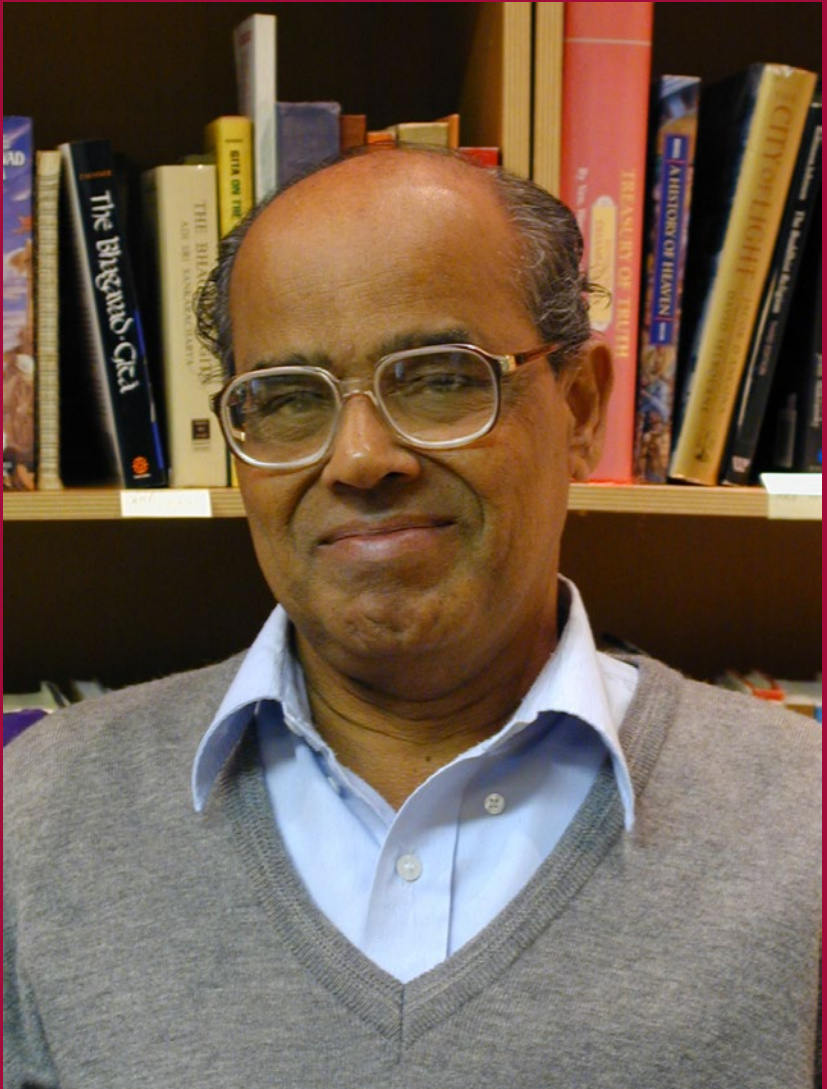
The Leadership Programme has this year hosted the Attorney General Dominic Grieve QC, Lord Desai, businessman Alpesh Patel and Barclays Retail and Business Banking CEO Ashok Vaswani.

A student committee runs the Programme. Thanks go to the founding committee which comprised Ameer Kotecha (Director), Monish Kulkarni (Speaker Officer), Sham Thakerar (Internship Officer), Ria Jesrani (Secretary), Viral Aggarwal and Sagar Shah (Communications Officers).

In the new academic year the programme hopes to build on the excellent foundation laid by the founding committee by expanding the guest speaker seminar series, launching the first internship placements and acquiring corporate sponsorship.

2. Obituary

Prof. M.N. Narasimhachary passed away in Chennai on Wednesday 6 March 2013. Here he is remembered by Dr Ravi Gupta.



SOME thirteen years ago, I met Prof. M. Narasimhachary for the first time when he arrived as a visiting professor at the OCHS. That fortunate encounter changed my life in more ways than I can describe. In the years that have passed, Prof. Narasimhachary served as my doctoral examiner, wrote a reference for my first job, offered advice on all my writing projects, attended my wedding, and showered blessings on the births of both my boys. But more importantly, Prof. Narasimhachary was for me a life-long mentor, a loving well-wisher, and a model of Vaishnava scholarship.

Prof. Narasimhachary's depth of knowledge was breathtaking. In Oxford I met with him several times a week to read Sanskrit texts. Every phrase that he read became a doorway to an entire area of Sanskrit learning. When that door was opened – perhaps by a well-timed question, or a fortuitous recollection – streams of wisdom would flow, leading to explorations of Vedanta, Sankhya, rasa-sastra, Kalidasa, and numberless other themes.

Knowledge of this calibre sets a person apart from others. Yet Prof. Narasimhachary's most noteworthy quality was that he used his scholarship to win people's hearts, not to create distance. On his students especially, he showered affection like a father, asking about their welfare and maintaining contact with them throughout his life. No student's concern was ever too small for him. His humility was endearing. I recall once expressing amazement at the extent of his knowledge. He responded by saying, "My knowledge is like that of a glowworm. You should hear about my teacher," whom he described with great humility.

Perhaps the deepest impression that Prof. Narasimhachary had on me was how effortlessly he balanced – indeed, embodied – the dual responsibilities of scholar and practitioner. He wore his Vaishnava tilaka with dignity as he lectured in public and yet did not hesitate to engage in historical critical scholarship. He expressed his devotion deeply in his poetry and his daily practice, and yet engaged comfortably with colleagues and students in a secular environment. He was as comfortable in Western universities as he was in Srivaishnava Mathas. He embodied the best of both worlds, and that is a very rare thing.

Prof. Narasimhachary's departure is an inestimable loss.

Dr Ravi Gupta is one of the OCHS's first D.Phil. students and is currently Associate Professor of Religious Studies at The College of William and Mary (USA).

3. Essays

Prof. Gavin Flood

Dr Archana Venkatesan

Prajwal Parajuly

Tushar Shah

Ionut Moise

Lucian Wong

The importance of religion

Prof. Gavin Flood

In the West we live in a secular world in which public displays of religion are questioned and the assumed general position among educated classes is that religion is irrelevant to contemporary concerns. Nevertheless, religion persists and is transformed in different ways in contemporary culture. We live in not only a secular but a religious world too, as David Ford points out. Indeed, for the vast majority of people on the planet religions inform and shape their lives. Yes, it is true that religions can be the cause of conflict and violence, of intolerance and narrow mindedness, but is it also true that religions have produced the greatest art in the world, great poetry and music, and have inspired individuals to achieve great things. My book *The Importance of Religion: Meaning and Action in Our Strange World* (Blackwell 2012), argued a general thesis about religion in relation to the world and how religion must be understood primarily in terms of meaning and ways through life, rather than as propositions or theories about life.



Religions are important as ways of living that create meaningful frameworks within which people build and live their lives. Far from being escapist fantasies, religions bring people into the world through their insistence on action that articulates both a cosmological and an ethical vision. This bringing of people into the world takes place through a cultural imagination that posits transcendent goals and develops cultural forms that articulate a desire for transcendence and a will to meaning. Religions (and I use the plural here) are always set within specific cultures, embodied in communities, and engender particular social practices that connect people to a goal that transcends or stretches the horizon of their own situation in place and time. In the language I have developed, religions mediate the human encounter

with mystery. Indeed, they mediate this encounter through three categories of action, speech, and world.

Religions can be understood as telling us how to act in the world, what to do and what not to do and the reasons for this. Through action we encounter the strange world, through action we push the boundaries of our horizon, and through action we impact upon or generate history. Our actions are unrepeatable, generally unpredictable, and their consequences always exceed us. It is this realm of action and the face-to-face human encounter that religions lay claim to. Thus in the *Bhagavad Gita* Arjuna's dilemma about whether he should fight is a dilemma concerning face-to-face human interaction and hence the realm of the ethical. The teachings of Krishna advising Arjuna on what to do, lays claim to that interaction.

By religious action I mean both the unrepeatable moral act and the repeatable (although non-identical) ritual act. These are forms of cultural knowledge through which religious people interact with the world. An action embodies a way of thinking and always involves understanding and a purpose. The religious person acts in a particular way, taking Holy Communion, meditating on the breath, making an offering to Ganesh, fasting at Ramadan, and thereby expresses the meaning of that act. Through religious action the person or community expresses their tradition and looks to the future. To place emphasis on religious action is therefore to emphasize the body and to emphasize the place of culture in the formation of religious meaning and expression.

But even if religions are about living a meaningful life, they also make claims about the world. These claims are usually conflicting, for example in understanding God or what happens after death. Religious claims to truth have been, and continue to be, rejected as irrational in the modern world. This is often justified when religions make empirical claims that are open to falsification – that the sun turns around the earth, for example. Some scholars have argued that different cultures have different standards of rationality and we cannot judge one through the standards of rationality developed in another. On this view, we cannot judge Azande belief in witchcraft as erroneous as this is to assume that western science, which is another language game, corresponds to reality, which is an unwarranted assumption.

This debate came into sharp focus about twenty years ago in the exchange between the anthropologists Obeyesekere and Marshall Sahlins. Sahlins argued for the apotheosis in 1779 of Captain Cook, who was killed after being mistaken for a god. Obeyesekere, by contrast, argues that this is a European myth that places the rational European above the irrational

native. While the debate lingers on, the data of religions suggest that they are indeed rational in the sense that they develop reasons for practices and speculative reasoning based on scriptural sources. Charles Taylor has furthermore suggested that we can make a distinction between theoretical and non-theoretical cultures, that rationality entails not merely cultural coherence, but that some cultures can theorize their practices and communicate them. We might argue therefore that rationality entails coherence and articulation. Religions contain coherence within the frameworks of their worldviews and practices. They also articulate good reasons for particular practices and transmit these through the generations. Indeed, it is vital for religions' survival to speak through the generations. On this account, a culture is rational to the degree that it is coherent and the degree to which it can articulate reasons for particular practices. Clearly the major, textual religions Buddhism, Christianity, are rational in this sense as can be seen, for example, in three contemporaries in the medieval period writing in different religious traditions in different continents: Al Ghazali in Tus explaining the Qur'anic verse on the "niche of the lights" in Arabic, Kshemaraja in Kashmir expounding a philosophy of pure consciousness in Sanskrit, and Anselm of Canterbury developing the ontological argument for the existence of God in Latin. All three figures are reasoning, yet they perform kinds of reasoning very different from the Enlightenment model of universal objectivity that we have inherited and that proclaims standards of truth independently of traditions of discourse. Rationality on this view is linked into science and is a kind of secondary commentary on a scientific understanding of the world.

But among the many cultural forms within which we live, the importance of religions lies in the ways they mediate the encounter with our strange world and endow human lives with meaning in the overwhelming presence of death's darkness and the infinity of space surrounding us.

Reflections from the Writer-in-Residence

Prajwal Parajuly

I grew up in a Hindu household, next door to a protestant church and went to a school whose leanings were heavily Buddhist. So, yes, I was surrounded by a lot of religion as a child – at school, where devout teachers took weeks off for a sermon with the Dalai Lama, in the Sunday School lessons that my parents encouraged me to attend and in my grandfather’s bath-time incantations, decibel increasing as the water’s warmth decreased, that we woke up to every morning of our vacation.



I learned about God in many contradictory ways – the Sunday School teacher talked about there being only one god, which wasn’t what the altar at home with its many-limbed statuettes corroborated – but the learning was never forced. God and religion were inseparable. God was easy to comprehend – someone who was always looking out for you. Religion was often difficult to grasp. God and religion came together in delightful harmony in festivals – in the fireworks and sparklers at Diwali or the Christmas tree and Santa Claus during Christmas.

Then adulthood intervened bringing these rose-tinted perceptions of religion to an end.

It started when I moved for college to Midwestern America, where I saw a kind of fundamentalism I hadn’t experienced until then. The nicest people descended on my dorm room to offer a ride to Wal-Mart. Dinner invites came from out of the blue. All wonderful things, no doubt, and what I attributed to the average American’s large heart. Until the generous favors were expected to be reciprocated with trips to the church. “Which church in Kirksville do you attend?” an elderly lady would ask. “I don’t,” I’d reply. “The way you say it, I can sense you know you’re doing something wrong.”

Back in India, at the gates of the famous Jaganath Temple in Puri, a white friend and I were refused entry because we didn’t look Hindu enough. I’d probably have passed muster if my Hindu-ness hadn’t come under suspicion

by virtue of my being with a white person. When I declared I was a Hindu, I was asked for proof. Upon my last name giving my Brahmanism away, there were repeated expressions of contrition. The damage had already been done, though.

Religion and God had become ugly. Selfish. Tainted. The more I made trips to the bigger temples in India, the less spiritual I felt.

Which is why the opportunity to become a writer-in-residence at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies couldn't have come at a better time. I hadn't expected an academic centre to restore my faith in the religion I was born into. Everything – from the secular approach with which Hinduism was approached to the hour-long discussions that became a free-for-all – informed me tremendously as a writer.

Land Where I Flee, my novel, deals heavily with the many positives of Hinduism and its many ills of – the rigidity of the caste system, the draconian nature of some rituals and the impenetrability of the religion – and discussing these aspects of my religion while also familiarizing myself with their origins and symbolism was a common occurrence on Wednesday lunches. If some expert wasn't readily available, one of the many books at the Centre's library were.

Given that the Centre is so much a part of our everyday lives, it'd be easy to forget that the organization is perhaps the only one of its kind all over the world. I just signed my North American book deal, which entailed a trip to the US, and I was hard-pressed to find a centre similar in nature and scope at universities such as Yale and Columbia.

With the Centre being involved in events as varied as talks by academics, experts and even Amitabh Bachchan to helping finance deserving if underfunded students' education in the form of scholarships and stipends, the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies had created opportunities for feeding of the soul as it has for feeding of stomachs on Wednesday lunches.

It has been a fruitful experience, one that I am very glad for. The Centre is doing excellent work, and to be a part of it was to see it make great strides.

Crossing the wastelands: the poetry and commentary of the Tamil Vaishnavas

Archana Venkatesan

Poetry brought me to the study of India. As an English undergraduate I read *Beowulf*, the requisite Shakespeare, the canons of classical Greece and Rome. I even read some postcolonial fiction and poetry, and tried to make sense of myself as a postcolonial subject living a diasporic life in North America. It was quite by accident that I found myself in a class on Indian poetry in translation taught by Professor George Hart at UC Berkeley. It was nothing short of a transformative moment – one surely shared by many like me – for I was suddenly



faced with a dazzling, beautiful, and to me, undiscovered world of poetry. Texts that I had never heard of, poets whose names I only vaguely recalled were suddenly brought alive through the elegant translations of George Hart, A.K.Ramanujan, and Hank Heifetz. It wasn't simply the thrill of discovery that launched me on a completely new trajectory, but that it ushered me into a world in which *everything* was new – the form, the experience, the content, the poetic conventions. That was almost fifteen years ago, not a lifetime or indeed, a very long while ago in the broad measure of time. But in that time, I found a world-within-a-world to explore: the poetry of the remarkable Tamil mystics and poets known as the *alvars*, who lived in Tamil speaking south India between the sixth and ninth centuries.

My study of the *alvar* texts – they are collected in a compendium of four thousand verses called the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* – began with and through the process of translation. In seeking an English register that evoked the *alvar* poems' emotional tenor, I acquired a deep appreciation of Tamil literary culture; how the *bhakti* poems are shaped by their literary antecedents, and how they in turn shaped the aesthetic imperatives of emergent Tamil Vaishnava theology of the twelfth century. Indeed, it took me a long while to understand that the erudite commentaries on the *alvar* poems were governed by their own set of aesthetic rules, and the cultivation of enjoyment was a central object of commentary.

The work of scholars such as A.K.Ramanujan and Friedhelm Hardy on the Tamil Vaishnava sampradayas revealed a deep-seated scepticism for the work of the commentators. In their view, these Tamil Vaishnava commentators circumscribed and limited the passionate and emotional devotionism of the *alvars* through dry, pedantic, plodding theology. Within such a framework, poetry and commentary, emic and etic approaches to reading and interpretation are set in opposition, with little possibility for a productive conversation between the two. Yet as I read and re-read the commentaries, and more importantly experienced them in a lived and embodied dimension, I came to realize that these commentaries were rooted in a refined and reflective pleasure. The commentary mediated enjoyment or *anubhava* on multiple levels, replicating the excruciating ecstasy of the *alvar* poet through the judicious use of wide-ranging allusions, quotations and anecdotal evidence. With the commentaries (in their many forms) as my point of departure, much of my work has sought to reconcile the two poles of religion and literature, and to thus situate the *alvar* poems in their active, lived environments. So while the art of translation invites close reading, the embodied lives of these poems and their many commentaries, enable us to understand how these poems are learned, transmitted and interpreted in both ritual and non-ritual contexts.

My most recent book, *A Hundred Measures of Time: Nammalvar's Tiruviruttam* (Penguin Classics, 2014), emerged out of just such an engagement. It began with a research project on the extensive, overlapping ritual and performance repertoire of the various performance communities at Alvar Tirunagari, an important temple site to Vishnu in Tamil Nadu. In the able hands of these skilled performers, commentary isn't static or ossified. It is vibrant, deeply felt and is the poem's second skin. Immersion of this sort in the extraordinary and unexpected lives of Nammalvar's poems – we can make the same argument about any of the *alvar* poems – transformed my appreciation of his *Tiruviruttam*, and left an indelible mark on my approach to it. It also allowed me to enter into the perplexing world of the *Tiruviruttam* with its odd, changeable characters, its subtle changes in emotional registers, and its intricate, dense vision of the divine.

Following the literary conventions of classical Tamil poetry, the *Tiruviruttam* is framed as a love story of an anonymous heroine and her beloved. Except, in the world of this poem, the heroine is the ninth century poet Nammalvar's female alter-ego, and the beloved is Vishnu. But unlike similar poems in which one hears only the lonesome voice of the heroine, the *Tiruviruttam* is populated by an entire cast of rather talkative characters,

who all offer some insight into the nature of impossible desire: the heroine's friend, her mother, a fortune-teller, and the hero himself. But as the poem draws to its conclusion, the poet dissolves the poem's frame in a fabulous sleight of hand, and it shifts to a profoundly introspective and philosophical register.

A Hundred Measures of Time, which was completed while in residence at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (OCHS) during the 2013 Hilary Term, is the first full-length academic study and translation of this foundational poem of the Tamil Vaishnava community. The study employs a variety of interpretive approaches in order to unpack and make sense of Nammalvar's very complex and multi-layered work. Translation is but one of these approaches. Comparison with the Tirukkovaiyar, a similar, contemporaneous work from the Tamil Shaiva canon helps us apprehend how poets in the ninth century, innovated in surprising ways, adapting and responding to their literary pasts. When we bring folk genres like the Tamil lament into conversation with Nammalvar's poem of longing and desire, it rents the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' literary forms, between the 'folk' and 'classical' and between the religious and the secular. And of course, the long and revered tradition of commentary forms the book's back-bone, my reading guided by the commentators' aesthetic imperative of enjoyment in exegesis (*anubhava*).

I leave you here with a favourite verse from the Tiruviruttam that builds beautifully on the Tamil literary past. The situation is as follows. The hero and heroine have eloped. The heroine is tired and frightened, and her handsome hero consoles her by pointing to a distant oasis. Look, the land of our beloved Vishnu is our place of refuge.

He Said:

*O girl who is like gold! You crossed this wasteland
that the lovely fierce sun spat out
when he swallowed the four lands
and sucked them dry.*

*Look! Just beyond Kannan's Vehka,
where even the gods come to pray
lie the lovely cool flower gardens rich with honey
that give comfort no matter one's state.
(Tiruviruttam 26)*

Forms and meanings: The Image of God in a Swaminarayan Sect

Tushar Shah

The central purpose of a Hindu temple (mandira) is to house the sacred images of deities (murtis). These material embodiments of the divine are ritually viewed and worshipped by devotees. However, the murtis can also tell us much about the specific tradition of which they are a part. My study focuses on the images enshrined at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden, London.

‘Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha’, or BAPS as it is commonly abbreviated to, is a sect of the wider two-century-old Swaminarayan Hindu tradition. BAPS, formed in 1907, holds at its centre a particular mode of worship, or upasana. It is believed in the sect that Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the founder of the tradition and who is considered by its followers to be God, had revealed a choice devotee as his spiritual successor, thereby initiating a lineage of gurus that continues to the present day. BAPS’s beliefs and principles can be seen inscribed in its religious art and iconography.

Following a method in the field of Art History, I conducted a ‘visual reading’ which entailed closely observing the images along with their surrounding environment and then attempting to perform an analysis on the specific features to eventually draw out relevant meanings and ideas. I also interviewed Hindu monks (sadhus) and devotees of the temple.

In analysing the murtis, I studied various aspects, such as layout, ornamentation, and rituals. One of the facets studied was the mudras (hand gestures) of the murtis in the central shrine of the mandira.

According to the Shilpa-Shastras, within which the Indian science of sculpture is codified, each hand of a deity is sculpted with a certain gesture. These mudras are indicative of the various capacities of the deities. The Swaminarayan images incorporate this convention as well.

The right hand of all three images is in japa-mudra. One of the sadhus explained to me that this mudra was the gesture of bhakti as the fingers are in the correct position for a mala (rosary) to be placed on them. Therefore, the mudra denotes the prominence of devotional practice within the Swaminarayan tradition. With BAPS being a bhakti tradition, it seems natural and appropriate that the idea of devotion is displayed and emphasised through the material nuances of its images.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s (centre) left hand is in the abhaya-mudra (see image below). This gesture of the lifted open palm typifies the protection he

offers to his devotees and also the way in which he dispels their fears. The left hand of Gunatitanand Swami (left) is in jñana-mudra; an open palm with the tip of the index finger touching the thumb. This represents true knowledge or wisdom. In the BAPS context, Gunatitanand Swami has this mudra as it shows him to be “the conferrer of true spiritual knowledge” (i.e. the presenter of the core upasana of BAPS). Finally, the sevaka-mudra of Gopalanand Swami (right) represents his servitude to Bhagwan Swaminarayan through which he was graced with liberation.

Vaisheshika. Revisiting the system from the perspective of cosmos-self-god

Ionut Moise

Vaisheshika has not been fully explored, thus one of the aims of my research (materialized in a recent paper I have given at the OCHS Graduate Seminars) is to explore such a little-researched philosophical system of Classical and Medieval India. The primary focus of my research is the notion of the Self (atman) its genesis, nature, and development, as seen in relation to cosmos and God. Indeed, the idea of ‘Self’ represents a fundamental notion in the majority of Indian darshanas. In Vaisheshika too, the ‘Self’ is a prevalent notion which I believe precedes that of Ishvara. For this research, the ‘Self’ represents an ‘epistemological tool’ upon which other doctrines would eventually build. Many researchers have already noticed the doctrinal shifts or annotations that happened in the system, especially those made by Prashastapada’s Padarthadharmanasangraha; however, conceptual shifts occurred in other schools as well. Nyaya, for example, extends the number of pramanas (for example, by adding upamana: comparison) in order to defend core metaphysical beliefs, like God’s existence (Dasti 2011; Tuske 2008). Sankhya, on the other hand, shifts its stances from religious concerns to more philosophical ones, and this is the case particularly in Ishvarakrishna and Yuktidipika (Harzer, 2006). But we must ask whether all these changes are ‘opportunistic’ in their intent? Why should we take such a ‘naive realism’ like Vaisheshika seriously? My response states that the ‘Self’ develops in early and later Vaisheshika in a curious way. For example, in the beginning soul relies on her own ‘cognitive soteriology’ while later on, when Ishvara takes precedence in the system, is left astray by becoming simply an instrument of sense-perception and the inner organ adrshta, which regulates the merits and demerits (dharma/adharma). There is a shift in Vaisheshika’s soteriology and implicitly on the self, which shows that theism put the notion of self in background.

As my title ‘The Self in Vaisheshika’ illustrates, my research involves some textual comparative exegesis encompassing a period of nine centuries (2nd AD - the probable date of Vaisheshikasutras’ composition to Udayana, the last Vaisheshika commentator, c. 11th AD). Although the period that my research covers is broad, this periodization is absolutely necessary for a correct understanding of the development of the system. The methodology I apply is the history of ideas, which involves capturing the bigger picture of the Vaisheshika. However, my research will focus only on three texts, which represent key moments in the development of the system. The three Vaisheshika texts analysed are: (1) Vaisheshikasutras of Kanada; (2) Padarthadharmanasangraha of Prashastapada; and (3) Udayana’s Atmatattvaviveka. I must also emphasise that the thesis’ investigation will focus principally on the concept of Self and its soteriology (‘The Self in Vaisheshika’).

There are several questions to which my research responds. (1) From a historical perspective, one may ask why Prashastapada creates doctrinal shifts like plurality of selves, 24 gunas, and Ishvara (Keith 1921)? (2) From an ontological perspective, one could also question whether Vaisheshika remains in tune with the Upanishadic cosmological descriptive understanding, including its cosmogony, ontology, and teleology. (3) From a theological perspective, we can also enquire whether Vaisheshika truly evolves into a ‘rational theology’, or whether it possesses a soteriology. I tend to believe that if Vaisheshika was not theistic in the beginning, it could not have eventually become so later on; perhaps Chemparathy’s view on the Vaisheshika as being a ‘rational theology’ is unnecessarily emphasised. (4) From an epistemological perspective, I also seek to discover a probable link between the notion of ‘Self’ with other metaphysical concepts discussed in some Vaisheshika texts, like the plurality of selves, the unseen cause residing in the human soul (adrshita), Ishvara as a cause of the cosmos, and ‘revelation’ with its link to shabda (sound and verbal testimony). (5) Finally, I aim to answer these questions through what I have called the ‘Self-sound reverberation theory’, by which I explain how the ‘Self’ (similarly to sound) might reverberate or cause, at the level of logical systematisation, a whole series of metaphysical doctrines. Shabda may explain also the genesis of the notion of ‘Self’ in Vaisheshika, as well as revelation.

First of all, my contribution to the research of Indian Philosophy will be to render a more focused perspective on the Vaisheshika, which in the European languages has enjoyed only general treatment, most often as a system merged with Nyaya. Second, I want to clarify Vaisheshika’s tenets as separate from Nyaya at a time when the amalgamation between the two was not

fully completed. Third, my work, which seems to be that of a historian of ideas, leads me to draw some conclusions related to the 'honest' or 'unfair' development of the system. The limitation of this philosophy, as well as its own originality, will be discussed. I suggest that the 'Self' is a notion prone to 'conceptual metamorphoses'. In Indian Philosophy it is a notion more prevalent than that of Ishvara. God has an indirect effect on the soteriology by regulating the unseen cause *adrshita*. He is also the creator of the cosmos. But He is still equal to the 'Self' and atoms, as all three are seen as eternal. The eternity of 'Self' and Brahman in later Vaisheshika seems to suggest that both notions entail each other, as is suggested in the Upanishadic tradition, where they are synonyms. I argue that the 'Self' as a doctrine pre-existed the notion of God. A careful look at the original understanding of Brahman shows that God was nothing but a Superior Soul, and this is the major role that 'Self' plays, not only in Vaisheshika, but also in the whole of Indian Philosophy, which begins with Self, not God.

Religious rupture: the tensions and transitions of a nineteenth century Vaishnava leader

Lucian Wong

The nineteenth century is widely regarded as a pivotal period in South Asian religious history. Colonial presence in the subcontinent entailed intense and prolonged exposure to challenging currents of western modernity for many South Asian religious traditions and practitioners. In addition to sweeping social and institutional transformations effected by the colonial regime, indigenous traditions had to contend with new and manifold challenges to their worldviews in the form of, among other things, early western Indological scholarship, Christian missionising, and post-Enlightenment ideas and ideologies disseminated through British-oriented educational curricula. While religious responses to the colonial challenge varied widely, there exists a prevalent view within scholarship that the encounter with modernity marked a definitive and vast structural and epistemic rupture with pre-colonial indigenous religious traditions.

Perhaps the most familiar and radical form that this thesis assumes is that Hinduism itself is an 'invention' of the British colonial period. Moreover, individual Hindu traditions are commonly characterised as having undergone major processes of transformation and re-invention during this period, evinced by the presence of new features and tendencies that are taken as signs of not merely historical difference but also deep structural, if not ontological, distinctness from the pre-colonial. At its most

comprehensive, this thesis of rupture even subsumes ostensibly diametrically opposed religious currents and dispositions, such as those commonly labelled ‘reform and revival’ or ‘moderniser and traditionalist’. Pivotal to the notion of rupture in the South Asian colonial context is an emergent indigenous middle-class, the *bhadraloka* (lit. ‘respectable folk’). Uprooted from their traditions, instructed in English medium education, and initiated into the service of the colonial regime in varied capacities, members of this small but historically significant social group were situated at the cusp of dissonant worlds, becoming the principal agents of transformations and innovations in society and culture, and thus key loci of religious rupture.

My thesis sets out to probe and problematise the notion of rupture in relation to the nineteenth century Bengali religious context, and more specifically, the nineteenth century Caitanya Vaishnava tradition. It does so by exploring the life and work of Kedarnath Datta Bhaktivinod (1838–1914), an important nineteenth century Caitanya Vaishnava religious figure, whose devotional and theological writings, publication efforts, and organisational endeavours played a crucially contributive role in the Vaishnava flourishing of the latter part of the century. Bhaktivinod serves as a particularly germane case study for the purposes of the investigation. Emerging from a typically nineteenth century Calcuttan middle-class educational and social context, Bhaktivinod spent a major portion of his adult life serving in the capacity of Deputy Magistrate for the colonial regime in various parts of Bengal and Orissa, rubbing shoulders with many of the prominent urban societal and religious notables of the day. Against the backdrop of the patent colonial influences on his formation, and in view of his having only decisively converted to Caitanya Vaishnavism at a fairly late age, Bhaktivinod’s impactful work within the nineteenth century Caitanya Vaishnava world readily lends itself to being interpreted as archetypically participating in a middle class current of rupture. It thus comes as little surprise that this basic premise underlies much of the critical scholarship relating to him and his legacy.

Though the academy has been somewhat slow off the mark in giving Bhaktivinod due recognition, recent years have witnessed the appearance of a number of scholarly studies and articles that have made his life and work a principle subject of focus. Somewhat ironically, though, one of the more evident lacunae left by these studies concerns arguably the most immediate feature of his work: its sheer diversity, both synchronic and diachronic. That is to say, Bhaktivinod’s writings display multiple and divergent dimensions at any one period of time, as well as a definite trajectory over time. The

crucial upshot of this shortcoming has been the privileging of one dimension or moment of Bhaktivinod's thought, which has, broadly speaking, entailed the placing of inordinate emphasis on the bhadr-loka and modern-liberal facets of his work.

Through in-depth, context-sensitive reading of a range of Bhaktivinod's Bengali, Sanskrit and English works, my thesis seeks to challenge this static and slanted view of Bhaktivinod and his religious enterprise. It does so by highlighting significant tensions and transitions in his writings, exploring these in relation to not merely (1) the urban setting of Calcutta and wider regional and national middle-class processes and currents, but also (2) surviving traditional rural Vaishnava communities with whom Bhaktivinod extensively associated, as well as (3) his personal religious practices and transformation. It argues that the tensions and transitions evident in his writings are indicative of the increasing influence of pre-colonial Caitanya Vaishnava currents in his life, implying a greater degree of continuity with the pre-colonial in his work than has hitherto been acknowledged. This approach is thus proffered as a correlate to 'early modern' approaches in South Asian intellectual and religious history that seek traces of an indigenous pre-colonial modernity, drawing attention to the fluidity, innovations, and dynamism within South Asia's intellectual and religious cultures prior to the advent of British rule, and which thereby highlight significant continuities with the colonial.

My thesis proceeds by way of examining Bhaktivinod's treatment of key themes that are commonly discerned as markers of rupture in modern South Asian religious traditions: (1) historical consciousness; (2) Victorian-puritan ethics and moral activism; (3) expanded conceptions of dharma; and (4) a concern for regional and national identity. Drawing on relevant sources from Bhaktivinod's expansive literary corpus, the chapters that form the main body of the thesis each focuses on one of these themes. My thesis argues that the tensions and transitions discernable in Bhaktivinod's treatment of these themes collectively serve to problematise a narrative of rupture in relation to Bhaktivinod's work, and more broadly, the Caitanya Vaishnava tradition in the nineteenth century.

4. Fellows and students

Visiting fellows reports

New students

Awards

Visiting fellows reports

Dr Swarupa Gupta

Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Michaelmas 2012

I have been rewarded and enriched academically during my visit to the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. The multidisciplinary focus of the Centre, and the freedom to concentrate on my research helped me a great deal. The Centre gives scope for creativity, originality, and deep thought. I have greatly benefited from the comments and suggestions of the Academic Director, Professor Gavin Flood, and from the co-operation and kindness of the Director, Shaunaka Rishi Das.

The Centre has a flexible and open academic environment, which helps open new vistas in academic collaboration across borders. The library and other staff were extremely generous. By using sources at the Bodleian Library and that of the Centre, I could complete two papers for publication: 'The Sacred and the Secular: Hindu Ideology and Imagery in Extremist Politics' and 'Facets of Hinduism in the Cultural Nationalist Programme of the Hindu Mela'.

Swarupa Gupta, Ph.D. in History, SOAS (University of London, 2004) is Assistant Professor at the Department of History, Presidency University, Calcutta. Her publications include: Notions of Nationhood in Bengal: Perspectives on Samaj, c. 1867-1905 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009); an edited volume entitled Nationhood and Identity Movements in Asia: Colonial and Postcolonial Times (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2012); and a book manuscript: Ethnicity, Otherness and Cultural Constellations in Eastern India and Beyond. She has also contributed to various peer-reviewed international and national journals such as Modern Asian Studies (Cambridge University Press), Economic and Political Weekly, Studies in History, Journal of the Asiatic Society, Encounters; and also to several edited books. She is the recipient of Felix Scholarship, University of London Central Research Fund award, SOAS fieldwork grant, and an invited visiting fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Gottingen, Germany.

Dr Archana Venkatesan

Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Hilary 2013

During my tenure as the Shivdasani Fellow for the 2013 Hilary Term, I

Fellows and students

completed work on a pending book project, continued my translation work for an ongoing collaborative project, submitted an article to the *Journal of Hindu Studies* for peer review, and began a collaborative book project with a colleague at SOAS. My two months as a Shivdasani fellow at OCHS have proved to be rewarding and productive.

I completed work on my book *A Hundred Measures of Time: Nammalvar's Tiruviruttam*, which had been under contract with Penguin India since 2008. My teaching and administrative duties in California had not given me sufficient time to work on this project, although the research for it had been completed over 5 years ago. The book is the first full-length study and analysis in English of the *Tiruviruttam*, an important 9th-century Tamil Vaishnava poem. The book also includes a full translation of the poem's 100 verses, accompanied by notes and commentary based on traditional interpretations. The completed book was submitted to the publisher in March, and is expected to be published either at the end of this year (2013) or at the beginning of next year (2014).

I continued working on a translation of Nammalvar's 1102 verse *Tiruvaymoli*, a project I have undertaken with Prof. Francis X. Clooney (Harvard University). I made steady progress on the translation, and the translation is expected to be published in late 2014 or early 2015.

Being in Oxford has afforded me the opportunity to meet and connect with a number of colleagues with similar interests in Tamil religious, literary and visual culture. Prof. Crispin Branfoot (Art History, SOAS) and I began a research collaboration exploring the architecture and the ritual and visual culture of the Andal temple of Srivilliputtur, Tamil Nadu. This important temple has been little studied, and our complementary skills (art historical and literary) will result in an interdisciplinary exploration of the Andal temple. We submitted a book proposal to Marg Publications in India in early March. The proposal was accepted, and we have now begun planning the writing and research for the book. The manuscript will be submitted to Marg in September 2014 for publication in December 2015.

As the Shivdasani Fellow, I also had the opportunity to share my research. I delivered four talks at OCHS (two on South Indian performance and two on Tamil devotional poetry). One of these talks transformed into an article that I have submitted to the *Journal of Hindu Studies*.

In sum, my two months at OCHS through the generosity of the Shivdasani Fellowship gave me the much needed time and resources to bring several long term projects to fruition. Without this opportunity, I know that my book would still remain incomplete and much of the other work would

have continued to stagnate. The rich, intellectual vibrancy of the Centre, the warmth of its members and staff, and the wealth of Oxford resources that the Centre makes available were all instrumental in making my time away from California so rewarding and fulfilling.

Dr Archana Venkatesan is an Assistant Professor in Comparative Literature and in Religious Studies at the University of California, Davis. She completed her PhD at the University of California, Berkeley in 2004. She has worked mainly on Andal, the female Alvar poet-saint, and published an award-winning translation of her poetry with OUP in 2010 (The Secret Garland: Antal's Tiruppavai and Nacciya Tirumoli). She is currently working, with Prof. Francis X. Clooney (Harvard), on a translation of the Tiruvaymoli, one of the most important collections of Tamil devotional poetry.

Dr Mario Russo

OCHS Visiting Fellow, Hilary 2013

My experience at the OCHS has been very useful, rich, and interesting. I met great scholars and students and I have learned new things, new approaches to the Indian Studies and different points of view.

I particularly enjoyed Dr Venkatesan's seminars, Prof. Flood's lectures on Hinduism, and many more of the lectures, which were always followed by interesting discussions and exchanges.

The atmosphere in the Centre is wonderful, friendly and warm. Each member contributes to this and I am really impressed by the efforts of all. The weekly scholars lunch was something new to me and this really helped me to feel at home.

During my fellowship I could work on translation and am very grateful for the practical support given.

The experience was fantastic and more exchanges between the Centre and other institutions would be very helpful. I would really like to spend more time at the OCHS and would be very happy to see increased fellowship opportunities open up.

New students

Viraj Aggarwal

India/UK

Balliol College

Viraj is study for a BSc in Engineering Science. Viraj is a committee member of the OCHS Leadership Programme.

Iliyana Angelova

Bulgaria

Wolfson College

MSc in Social Anthropology, Oxford University (2009)

Iliyana is pursuing a DPhil in Social Anthropology. Her area of academic focus is Christianity in India.

Samvartika Bajpai

Canada

University College

Samvartika is studying History at University College.

Josephine Brill

USA

Wolfson College

BA in Mathematics and Economics, Drake University (1980)

MA in Economics, Cornell University (1984)

Josephine is studying for a MSt in Oriental Studies. Her areas of focus are Sanskrit, Sastra, Genre and Metarules.

Edwin Burlton

UK

Oriel College

Edwin is studying Theology at Oriel College. His areas of academic interest are Christianity, Hinduism and the Psychology of Religion.

Avni Chag

UK

St Cross College

BA in Study of Religion (SOAS)

Currently pursuing a M.Phil.

Her areas of academic focus are Sanskrit, Brahmanism and Vaishnavism. The title of her thesis is: An Introduction and Annotated Translation of the unpublished second chapter of Bharadvaja Samhita.

Maura J. H. Collins

UK

St John's College

Maura is studying for a BA in Classics and Oriental Studies (Sanskrit with Greek). Her main areas of interest include comparative philology, Indo-Iranian languages, epic poetry and eastern religions.

Ida Danewid

Sweden

Lady Margaret Hall

Ida is studying for a MPhil in International Relations. Her areas of interest are International Political Theory and Global Ethics.

Kunchok Dolma

USA

Balliol College

BA in English Literature and Politics, The City University of New York (2009)

Kunchok is pursuing a MPhil in International Relations at Balliol College.

Gayathiri Kamalakanthan

UK

Worcester College

Gayathiri is pursuing a BA in Theology. Her areas of academic concentration are Hinduism and the Nature of Religion.

Brunda Karanam

India

Worcester College

BA Honours in Law, National Law School of India University (2011)

Brunda is studying Law at Worcester College.

Ameer Kotecha

UK

St Peter's College

Ameer is studying for a BA in Politics and Philosophy, with a focus on International Relations, Religion, Ethics and Politics in Africa. Ameer is a committee member of the OCHS Leadership Programme.

Rahul Kulka

Germany

St Hugh's College

Rahul is pursuing a BA in History. His area of focus is the Early Modern History of Europe.

Monish Kulkarni

UK

Lincoln College

Monish is studying History at Lincoln College. His areas of interest are British and Indian History

James Michael Macdonagh

UK

Regent's Park College

James is pursuing a BA in Theology. His main areas of interest are Hinduism and Sociology of Religion.

Sasidhar Madugula

UK

The Queen's College

Sasidhar is pursuing a Msc in Neuroscience at The Queen's College.

Matthew James Martin

UK

Wolfson College

BA in Religious and Theological Studies, Cardiff University (2012)
Matthew is studying for a MSt in Study of Religion. His areas of academic interest are Hindu and Buddhist traditions and Anthropology of Religion.

Fellows and students

Anirudh Mathur

UK

Balliol College

Anirudh is studying for a BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics.

Anna Rose McCrory

India/UK

St Peter's College

Anna is studying Theology at St Peter's College

Dr Alok K Mishra

India

PhD in Psychometric Disorder

MSt in Philosophy

MSt in Clinical Psychology

Dr Mishra is studying Statelessness and International Law. His area of academic interest is International Development.

Amit Mishra

UK

Harris Manchester College

MBBS in Medicine, Imperial College London (2010)

Amit was studying PPE. Amit passed away on 27 February 2013, before the completion of his degree.

Kirtan Patel

UK

Mansfield College

Kirtan is studying History at Mansfield College.

Shanna Patel

UK

St Cross College

Shanna is pursuing a MSc in Contemporary India. Her areas of interest are Indian Politics since 1947, Indian Political Economy and Human Development in India.

Megan Robb

USA

New College

MPhil in Modern South Asian Studies - Oxford University (2010)

BA in Indian studies and English literature - Indiana University (2008)

Megan is studying for a DPhil in Oriental Studies. Her areas of academic studies are South Asian Studies and History of Islam in South Asia.

Vibha Selvaratnam

UK

Oriel College

Vibha is studying Mathematics at Oriel College. Her area of academic interest is Mathematical Models in Fluid Dynamics.

Swati Seshadri

UK

St Hugh's College

Swati is studying for a Bachelors degree in Engineering. She helped establish the Oxford Indian Classical Arts Society (OICAS).

Rajan Shah

UK

St Hugh's College

Rajan is studying for a BA in Classics.

Sagar Shah

Belgium

St Catherine's College

Sagar is study for a BSc in Engineering Science. Sagar is a committee member of the OCHS Leadership Programme.

Tushar Shah

UK

Mansfield College

BA in Politics, Psychology, Sociology and International Studies, University of Cambridge (2011)
MA in South Asian Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (2012)

Tushar is pursuing a MSt in the Study of Religion. His areas of focus are Christianity, Hinduism and Nature of Religion.

Mahaveer Singhvi

India

New College

MBA in Management and Law, University of Delhi (2008)

Mahaveer is pursuing a Masters in Diplomatic Studies. His areas of interest are International Law and International Relations.

Shibanee Sivanayagam

UK

Trinity College

Shibanee is pursuing a BA in PPE.

Priya Sury

USA

Balliol College

Priya Sury is studying for a Masters in the Study of Religions. Her areas of academic interests are Hinduism and Buddhism.

Oliver Whiteman

UK

St Cross College

Oliver is studying for a M.Phil. in Modern South Asian Studies. His areas of interest are Himilayan Politics and the British Imperial History in Asia.

Clarisse Zoulim

France

St Catherine's College

Mphil in Philosophy - Paris-Sorbonne University

M.A in Philosophy - University

College London (2010)

Clarisse is a visiting student from Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris. She is currently studying Philosophy at St Catherine's College. During her stay in Oxford, Clarisse is the French Lectrice to undergraduate students, at both St. Catherine's College and Wadham College.

Fellows and students

Awards for OCHS students

Jiva Gosvami bursary

Lucian Wong

Hanuman Bursary

Ionut Moise

Okita Bursary

Ilyana Angelova

Maura Collins

Hansraj & Kanchanben Popat Bursary

Tristan Elby

Gupta Dan Bursary

Tushar Shah

Avni Mehta

Dr Jessica Frazier

Ramiah Alagappan Bursary

Rohana Seneviratne

The Patel Book Grant

Chris Jones

Professor Makhanlal Roy Chaudhury Book Grant

Nayan Bedia

5. Library

THE OCHS Library currently holds approximately 18,000 titles, mostly in the fields of Hindu intellectual history (with an emphasis on Vedanta, Nyaya and Mimamsa), Puranic texts, Sanskrit poetry, and comparative theology. Due to several generous donations over the years, the library now also has a substantial collection of works on Indian Christianity and Hindu-Christian theological interactions, which has been used extensively in the past year by several of our doctoral and visiting students working in those areas.

With the help of our interns, the Library's old collection is now nearly entirely catalogued. Prof. Roodbergen's collection (approx. 10,000 volumes), which the OCHS library received two years ago, is still being catalogued. The majority of works on Indian philosophy and theology from that collection has now been catalogued.

The Library has this year received a substantial collection consisting mainly of Dvaita Vedanta works from Kiyokazu Okita, and smaller donations from Raj and Ramila Chauhan, Marie Ann Ostlund, Shaunaka Rishi Das, John and Mary Brockington, Gopal Gupta, Sefton Davies, Prof. M. Narasimhachary, Gopal Patel, David Soud, Jessica Frazier, Pradeep Kumar, David Millington, Nandita Satsangee, Nanditha Krishna, Arjun Vekaria, Archana Venkatesan, Yoshitsugu Sawai, Swami Pranava Sudhan Jnana Tapaswi, Rembert Lutjeharms, and Jaya Row.



6. Continuing Education Department

Taught courses and lectures

During the Spring term we resumed taught courses in two venues, at the Harrow Arts Centre and at the Regency Hotel in Kensington. The proposal is that we will offer the second part of the introductory course in the same venues during the Autumn term and then decide whether to move to other locations or whether to offer further courses in the same locations. Despite the difficulties involved in terms of venues, travel, and demands on staff time, we remain committed to face-to-face tuition and intend to maintain as much provision of this type as possible.

We are continuing to give talks at the Nehru Centre but these have now been reduced to four per year.

Talks in Leicester are held every month organised by our Friends group and these are very well attended.

Talks in Birmingham are less frequent but are still ongoing and will in the future be held in various Hindu centres around the city, beginning with the Balaji Temple in Tividale.

Online courses

The provision of online courses has continued this year and expanded so that we now have a total of six courses currently available to offer each term, although the popularity of certain courses is much greater than for others. Online student numbers have increased by more than 50% this year, reaching 115 during the Spring term of 2013.

We are currently working on producing a new two-part introductory course and it is hoped that this will be an effective strategy in further increasing online student numbers. The two courses are now written and we plan to complete filming and production over the summer so that the two courses will be available for the Autumn term. These are the same two courses that are currently being taught in Harrow and Kensington.

Plans for an online Sanskrit course have been postponed as it was felt that this would require too much work at the origination stage. When the new introductory courses are complete we intend to work on two more advanced courses, one on the Upanishads and the other on the Bhagavad-gita.

Ebooks

We are also hoping to produce a series of e-books. These will primarily be translations of important passages from Sanskrit texts, including the Mahabharata, Bhagavad-gita and Upanishads. Work on editing the Bhagavad-gita is well under way.

Other

We are still considering the possibility of providing study tours to selected sites in India although it is accepted that it would require a considerable amount of work to put together a suitable package.

Another idea we are considering is making books available by bringing these in from India. This can be done on a relatively small scale and would be a service much appreciated by our students and supporters as well as persons attending our talks.

Management

Dr Nick Sutton is responsible for the writing of courses and modules. Online courses are taught by Nick Sutton and Rembert Lutjeharms and managed by Lal Krishna. Anuradha Dooney, Rembert Lutjeharms, and Nick Sutton share other teaching responsibilities with other tutors contributing occasional classes as and when required. Judit Bajusz provides secretarial support and edits course materials.

7. Internet

THE OCHS website (www.ochs.org.uk) is a valued resource to its core audiences of prospective students, academics wanting more information about the Centre, students of Hinduism worldwide, and potential supporters of the Centre. The site was relaunched in mid-2012 and has seen improvements in useability, efficiency, and reliability.

Our outreach to the wider community of academic and public interest in Hindu Studies has involved making audio of more than 450 OCHS lectures and seminars since 1998 available on the OCHS website. We also have a very successful podcast of lectures and seminars and the internet has become a major focus of our Continuing Education classes.

The internet is also one of our main avenues for publicising our forthcoming lectures and seminars. These are all noted on the website and this section of the site saw some of the most useful improvements.

Our email list subscriptions have grown by 20% over the year. The lecture list has more than 3,900 subscribers, with new subscribers signing on regularly. Our monthly email Friends Updates and six-monthly email Newsletter have 4,600 and 7,500 subscribers respectively.

8. Development

Property campaign

The search for a new home for the OCHS began in earnest in May 2012. A suitable property was identified and fundraising began, a major milestone of which was a dinner in London in November 2012. An offer was placed on the building, but was rejected. To date we have raised £300,000, with another £200,00 pledged, making this by far our most successful fundraising endeavour.

Broadcast

The OCHS serves as a useful reference for broadcasters seeking an authoritative voice for Hindu traditions.

Shaunaka Rishi Das consulted on a number of news and documentary programmes as well as a series of Prayer for the Day recordings at Janmas-tami time.

Shaunaka and Dr Jessica Frazier worked on a documentary project about the Kumbha-mela, Shaunaka as an interviewee and Dr Frazier as a consultant.

Dr Frazier's media work keeps growing with a third appearance on Radio Four's *In Our Time*, this time speaking on the Upanishads. She acted as consultant and interviewee on BBC programmes marking the fortieth anniversary of the arrival of Ugandan Indians into the UK. As well as this she was a consultant on the series *Divine Women* and an interviewee on Radio Four's *Origins of Sin*. Dr Frazier is currently discussing further programming opportunities with BBC TV.

The Bhumi Project

The OCHS Bhumi project, initiated by the UN, co-ordinates Hindu responses to environmental change and greening pilgrimage sites.

The Bhumi Project received funding from the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) for another year to enable Gopal Patel to work full-time for the Bhumi Project. For most of the last twelve months Gopal has been based in India to establish the Project there.

The Bhumi Project organised a national conference at the Parmarth Niketan ashram in Rishikesh, India, on the topic of green pilgrimage. This meeting was part of the Green Pilgrimage Network (GPN) initiative of ARC.

Development

It brought together representatives, including city mayors and religious leaders, from six pilgrimage cities from across India – Kolkata, Mayapur, Rishikesh, Varanasi, Vishakapatnam, and Vrindavan. By the end of the conference delegates decided on a number of initiatives to help develop the GPN in India with the assistance of Bhumi. As part of this conference we also helped develop a handbook for pilgrim towns and cities on guidance to implement green practices.

In January 2013 the Bhumi Project attended the Kumbh Mela celebration in Allahabad, India for 10 days. The largest religious gathering in the world, the celebration attracts up to 100 million pilgrims over two months. The Bhumi team helped organise a meeting on green pilgrimage with local and national officials and also met with many of the Mela authorities to learn what planning they had put in place to deal with the large numbers of pilgrims. They met many senior religious leaders from different Hindu traditions at the Kumbh to talk about the environment and ask for their support and blessings.

With funding from the ARC the Bhumi Project commissioned Jahnvi Harrison, a UK-based writer and illustrator, to create a story with accompanying illustrations to highlight the role women in India can play to protect the environment in pilgrim towns. The story follows the journey of three generations of women going on pilgrimage to the sacred town of Vrindavan. This story has also been adapted into a script for use by schools. Entitled *The Hidden Forest*, it should launch in July.

Since October the Bhumi Project has made a number of important partnerships, of note, the Radha-Gopinath temple located in South Mumbai has offered to partner with us to establish a permanent Bhumi presence in India. They have offered free office space and to assist in fundraising efforts in India. In south India the Bhumi Project is developing a partnership with the C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation; a respected institution associated with the University of Madras. The Foundation has been active for many years in researching and documenting the links between Hindu religious practice and the care for the environment.

The next twelve months will see the Project hiring a staff member in Mumbai to oversee our work there. It will also be launching an international Hindu Environment Week to celebrate the planet and encourage Hindus to better care for the planet.

Awards

Thanks to generous donors, the OCHS is able to award nearly £6,000 per year to students.

Outreach

OCHS speakers continue to be invited to provide a voice for Indian traditions in media, business, education, and government. Of particular interest this year have been consultancies on news and documentary programmes, interviews, and a report on a controversial piece of caste legislation.

In May, in response to new UK law against caste discrimination, the OCHS was asked to provide an academic opinion on the relevance and effects of such legislation. The report's emphasis was on the need for better research to ensure that any legislation is based on proper understandings of the role of caste in the UK and the prevalence of caste awareness amongst British Hindus. The full report is available at www.ochs.org.uk/documents.

Shaunaka Rishi Das was invited as a guest preacher at Hertford, Wadham, and Somerville Colleges's Sunday services. He serves as the University's Hindu Chaplain and as well as providing pastoral care to Hindu students he spoke at the Student Ministry Forum on Hindu chaplaincy.

The OCHS also hosts school groups including a standing annual visit from St Mary's Girls School, Ascot, and Cherwell Valley School, who visited twice this year.

The OCHS continues to provide the Hinduism entry in the *Annual Register*.

Interns

The OCHS internship programme goes from strength to strength with no less than eight enthusiastic young people offering their considerable talents to the OCHS this year. Internships provide value to the Centre and allow young people to gain valuable experience and contacts.

The year started with Meijia Ling and Hershini Soneji who both gave much needed administrative support, and Raam Chauhan who applied his analytic scientist's mind to the problem of bringing order to our filing system.

Biranavi Mahesvaran served for a full year as the smiling face of the OCHS at the front desk and on the phone as well as being available above and beyond the call of duty as event co-ordinator, assistant librarian, and any other task that came her way. Biranavi was given the first ever 'Malvika Poddar Intern of the Year' award. Malvika, of course, was one of the Centre's

Development

most valued interns, who despite going to Exeter to finish her degree course made time for another short internship this year.

Later in the year, Biranavi was joined by Pandita Wong. Together they were a formidable and always cheerful team. Pandita worked on several projects including editing a forthcoming edition of Dr Nick Sutton's Bhagavad-gita. She will be rejoining the OCHS later this year as a student.

Last arrivals, but not least, are Vijay Panchia and Gehna Mohanani. Vijay joins us from New Zealand in his effort to make a new life in Oxford and has proven very useful in media editing and can turn his hand to all kinds of other tasks.

Gehna Mohanani joined us from Dubai for a very short four-week internship at the suggestion of our friend, Biku Ahluwalia. Gehna displayed an incredible amount of intelligence and determination in revamping our written presentations and our social media presence, as well as producing new video materials about the OCHS, planning an OCHS art event in Dubai, and developing initial plans for an iPhone/Android app for the OCHS.

More than ever, interns made solid and lasting contributions to the life of the OCHS and became enduring members of the OCHS team.

Friends of the OCHS (FOCHS)

Friends groups are thriving in Leicester and Birmingham, raising awareness and funds for the OCHS.

Upcoming events are listed at www.ochs.org.uk/friends-events

Leicester Friends of the OCHS

The Leicester Friends continue to host an excellent series of talks covering topics as diverse as 'Women in Hinduism' and the Hanuman Chalisa.

One of the year's biggest events was a Gala Dinner in Leicester on 23 November attended by 150 guests. Other Leicester Friends events included a day trip to Oxford which included a tour and lunch for thirty and the third Tirath-Yatra – a sponsored fourteen-mile walk visiting fourteen Leicester mandirs.

The Leicester Friends stand as a model of a community supporting good education and helping good education nourish the community in return.

Birmingham Friends of the OCHS

Inspired by the work of the Leicester Friends, Nitin and Meena Sodha and Raj and Jyoti Patel are working to replicate the success in Birmingham with similar bi-monthly events bringing people to the educational ethos of the

OCHS and helping some of those Friends become regular donors. A new series of bi-monthly talks is now planned at the Balaji Temple. The talks given by the OCHS provide a further opportunity for the Centre to make its expertise available to as wide a section of the community as possible.

9. Benefactors and friends

Volunteers and donations in kind

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 or at reduced rates. This and other voluntary work saved the OCHS in the region of £248,000 this year.

Other friends and businesses have been kind to the Centre by charging greatly reduced rates for services. These include our accountants, Wenn Townsend.

Special thanks are due to David Smith, Washington DC, who funds and maintains our web server. Since 2002 David has been responsible for keeping us online in hardware and software.

Aquila Technologies kindly donated a Canon colour photocopier and network-printer replacing an increasingly unreliable machine from the previous millennium. Satish Sharma our volunteer IT Officer continues to provide valuable support including donation of a new switch keeping our network running smoothly.

Also, during this period Harish I. K. Patel, Prashun Papat, and Upendra Kalan worked hard to save expense and the time of OCHS staff.

Other significant voluntary service has been very gratefully received from Dev Bahl (book-keeping) and Sanjay Gadhvi (mobile phone contract).

A major undertaking at present is the cataloguing of our copious library. This is being managed by our Librarian Dr Rembert Lutjeharms and assisted by interns and volunteers.

Our Wednesday lunches saw attendances grow again this year. Managed by Anuradha Dooney and Judit Bajusz, the increased effort was greatly assisted by numerous helpers, but special thanks go to Lucy Barton for her steadfast help. The BAPS Swaminarayan Temple in Neasden has come forward as a major sponsor of this programme.

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.

Benefactors and friends

Donors

We extend our warmest gratitude to the following individuals, companies, and organisations for their generous financial support of the Centre.

Agenda 21	Shobhna Ghelani
Anoopam Mission	Evelyn Gilsdorf
Aquila Technology Ltd	Kanu Gohil
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha	Suresh Gohil
Bhaktivedanta Manor	Nitesh Gor
Florida Institute of Technology	Prof. Ravi Gupta
FOCHS Birmingham	Martin Gurvich
FOCHS Leicester	Prof. Martin Haigh
Oxford University Hindu Society	Aarti Hansrani
Shruti Arts	D J Roberts
Kamal Adatia	Neela Jesrani
Sudershna Aggarwal	Jay Jina
Anita Amin	Dr Ranjit Johri
Hemal Amin	Vijay Kumar Juneja
Dr Arnab Banerji	V K Agarwal
Rajesh Bhavsar	Monika Kadar
Bharat Bhundia	Ashwin Kagdadia
Mandakranta Bose	Upendra Kalan
David Bruce	Bharatraj Kiri
Jugdish Budhan	Gopal And Elizabeth Krishna
Babu Chandarana	Dr Sowmi Krishnamurthy
Ashwin Narandas Chandrani	Bhavini Ladwa
Raj and Ramila Chauhan	Ananya Purba Lahiri
Ritesh Chauhan	Jayendra Lakhani
Hitendra Chudasama	Yashvant Lodhia
Dr Sandhya Chundhur	R. N. Majithia
Dr Ian Cragg-Hine	Mayuri Mandavia
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Pursottam Dabasia	Bhavit Mehta
Urvashi Dattani	Amit Mishra
Bhupen Dave	Atul Mishra
Nimish Desai	Jitendra Mistry
Anuradha Dooney	Manharlal Mistry
Pravinchandra Doshi	Sunil Mistry
Manu Duggal	Maaya Modha
Alfred Ford	Dr Jagdish Modi

Harsit Nakarja	Navinchandra Raval
Dhiren Nathwani	John Ridge
Kiyokazu Okita	Shaumit Saglani
Vinod Pabari	Deepak P Samani
Hemant Kumar Padhya	Shila Sampat
Preeti Padia	Geeta Sampath
Nitin amd Kamu Palan	R S Satoor
Dr Shiv Pareek	Meera Saujani
Ravi Parekh	R Saujani
Alpesh Patel	Sarla K Saujani
C Patel	Neerja Sethi
Dhruv Patel	Dr Milen Shah
Govind Patel	Dr S. K. Sharma
Harish and Gita Patel	Azad Shivdasani
Jayant Chhaganbhai Patel	Mahesh Sinhal
Jayesh Patel	Meena Sodha
Jyoti Patel	Nitin Sodha
Kamlesh and Yaksha Patel	Rajesh Somani
Kirit Patel	Jyoti Soneji
Nirav Patel	Cllr Manjula Paul Sood
Parimal Patel	Ronald Staff
Pyarelal Patel	Diana Stevenson
Ragini Patel	Raakhi Sunak
Raju Patel	Usha Kiran Sunak
Sujata Patel	Dr Yash Sunak
Vinit and Hema Patel	Divyesh Tailor
Y. M. Patel	Kusum Tandon
Yogesh Patel	Hasmukh Tanna
Ramesh Pattni	Navin Thaker
Hemang Popat	Atul Thakrar
Jayesh Popat	Harish Thakrar
Prashun Popat	Subhash Thakrar
Brainerd Prince	Raju Thanki
Kamlesh Purohit	Caroline Trimmingham
J R Ward	Shobhaben Trivedi
Dilip Raithatha	Pradeep Vasudevan
Harish Raja	Dr N Vijayakumar
Prafulla Raja	Rahul Vyas
Pratibha Rajani	Todd Wahlstrom

10. Accounts and finances

THE Centre has continued to benefit greatly from voluntary work and in-kind donations – these have amounted to more than £248,000 in this period – which add great value to the Centre.

Dev Bahl and Judit Bajusz were our book-keepers for 2012–13. Our accounts were certified by Wenn Townsend, Oxford.

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 fundraising efforts of the Friends and Benefactors of the Centre.

11. Appendix one: Organisation

Board of Governors

Mr Shaunaka Rishi Das
Lord Dholakia, OBE, DL
Dr Mark Edwards (Theology
Faculty representative)
Prof Bjarke Frellesvig (Oriental
Studies representative)
Dr S. Bhattacharya-Ford
Prof. Richard Gombrich
Peggy Morgan
Prof. Polly O'Hanlon (General
Board representative)
Mr Harish I. K. Patel
Mrs Neerja Sethi
Mr Pramod Thakkar
Mr Ramesh Venkataraman
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Prof. Keith Ward, FBA

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Director

Mr Shaunaka Rishi Das

Academic Director

Prof. Gavin Flood

Development Administrator

Mr Lal Krishna

Librarian

Dr Rembert Lutjeharms

Finance Administrator

Mr Dev Bahl

Administrative Secretary and Book-keeping

Miss Judit Bajusz

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Dr Gillian Evison
Prof. Gavin Flood
Dr Sanjukta Gupta
Dr Sondra Hausner
Dr Rembert Lutjeharms
Peggy Morgan

Senior Associate Fellows

Prof. Francis X. Clooney, SJ
Prof. Thomas Hopkins
Prof. Dermott Killingley
Prof. M. N. Narasimhachary
Prof. Patrick Olivelle

Research Fellows

Dr Jessica Frazier
Dr Bjarne Wernicke Olesen
Dr Brainerd Prince
Dr Ferdinando Sardella
Dr Kenneth Valpey
Dr Katherine Wharton

Continuing Education

Department

Dr Nicholas Sutton
Ms Anuradha Dooney

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Mr Amitabh Bachchan
Dr Karan Singh
HE The Indian High Commissioner

Organisation

Academic Council

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Dr Gillian Evison

Dr Jessica Frazier

Dr Sondra Hausner

Dr Rembert Lutjeharms

Peggy Morgan

Prof. Polly O'Hanlon

Prof. George Pattison

Shaunaka Rishi Das

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Prof. Julius Lipner

Prof. Eleanor Nesbitt

Prof. Malory Nye

Prof. Ceri Peach

Prof. Lord Bikhu Parekh

Prof. Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad

Dr David Smith

Fund Management Committee

Mr Upendra Kalan

Mr Akbar Moawalla

Dr Prashun Popat

Mr Ramesh Venkataraman

Friends of OCHS

USA

Mr Robert Cohen

Shaunaka Rishi Das

Dr S. Bhattacharya-Ford

Mr Todd Wahlstrom

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Jyoti Patel

Meena Sodha

Nitin Sodha

City of London

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Prashant Joshi

Dipesh Patel

Dhruv Patel

Leicester

Raj Chauhan

Ramila Chauhan

Aarti Hansrani

Yashvant Lodhia

Kamlesh Purohit

Manish Thakrar

12. Appendix two: Lectures

Lectures and Seminars Michaelmas Term 2012

Religion and the Human Person Series: Towards a Comparative History of Inwardness

Prof. Gavin Flood

This first lecture raises the topic of the human person in the context of comparative religion. It asks the question ‘how can we map the self across cultures?’ and ‘can inwardness be a topic of comparison?’ I propose firstly to present some general comments on inwardness and spiritual practice and the relationship between ‘subjectivity’ and ‘individuality’ (arguing that a traditional subjectivity is not individual but collective). Secondly I propose that we need to examine these questions about inwardness, subjectivity, body and world in three areas of method, history, and comparison. The lecture will make reference to classical phenomenology, particularly Heidegger’s early work on the phenomenology of the religious life.

Religion and the Human Person Series: Inwardness and Visual Contemplation in Tantric traditions

Prof. Gavin Flood

In medieval Hinduism some renouncers and householders seeking a more intense religious experience adopted mystical or spiritual practices that involved the visualization of a deity or group of deities with a view to identification with the imagined image. This lecture will examine visual contemplation with reference to specific texts, showing how this pre-philosophical understanding of inwardness is shared by Shaiva and Pañcaratra traditions. We see from these reading firstly how imagination can be guide to understanding them and secondly that these texts present us with ritual thinking and point to a layer of culture below a clearly articulated philosophical discourse. Yet this cultural layer is still a symbolic world, more complex than daily transaction, which entails a symbolism of the eradication of individuality and a process that we might call entextualisation.

Religion and the Human Person Series: Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Inwardness

Prof. Gavin Flood

Abhinavagupta, the greatest thinker of the Shaiva Age, is a philosopher of

Lectures

inwardness. He presents an analysis of the human person in response to other competing philosophical systems and promotes a particular vision of human liberation and the highest good. The human person for Abhinavagupta is an appearance of pure consciousness, which becomes differentiated into subjects and objects in a process of development in which unity becomes fragmented. But even this language of emanation in some ways compromises the pure non-dualism Abhinavagupta wishes to promote. The lecture will examine his philosophy of the person and present the themes that Abhinavagupta is dealing with in a broader intellectual framework and the history of ideas in South Asia.

Religion and the Human Person Series: Christian Vision and Inwardness

Prof. Gavin Flood

In 1196 Edmund, a monk in a monastery at Eynsham, fell into a two day trance during which he had a vision of the other world, of purgatory and of heaven. When he awoke on Easter Sunday he reported the vision to his brother Adam who wrote it down in Latin. The text was copied through the generations and translated into Middle English, German and French verse. This text is one of a genre of vision texts composed during the High Middle Ages. The lecture will examine this literature in relation to the question about the rise of individuality in the 12th century and in light of the shift in the later period from 'participation' to 'conscience' with a view to comparison with the Hindu material we have seen.

Shivdasani Seminar: The Sacred and the Secular: Hindu Ideology and Imagery in Extremist Politics

Dr Swarupa Gupta

My presentation would explore how different visions, versions and heritages of Hinduism were reflected in Extremist politics. It would trace how such reflections crafted a nationalist idea of India. I will see how concepts such as Tilak's 'feeling of Hindutva', Lajpat Rai's 'Hindu nationality', B.C. Pal's 'composite patriotism', and Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's 'Sankara's Advaitic system' differed from contemporary ideas about 'Hindu Nationalism'. I argue that the Extremist brand of nationalism cannot be equated to communalism (Cf. J. Zavos: 2000 and 2011; and C. Jaffrelot: 1998). Using a comparative model, I trace regional and trans-regional iconisations of Hinduism in Extremist politics. Why and how were yearnings and devotion to a divine Motherland (India), referred to as 'Gyan Bhumi', 'Punya Bhumi', and 'Ved

Bhumi' expressed? This is yoked to the symbolism of Krishnacharitra, and the performance of religious ceremonies for political purposes, such as the Ganapati festival in Maharashtra, which was also celebrated in Bengal. This is connected to the point about dissemination of Extremist religious-political ideas. I see how Kathas, and periodicals on religious discussions disseminated such ideas to a wider audience, and how the latter reacted to these.

Hindu Ideology and Imagery in Extremist Politics: Reflections and Impact

Dr Swarupa Gupta

My presentation would explore how different visions, versions and heritages of Hinduism were reflected in Extremist politics. It would trace how such reflections crafted a nationalist idea of India. I will see how concepts such as Tilak's 'feeling of Hindutva', Lajpat Rai's 'Hindu nationality', B.C. Pal's 'composite patriotism', and Brahmabandhab Upadhyay's 'Sankara's Advaitic system' differed from contemporary ideas about 'Hindu Nationalism'. I argue that the Extremist brand of nationalism cannot be equated to communalism (Cf. J. Zavos: 2000 and 2011; and C. Jaffrelot: 1998). Using a comparative model, I trace regional and trans-regional iconisations of Hinduism in Extremist politics. Why and how were yearnings and devotion to a divine Motherland (India), referred to as 'Gyan Bhumi', 'Punya Bhumi', and 'Ved Bhumi' expressed? This is yoked to the symbolism of Krishnacharitra, and the performance of religious ceremonies for political purposes, such as the Ganapati festival in Maharashtra, which was also celebrated in Bengal. This is connected to the point about dissemination of Extremist religious-political ideas. I see how Kathas, and periodicals on religious discussions disseminated such ideas to a wider audience, and how the latter reacted to these.

Shivdasani Lecture: Inscribing Hindu Religion in the Cultural-Nationalist Programme of the Hindu Mela

Dr Swarupa Gupta

The Hindu Mela (1867) was the first organised expression of cultural nationhood. This lecture will examine the triadic intersection between (Hindu) religion, culture, and nationalism as reflected in the Hindu Mela. It studies how this intersection formed a reference point for comparing the selective emphasis on Hindu heritage in the earlier (late nineteenth century and early twentieth century) phase, and later, in emphatically communal and political discourses. I will focus on the shifting connotation of 'Hindu', and argue that despite the nomenclature: 'Hindu Mela', there was a flexibility. This

Lectures

was evident in the contextual inclusion of non-Hindu groups in the Mela. Lines of religious divisions were blurred. The Mela was open to Indians of all classes, srenis [occupational-cum-social groups], and religious-communal groups. The ideology of the Mela was yoked to ideas about swadesh or Bharat Bhumi, which was not necessarily the land of the Hindus alone. This inclusion occurred despite the use of Hindu religious imagery. Using a comparative model, I track how and why this was different from / similar to the use of Hindu ideology and imagery by the Moderate Congress leaders and by the Extremists. In this regard, I explore how the Mela depicted / picturised Hindu Gods, e.g., a pushkar bijmala was given to Shiva; how Krishna was transmuted to the idol of Kali (done by Kasisvar Mitra, Rajendranath Deb and others). Further, I also address the issue of dissemination: for instance, at the national theatre, religious plays were staged. I also aim to investigate how the use of religious icons and images was accepted / not accepted by non-Hindus.

Patriotism and Piety: Representations of Bengal / India as Bharat Mata during and after the Swadeshi Period

Dr Swarupa Gupta

Patriotism or love for the land, and memorialisation of homelands predated as well as synchronised with creations of nation-states across the world. This lecture would show how, in India, religious emotion and patriotic sentiment intersected to produce the image of Bharat Mata. How were 'creations of Indian patrias' inextricably linked with depictions of a divine India, emblematised by 'Bharat Mata'? I argue that patriotic representation(s) of Bharat Mata were not frozen in time. Representations continue even today, and this forms a contested, much-debated terrain. Prioritising genealogies, this study connects historical / epic hymns, and poetic, patriotic sensibilities with images of Bharat Mata during and after the Swadeshi upsurge. It traces antecedents of the modern, secularised, anthropometric-cartographic, scientific, political models of Bharat Mata. Such antecedents were not evocative of only a Hindu India. While existing literature has situated the theme of regional representation of the nation as Goddess in a comparative grid, nuanced region-nation intersections are missing. The regional representation (Banga Mata: Bengal as mother, painted by Abanindranath Tagore) travelled beyond the region and influenced other patterns of the theme. Banga Mata flowed into, but was not swept away by the hegemonic tide of Bharat Mata which pushed the region to the background (Cf. S. Ramaswamy: 2010). Instead, (1) I relate the rich plurality of representations to concrete modes of

dissemination such as the building of a Bharat Mata temple, and the staging of a play called 'Bharat mata' in 1873 by Kiran Chandra Majumdar; and (2) ask whether such representations have common features despite differences, which may help in delineations of a religious-geographic-political cartography of India. I also ask how the 'Hindu' depiction of Bharat Mata may be compared with other representations of the Goddess and the nation, such as the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico, which acted as a national integrator.

In the World but Not of the World: Social Ethics in Early Modern North India

Dr Kiyokazu Okita

Can a religious practitioner be exempt from performing social duties? Ever since Buddhists and Jains rejected Brahmanical social values, the issue of social ethics for religious practitioners has been a contested topic in South Asia. In this presentation, I examine how Baladeva Vidyabhusana, a Vaishnava theologian in the 18th century, dealt with this topic at the court of Jai Singh II, a famous Rajput king of Jaipur.

Elementary Sanskrit

Prof. Gavin Flood

Intermediate Sanskrit Reading Class

Dr Rembert Lutjeharms

Hinduism I

Prof. Gavin Flood

Hindu Scriptural Reasoning

Prof. Gavin Flood

Scriptural Reasoning is a practice of reading scriptures and thinking about them across traditions. It was founded by Peter Ochs as a practice of Jews, Christians, and Muslims reading their scriptures together in small groups and comes out of the post-liberal Theology of the Yale School along with traditional Jewish practices of reading scripture (called Textual Reasoning). With a view to broadening the scope of Scriptural Reasoning it is proposed to transplant the practice into a Hindu context. The enterprise is hermeneutical in orientation although it assumes that much of the text-historical or philological work has been done. The practice will be simply to take a theme and passages from Hindu scriptures and discuss them. The aim of

Lectures

Scriptural Reasoning is to understand difference rather than to arrive at consensus (although that too can arise) but the practice is open ended. It is practice driven rather than theory driven although general features of Scriptural Reasoning have developed over the last twenty years or so. Probably the best way to describe it is to let Peter Ochs speak:

Scriptural Reasoning (SR) is an open-ended practice of reading- and reasoning-in-dialogue among scholars of the three Abrahamic traditions. There are no set doctrines or rules of SR, since the rules are embedded in the texts of scripture and their relation to those who study and reason together. Individual practitioners of SR do find it useful, however, to reflect occasionally on their group practice and identify its leading tendencies. Such reflections differ from individual to individual and from time to time, but there are overlaps, and both the overlaps and the differences stimulate <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals/jsrforum/>

Hindu Scriptural Reasoning will be by way of experiment to see whether a practice developed out of a Jewish context can work in a Hindu context.

Lectures and Seminars Hilary Term 2013

Hinduism 2, Hindu Traditions (Paper 21)

Prof. Gavin Flood

Beginning with the early medieval period, this paper traces the development of Hinduism in devotional (bhakti) and tantric traditions. The paper examines the development of Shaiva, Shakta, and Vaishnava traditions along with ideas about liberation, ritual, asceticism, yoga and devotion. There will be some exploration of Hinduism and Modernity and there may also be reference to major schools of Hindu philosophy such as Vedanta.

Elementary Sanskrit

Prof. Gavin Flood

The course continues an introduction to Sanskrit for the preliminary paper in Elementary Sanskrit. The class is designed to introduce students of Theology and Religion to the basics of the Sanskrit grammar, syntax and vocabulary. By the end of the course students will have competency in translating simple Sanskrit and reading sections of the story of Nala. The course book is Maurer's *The Sanskrit Language*.

The Importance of Religion

Prof. Gavin Flood

This is a series of four lectures based on Flood's recent book *The Importance*

of Religion: Meaning and Action in Our Strange World (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

A prevailing idea from the Enlightenment, still with us today, is that the light of reason would dispel the darkness of religion and reveal the universe to us. While the desire for enlightenment and the attendant aspiration for a better human future are commendable, the identification of religion with darkness and ignorance is problematic. Religion has not gone away and is a topic of deep concern both because of its destructive capacity and for its constructive capacity as a resource that gives people truth, beauty, and goodness. These lectures are within the broad claim that the importance of religion is existential: religions provide significant meaning to life and guide people in their choices and practices.

Majewski Lecture: The snan-yatra of Salkia: Contrasting voices on possession and animal sacrifice in contemporary Bengal

Prof Fabrizio M. Ferrari, Religious Studies, Chester University,

The snan-yatra is a pilgrimage celebrated once a year in the town of Salkia (Howrah district, West Bengal). Attracting thousands of pilgrims, the festival is the occasion to celebrate Shitala as Chota Ma, a loving and benevolent protective mother. The yatra emphasises devotion but is also an arena for tense performances. Phenomena of individual and collective possession (bhar) are extremely common and are viewed as a much needed proof of the auspicious presence of the goddess. But possession is also a way to claim (or challenge) power in and across specific contexts (family, jati, gender, political circles, etc.). It is thus not unusual that many (especially women, or non-Bengali migrants) are accused to cheat, to enact fake possessions, or to be 'mad.' Contention also features the day after snan-yatra, which is dedicated to Bao Ma. This form of Shitala is radically different. Bao Ma is believed to be potentially dangerous, and is a hungry goddess. The ritual killing of animals (balidan) is the distinctive feature of her service, a performance aiming at pleasing, feeding and thanking the goddess. Regardless of its importance, balidan does not enjoy much popularity. Temple attendance is limited to locals and the sebaits of the temple are indicated by outsiders as ignorant and violent. Such views are validated on a broader scale. In contemporary Bengal practices such as possession and sacrifice are objected by intellectuals and teachers, the middle class, the media and religious authorities from all faiths. In this climate, many facets of local folklore are increasingly dismissed, diminished and ridiculed (often aggressively) as a heterogeneous bunch of backward practices and superstitions. The

Lectures

snan-yatra is not just an occasion to experience local variations of Shitala and the gentrification of the goddess. This paper, part of a larger study on Shitala and medical folklore in North India, reflects on the meaning and destiny of vernacular culture in contemporary India.

Professor Ferrari was educated in Indology and South Asian languages and literatures (Hindi and Sanskrit) at the University of Venice (Italy) and received my PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) for a study on Bengali folklore. After teaching South Asian religions and Religious Studies for two years at SOAS, he joined the University of Chester in 2007. He is an active fieldworker and regularly conduct ethnographic research in India. He specialises in the study of vernacular Hinduism and folklore and is particularly interested in ritual healing and therapeutic possession; ritual theory and Marxist approaches to the study of religion.

Tantric Dimensions of the Rasa Mandala: The Bhagavata Rasa Lila and the Artistic Imagination

Prof. Graham Schweig

The focus of this presentation will be two-fold. First Schweig will bring out tantric dimensions of the Bhagavata's Rasa Lila: the yantra-like narrative, the feminine power of the Vraja Gopikas over divinity, the lila of divine love as arranged by the Goddess, etc. Second, Schweig will focus on the symbolism of the Rasa Mandala by examining key elements of the passage and ways in which its tantric character influences its artistic renderings. Schweig will argue that the imagery of the Rasa Mandala functions as a bhakti-yantra. Through lila-smaranam practitioners enter the world of the dance, becoming eternal participants in it. Contemplation and participation become one by virtue of the power of this bhakti-yantra. The centripetal, centrifugal, circumferential and centrifocal dynamics of the Rasa Mandala circle as they function as powerful inner mechanisms within bhakti, and as expressions in artistic renderings of Rasa Mandala, will be presented.

Graham M. Schweig is currently 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* (Princeton 2005).

Hinduism and Globalisation

Dr Ferdinando Sardella

Hindu religions and oriental spirituality have travelled West during the last two centuries, and adapted in many ways to the cultures and societies of the West. The presentation first looks briefly at the processes of migration of Indian religions and spirituality to the West and second to a case of return to their place of origin in the East through modern global institutions. The lecture discusses issues of identity, conversion and the emerging of a globalised Hinduism in Sweden and in India that challenges local social, cultural and religious communities. It is based on field work, participant observation, and interviews of informants conducted among others in Stockholm and West Bengal during 2011 and 2012.

Ferdinando Sardella is based at Uppsala University and he is a fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. He is the author of *Modern Hindu Personalism: The History, Life, and Thought of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati* (2013) published by Oxford University Press.

Shivdasani Lecture: No Night Like This: Female Longing in Nammalvar’s Tiruviruttam

Dr Archana Venkatesan

The great ninth century Vaishnava poet, Nammalvar composed a short poem of one hundred verses, the Tiruviruttam, which purportedly utilizes the narrative trajectory of love and longing to speak of the poet’s desire for Vishnu. The poet assumes many voices—the heroine, the hero, the mother, the friend—although later medieval commentators only see the heroine’s voice as contiguous with that of Nammalvar. Tamil aesthetic theory that governs the reading of akam poetry guides us to determine the poem’s voice based on the poetic situation and the landscape. While such an approach fits some of the female-voice verses in the Tiruviruttam, several verses resist such categories, as they can easily and equally be spoken by the hero, heroine, mother or friend. Using the verses in the Tiruviruttam as an example, I explore what it means for a male poet to assume multiple female voices, and the manner in which he effaces these multiple voices by imbuing these “female-voiced” verses with a deliberate and intentional ambiguity.

Shivdasani Seminar 1: The Other Trinity: Saurashtra Histories of Karnatak Music

Dr Archana Venkatesan

In this paper I examine the place of Venkataramana Bhagavata (1781-1874), Kavi Venkatasuri (1818-1890) and Nayaki Svamikal (1843-1914) – three nineteenth century figures – in the Saurashtra reimagining of the history

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of the South Indian music tradition. Worshipped as the mummurti, these three poet/saint/musicians are regarded by the Saurashtra community of Madurai as the alternate to the deified figures of Tyagaraja, Muttusvami Dikitar and Shyama Shastri, canonical to the South Indian classical tradition as it develops in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Engaging with recent scholarship of the cultural histories of South Indian music, my paper moves us from Chennai to Madurai and to the (continuing) work of the Saurashtra community in rewriting the script for South Indian music.

Shivdasani Lecture 2: Legends of the Goddess: Antal Stories in the Shri vaishnava Traditions

Dr Archana Venkatesan

This paper examines Antal's story as it circulates in both textual and oral sources since the 12 century, with a particular emphasis on the Manipravala Guruparamparaprabhavam 6000 and 3000 and the Sanskrit Divyasuricaritam. I explore issues of genre, style and language choice as I chart the changes in Antal's story, and the history that such alterations both reveal and conceal.

Shivdasani Seminar 2: From Under the Tamarind Tree: Hereditary Performance and Sectarian Identity in South India

Dr Archana Venkatesan

The temple of Alvar Tirunagari in the deep south of India is a unique archive of hereditary performance traditions in India. Whereas the seismic shift in patronage that occurred in the post-Independence period ensured the rapid erosion of temple-centered performance cultures, the insularity of Alvar Tirunagari ensured the preservation of multiple hereditary performance traditions—liturgical recitation, gestural interpretation, and ritual singing are just three examples—into the present century. But the performers of Alvar Tirunagari have not been untouched because of the shift in patronage, from local, elite landowners to State supported funding. Many performers have left temple service for more lucrative employment, while others supplement their meager temple income with white-collar jobs in major cities. In this paper I take up the example of Araiyaar Cēvai, just one of Alvar Tirunagari's several performance traditions, to explore the ways in which members from both within and from outside the hereditary families have sought to reshape it for a contemporary, urban audience.

Readings in the Netra Tantra

Prof. Gavin Flood

The Netra Tantra is an important early medieval Shaiva text. We will read and discuss sections of the text based on the two manuscripts in the NGMPP Library and compare these with the published KSTS edition. Apart from reading the text we will discuss its meaning.

Mapping the Mystical Self

Dr Jessica Frazier

Four sessions:

1. The Cartography of Subjectivity and Consciousness
2. Imagination, Narrative and Possession
3. Emotion, Ecstasy and Intensity
4. Body, Practice and Transformation

Graduate Seminars in Indic Religions

Convener: Tristan Elby and Lucian Wong

This series of seminars will provide a lively and thought-provoking forum for graduate students from across the disciplines to present their latest work on any of the Indic religions, creating an opportunity for regular discussion and cross-fertilisation among students in this area. It will be held fortnightly in Hilary term (weeks 2, 4, 6, 8) on Fridays from 4pm–5pm, with a chance for informal discussion afterwards over refreshments. Each seminar will feature two papers on related themes or subjects, of about 20 minutes each, with a chance for questions after each paper. Any graduate students working on, or otherwise interested in, Indic religions, are warmly invited to attend.

Graduate Seminars in Indic Religions: Seminar One

Cosmopolitan visions of the homeland. How Hindus in the diaspora are renegotiating multiple identities

Nirav Amin

Hindus in Britain are undergoing an interesting shift in their understanding of place within society at large. From multicultural parodies of ghettos, to the current appreciable cosmopolitan ethos within many Hindu communities in Britain, this paper shall evaluate some key elements that could explain why homeland inclinations may be evolving in the next generation.

Cosmopolitanism is now increasingly being raised to avoid the drawbacks of essentialism or some kind of zero-sum, all-or-nothing understanding of

identity issues within a nation- state framework (Clifford 1998).

It is amongst the backdrop of an emerging cosmopolitan that we can attempt to find ways in which Hindus have been negotiating the public, private, and religious spaces within which identity creation has been occurring. By using the framework of cosmopolitanism, we can attempt to understand the emerging new rhetoric of identity creation, and how these identities have been evolving over the course of multiple generations (Amin 2012).

Temple building has served as one pillar, amongst many, that have served in performing this renegotiation of identities. They have served as a response to the diasporic longings of a transnational community, but most importantly, in a way that is 'recognised' and 'accepted' by their host community (Kim 2007).

Hindus, raised in the 'West', whom are encultured into the 'Western' notions of religion and identity, are often caught in the middle between their 'Eastern' transnational linkages, beliefs, and understandings, and their daily lived reality. This paper seeks to investigate this hybrid space between the West and East in the minds and lived realities of the Hindus in Britain.

Graduate Seminars in Indic Religions

Archaeology of personhood in Early Historic India

Ken Ishikawa

The present paper discusses the concept of personhood in Early Historic South Asia from anthropological/archaeological perspective, focusing on Indic divine personality.

The construct theory of personhood has been employed in archaeology to explore the idea of personhood in the human past. The person in this context refers to humans, animals or objects. Personhood is constructed through relationships not only with other humans in the society but with all aspects of the world around them. One of the fundamental questions thus is in what context inanimate objects, events or places attain 'personhood.'

Personhood in traditional India is largely characterized by dividuality, in which the person is considered as a composite of so-called substance-codes that can be transmitted interpersonally. In my view, divine beings display this dividuality with its temporal and transformative nature as seen in the classical example of Ardhanarishvara, who is half Shiva and half Parvati. I will investigate to what extent Indic Gods can be characterized by dividual personhood by looking at archaeological, art-historical, textual/epigraphic and ethnographic evidence from Early Historic South Asia and beyond.

My key case studies include: 1) a manifestation of social interactions: the

relic cult and image worship in Indian Buddhism (with ethnographic reference to relics of the Jagannath image), 2) multiply personhood: Seven Buddhas of the past in Indian art 3) Avatars: Buddhist/Jain fusion art of Gujarat and the interchangeability of the 9th avatara between Buddha and Jain Adinatha; the divine 'avatara' kingship during the Gupta period.

Adhyaropa-Apavada Tarka: The Nature and Structure of the Soteriological Upanisadic Argument in Sankaracarya and Swami Sacchidanandendra Saraswati

Prof. Dilip Loundo

The lecture will highlight some of the basic features of contemporary vedantin writer Satchidanandendra Saraswati's advaita vedanta as presented in his magnum opus *Vedanta Prakriya Pratyabhijña* (The Method of the Vedanta). Elaborating on Shankaracarya's postulation of the Upanisads as 'secret knowledge' or 'secret instruction' (rahasya-upadesha), Satchidanandendra Saraswati posits a sort of apophatic mystagogy that seeks to reinstate upanishadic thinking (vicara-tarka) as a rigorous rational discipline understood as a 'device of imagination' (kalpita-upaya) acceptable only on account of its results, viz., self-realisation (anubhuti). Described as a systematic process of deliberate superimposition of attributes followed by their retraction (adhyaropa-apavada), upanishadic thinking aims at eliminating the various manifestations of the fundamental and recurrent error of objectifying the ultimate Reality (atman/brahman). It is described as the culminating ladder of a tri-phasic reasoning that includes, in its two initial stages, *avirodha-tarka* – a set of arguments 'proving' the plausibility of upanishadic 'theses' – and *mimamsa-tarka* – a set of exegetical arguments 'proving' the purported centrality of the sentences of non-difference (mahavakya) in the Upanishads. Eliminative reasoning constitutes, finally, the fundamental nature of upanishadic thinking and the basic tool of a transformative philosophy that ensures the eradication of ignorance as the root cause of human suffering and the concomitant realization of one's ever-present non-dual nature (atman/brahman).

Prof. Loundo is Coordinator of the Center for the Study of Religions and Philosophies of India (NERFI). NERFI is an integral part of the Postgraduate Program of Religious Studies (PPCIR) of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. It was started in 2010 and is officially registered as a national research group at the National Scientific Research Council (CNPq.), Brazil. In addition to its core group based at UFJF, NERFI has also developed an interdisciplinary network of research collaborators

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from various universities in Brazil, covering areas such as Philosophy, Social Sciences, Linguistic, Mass Communication and Psychology. Prof. Loundo is a Ph.D. in Indian Philosophy from Mumbai University; an M.A. and M.Phil. in Philosophy from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro; and a Postgraduate Diploma in Sanskrit from Mumbai University. His recent publications include: *What's Philosophy After All? The Intertwined Destinies of Greek Philosophy and Indian Upanisadic Thinking* (Barcelona, 2011); *An Anthology of Hindi Poetry* (Rio de Janeiro, 2010); *The Seashore of Endless Worlds: Rabindranath Tagore's Encounters with Latin America* (Belo Horizonte: 2011); *The Apophatic Mystagogy of the Upaniṣads in Satchidanandendra Saraswati's Advaita Vedanta* (Juiz de Fora, 2011); *Poetry and Soteriology in India: The Devotional Lyricism of Jayadeva's Gita-Govinda* (Campinas: 2011); *Bhartrhari's Nondual Linguistic Ontology (sabda-advaita-vada) and The Semantics of Sanskrit Middle Voice (atmanepada)* (Bangalore, 2010); *Ritual in Vedic Tradition: Openness, Plurality and Teleology* (João Pessoa, 2012); *Tropical Dialogues: Brazil and India* (Rio de Janeiro: 2009).

Sculpted Forms of Enlightenment: Gods & Goddesses in Hindu Sculpture

Jasleen Kandhari

Explore the iconography of Hindu gods and goddesses in Indian sculpture followed by a handling session.

Jasleen Kandhari is an art historian, lecturer and curator who has lectured on Asian art over the past 10 years in museums and universities including the British Museum, British Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Museums Liverpool, Design Museum, Fashion and Textiles Museum and SOAS and this year, started lecturing at the Ashmolean Museum of Art & Archaeology, University of Oxford. She has published several articles on Hindu art collections and exhibitions including the Indian paintings collections at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, formerly Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai and *Hindus, Buddhists and Jains: In Search of the Divine* exhibition at RJK Museum, Cologne in Asian Art. Her upcoming lectures at the Ashmolean Museum include *Indian Portraiture: Sikh Paintings from Gurus to Maharajahs*, a study day on Indian textiles and a summer school on *Exploring Asian textiles* at the Ashmolean.

Lectures and Seminars Trinity Term 2013

Majewski Lecture: The Roots of Early Hindi Literary Culture

Dr Imre Bangha

The theoretical framework of Hindi literature today is still defined by the almost century-old History of Hindi Literature (1929) of Ramchand Shukla. This History, written at the time of the Indian freedom struggle, created the image of a national literature extended in time and space. Rejecting claims for a 1000–1500 year old history, my talk examines the emergence of vernacular literature in the Gangetic Plain in the fourteenth century, and argues for continuity in poetic genres, forms and language between the Jain-inspired Maru Gurjar literature and the poetic idioms of Avadhi and Brajbhasha. Using reliably dated literary material, it documents the spread of Maru Gurjar literature beyond Gujarat and Rajasthan into Central North India (Madhyadesha) and presents how non-Jains used this trans-regional literary idiom to develop it into more localised ones that in modern times came to be considered literary dialects of Hindi.

Dr Bangha is a Lecturer in Hindi. His research has focused on early modern Hindi poetry and he has produced editions and translations of early modern Hindi texts. His research interests include the emergence of Hindi as a literary dialect in various scripts, textual transmission and Hindi manuscript culture, riti poetry and the continuity of classical Sanskrit aesthetics in court literature and individual poets such as Vishnudas, Kabir, Tulsidas, and others. He publishes his work in both English and Hungarian. Among his publications are *Hungry Tiger: Encounter between India and Central Europe – the case of Hungarian and Bengali Literary Cultures* (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2007) and a translation of Indian short stories into Hungarian (E. Greskovits ed., *Tehén a barikádon: Indiai elbeszélések* (The Cow of the Barricades: Indian Short Stories) Pallas Akademia, M. Ciuc/Csíkszereda, 2008). He is currently working on several editions and translations of early modern Hindi texts including ‘Love, Scorpion in the Hand’: Late Brajbhasha Court Poetry from Bundelkhand: Thākur-kabittāvali (critical edition accompanied with an introduction and English translation of selected poems).

Hindu Women as depicted in the inscriptions of ancient Deccan: A Paradigm Shift in the Historiographic Perception of Hindu Women

Dr Rupali Mokashi

The art of engraving inscriptions was popularised by the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka in India in 3rd century BCE and proliferated thereafter. A mammoth corpus of inscriptions engraved in different scripts and languages is available on a pan-India level covering a span of more than a millennium. Although Hinduism predates the period from which the inscriptions are

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available, especially the votive epigraphs constitute a significantly tangible source for reconstructing the history of women in India. The inscriptions were always a realm of the epigraphists. They preserve valuable data about women that is well-stacked in the milieu of time and space. Mostly votive, administrative, and eulogistic in nature they hold diverse information not only on the contemporary society and polity but also on the prevalent religious observances and the active involvement of women therein. However the inscriptions were never adequately sifted by historians in their quest for reconstruction of history of women in ancient India. The mythological characters restrained by the laws of the dharma-śāstra were almost stereotyped as 'the women of ancient India'. There has been a sustained and fruitful involvement of women in the growth and development of Hinduism in ancient India that was unfortunately never highlighted.

Dr Mokashi has a Ph.D. from the University of Mumbai in Ancient Indian Culture. She is Associate Professor in the Department of History, R. K. T. College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Ulhasnagar, Maharashtra (affiliated to the University of Mumbai). Among her publications are *Alaukikā* (Mumbai: Param Mitra Prakashan, 2010) and *Women in ancient Deccan: An Epigraphical Perspective 200BC–1200AD* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, forthcoming). She is a column writer for national dailies such as *Lokasattā*, *Sanmitra* and *Garjana* and editor of the monthly 'Kāyastha Prabodhana', Mumbai.

Wahlstrom Lecture: Hinduism in Bengal and Bali

Professor June McDaniel

In terms of layering, while Bengali Saktism has folk, yogic-tantric and bhakti layers, Balinese Hinduism has folk religion, agama tirtha, and agama hindu dharma. From the perspective of mysticism, while Bengali sadhus and sadhikas have visions of Kali and union through both emotion and yogic expanded consciousness, Balinese pedandas have daily ritual union with Shiva/Surya to create holy water and link the religion in exile with both the gods and the homeland of India, creating Ganges water. From a political perspective, whereas the Bengali goddess has been linked to patriotism, defense of the land and concern for the oppressed (including women). In Bali, the religion has developed into a monotheism that protects it from Islamic concerns with idolatry, and hints that the Hindu god has legitimacy as one of the hidden names of Allah. Balinese forms of religion strongly emphasize dharma (as one pedanda said, the island is too small for renunciation- there is no place to go to be alone!) In these and other ways we will

explore the contrast between their understandings of dharma, and roles of religious experience, renunciation, and society in Hinduism.

Professor June McDaniel is a historian of religion at the College of Charleston. She focuses particularly on religious experiences and their interpretation in different cultures and has done much fieldwork in India and other Asian countries. She has worked on religious experience in Hinduism with particular reference to bhakti and the tantric traditions and has published widely in this field, of particular note being *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), *Making Virtuous Daughters and Wives: An Introduction to Women's Brata Rituals in Bengali Folk Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), and *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Swami Vivekananda and the Transformation of Indian Philanthropy

Prabhu Guptara

Arising from research towards a history of Indian philanthropy, the lecture examines the influence of Swami Vivekananda. Briefly, the argument is that Indian philanthropy was transformed from its focus on temples and priests (with occasional charity to the poor), to take in “modern” concerns such as schools, hospitals, orphanages and other areas of public interest; and that Swami Vivekananda's impact prepared the way for the expansion of the ambit of Indian philanthropy to national and international concerns.

Hindu Theology

Dr Rembert Lutjeharms and Dr Jessica Frazier

Hindu Theology is an emerging field of academic inquiry. These two seminars seek to examine the boundaries and possibilities for such inquiry. According to the classical Christian definition, theology is ‘faith seeking understanding.’ Is this an adequate understanding of theology from a Hindu perspective? Is there a Hindu Theology or simply a proliferation of multiple theologies? Is faith seeking understanding simply apologetics or can the understanding come from an external discipline (such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, or neurology)? Is there a place for Hindu theology as an ‘insider’ discourse in the publically funded university? If disciplines are defined by their method and object, what is the object of Hindu theology? If God is unknowable can there be an inquiry into her? Or is the object of theology ‘revelation’ in which case Theology is concerned with history and culture? Is Hindu Theology a development in the English language of the

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'discourse' (vada) tradition of Sanskrit commentary or is it something different? These questions and others will be explored during these two seminars. Active participation is expected.

Readings in the Netra Tantra

Professor Gavin Flood

Intermediate Sanskrit Reading Class

Dr Rembert Lutjeharms

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