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# The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies Board of Governors Report 2007–8



## **Contents**

- 1 Chairman's introduction
- 1 Dating of reports
- 2 If you think education is expensive...
- 4 Academic report
- 9 Fellows and students
- 12 Continuing Education Department
- 13 Internet
- 14 Archive
- 14 Library
- 15 Publishing
- 16 Development activities and achievements
- 19 Benefactors and friends
- 20 Accounts and finance January–December 2007
- 20 Approval
- 21 Appendix one: Organisation
- 24 Appendix two: Lectures and seminars
- 32 Appendix three: Routledge Hindu Studies series



## **Chairman's introduction**

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Recent events have demonstrated that we live in a changing world – Globalisation has its impact on economy and political structures can no longer be taken for granted. As the world faces a future in which change is the only constant, good thinking and therefore good education becomes more important than ever if that change is to be turned to the positive.

With India continuing to surprise us all with its growing impact – social and economic – education in the cultures and traditions of thought that permeate that growth become ever more relevant. And not just to scholars but to practitioners wishing to communicate their tradition to their youth and their host communities; to decision-makers worldwide who face a growing need to understand how India thinks; and to young people who wish to examine the richness of thought and culture that comes from India.

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies addresses all these needs and more. It does this through (to name only a few) its study, research, and publishing programmes, through its adult education courses (now also available online), through its solid engagement with global media as a non-partisan source of information, and through its engagement with industry exemplified by its work providing the academic basis for the Dow Jones Dharma Index.

As I have said before, the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is a national institution that deserves our support. Its reach, quality, and positive influence are made possible by a small but dedicated group of staff, volunteers, and friends, all of whom share the mission of making Hindu Studies relevant.

This past year has seen a solid increase in the quality and quantity of the Centre's work as you will see from this report. I am happy to be a part of this project and I urge you to participate too.

***Lord Navnit Dholakia, OBE DL***  
***Chairman of the Board of Governors***

## **Dating of reports**

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The OCHS Board of Governors Report covers the academic year 2007–8. The financials are reported according to our financial year (January–December, 2007).

## **If you think education is expensive...**

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### **Extract from Prof. Richard Gombrich's Board of Governor's Speech, 24 June 2008**

Education means drawing out the potential of every individual human being. I doubt whether the late Enoch Powell was the favourite public figure of anyone reading this, he was certainly not mine. But he could be brilliant in a good cause as well as in a bad one. I remember an article he wrote in *The Times* in the early eighties, attacking the education policy of Mrs Thatcher. She, as he correctly said, thought that the aim of education was to enable people to make more money.

Surely, wrote Powell, she has got it exactly the wrong way round: the aim of enriching the population is to enable them, both individually and collectively, to afford better education! I don't think I can improve on that, but will just add the slogan that some of us wore on a button in those days: 'If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.' But, I must admit, Powell is even better.

Education in the humanities is a particularly unpopular cause these days. The main reason for its unpopularity is that studying the humanities is unlikely to make you money.

I must emphasise that I esteem the study of any subject that has as its goal coming closer to truth, and by that criterion mathematics and the natural sciences are inferior to none. I also value any subject that teaches you to assess evidence, argue logically, and express yourself clearly; and many practical subjects, if properly taught, do have those virtues. Nor am I for a moment denying that people do need at some stage to acquire skills that will enable them to earn a living. But only the humanities teach us more broadly about the values that make life worth living.

Normally they do not do this by imitating science in an unceasing quest for new knowledge and understanding. No: though new discoveries are certainly possible in the humanities, by and large the humanities exist to preserve the human heritage, to teach us about what humans have already felt, thought, and understood. In this way they enlarge not just our knowledge but our sympathies, our conception of what it is to be human. Only where the humanities flourish can we live in societies where the art, music, and literature of the past are enjoyed and new works are created, and our empathy with the range of human experience makes us not merely tolerate each other but even value and enjoy our diversity, both cultural and individual.

Becoming a fuller person in this way is not to be postponed until retirement. By then we are set in our prejudices. It is young people who must be given this kind of education. I believe that parents who divert their children from studying a subject like history or music, and say no time must be lost before they study law, say, or accountancy, are depriving them of the full range of their potential as surely as if they were cutting off a limb.

So let me become more specific, and talk about studying India, or rather the range of human experience that the study of India offers us.

India is one of the handful of great civilisations. 'Hinduism' is a notoriously broad term, and even if it is usually classified as a religion, its study involves most facets of traditional Indian culture: leaving Islam aside, we can say that in the vast treasure house of Indian literature, philosophy, linguistics, law, music, and the arts, there is not much that has no connection to the Hindu traditions. Of course many texts have been translated, and we cannot demand that people who only want to learn about India as part of a broader education learn Indian languages or languages of the original material. But for those who want to go deeper, the chance to learn Indian languages must be on offer. And in this context, the most important Indian language is Sanskrit.

I retired from the Chair of Sanskrit four years ago, and I had to fight a great battle to ensure that the post would be refilled when I left. The University was reluctant, because it is nowadays too poor to run any part of its operations at a loss and the original endowment of the Chair of Sanskrit by Colonel Boden does not cover the cost. My cause seemed desperate. I believe the main reason I won is that the authorities suddenly realised that the Oxford chair is the last chair in Sanskrit in the British Isles.

And so we finally narrow our focus to the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies itself. On its foundation in 1997, it was the only academic centre of its kind in Britain or in Europe, perhaps in the entire western world.

An OCHS student first achieved an Oxford doctorate in 2002. Perhaps of even more significance for the Hindu community in this country is that in the following year the OCHS began teaching Hinduism for Higher Education Certificates to adults at venues across the UK. It is in this way that future teachers can be trained and a whole pyramid of expertise gradually erected. We must salute the teachers, who often have to travel long distances and who all work for tiny wages that hardly even cover their expenses; and we must salute Shaunaka and his staff who work at the Centre for a mere pittance, not even a living wage. It is only through heroic efforts like theirs that Oxford has any chance of keeping its high-level offerings like the BA in Sanskrit alive.

I consider the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies so admirable a model that it has inspired me to found the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies in emulation. In my opinion, it is only through centres like ours that we can keep these subjects alive, because we have the flexibility to teach at all levels, both within and without the straitjackets of a university syllabus.

There are large issues at stake; for unless we can all work together to make Hindu studies flourish at Oxford, we do leave the field to the mass of bigots and ignoramuses who see no need for any rational study of religion, and promulgate fantastic visions of India's achievements that no educated person can take seriously.

If reason is allowed to wither, unreason will triumph. If you have any rational criticisms of those who are fighting for reason, join in and reason them round, but don't walk away and leave it all to the chauvinists and the loonies.

## Academic report

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OCHS has continued to develop its academic programmes and to be highly relevant to contemporary discussions about Hindu traditions and religion more generally. Our five year plan identified two broad areas of focus in the coming years, firstly Hindu theology and philosophy and secondly Hinduism in relation to social policy. We have made steps in these directions through introducing a research structure into which various projects supported by the Centre can be placed.

Since gaining Recognised Independent Centre status, the OCHS has become more closely integrated into the University and continues to be an indispensable contributor to its academic programmes. The Centre has continued to attract scholars from around the world and to offer high quality lectures and seminars.

### Core activities

The core activity of OCHS is the academic study of Hindu culture and traditions in all times and places.

This means,

- providing lectures and seminars for formal programmes within the Theology Faculty Track III,
- providing teaching for undergraduates and postgraduates on the M.St. Study of Religions and the M.Phil. in South Asian Studies,
- publishing,
- providing lectures and seminars of a more general nature (such as the continuing education programmes),
- offering lectures and seminars to various faculties within the university,
- public broadcasting,
- providing reliable information for public bodies such as the BBC and government agencies.

### Teaching

The OCHS offered a robust programme of teaching, lectures, and seminars during the academic year. Our programme of public presentations continued to reflect our areas of theology and philosophy along with Hinduism and social policy identified in our strategic plan. We held a successful seminar on comparative theology focussed on the idea of surrender to God in Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism with Professor Keith Ward (Oxford), Prof. Julius Lipner (Cambridge), and Dr Yahya Michot (Oxford). The event was highly successful with interesting responses and questions.

Our Shivdasani Fellow (Trinity 2008), Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy (Duke), presented a series of talks based on her research on modernity and visual culture. These attracted wide interest, particularly from the Anthropology Department. She also presented seminars to the History Faculty Our second Shivdasani Fellow (also Trinity 2008), Professor G. C. Tripathi (IGU), offered a series of talks on Sanskrit metrics and a lecture on the Pancaratra.

The three Majewski Lectures were offered by renowned scholars. Dr Peter Bisschop (Edinburgh) presented a lecture 'Pancartha and Pasupata: Notes on the historical development of the Pasupatas,' which gave an account of sources, doctrines, and

practices based on new research. Professor P. O'Hanlon presented 'Pandits, Service People, and Caste Debates in the Early Maratha State' which explored the role of Kesava Pandit, a Brahman intellectual and diplomat in the service of the Maratha state in the late seventeenth century. Dr Rich Freeman gave the Trinity Majewski Lecture on the tantric traditions of Kerala based on his field research and reading of Malayalam and Sanskrit texts.

OCHS continued to offer teaching for the Theology Faculty. Gavin Flood offered Hinduism I and II for track 3 of the Theology degree and offered a series of seminars 'Readings in Phenomenology' which attracted interest among Theology students. These will continue next year. He also offered 'Readings in the Jayakhya Samhita', a Pancaratra text.

Dr Jessica Frazier offered a series of well received lectures 'Key Thinkers in the Study of Religion' on the nature of religion which covered the main thinkers and theories including Weber, Marx, and Durkheim. Dr Frazier offered a seminar on Hinduism and film, about implicit theology in Bollywood movies. She also offered two seminars on how to write essays and dissertations and writing essays in exams. These were very well attended.

At the request of the Theology Faculty, the OCHS is to develop an introductory Sanskrit course for Theology Prelims. This will then provide Sanskrit at first-year level and so bring Hindu Studies into line with other traditions. Theology has traditionally offered Hebrew and New Testament Greek. More recently Arabic and Pali have been offered and now Sanskrit will be added. Gavin Flood has written a proposal and submitted it to the Theology Faculty which needs to formally process the proposal in order for it to be added to the programmes and incorporated into the Grey book. It may be on the books for Michaelmas term 2009.

We also hope to develop a postgraduate degree in Hindu Studies ratified by the University of Oxford, namely an M.St. in Hindu Studies. This would be within the Faculty of Theology and would complement other parallel programmes such as the M.St. in the Study of Religions and the M.St. in Theology. The course needs to be approved by the Study of Religions group, then by the Theology Faculty Board, and finally it goes to EPC for final approval.

## **Research strategy**

Up until now OCHS has focussed on offering teaching, seminar and lecture programmes. We now wish to develop a more public research profile. Commensurate with our academic plan, the Academic Planning Committee has formulated a structure for categorising research that has been approved by the Academic Council. We would like research projects at OCHS to fall under four general headings, (1) Hinduism and Modernity, (2) Classical Hinduism, (3) Comparative Religion and Theology, and (4) Historical Studies. Under each of these broad umbrellas OCHS seeks to promote collaborative research on specific projects.

### **1. Hinduism and modernity**

This general category seeks to examine the Hindu traditions in relation to modernity, particularly with respect to questions about the place of religion in the public sphere, questions of social hierarchy and equality, and Hinduism in relation to globalisation and



localisation. Within this broad category, research projects could deal with Hinduism and the plastic arts, Hinduism and politics, Hinduism and society, and Hinduism and literature.

## **2. Classical Hinduism**

This is a general category for research projects of a more textual nature. It might include the gathering, preservation, critical editing, and translating of texts of particular traditions. It also might include thematic studies of topics within Hinduism such as the project recently undertaken by OCHS on the temple and archaeology. Projects here might include one on what might be called scholasticism in the medieval period, manuscript preservation, and cataloguing projects.

## **3. Comparative religion and theology**

Having developed out from the Theology Faculty, one of the concerns of the OCHS has been comparative theology. This research field intends to include comparative religion within its remit and seeks to examine the ways in which Hindu thought about transcendence can interact with non-Hindu philosophies and theologies. This research area partly grows out of the successful comparative theology seminars and conferences held at OCHS between Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism and builds on the work of Prof. F. Clooney who has written extensively on comparative theology.

## **4. Historical studies**

The history of religion in South Asia is highly contested and has become a battleground for ideological conflict. But history is crucial for any understanding of religion, not only in the past but in the contemporary context. History might be seen both as a discourse about the past and the object of that discourse. This research trajectory seeks to raise questions about the nature of history in South Asia, questions about colonial vs non-colonial versions of history, and questions about how history relates to contemporary social, religious and cultural identities.

### **Projects under consideration**

Projects currently being considered include proposals for a colloquium on caste, scholasticism, a Gaudiya manuscript project, helping develop manuscript recording and preservation projects with institutions in India, and a comparative religion/theology project on subjectivity (this could link in to the Copenhagen Centre for Subjectivity Studies).

## **Conferences**

### **Shivdasani Conference: Archaeology and Text: The Temple in South Asia**

A key event of this academic year and a major international launch for the Centre was the Shivdasani Conference on Archaeology and Text: The Temple in South Asia held at Trinity College in September 2007. This conference helped create an understanding of how sacred spaces came to be defined in the archaeological record from around the latter half of the first millennium BC onwards. It bridged the gap that exists between textual studies and archaeology with focus on the Hindu temple.

The main themes of the Conference were: The Archaeology of the Temple; Texts and Religious Action; Asceticism and the Bhakti Tradition, and; Performance and Text. Leading scholars from India, Canada, the USA, Russia, France, Germany, and the UK made short presentations, audio of which is available on the OCHS website. The Conference's convenors were Prof. Gavin Flood, OCHS Academic Director, and Prof. Himanshu Prabha Ray, JNU, New Delhi.

Special thanks are owed to Mr Azad Shivdasani who generously sponsored this valuable conference.

The proceedings of the Conference are to be published by Oxford University Press. Further information on the Conference is available at [www.ochs.org.uk/news](http://www.ochs.org.uk/news).

### **Surrender to God in Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism**

In January 2008 we hosted three eminent scholars: Professor Julius Lipner, Dr. Yahya Michot, and Professor Keith Ward speaking on how Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity understand the idea of surrender to God.

In all three traditions there is the idea of human surrender to God. This afternoon conference explored what this means in the different traditions and looks towards a theological dialogue between them. Each speaker made a presentation and each responded to the other presentations, ending with a plenary discussion.

### **Outreach**

One dimension of the work at OCHS falls under the general category of outreach. Part of the remit of OCHS is to provide resources based on the academic study of Hinduism for a broad public.

We regularly receive enquiries from media and government institutions wanting speakers, writers, and commentators on issues relating to Hindu culture. This provides an opportunity for students and academic staff to find their voices. Through our enquiries we are able to arrange opportunities to broadcast, lecture, and write, thus challenging their thinking and sharpening their presentations. We want to develop experienced, articulate, and broad-minded commentators on issues of Hindu culture and traditions.

OCHS participation in public discourse include students, staff, and scholars of the Centre contributing to the BBC, *National Geographic*, Asian newspapers, and the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, with speakers representing the OCHS at interfaith events, temples, and community groups.

### **Global partnerships**

#### **Dow Jones Dharma Index**

The OCHS played a key role in the formation of the Dow Jones Dharma Index – an ethical investment package based on dharmic principles and suited to the needs of Hindu investors. The OCHS's role was to provide the academic underpinnings of the Index and to bring together the advisory board of academics and religious leaders that determined the Index's principles and broad rules of application. A full report on the evolution of this project and its outcomes is available at the OCHS website at [www.ochs.org.uk/news](http://www.ochs.org.uk/news) or on request.

### **Relationships with other institutions**

We have been approached by the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden to form Memoranda of Understanding. We also propose to approach the Vrindavan Research Institute, UP, India, to establish an MOU.

We have also continued to develop links within Oxford University and with other universities in the UK (Edinburgh, SOAS, Cardiff, Cambridge) through teaching and collaboration.

### **Future programmes**

We intend to see that our core activities continue and develop in the future and that we also develop in new directions.

Such directions will include,

- the development of a research profile as outlined above,
- the development of the library and archive through donations of papers, collections, books and funds,
- the continuing development of our website as a resource for academics and the wider public,
- providing informative lectures available on line.

The overall aim is to make OCHS a vibrant centre where scholars can interact; which provides academic programmes of local, national, and international importance; which provides general information on all Hindu traditions and cultures to public bodies; and provides a focus for contemporary Hindu cultural events. To pursue these events the OCHS is actively engaged in fund raising.

Over the next five to ten years we need to develop a strong personnel base of both academic and administrative staff. Our vision for OCHS is that it becomes the foremost centre for the study of Hindu traditions and cultures setting a trend for the rest of the world. We will also continue to develop the five year projection.

## Fellows and students

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### Fellowships

#### Shivdasani Visiting Fellowship

***Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term***

Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy is Professor of History at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Prior to this appointment, she was Professor of History at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and Assistant Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. She studied for her MA and M.Phil. in ancient Indian history at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She also has a Master's in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania, and graduated with a Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970* (University of California Press, 1997) and *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (University of California Press, 2004). She has also edited a volume entitled *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India* (Sage, 2003), and has recently completed a book manuscript entitled *The Goddess and the Nation: Picturing Mother India* that is part of a larger project on empire, nationalism and cartographic culture.

While at the OCHS she delivered lectures on 'Visual piety and bazaar Hinduism, The "Hindu" Goddess and Indian modernity', 'Maps, mother goddess, and martyrdom in modern India', and 'The territorialisation of Hindu deities in popular visual culture'.

***Prof. G. C. Tripathi, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term***

Prof. Gaya Charan Tripathi was born at Agra, India. He went to school and pursued higher studies at Agra, Pune, and Benares. He has a Masters in Sanskrit (1959) from the University of Agra with a Gold Medal and first position in the University. He received his Ph.D. from the same University in 1962 on Vedic Deities and their subsequent development in the Epics and the Puranas supported by a Fellowship of the Ministry of Education. He is a Fellow of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for Higher Studies in Germany. He has a Dr.Phil. from the University of Freiburg/Br (1966) in History of Religions, Comparative Indo-European Philology, and Latin (besides Indology) as elective subjects in the grade Summa cum Laude. D.Litt. in Ancient Indian History and Culture from the University of Allahabad on 'A Critical Study of the Daily Puja Ceremony of the Jagannatha Temple in Puri' (published under the title *Communication with God*). He has taught at the Universities of Aligarh, Udaipur, Freiburg (twice), Tuebingen (twice), Heidelberg, Berlin, Leipzig, and British Columbia (Vancouver). He is Chief Indologist and Field Director of the Orissa Research Project (1970–5) of the German Research Council (DFG), and has been Principal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute, Allahabad, for over twenty years. He is presently Professor and Head of the Research and Publication wing of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Delhi. He has contributed around ninety papers in English, German, Sanskrit, and Hindi to various Indian and international journals on Religion, Philosophy, History, Literature, and Vedic/Puranic studies. Published 22 books on subjects mostly pertaining to religions and literature of India. His specialisations are: Indian Religions and Philosophy, Vishnuism (especially

Pancharatra school), Vedic studies, Sanskrit Literature, Grammar, and Philology, Cult practices of Orissa, and Gaudiya Vishnuism.

At the OCHS, Prof. Tripathi contributed greatly to the students' understanding of Sanskrit in private tutorials and his lectures. He also lectured on 'Ritual and philosophy of the Vaishnavas based on the Pancaratra system'.

***Dr Rich Freeman***

Three scholars for the price of two. Along with Prof. Ramaswamy we were fortunate enough to have the association of her husband, Dr Rich Freeman (Study of Religions, Duke University). Dr Freeman is an Anthropologist who has worked for many years in Kerala and is fluent in Malayalam. Dr Freeman's work is particularly valuable because he combines textual knowledge of the Kerala traditions, both through Malayalam and Sanskrit, with ethnography. His initial focus of research was the teyyam dance tradition on which he is the world's leading expert and he has published on the history of Malayalam religious literature and continues to work on the tantric traditions of Kerala.

Dr Freeman delivered the Majewski Lecture on 'The tantric traditions of Kerala.'

## **New students**

**Alexandra Buhler, UK, Christ Church**

Alexandra is pursuing a BA in Theology, University of Oxford.

**Deepa Chaturvedi, India, Lady Margaret Hall**

BA in English Literature, History and Philosophy, MDS University of Ajmer, 1991. MA in English Literature, MDS University of Ajmer, 1993. Deepa is currently pursuing an M.St. in the Study of Religions, University of Oxford. She is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, Govt. College, Kota, India, and was the recipient of the Pandit Abaji Bursary.

**Ayush Goyal, USA, Balliol College**

BS Electrical Engineering, Boise State University, USA, 2005. Ayush is pursuing a D.Phil. in Artificial Intelligence Modelling of Biological Systems. His research interests include Human versus Computer Cognition, Sanskrit Syntax in Modern Computation, Ethics of Computer Chip Implantation in Human Subjects, Social Repercussions of Genomic Engineering, and Distinguishing Humans from Computers in the Bionic Era. Ayush is a recipient of the Clarendon Fund Scholarship from the University of Oxford.

**Nikos Franci-Ioannou, UK, St Cross College**

BA in Theology and Religious Studies, and in the History and Philosophy of Science, University of Leeds, 2002. Currently pursuing an M.St. in The Study of Religion, University of Oxford, focusing on Hinduism and Christianity.

**Judith Mueller, Germany, Mansfield College**

Judith is in Oxford on a 'Junior Year Abroad' programme studying Economic Theory and Hinduism. She is currently pursuing a BA in International Relations, Economics, and German, George Washington University, USA.

**James David Naylor, UK, St Peter's College**

Currently pursuing a BA in Theology and Philosophy, University of Oxford.

**John O'Connor, UK, Christ Church**

Currently pursuing a BA in Theology, University of Oxford.

**Ferdinando Sardella, Sweden**

MA in Religious Studies with major in History of Religions from Gothenburg University, 2005. Ferdinando is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Gothenburg University in Sweden. He has received a scholarship from The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education and spent two terms in spring 2008 at the OCHS as a visiting scholar. He is working on a project that explores the philosophy and history of modern devotional mysticism. The focus of the study is on Vaishnavism in Bengal in the early twentieth century. He has studied and carried out field work in India for a total of eight months since 2004. He is currently affiliated to the Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University in Kolkata.

**Awards for OCHS students**

**Pandit Abaji Bursary**

Ms Deepa Chaturvedi

**Jiva Goswami Bursary**

Ms Alexandra Buhler

**Gupta Dan Bursary**

Mr Nikos Franci-Ioannou

**OCHS Bursary**

Mr Rembert Lutjeharms

**Book Grant**

Ms Deepa Chaturvedi

## **Continuing Education Department**

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At present the Continuing Education Department is providing classes in three locations – Harrow, Birmingham, and Oxford. We have about sixty students registered for courses with over fifty in total attending classes each week.

In Harrow the course was started again at the beginning of the 2007–8 academic year and enrolment has been consistently higher than during the first running of the modules. For each of the three modules offered this academic year enrolment has been over twenty students and at present we have almost thirty attending each week.

In Birmingham numbers have remained consistent at around fifteen. The group here is approaching the end of the certificate course and some members of the group will be graduating and gaining their qualification. We will be undertaking a consultation process before considering what provision we should offer for the next academic year.

In Oxford the numbers are again consistent at around twelve registered students. Here we will have completed eight of the twelve modules by the end of this academic year and so will proceed according to schedule into 2008–9.

Finances for the last academic year have been stable and we have been able to balance expenditure against income from student fees. We have, however, been submitting fewer essays to Lampeter and so our income from that source has declined markedly. Moreover, Lampeter is now phasing out payments for credits. Lampeter has requested that we try to increase the amount of course work we submit even though they are reducing the payments they make.

For the 2008–9 academic year we propose to continue offering courses in Harrow and Oxford and it seems very likely that we will be continuing in Birmingham although the exact form provision will take has yet to be determined.

There is clearly scope for the course to be offered again in Leicester but here we face difficulties in terms of staff to teach the course and also getting our tutors to Leicester and back at weekends or in the evening.

Another possibility we are considering is the provision of occasional study days in different regions, which would focus on a specific topic and would be geared primarily towards young people from the Hindu community. Younger people seem more reluctant to enrol for weekly classes and occasional freestanding events might prove to be more popular for this age group.

### **CED online**

A major development for the next academic year will be the presentation of the course in an online distance-learning format. The website has been constructed and the first three modules have been rewritten for distance learning students. We are proposing to run a pilot scheme with student volunteers in autumn 2008 with the course going live in early 2009. By this time the fourth module will be ready and available. There is enormous potential in online teaching of the course to students throughout the UK and worldwide. Hence this will be a major new initiative for the CED programme.

### **Staff**

Ms Anuradha Dooney was appointed as Education Resource coordinator, a position

which will help develop existing curriculum, online education, and new executive programmes.

At present Nick Sutton is responsible for the writing of courses and modules and steering them through the validation process with Lampeter. Anuradha Dooney and Nick Sutton share the teaching responsibilities with other tutors contributing occasional classes as and when required. Jessica Frazier remains responsible for course administration and Judit Bajusz oversees costs and fees.

## **Internet**

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The OCHS website ([www.ochs.org.uk](http://www.ochs.org.uk)) is a work in progress. Its core audiences are prospective students, academics wanting more information about the Centre, students of Hinduism worldwide, and potential supporters of the Centre.

Our outreach to the wider community of academic and public interest in Hindu Studies has involved making almost all OCHS lectures and seminars since 1998 available on the OCHS website. We also have a very successful podcast of lectures and seminars with over 100,000 subscribers.

A project that is in its earliest phase is the establishment of a Hinduism Wiki – a user editable overview of Hinduism suitable for a broad audience. The aim of this is to allow students of the Centre to collaboratively produce a useful resource with the ultimate goal of replacing the BBC's Religion and Ethics website's section on Hinduism. This follows longstanding discussion with the BBC.

The internet is also one of our main avenues for publicising our forthcoming lectures and seminars. These are all noted on the website and visitors may subscribe to a variety of regular email notifications. The lecture list has nearly 2500 subscribers.



## Archive

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### New additions

The OCHS archive has acquired three notable collections in the last year, the most significant of these being the papers, diaries, and photographs of Rev. Murray Rodgers. Rev. Rodgers, a member of the small group of Christian missionaries who founded ashrams in India, had become a friend of the OCHS since he retired to Oxford. After his sad passing in 2006, and that of his wife in 2007, his family and the executors of his estate offered us his archive, which we have been happy to receive. It is currently being catalogued.

Varshana Devi, upon retiring from ISKCON's UK National Office, offered a significant collection of papers and media to the OCHS.

Dr Jim Robinson offered his photo archive of Durga Puja, catalogued and in an archival box.

The archive also regularly receives a number of smaller deposits.

### National Archives

We had a visit from Norman James, a senior representative of the National Archives, in July 2007. This followed on directly from a presentation we had made at a conference in March about the importance of developing archives in the Hindu community and encouraging historical consciousness in the community. The National Archives want to work with the OCHS as its principal point of reference in this area, formulating archival standards suitable for temples and communities and devising training programmes to help it all happen.

### Storage space

There is ongoing discussion about the need for warehouse space within Oxford's ring road to provide our collections with a more suitable home.

## Library

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The OCHS Library works closely with Oxford's Indian Institute Library. It currently holds approximately 6,000 titles, mostly in the fields of Vaishnavism, Vedanta, Puranas, and comparative theology. The Library is currently expanding its collection in those areas even further, to make it a relevant research library for the Centre and the wider Oxford academic community.

The Library has received substantial donations this year. Donors for 2007–8 include Krishnakant and Indira Mehta, Sandy Bharat, Prof. Gavin Flood, Ramesh Chauhan of Bisleri Water, Shaunaka Rishi Das, Chris Wood, Prof. Shashiprabha Kumar, and Meru Ostlund.

## Publishing

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### Routledge Hindu Studies Series

OCHS will continue to develop the Hindu Studies Series with Routledge. A number of books have been published, often in the area of Hindu philosophy and theology, and the series continues to grow. This academic year we published *Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata* edited by Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black (2007). See Appendix Three for list of all current titles.

By the end of the year or early next year the Routledge Hindu Studies Series will publish *Yoga in the Modern World* edited by Mark Singleton and Jean Byrne and *Consciousness in Indian Philosophy, the Advaita Doctrine of Awareness Only* by Sthaneshwar Timalsina.

Other titles in the pipeline include

- Christopher Framrin, *Desire and Motivation in Indian Philosophy*
- Mackenzie Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Creation and Evolution.*
- Shashiprabha Kumar, *Perspectives on Vaisheshika*
- James Hegarty, *Religion, Narrative and Cultural Memory in Early South Asia: Past and Place in the Sanskrit Mahabharata*
- Knut A. Jacobsen, *Salvific Space: Pilgrimage Place as Source of Salvation in the Hindu Tradition*

### Journal of Hindu Studies

During the last year plans for a *Journal of Hindu Studies* associated with the Centre have reached fruition with a contract with Oxford Journals, the serials branch of Oxford University Press. This will be a bi-annual themed journal of peer-reviewed articles and reviews covering the interdisciplinary study of Hinduism and Hindu culture. With this comes a programme for publication that envisions the Journal growing to three and ultimately four issues per year published in print and on-line.

The Editors are Gavin Flood, Jessica Frazier, Ravi Gupta, Rembert Lutjeharms, and Deepak Sarma. The advisory and editorial boards can be viewed on the Journal's website at [www.oxfordjournals.org/our\\_journals/jhs](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/jhs).

The Journal emphasises quality critical scholarship that is informative about the traditions of Hindu culture and engaged with contemporary methodological and theoretical concerns that govern the field.

2008's inaugural issues of the Journal, on the theme of 'Hermeneutics and Interpretation' are due for publication online in October. The call for 2009's issues on the theme of 'History and Tradition' have gone out and the Journal is on schedule for their publication next year.

While the development of an energetic community writing for the Journal may take some time, the Journal has been successful in attracting very significant names to write for it from the outset, and the hope is that this will continue in the future.

## **Development activities and achievements**

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### **Dow Jones consultation**

Eighteen months of hard work providing the academic basis to the Dow Jones Dharma Index, an ethical investment package based on Hindu and Buddhist ethics, came to fruition with the launch of the Index in Mumbai in January 2008.

The OCHS built bridges between academia and finance by bringing together scholars and religious leaders of sufficient calibre to advise on the moral implications of various types of investment.

The Mumbai launch also served as an opportunity for the Director, Shaunaka Rishi Das, to meet with potential supporters of the Centre. A full report on the launch is available for download as a pdf from [www.ochs.org.uk/friends/downloads.html](http://www.ochs.org.uk/friends/downloads.html) or contact our Development Administrator, Lal Krishna, for a printed copy.

### **Oxford-India Business Forum**

The Oxford-India Business Forum (Mumbai, March 2007) was organised by the Saïd Business School and attended by the University's Vice-Chancellor. Shaunaka Rishi Das attended the event on behalf of the OCHS. This very prestigious event gave an opportunity to follow up on contacts made during the Dow Jones Dharma Index launch in January and meet new friends, a number of whom were Oxford alumni. It was a successful trip and another step towards our endowment campaign.

### **OCHS legal presence in India**

In order to effectively collect funds, transfer contributions, or conduct any other business in India it is necessary for us to have a legal entity in India. It is proposed that this follow the model of Friends of the OCHS USA.

### **Friends of the OCHS**

#### **Harrow Friends of the OCHS**

One of the highlights of 2007–8 has been the development of the Harrow Friends of the OCHS. This group of concerned supporters of the Centre have organised a number of events aimed at raising funds and awareness of the Centre. Dinners, home events, plays, and a bhajan evening have raised in excess of £5000 and have rapidly increased the Centre's exposure to one of our key audiences – UK Hindu communities. We plan to use the development of this group as a model for similar groups in other parts of the UK. We are grateful to Raj and Saloni Somani for the initial impetus and Ash and Deepa Unadkat, Radhika Unadkat, Yaksha and Kamlesh Patel, Hema and Vinit Patel, and Hemang Popat for their imagination and hard work in making this such a resounding success.

#### **Other events**

Our longstanding friends and supporters, Harish I.K. Patel and Bharat Bhundia, organised a great evening in April out for our friends – a play by the highly regarded Gujarati playwright, Kiran Purohit. 'Lagnani Vyaadhi Divorcenee Upaadhi' made us laugh, made

us cry, and made us think – all while supporting the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies with the proceeds.

### **Diwali at Trafalgar Square**

Thanks go to Nitin Palan for organising a table at the Diwali at Trafalgar Square celebrations. Lal Krishna and two of our students braved the wind and rain to spread word of the Centre to a sea of people.

### **Benefactors Meetings**

We held two very successful Benefactors Meetings this academic year. One in November 2007 and one in May 2008. These meetings aim to give an overview of the Centre that is relevant to our staunchest supporters.

In November we were grateful to the eminent Prof. Keith Ward who spoke of the Centre's programmes and processes, successes and failures, plans and aspirations; attesting to the fact that our progress since 1997 has been breathtaking and our recognition from Oxford University a real distinction

In the May Meeting, Dr Nick Sutton gave an excellent lecture, 'Understanding Hindu ethics: Where is your sharia?' It was a very good evening with much food for thought from the lecture and discussion, and plenty of time to talk over dinner.

A large part of the success of these meetings is the venue – the Regency Hotel in London – kindly provided along with a delicious dinner by Harish I. K. Patel.

### **Board of Governors Dinner**

The 2008 Board of Governors Dinner was held on Tuesday 24 June at Oxford Town Hall. This year we invited Friends and Benefactors of the Centre to sponsor tables of twelve seats for £300 with principal sponsorships of £900. The uptake on this offer was very good and covered the cost of the Dinner. Principal sponsors were Nirmal Sethia of N. Sethia International, Nitin Sodha of Knight's Pharmacy, Dr Arnab Banerji of Landsdowne Partners, and Nipun Gupta of Bird and Bird. Table sponsors were Dinesh Hirani of MP Bros., Raj Somani of Sol Group, and Mr Markand Upadhyaya.

This year's guest speaker was Prof. Richard Gombrich, longtime supporter of the Centre, a Board member, and Emeritus Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University.

### **Annual Revenue Campaign**

We launched a new-look Case For Support for the 2008 Annual Revenue Campaign, sent to about 500 potential donors. As well as being a good fundraising tool, the Case For Support works well as an informational publication on the work of the Centre. We have worked hard over the years to refine our messages to ensure that we are properly communicating the scope and importance of the OCHS's contribution to Hindu Studies in the UK and globally.

### **Finances**

Since last year we have introduced improvements to our book keeping procedures. A Finance Committee, dealing with all matters to do with accounts, book keeping and financial reportage was formed under the Chairmanship of Upendra Kalan with Judit

Bajusz and Syama Dasi as members. Bharat Bhundia, Shaunaka Rishi Das, and Harish I. K. Patel have been co-opted onto this committee for specific meetings. We acquired Sage software late last year and our accounts now run on this system making it easier to produce financial reports and synchronise data with our accountants. We also formed our Fund Management Committee.

## **Infrastructure development**

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

### ***Governance***

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

### ***Strategy***

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

### ***Reports***

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

### ***Handbooks***

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

### ***Support Publications***

- OCHS 15 OCHS Brochure (completed)
- OCHS 16 Case for Support (completed)

## **Staff**

This year we are pleased to be able to confirm Miss Anuradha Dooney as our CED Education Resource Coordinator, a position which will help develop existing curriculum, online education, and new executive programmes. We also welcome Syama Dasi as our book-keeper.

## **Benefactors and friends**

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### **Volunteers**

In keeping with our tradition of encouraging voluntary service and keeping costs down, we are safeguarding the true charitable nature of the OCHS. The OCHS Director and other administrative staff continue to work on a voluntary basis, saving in the region of £248,000 per annum.

The OCHS also retained the free professional services of a designer – Mr Rasik Varsani, London; a web designer – Mr P. Tusler, Wales; and a photographer – Mr Pavel Tomanec. Savings from these kind donors have amounted to nearly £12,500.

Other friends and businesses have been kind to the Centre by charging greatly reduced rates for services. These include our accountants, Macilvin Moore Reverses, Harrow; our printers Aartus Ltd, Leicester; and Stagprint, London. Savings from these sources amount to £10,500.

Thanks are also due to David Smith, Washington DC, who funds and maintains our web server. David has been the backbone of our website since its inception, in 2002, and is responsible for keeping us online in hardware and software, directing and guiding us, and developing our website to its current success. These services saved us £6,000.

Danny Patel and Showki Aziz, from Quest Software have kept our server going since 2003, even turning a disaster around when our server crashed early in 2008. I would like to thank them for their work, maintaining the server, and donating computers for our student room all together saving us £7,200.

During this period, benefactors, such as Harish I. K. Patel, Ramesh Shamdasani, Kamlesh Patel, Upendra Kalan, Pramod Thakkar, Bharat Bhundia, Dinesh Hirani, and Rajesh Somani offered their valuable time and worked hard to save expense and the time of OCHS staff.

Other significant voluntary service has been very gratefully received from Dr Nicholas Sutton (teaching and curriculum development), Emma Flood (painting the Centre's entrance doorway), Anuradha Dooney (teaching), Meru Ostlund (cooking), Sanjay Gadhvi (mobile phone contract), Gopal Gupta (organising Wednesday student lunches), Neha Datta (developing Case for Support and CED Student Secretary), and Sruti Shah and Jyoti Soneji (CED Student Secretaries).

The BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir responded to our call for computer equipment with the generous donation of four flat-screen monitors.

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

### **Donors**

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

Rajan Amin, Hemal Amin, Dr Arnab Banerji, Sandy Bharat, Prakash Bhundia, Bharat Bhundia, Patryk Boch, Raj Chauhan, Mahaprabhu Das, Neha Datta, Urvashi Dattani, Alfred Ford, Sunil Gadhia, Mahendra Ganatra, Dr Pujit Gandhi, Suresh Gohil, Shailesh

Govindia, Dr Ravi Gupta, Hari Hariharan, Ravji .M. Hirani, Dinesh Hirani, Jay Jina, Ashwin Kagdadia, Upendra Kalan, Binoy Karia, Sadhana Karia, Deepan Khiroya, Bharatraj Kiri, Gopal Krishna, Jayendra Lakhani, Subhash Lakhani, Bharat Mamtara, Hasu Manek, Krishnakant Mehta, Bhavit Mehta, Sunil Mistry, Akber Moawalla, Peggy Morgan, Ash Mussai, Snehal Padhya, Hemant Kumar Padhya, Nitin Palan, Ragini Patel, Harish I.K. Patel, Shailesh Patel, Rajni Patel, Vipin Patel, Nalin Patel, Parimal Patel, Jayesh Patel, Dr S. H. Patel, J. G. Patel, Suresh Patel, Kamlesh Patel, Y. M. Patel, Jayant Chhaganbhai Patel, Rameshbhai Patel, Shanti Patel, Govind Patel, Vinit A Patel, Jayesh Popat, Sunit Popat, Prashun Popat, Hemang Popat, Dilip Raithatha, Dr Rami Ranger, Dr Ayyarani K Rajan, Pratibha Rajani, Claire Robison, Satish Ruperelia, D.D. Sangani, Shruti Shah, Dr Milen Shah, Azad Shivdasani, Nitin Sodha, Rajesh Somani, Greg Stein, Usha Kiran Sunak, Divyesh Tailor, Navin Thaker, Pramod Thakkar, B.P. & Mrs. H.B. Thakor, Subhash Thakrar, Dilip Unadkat, Ash Unadkat, Jay Vadher, Arjun Vekaria, Bram Vyas, Todd Wahlstrom, Geoffrey Walker.

AGK Ltd, Continental Coachworks, Jenmark Ltd, Sun Oil Ltd, Phoenix Hotel, Amazing Tiles, Aartus Litho Ltd, Vascroft Foundation., Sunak Ltd, Anoopam Mission, Arpan Insurance Agents, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Benjamin Toys Ltd, Regency Hotel, Brittanic Commercial, Golden Tours, Jalaram Charitable Trust, Jay Vadher & Co., Kingsland Hotel, MP Brothers, SNP Associates, Sol Group, East London & Essex Brahm Samaj, India Heritage Research Foundation, Africa Heritage Investment Ltd, Knights Chemist Ltd/Lexon Pharmaceutical, Thakor Properties and Services, Popat Vaishnava Heritage Trust.

## **Accounts and finance January–December 2007**

This year our income exceeded our expenditure by £17,000.

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.

Mr Upendra Kalan with Miss Judit Bajusz were our book-keepers for 2007. Our audit continues to be done by our accountants, Macilvin Moore Reverses, London.

The Board has been successful in maintaining the sound financial management of the Centre and its responsibility to ensure the true charitable nature of the OCHS. The work to attain financial stability for the long term goes on and the Board is encouraged by the current Annual Revenue Campaign undertaken by Friends and Benefactors of the Centre.

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

Audited accounts are available on request from the Director.

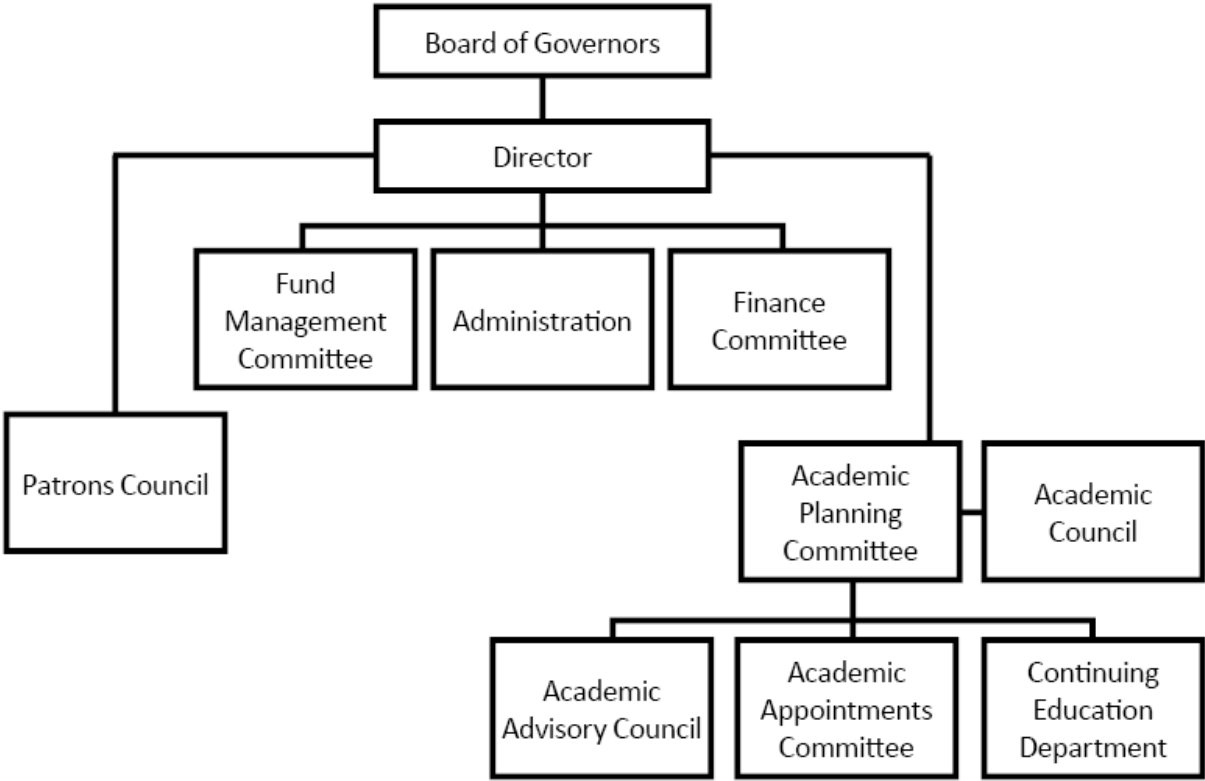
## **Approval**

This report was approved by the Board of Governors and Trustees on 24 June 2008 and signed on its behalf by Lord Navnit Dholakia, OBE DL.

**Appendix one: Organisation**

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**Organisational structure**



**Board of Governors**

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

**Administration**

**Director**

Mr Shaunaka Rishi Das

**Academic Director**

Prof. Gavin Flood



**Finance Administrator**

Mr Upendra Kalan

**Academic Administrator**

Dr Jessica Frazier

**Librarian**

Mr Rembert Lutjeharms

**Development Administrator**

Mr Lal Krishna

**Administrative Secretary**

Miss Judit Bajusz

**Domestic Bursar**

Meru Ostlund

**Book keeping**

Syama Dasi

**Fellows**

Dr Gillian Evison

Prof. Gavin Flood

Dr Jessica Frazier

Dr Sanjukta Gupta

Mr Rembert Lutjeharms

Peggy Morgan

Dr Kenneth Valpey

**Senior Associate Fellows**

Prof. Francis X. Clooney, SJ

Prof. Thomas Hopkins

Prof. Joseph O'Connell

Prof. M. N. Narasimhachary

**Continuing Education Department**

Dr Nicholas Sutton

Ms Anuradha Dooney

**Patrons Council**

HE The Indian High Commissioner

Baroness Prasher, CBE

The Maharaja of Jodhpur

The Maharaja of Puri

Mr Ranjit Sondhi, CBE

## **Academic Council**

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

## **Academic Advisory Council**

Dr N. J. Allen  
Dr Rohit Barot  
Prof. John Brockington  
Prof. Judith Brown  
Prof. F. X. Clooney  
Dr Gillian Evison  
Prof. Bob Jackson  
Dr Dermot Killingley  
Prof. Ursula King  
Prof. Kim Knott  
Prof. Julius Lipner  
Prof. Eleanor Nesbitt  
Prof. Malory Nye  
Prof. Ceri Peach  
Prof. Lord Bikhu Parekh  
Prof. Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad  
Dr David Smith  
Dr David Washbrook

## **Fund Management Committee**

Dr Arnab K. Banerji  
Mr Upendra Kalan  
Mr Akbar Moawalla  
Dr Prashun Popat  
Mr Ramesh Venkataraman

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

### **Directors**

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

### **Book keeper**

Mr Pierre LeMieux

## Appendix two: Lectures and seminars

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### Michaelmas Term, October–December 2007

#### **Majewski Lecture: Pancartha and Pasupata: Notes on the historical development of the Pasupatas**

*Dr Peter Bisschop*

This lecture reflects upon some of the teachers and doctrines associated with the Pasupatas in Sanskrit literature. Specific attention will be paid to the meaning of the term Pancartha in the Pancarthabhasya – Kaundinya’s commentary on the Pasupatasutra – to uncover a pre-Kaundinyan form of Pasupata doctrine. Evidence from the Puranas, in particular the original Skanda-purana, is used to throw light on the subsequent spread and development of the Pasupata movement.

#### **Hinduism I: Themes and textual sources**

*Prof. Gavin Flood*

This course offered a thematic and historical introduction to Hinduism for students of theology and religious studies. Focussing on the brahmanical tradition we explore the textual sources, categories, practices, and social institutions that formed that tradition. Primary texts in translation provide the basis for reflection on issues such as dharma, renunciation, caste, and concepts of deity. We then moved on to some of the major philosophical developments of the tradition, with particular emphasis on the Vedanta. The course raises theological and cultural questions about the relation between reason and practice, person and world, and society and gender. It concluded with a consideration of Hinduism and modernity.

##### **Lecture schedule**

- Introduction: What is Hinduism?
- The Veda and vedic traditions
- Dharma, society, and gender
- Ascetic traditions
- Indian theism
- Philosophical traditions 1
- Philosophical traditions 2
- Hinduism and modernity

#### **Key thinkers in the study of religion**

*Dr Jessica Frazier*

Scholars of religion have sought to make sense of human experience through the lens of one of its most powerful, pervasive, yet enigmatic dimensions: religion. In the contemporary world this involves weaving diverse perspectives on that rich phenomenon into a single coherent picture. Modern theorists have sought to advance classic approaches to religion through groundbreaking theories, borrowing from disciplines ranging from anthropology, psychology and sociology, to theology, philosophy, and hermeneutics.

This lecture series addressed major questions in the contemporary study of religion

through the ideas of key twentieth-century thinkers such as Evans-Pritchard, Gellner, Geertz, Turner, Eliade, Said, McCutcheon, Neville, Van der Leeuw, Ricoeur, Flood, and Hick. It explores their background and motivations, their insights and pitfalls, and assesses them in the light of the world's religious traditions. It asks what religion is, how we can best understand the experiences, discourses, actions, and communities of which it consists, and what it has to tell us about human life itself.

- Grand narratives of religion: Anthropology and the genesis of religious life
- Experiential approaches: Mysticism and the category of the sacred
- The perennial faith: Comparative religion and religious pluralism
- The religious imagination: The heirs of Freud and Jung
- Religious structures and symbol: The grammar of myth and meaning
- Prejudice, protest, and 'the study of religions': Creating a new academic field
- Phenomenology as the 'new hope': The methodological turn in study of religion
- Religious truths and cultural perspectives: Stepping outside the 'west'

### **Hindu scriptural reasoning**

**Convenor: Prof. Gavin Flood**

Scriptural Reasoning is a practice, developed mainly at the Universities of Virginia and Cambridge, of reading the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in groups. At OCHS we have the opportunity to extend this model beyond the Abrahamic traditions to the group reading of the scriptures of Hinduism. Indian traditions have developed interpretative strategies for reading their own scriptures which go back over a long period of time and scriptural reasoning might be seen as an extension of these reading practices in the contemporary context. To adapt a phrase by one of the practitioners of scriptural reasoning, Hindu scriptural reasoning is the reasoning that occurs when scripture is discussed by a group of interpreters. It works through the reasoning implicit within the source texts themselves and the reasoning that interpreters bring to the scriptures in dialogue both with the text and with each other. In the Abrahamic context, Kepnes points out that scriptural reasoning has functioned within a triadic semiotic that assumes that meaning arises out of the relationship between sign, referent, and community of interpreters who bring to the texts their own disciplines of theology, indology, history, sociology or whatever. Thus scriptural reasoning is non-teleological, open-ended, and intends only to secure deep, engaged reflection upon, in our case Hindu, scriptures.

While the expertise in the languages of the texts will be present in all groups, the primary focus is in reading the texts in scholarly English translations. We focus on passages from two texts in the first instance from the Upanishads and *Bhagavad-gita*. In due course the range of texts can be extended. The first texts during the term will be the *Brhadaranyaka-upanisad* 1.2.1–7 and 1.4.1–15, and *Bhagavad-gita*, chapter 2.

### **Readings in phenomenology**

**Convenor: Prof. Gavin Flood**

Phenomenology is one of the most important developments in philosophy in the twentieth century that has had a deep impact on theology and religious studies. This seminar series seeks to engage with some of the fundamental concepts of

phenomenology, which underlie much work in theology and the phenomenology of religion. While the readings themselves are not directly about the phenomenology of religion, in order to understand the phenomenology of religion we need to address these fundamental ideas and to raise the basic questions of phenomenology. The aim is not so much a comprehensive overview of the phenomenological movement, but rather an attempt to come to grips with key phenomenological ideas that influence theology, the phenomenology of religion, and other areas in the human sciences. Thus we pay attention to phenomenology as ‘showing’; as that which shows itself by coming into the light. The series began with a reading from the ‘father of phenomenology’, Edmund Husserl, and then moved on to readings from Heidegger, Levinas, Ricoeur, and Henry. Our starting point was Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* which provide us with some of the fundamental tools of phenomenology. We then looked at a different understanding of phenomenology as ontology in contrast to ‘worldview’ with Heidegger’s first lecture in ‘The Basic Problems of Phenomenology’. With two different understandings of phenomenology we then go on to a reading that responds to the Heideggerian understanding with Levinas and then examine the application of phenomenology to memory in the later work of Ricoeur. Finally, as an example of the application of phenomenology, we examine the Christian theological phenomenology of Michel Henry.

## Hilary Term, January–March 2008

### Hinduism II: Yoga, Bhakti, and Tantra

#### *Professor Gavin Flood*

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

While the lectures place texts in their historical contexts, the course does not examine texts in a strictly chronological sequence, the stress being on theme. Throughout, we raise critical theological questions through engaging with texts in translation and raise the question about the extent to which liberation is a rhetoric that overlays other cultural forces. By the end of the course the student should have an understanding of soteriology in Hindu traditions, an understanding of some the main literatures associated with this, and an awareness of the philosophical and theological problems entailed. These lectures are aimed at students of theology and religious studies.

### **Lecture Schedule**

1. Introduction: the question of soteriology in India
2. The Samkhya and Yoga
3. Yoga-sutras of Patanjali
4. Bhakti and Yoga in the Bhagavad-gita and its interpreters
5. Bhakti literatures and ritual texts
6. The Sant tradition: Kabir, Mirabai
7. The Pancaratra
8. Monistic Saivism

### **Majewski Lecture: Pandits, service people, and caste debates in the early Maratha state**

***Professor Polly O'Hanlon***

This paper explores the role of a Brahman intellectual and diplomat, Kesava Pandit, in the service of the Maratha state in the later 17th century. Through focusing on Kesava Pandit the paper brings together themes in the social history of Mughal India and in the history of colonial Maharashtra.

### **Surrender to God in Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism**

***Dr Yahya Michot (Oxford), Professor Keith Ward (Oxford), Professor Julius Lipner (Cambridge)***

This afternoon conference examines the idea of surrender to God in three religions and provides the opportunity to address comparative theological concerns. In all three theistic traditions there is the idea of human surrender to God. The conference explored what this means in the different traditions and looks towards a theological dialogue between them.

### **Readings in the Jayakhya-samhita**

***Convenor: Professor Gavin Flood***

The Jayakhya-samhita is one of the three gems of the Pancaratra or tantric Vaishnavism. This early medieval text contains material on cosmology, ritual, and the construction of mantras. The seminar focuses on selected chapters.

### **Readings in phenomenology 2**

***Convenor: Professor Gavin Flood***

This seminar series continued the Michaelmas term's work by focusing on a single text in the phenomenological tradition – Merleau Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception*. This is an important work of phenomenology which develops many key ideas and is striking for its contemporary relevance. Key ideas it deals with are the world that precedes knowledge, the lived body as that which gives access to a world, and subjectivity as being inseparable from body and world. The seminar begins with a brief introduction to Merleau Ponty, situating him in the history of phenomenological thinking, and thereafter was based on reading the text.

### **The contributions of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati to modern Hinduism 1900–37**

***Ferdinando Sardella***

A presentation of a thesis that deals with a controversial contribution to modern

Hinduism by Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati (1874–1937), within the frame of the encounter with Western colonialism and culture. It explores his life in colonial India, his social and philosophical background, motives and sources of inspiration, and impact in forging a new distinctive movement for the transformation of Hinduism within the frame of modernity. Bhaktisiddhanta grew up in the cultural milieu of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, a tradition founded in Bengal by Caitanya (1486–1534) and popular throughout East India. Sections of this tradition went through a dramatic process of modernisation through the agency of Bhaktisiddhanta's father, Bhaktivinoda Thakura (1834–1914), a judge in the British colonial administration. Bhaktisiddhanta developed his father's work and founded a movement popularly known as the Gaudiya Math, which had branches in London and Berlin, and now has offshoots around the world. The study fills a neglected gap in the history of modern Hinduism and focuses on an intriguing stage of its development from medieval tradition to global institutions, shaped by the tumultuous encounter between Hinduism, Christianity and European modernity.

### **Performing Hirapur: Dancing the Shakti Rupa Yogini**

*Dr Alessandra Lopez y Royo*

The Shakti Rupa Yogini, composed and choreographed by the late Guru Surendranath Jena in his unique style of *odissi*, a 20th century Indian classical dance genre, is a piece inspired by and dedicated to the *yoginis* of the Chausat Yogini temple at Hirapur, in Orissa, an ASI archaeological site. An extraordinary performance of Shakti Rupa Yogini was filmed in 2005 at Hirapur as part of a documentary about the work of Guru Surendranath Jena. Pratibha Jena Singh, Sura Babu's eldest daughter, danced the composition at the Chausat Yogini temple, in order to bring out more explicitly the sense of connection between the dance and the ancient site.

This performance raises a number of questions, about the relationship between dance and temples in contemporary India, going beyond stereotypical notions of sculptural poses and sacred devadasi dancing. The seminar gave us an opportunity to discuss, from a new perspective, the use we make of archaeological sites and of dance performance in our project of re-imagining history and re-imagining the past.

### **The Parinama aesthetics as underlying the Bhagavata Purana**

*Dr. Ithamar Theodor*

This paper offers a literary and ideological deconstruction of the *Bhagavata Purana*. It traces the *Purana's* formation through the convergence of the Vedantin, the Aesthetic, and the Vaishnava traditions, and argues that it is the doctrine of Parinama that underlies the treatise. We first examine the *Bhagavata Purana's* literary components; the roots of these are traced back historically to the Vedanta and Alvar traditions, and the *Bhagavata Purana's* nature as an opus universale, representing an all-Indian cultural melting pot, is highlighted. The paper then looks at the relations of Vaisnavism and dramaturgy, both historically as well as theologically, and argues that the *Bhagavata Purana* was traditionally read as a drama. It proceeds to decipher the aesthetic theory underlying the *Bhagavata Purana*, and argues that it is Bharata's dramaturgical *rasa* theory. Within the *rasa* tradition, Abhinavagupta's and Bhoja's positions are highlighted and compared through three seminal points and it becomes apparent that the *Bhagavata Purana's* underlying aesthetic theory is close to the Parinama doctrine of Bhoja where

*sringara* is considered to be the supreme *rasa*. As Bhoja's date is no doubt later than the *Bhagavata Purana's* it is assumed that the *Bhagavata Purana* was influenced by one of Bhoja's predecessors. The paper ends by reinforcing this analysis by highlighting a later tradition – the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition – which had actually accepted this point of view.

## **Trinity Term, April–June 2008**

### **Methods of chanting various Vedic metrical and prose texts with their phonetic variations**

***Prof. G. C. Tripathi***

The four main Vedic Samhitas are sub-divided into a number of differing branches. The names of these branches or Shakhas are available in ancient texts and Anukramanias but at present not all Shakhas are available. The branching of one Veda into many Shakhas has taken place for many reasons – geographical, phonetic, and ritualistic. Every Shakha has a different mode of chanting and recitation, although they belong to one and the same Veda. At present two Shakhas of Rigveda, three Shakhas of Samaveda, four Shakhas of Yajurveda, and two Shakhas of Atharvaveda are available in India with their reciters who know the text of these Samhitas by heart. It is interesting to note the differences in the accent system and the way of chanting of these Shakhas. This lecture aims to help students understand the Vedic texts and their mode of accentuation more clearly.

### **Introduction to Sanskrit metrics and correct recitation of Sanskrit verses**

***Prof. Gaya Charan Tripathi***

Students of Sanskrit may have little knowledge of how a Sanskrit Shloka should be read and correctly recited, often reading the verse as prose, breaking the Sandhis and spoiling the character of the verse. All the metres of classical Sanskrit have a fixed structure with rules for pauses in the middle or at the end of a foot. Some metres are recited slowly and some have a fast cadence. The metre in Sanskrit plays an important role in expressing its subject and the emotions connected with it. Correct recitation of a verse also leads to correct pronunciation of Sanskrit.

### **Shivdasani Lecture: Maps, mother goddess, and martyrdom in modern India**

***Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy***

This lecture explores the convergence of mother-goddesses, maps, and martyrdom that is critical to the people's imagining of national territory in modern India. Building on Christopher Pinney's suggestion that embodiment is crucial to nationalism, I suggest that the dismembered body of the martyred patriot is a reminder that disembodiment as well is critical to the hold of the nation on the millions who live and die on its behalf. The archive for the essay is constituted by visualisations of Indian national territory produced by 'barefoot' artists who drew embodied maps of the nation that transform India into a corporealised home-place to which the citizen is expected to respond with an affective intensity that leads the most patriotic among them to martyr themselves.



## **Shivdasani Lecture: Of gods and globes: The territorialisation of Hindu deities in popular visual culture**

***Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy***

This lecture considers the appearance of cartographic imagery in the form of maps and globes in the so-called god pictures that have been such a ubiquitous feature of popular Indian visual culture for the past two centuries. A special focus is on tracking the transformations through time of representations of Varaha who is shown in much of twentieth-century popular art in the company of a globe with a map of India clearly delineated on its surface. Through a consideration of such images, Prof. Ramaswamy suggests that the secular modern science of cartography has enabled the transformation of 'Hindu' deities into 'Indian' gods.

## **The Majewski Lecture: Tantric traditions of Kerala**

***Dr Rich Freeman***

This lecture presents an account of tantric traditions in Kerala and place these in their historical and social context. Of particular interest is the way in which these traditions respond and adapt to modernity as we see in the school which trains priests – the Tantra Vidya Peetham.

## **Visual piety and bazaar Hinduism**

***Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy***

On modern Hinduism and popular visual culture: This seminar relates the work of David Morgan (Visual Piety, Sacred Gaze) to Indian popular visual culture scholars (Kajri Jain, Chris Pinney, Jyotindra Jain, and others).

## **The 'Hindu' Goddess and Indian modernity**

***Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy***

Through a consideration of figures like Bharat Mata, Tamilttay, the Gau Mata, Kannagi, Santoshi Ma, and a few others, we look at the phenomenon of why Indian modernity has seen such an eruption of the female divinity and the maternal body.

## **An introduction of ritual and philosophy of the Vaishnavas based especially on the Pancaratra system**

***Prof. G. C. Tripathi***

There are two main branches of Vaishnava Theology: Pancaratra and Vaikhanasa. Of these, Pancaratra is followed in most of the temples in North and the South whereas in the North the Vaishnava ritual is also highly influenced by the Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The way of worshipping the Deity has some marked differences in all the systems though basically the spirit is the same. The course introduces the students to the rite of Puja ceremony as it is performed in the temples and as it is ideally supposed to be performed also in home. The Puja ritual of a particular sect represents at the same time its philosophical structure and sheds light on the religious beliefs of the followers of that particular school.

## **Hinduism in Contemporary Indian Cinema: Popular travesty or new theology?**

*Dr J M Frazier*

India's film industry is the second largest in the world, currently providing stories that negotiate the cultural transition between tradition and innovation in one of the world's fastest growing economies. These filmic arts are often uniquely Hindu; Bollywood's approach to plots, heroes, ethics and the divine image bring ancient models to life in new ways. But are these only shallow imitations, or are they new incarnations of a deeply rooted theology, which has now adapted to the visual media of the modern age? Using clips from three of India's most successful films of the last ten years, we explore contemporary depictions of Hindu devotion in Hindi cinema.

## **Readings in the Jayakhya Samhita**

*Prof. Gavin Flood*

## **Readings in Phenomenology**

*Prof. Gavin Flood,*

## **Writing Essay and Exams**

*Dr J. M. Frazier*

A seminar for Masters and Undergraduate students offering pointers for writing essays and dissertations. We talk about essay structure, developing original arguments, showing awareness of methodological and theoretical issues, incorporating primary texts and secondary readings, balancing explanation and argumentation, and aiming at excellence.

## **Writing Essays in Exams**

*Dr J. M. Frazier*

Turning long essays into exams is never easy, but it is crucial to success. Exam essays are an art of their own, and in this class we look at strategies and suggestions for writing the best essay within that pivotal hour.

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