

The Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies Board of Governors Report 2008–9



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Introduction

Welcome to this year's Board of Governor's report – the Credit Crunch Edition.

Said crunch has certainly necessitated increased belt-tightening and new approaches to fund-raising, however, the work of the Centre continues to grow and bear fruit, giving an indication of just how much more can be achieved when our financial base is made solid.

This report gives a broad overview of the life of the OCHS for 2008–9.

Two events that the year will always be remembered for are the launch of our online courses and the launch of the Journal of Hindu Studies.

The online courses follow on from the very successful 'terrestrial' courses held in Oxford, London, Leicester, and Birmingham over the past decade but are now made available to students anywhere in the world. The Autumn 2009 term will be our fourth and will have three concurrent courses running. By the end of 2010 we hope to have five or six courses running concurrently.

The Journal of Hindu Studies is a very bright feather in our publishing cap. It operates in partnership with Oxford University Press and brings together writing from the best scholars in the subject and is already, after two issues, the best in the field.

This is just a sample of what the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies is making possible.

The OCHS is a national institution that deserves wide 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.

Lord Navnit Dholakia, OBE DL

Chairman of the Board of Governors

Dating of reports

The OCHS Board of Governors Report covers the academic year 2008–9. The financials are reported according to our financial year (January–December, 2008).

The Rig Veda and the Credit Crunch

As we emerged from the meeting, Professor Gombrich asked me what I was doing that evening. I replied that I was giving a talk at Deloitte, in the City of London. With interest, he enquired as to the subject, to which I replied, 'The Rig Veda and the Credit Crunch'. Professor Gombrich, Sanskrit Professor at Oxford University for 28 years, raised an eyebrow and smiled as he offered me a wonderfully British, understated 'I see'.

Indeed, how could the world's oldest philosophical and religious text in continued use—dated by tradition to 3000 BC, and by scholars to between 1900 BC and 1400 BC—have anything to say about an event that only happened last year? Had I bitten off more than I could chew? Or has that ignominy been left to our much maligned banking community?

The Rig Veda is the oldest of India's literary works, and one of the four principal Vedas, or works of knowledge. But, while it is mainly known for its hymns and its association with ritual performance, there are some very big philosophical ideas hidden in the Rig Veda: the concept of atma, and the concept of rita, from which dynamic world views have arisen—world views that influence Indian and Eastern thinking to this day.

Whereas greed has served as an acknowledged motivating factor for today's economic wheels, sacrifice has served as the vehicle of gain for ritual performers of the Vedic rituals—a vehicle driven by the idea of rita.

Rita is little known these days, having been superseded by other Vedic ideas such as dharma, karma, varnashram, sattva, dana, ahimsa, yajna, and seva, for all of which it serves as the basis. Rita means 'cosmic order', and it also denotes 'right'. By aligning ourselves with all around us, we can integrate, causing no harm to others, and satisfying ourselves—a nice thought.

I am writing this article here in Oxford, whose strap-line is 'good thinking', and indeed rita is a product of good thinking. Some thoughtful person, or collection of thoughtful persons, observed the complexity of the universe, and considering the wonderful simplicity of its organisation, they realised that they were not the creators, controllers, or even fully aware of its depth.

Their realisation was that we are very small cogs in a very large machine, and it is essential for us to find our place in the scheme of things, so that we can make a contribution, and not become a hindrance.

One of the essential elements of this worldview, when compared with western thought, includes the dichotomy between the concept of being the master of the universe, and being the servant of the universe. On the whole, the West has adopted the view that we are the master of all we survey. This is seen to be expressed in scientific perspectives and theories, and through God-given rights to dominate. India, while developing its relationship with science, western tastes, and global concerns, is still largely influenced by rita, and a view that we are the servant of all we survey.

Well, personally I was always more attracted to being a master than a servant, but on closer examination I am less self-assured. One way of thinking leads naturally more towards giving, another more towards taking. One naturally leads more towards being conscious of others, and the other more towards being more concerned with oneself. One recognises independence as high virtue, while the other values dependence as a higher virtue.

As you will note, these worldviews seem to be diametrically opposed to each other and this comes into even sharper focus when we consider how these perspectives affect attitudes to community, family, self, politics, and indeed economics. Thus, Indian thought has a very different starting point from the world it does business with.

Rita ultimately provided the inspiration for Gandhi's thoughtful perspective that 'earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed'. The banking system of a year ago was as vulnerable as mildewed cloth, corrupted and ruined. After the Lehman Brothers collapse it seemed that any push or pull would ensure its disintegration—and panic ensued. The emperor's cloth seemed to be tearing apart .

Einstein's conviction that the thinking that has produced a great difficulty will not be the thinking that solves it is important for us to now consider—before we slap a few regulations on the dastardly bankers and get back to business as usual. The pollution of mildew is permanent and requires us to weave a new cloth. Patchwork will not hold.

A new weave requires a rethink, a fundamental review of the goals of our economic system. Essentially: is the goal of our economy about gain, or does there need to be an element of giving built in? We obviously don't mean to build it in simply as a PR exercise, nor indeed to develop a more pious sense of balance—as we only try to balance opposites and unequal partners. The Rig Veda would suggest that taking without giving has no integrity. Giving and taking are not opposites but part of the same whole. To separate them, to create opposites of them, corrupts their integrity and leads to a faulty foundation for future action.

Our current system is built on the assumption that economics is about gain, and we make that more palatable by discussing whether it should be personal or communal gain. Thus the debate about capitalism and socialism that have kept us all hot under the collar for so long. But does this right/left debate present us with a false dilemma? One which ignores a more fundamental question about the value of gain, and greed, its frequent bedfellow; or, indeed, does it perpetuate a nuanced culture of greed—greed with a sense of piety? Basically, does it have integrity?

Using Rig Vedic thinking, we approach each circumstance on its merits and deal with it holistically, considering its integrity and recognising its interdependence—its place in the bigger picture—its connection with our environment, other living beings, and other ideas and cultures.

By this standard I may have introduced a false dilemma into this article by separating the philosophical ideas of master and servant. Both are interesting ideas with their own merit. The fundamental question is which is the more wholesome starting point for a life well lived? Which will form the basis of future self-respect, virtue, and trust?

From the perspective of rita there is no question here, as it would maintain that by a humble approach to all facets of a circumstance we can ultimately gain mastery of any situation—from servant to swami. But without nurturing the concern born of service, learning the value of the world as much as its price, and developing personal principles and subsequent virtue we cannot expect to be respected or trusted, and thus cannot expect to become leaders, managers, bankers, and commentators, etc. Unless our personal and private selves are integrated, we are being duplicitous.

Our current financial system does not acquit itself well under such scrutiny, either individually or institutionally, and government bailouts have not added to a much needed sense of security. Rather they have reinforced the fact that those who are

most responsible in the short term, and whose thinking was so short term, live to profit again—a testament to short-termism and lack of reflection. It also gives politicians licence to begin to use words like moral and ethical, which adds a touch of the surreal.

We are also ignoring issues of integrity by foisting blame on bankers, as we have been so happy to do. Greed is everyone’s problem, if we are to be honest, and unless we deal with it openly, the financial system we patch together will continue to fail. If the personal challenge of building our giving into our taking—as a matter of principle—translates to institutional policy, we will see the beginning of a more wholesome, sustainable, and dare I say respectable financial system.

So, does the Rig Veda help us understand the credit crunch? In this author’s opinion the answer is yes. The Rig Veda is not saying anything any thoughtful person could not conclude, but it excels in the fact that it has said it and has based its conclusions on essential and simple questions. More fundamentally, it helps us individually understand how we are all responsible for the credit crunch and how we may all contribute to its solution.

Its message? It encourages us to consider our humble place in a cosmic context, find our principles; become a servant, a contributor first; and make our contribution with a heart and a half. That’s what we can do to serve communal and individual need and help us self-regulate greed.

Without self-regulation, without respect, and trust no system we introduce will be efficient or effective in the long term. And, the Rig Veda puts the responsibility for this on the basic building block of the Universe, the individual. We have to individually choose to develop a character that can sacrifice some of its freedom for the common good, some of its gain in each and every exchange, and some of its pleasure for the satisfaction of others. The more responsible we are, the greater the sacrifice to be made.

I ended my talk to the Deloitte audience by hoping that they could make an honest attempt at such nobility to build good character and sincere relationships among themselves and their clients, and to become servants in a world which needs such good example.

On the way out I looked in a mirror and hoped the same of myself, and in my head I again heard the voice of my friend Professor Gombrich: ‘I see’.

***Based on a talk given by OCHS Director, Shaunaka Rishi Das
at Deloitte UK, August 2009***

Academic report

The function of OCHS is the academic study of Hinduism, however complex that term is, to promote a critical inquiry into Hinduism and to allow for the articulation of an intellectual inquiry within Hindu traditions.

We have at OCHS a general vision of understanding and approaching Hinduism from a number of perspectives and disciplines: from Indology, the philological and critical study of texts; from Theology, the inquiry into what is regarded as revelation; from Anthropology, the study of particular communities; and from Religious Studies, the historical and descriptive account of what it is to be a Hindu.

To study Hinduism we need multiple tools and we need to draw on a number of academic disciplines in order to understand the many layers of the tradition. At OCHS we have a vision of the academic study of Hinduism that embraces both social science and humanities perspectives and that seeks understanding within a framework of critical, although sympathetic, inquiry. Indeed, we promote an ethos and atmosphere in which intellectual inquiry can be undertaken from within a Hindu tradition.

The academic values which OCHS adheres to, of open minded, critical inquiry, tolerance of diverse views, and friendship, are present in all our avenues of study. Indeed, this somewhat intangible spirit or ethos is central to the success of OCHS and has been remarked upon by students and visiting scholars alike. We believe that one of the functions of OCHS is to create the conditions for the critical inquiry into tradition from within tradition itself; in other words the development of Hindu theology both from within the horizon of the tradition and from perspectives outside of the tradition. This is not to say, of course, that OCHS promotes a particular view of Hinduism, it does not, or that it is confessional in its approach, it is not that either, but the Centre does recognise the situated nature of inquiry and encourages reflexive awareness in the students and scholars who study here. Indeed, far from promoting a particular view of Hinduism we actively encourage our students to become exposed to as many intellectual influences as possible and to pursue rigour, particularly philological rigour, in their work. At OCHS we have been generally proud of the students who have passed through our doors and have gone on to hold academic positions at respectable universities.

Within this ethos of sympathetic yet critical inquiry, OCHS will develop in two broad directions in the coming five years. Firstly OCHS will develop Hindu theology and philosophy and secondly Hinduism in relation to social policy.

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.

Our Shivdasani Fellows, Dr Piyali Palit (Michaelmas 2008) and Prof. Patrick Olivelle (Trinity 2009), were very well received for their talks and seminars and added great value to the Centre by providing individual tutoring to the Centre's students.

The three Majewski Lectures were offered by renowned scholars. Dr Whitney Cox (SOAS) spoke on the interaction between Kashmir and Karnataka in the eleventh century. In Michaelmas, Dr Maya Warrier examined issues of Hindu identity in Britain, while in Trinity term, Prof. Olivelle spoke on the literary and political history of Dharmasastra.

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.

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.

OCHS, in partnership with Jadavpur University in Kolkata, is launching a workshop on manuscriptology and palaeography. This two-week workshop in the study of manuscripts and the writing of old texts will be held at Jadavpur University in August of this year. Three of our students will be attending. The course is free.

We are also in discussion with Jadavpur University to develop an intensive summer school course in classical Bengali and with JNU to develop an intensive summer school course in Sanskrit.

Research strategy

Up until now OCHS has focused 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 research 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 being developed

Projects currently being developed include the Shivdasani Indian philosophy conference: 'Thinking inside the Box: The Concept of a Category in Indian Philosophy' to be held at Somerville College in October 2009, a colloquium on Shakta history, theology and texts to be held in October 2010, and a comparative religion/theology project on subjectivity (which may link to the Oxford Centre for Theology and Modern European Thought, and the Copenhagen Centre for Subjectivity Studies).

Projects under consideration

Projects currently being considered include proposals for a Purana project, and a Gaudiya manuscript project to help develop manuscript recording and preservation projects with institutions in India.

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, both radio and television, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, national print media, the Church of England, Asian newspapers, and Hindu communities around the country, with speakers representing the OCHS at interfaith events and community groups.

Global partnerships

Relationships with other institutions

In April, we made an approach to the University of Lancaster requesting a partnership which will facilitate accreditation of our Continuing Education Department courses. Such a partnership will also aid co-ordination in putting together collaborative applications for project funding, obviously increasing the possibility of success for both institutions. It is also conceivable that Shivdasani scholars may be available to work with scholars and students of Lancaster. Further the OCHS could also offer PGR students from LU an institutional base in Oxford from which to access the Bodleian's Indian Institute Library, tutorials, and visiting scholars. Discussions are ongoing.

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

Fellowships

Shivdasani Visiting Fellowship

Dr. Piyali Palit, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Michaelmas Term

Piyali did her Ph.D. thesis on 'The Role of Syncategorematicity as the Principle instrument in Linguistic behaviour in Vedic and Popular Usages'. She did her MA in Sanskrit from Visva Bharati, Santiniketan and Acharya in Advaita Vedanta from Rashtriya Sanskrita Sansthan, New Delhi. She was awarded a fellowship for the project on 'Influence of Indian Tradition on Rabindranath Tagore' at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. She is also associated with the Centre of Advanced Studies in Philosophy at Jadavpur University. Presently she holds the chair of Principal Investigator, Major Research Project in Indian Philosophy and Research Methodology, sponsored by University Grants Commission, Govt. of India. Her recent research works extend in the areas: Analytic Research and Theory Development, Ontological Issues in Ayurveda, Advaita Vedanta, Vaisesika, Purva Mimamsa and Panini-Vyakarana. Apart from a number of articles published in various National and International journals, proceedings, and anthologies, she has authored titles including *Basic Principles of Indian Philosophy of Language, A Treatise on Arthasamgraha, Samksepa-Sariraka* (Trans. & Comm.), *Panchikarana-Varttika, Vedanta-Sanja-Prakarana* (both are transcribed from rare original manuscripts).

Prof. Patrick Olivelle, Shivdasani Visiting Fellow, Trinity Term

Professor Olivelle is very well known and highly regarded for his work on early Indian religions. Among his many publications are *The Asrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (OUP 1993), *The Early Upanishads* (OUP, 1998), and *The Laws of Manu* (OUP, 2004). Among his research interests are ascetic traditions and the history of the idea of dharma. Professor Olivelle teaches at the University of Texas at Austin.

New students

Jason Birch

Balliol College

Jason is pursuing a D.Phil. in Oriental Studies, University of Oxford.

Tristan Edward Elby

St Peter's College

Currently pursuing an M.St. in The Study of Religion, University of Oxford.

Corin Golding

Wolfson College

Corin is pursuing a D.Phil. in Oriental Studies, University of Oxford.

Alana Lajoie O'Malley

Linacre College

Alana is pursuing an M.Phil. in South Asian Studies, Oxford University.

Tucker Plumlee

Blackfriars

Tucker is a Junior Year Abroad student studying Theology and Philosophy while in Oxford. His home college is the University of Denver.

Naama Shalom

Balliol College

Naama is pursuing a D.Phil. in Oriental Studies, University of Oxford.

Sarah Skenazy

Wadham College

Sarah is a Registered Visiting Student of the University currently completing her Liberal Arts Degree at Sarah Lawrence College, USA.

Paul Trafford

St Cross College

Paul is currently pursuing an M.St. in the Study of Religion, University of Oxford.

Bjarne Wernicke Olesen

Bjarne is a Ph.D. candidate at Aarhus University, Denmark. He was the recipient of a four-year Ph.D. scholarship at the Faculty of Theology, University of Aarhus, in 2007, and, as part of his research spent Michaelmas term 2008 at the OCHS as a visiting scholar.

Awards for OCHS students**Pandit Abaji Bursary**

Mr Kiyokazu Okita

Jiva Goswami Bursary**Mr Rembert Lutjeharms****Gupta Dan Bursary**

Ms Sara Skenazy

Ashvattha Narayan Scholarship

Ms Alana Lajoie-O'Malley

Ms Naama Shalom

Ramlal Patel Scholarship

Mr Tristan Elby

Mr Corin Golding

Book Grant

Mr Tristan Elby

Continuing Education Department

CED online

The major development for 2008–9 was the presentation of our CED courses in an online distance-learning format.

A pilot programme was run in October and was met with great enthusiasm by students. The official course launched in February with one module, 'Understanding Hindu Identity'. In May two courses were launched, 'Understanding Hindu Identity' and 'The Vedas and Upanishads'. In October, these courses will be run alongside a third course, 'Mahabharata and Ramayana'.

To date, 89 students have participated and feedback has been entirely positive. As initial setup costs are covered, and these courses provide income for the OCHS.

Each course consists of lecture notes, audio and video materials, and discussion forums. Tutoring has been led by Dr Nick Sutton along with Rembert Lutjeharms, Dr Jessica Frazier, and Dr Jonathan Edelman.

Classroom-based courses

At present the Continuing Education Department is providing classes in four locations – Harrow, Neasden, Birmingham, and Oxford. In Harrow the course was started again at the beginning of the 2008–9 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 also increased from 15 to 24 students.

In Oxford the numbers have decreased from twelve to six students.

Neasden is the newest and most successful addition to our schedule. The BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir have provided facility and over 100 students to attend the course and have organised registrations very efficiently.

Partnerships

Our relationship with Lampeter University, came to an abrupt end in April. We had some forewarning that there was trouble in Lampeter, hence began our discussions with Lancaster regarding accreditation. These discussions are proceeding positively and we hope we can gain accreditation for our CED courses by October of this year.

Discussions with the Said Business School on providing courses on Hindu perspectives on leadership and management are continuing. Our relationship with the Dutch business and management organisation, Avicenna, is also continuing with Prof. Gavin Flood, Anuradha Dooney, and Shaunaka Rishi Das being asked to deliver lectures to groups visiting Oxford.

Finances and future provision

Finances for the last academic year have been the best yet. The combination of the Neasden classes and online courses have pushed the CED into profit. The future of the Continuing Education Department is further underwritten for the next five years by pledges.

For 2009–10 we propose to continue offering courses in Neasden, Harrow, Oxford, and Birmingham. There is an ongoing demand for courses in Leicester which is being met partially through regular lectures organised by the Friends of the OCHS-Leicester.

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.

Archive

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. The kind offer from one of benefactors to begin a property search has come to nothing as he was crunched in our current recession. We continue to receive donations of material in small lots.

Library

The OCHS Library works closely with Oxford's Indian Institute Library. It currently holds approximately 8,000 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 catalogue of the entire Library collection is scheduled to be completed by the beginning of 2010, and will be available online through the OCHS website.

The Library has received substantial donations this year. Donors for 2008–9 include Sarva Sahni, Sandy and Jael Bharat, Yashvant Lodhia, Elizabeth De Michelis, Shaunaka Rishi Das, Jonathan Edelman, Peter Clarke, Ken Valpey, and Raj Mohan Gupta.

Internet

The OCHS website (www.ochs.org.uk) received an overhaul in 2008, being moved to a new content-management system and given new functionality.

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.

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 3,000 subscribers, with new subscribers signing on regularly.

Our monthly Friends Updates and six-monthly Newsletter have 1,000 and 3,000 subscribers respectively.

Publishing

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, and Rembert Lutjeharms. The advisory and editorial boards can be viewed on the Journal's website at 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 issue of the Journal, on the theme of 'Hermeneutics and Interpretation' was launched on 3 November at the American Academy of Religion conference in Chicago. The second issue was printed in May 2009.

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.

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 *Consciousness in Indian Philosophy* by Sthaneshwar Timalsina and *Desire and Motivation in Indian Philosophy* by Christopher G Framarin. See Appendix One for list of all current titles.

Development activities and achievements

Endowment campaign

Since 2007 we have been laying a foundation for an Endowment Campaign. We are currently aiming at launching this Campaign in late 2010. This year we have developed further contacts in India, one of our major audiences for such a campaign.

Important facets of the groundwork includes ensuring that the Centre's procedures and workflow are sustainable and efficient; that our fundraising efforts are realistic and properly targeted; and that our messages are clear and consistent. To this end we have consulted Brakeley and Accenture.

We are also developing relationships with the University's Development Office. This campaign is our main focus for future sustainability.

BBC Religion and Ethics Website

Any search of the internet using words associated with Hindu traditions and culture will quickly bring you into contact with the BBC Religion and Ethics website. Discussions between BBC producers and the OCHS discerned a number of improvements that could be made to the current presentations about Hindu culture on the site.

Thus, forming a partnership, the BBC and the OCHS are working together to develop resources worthy of an international audience desirous of objective, articulate, and well presented information about Hindu everything.

Plans for Generational Change for a Living Planet

This is an environmental partnership between the United Nations, the Alliance of Religion and Conservation, and the OCHS, aimed at launching a seven-year plan pioneered with various faith communities.

Consultations with Hindu leaders, temples, and communities to develop their plans to protect their environment and educate their youth in environmental issues are being facilitated by the OCHS.

One milestone in the project will be a conference to be hosted later this year by His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, at Windsor Castle.

Running Professor Campaign

Thanks to the IK Foundation securing his place, the Centre's Academic Director, Professor Gavin Flood, joined over 35,000 runners in taking to the streets of London for the London Marathon.

This was the basis of a fund-raising campaign led by Ms Anke Holst that raised just under £4,000. Equally important was the raising of the Centre's profile through articles in the UK Asian press.

Friends of the OCHS

Leicester Friends of the OCHS

In December 2008, a gathering of CED alumni in Leicester became the inaugural meeting of the Friends of the OCHS-Leicester. Since then, monthly fund- and awareness-

raising activities have been held. Over £1000 has been raised at these events in one-off donations and a dozen kind donors have signed up for monthly standing order donations.

As the FOCHS-L developed from our CED courses, it's perhaps not surprising that the events have been largely educational with lectures on Hinduism in its modern contexts. Extra special thanks are due to Raj and Ramila Chauhan of Aartus for making this all happen.

Other events

In October, Harish I.K. Patel and Bharat Bhundia organised a great evening with a ballet called Devangana, the story of the Somnath Temple in Gujarat. Proceeds went to the OCHS.

Board of Governors Dinner

The 2009 Board of Governors Dinner will be held on Monday 22 June at Oxford Town Hall. This year we again invited Friends and Benefactors of the Centre to sponsor tables of twelve seats for £300 with principal sponsorships of £900. Sponsors include, Mr Markand Upadhyaya, Mr Nitin Sodha, Mr Prashun Popat, Mr Jayesh Popat, and Mr Kamlesh Patel.

This year's guest speaker is Sir Mark Tully, a long-time supporter of the Centre and lifetime friend of India and its cultures.

CED Alumni Campaign

Our major fund-raising campaign this year was the CED Alumni Campaign. Traditionally, CED alumni are amongst our greatest supporters, having first-hand experience of the type of teaching we do. This campaign invited our CED alumni to become Friends of the OCHS by setting up monthly standing orders. It has been one of our most successful mailout campaigns so far, despite being launched during an economic collapse.

Finances

We have held very constructive discussions with our accountants, Macilvin Moore Reverses, working towards streamlining our interactions. We are particularly grateful to Harish Gelani and Jyoti Parmar of MMR for producing consistently good work for subsidised rates.

Infrastructure development

Infrastructure developments are aimed at improving efficiency, accountability, and smooth succession. All three of these aims are being assisted by the re-development of our administrative handbooks, strategy documents, and reports listed below. Updated versions of these documents can be found at www.ochs.org.uk/bg/downloads.

Governance

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

Strategy

- OCHS 03 Academic Strategy (completed)
- OCHS 04 Business Plan (completed)
- 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 welcome Mr Gateen Patel as an intern for six months. Gateen has been friends with the Centre since 2001 when he arrived in Oxford to study at Oxford Brookes University. Since then he has gone on to complete an MA at King's College, London, and spent time traveling in India. His roles at the Centre include development of the OCHS website, assisting in the running of the Continuing Education Department online courses, and the implementation of a new contact database.

Benefactors and friends

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 £255,700 this year.

The OCHS was very fortunate to receive the services of a very talented film-maker, Mr Pavel Tomanec, at greatly reduced rates. Pavel produced the video section of the CED online courses. He is also a first-class photographer and has often worked free for the OCHS producing stunning shots of the Centre's activities, of Oxford, and India.

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 and our printers Aartus Ltd, Leicester. Savings from these sources amount to £20,000.

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. We 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 Harish I. K. Patel, Prashun Popat, and Upendra Kalan worked hard to save expense and the time of OCHS staff.

Other significant voluntary service has been very gratefully received from Syama Dasi (book-keeping), Dr Nicholas Sutton (teaching and curriculum development), Anuradha Dooney (teaching), Meru Ostlund (cooking), Sanjay Gadhvi (mobile phone contract), and Jyoti Soneji (CED Student Secretary). The Director also continues to work on a voluntary basis.

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.

Arnab Banerji, Sandy Bharat, Bharat Bhundia, Jugdish Budhan, Babu Chandarana, Pradip Chandarana, Raj and Ramila Chauhan, Pursottam Dabasia, Mahaprabhu Das, Priya Dhruve, Arthur Dickson, Anuradha Dooney, Rich Freeman, Sunil Gadhia, Suresh Gohil, Nipun Gupta, Martin Haigh, Dinesh Hirani, Jay Jina, V. Juneja, Ashwin Kagdadia, Ramesh Kansagra, Mr & Mrs Khiroya, Sadhna Kotadia, Bhavini Ladwa, Jayendra Lakhani, Hasu Manek, Deepak Manghnani, Bhavit Mehta, Werner Menski, K. Mistry, Maaya Modha, Kapila Monet, John Muddiman, Harsit Nakarja, Sachin Nandha, Marie Ann Ostlund, Preeti Padia, Nitin Palan, Nimisha Patel, Kamlesh and Yaksha Patel, Ramesh

Patel, J. J. Patel, Parimal R Patel, Kirit R. Patel, J. R. Patel, Yogendra Patel, Nirav Patel, Jyoti Patel, Shashikant Patel, Pyarelal Patel, Ragini Patel, Dipak Patel, Vash Patel, Harish I.K. Patel, Chhotabhai Patel, Rajendra Patel, Sujata Patel, Raj Patel, Jayant C. Patel , Prashun Popat, Hemang Popat, Jayesh Popat, Dilip Raithatha, Prafulla Raja, Bheeshma Rajagopalan, Parvati Rajamani, Pratibha Rajani, Rami Ranger, Satish Ruparelia, Jean-Marie Schmitt, Neerja Sethi, Nirmal Sethia, Milen Shah, Milen Shah, Azad Shivdasani, Nitin Sodha, Rajesh and Saloni Somani, Raakhi Sunak, Usha Kiran Sunak, B.P. & Mrs. H.B. Thakor, Atul Thakrar, Subhash Thakrar, Shobha Trivedi, Markand Upadhyaya, Hari Vaudrey, Ramesh Venkataraman.

Anoopam Mission, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, East London & Essex Brahm Samaj, Evans Dodd, FOCHS Leicester, IK Foundation, , ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor, Kagdadia & Co., Kingsland Hotel, Knights Chemist Ltd/Lexon Pharmaceutical, MP Brothers, Markand & Co, Mostyn Hotel, N. Sethia Foundation, Phoenix Hotel, Popat Vaishnava Heritage Trust, SKS Swaminarayan Temple, Shree Lohanna Association Birmingham, The Regency Hotel, WeComeOne Consulting,

Accounts and finance January–December 2008

The Centre’s finances were hit by the global economic difficulties of 2008 with a number of regular donors unable to maintain previous levels of giving. It is expected that this will also affect fundraising in 2009.

The Centre has continued to benefit greatly from voluntary work and ‘in kind donations these have amounted to more than £255,700 in this period – which add great value to the Centre.

Upendra Kalan and Syama Dasi were our book-keepers for 2008. Our audit continues to be done by our accountants, Macilvin Moore Reveres, London.

The Board has been successful in maintaining the sound financial management of the Centre and its responsibility to ensure the true charitable nature of the OCHS. The 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.

Approval

This report was approved by the Board of Governors and Trustees on 22 June 2009 and signed on its behalf by Lord Navnit Dholakia, OBE DL.

Appendix one: Organisation

Organisational structure

Board of Governors

Mr Shaunaka Rishi Das
Lord Dholakia, OBE, DL
Dr S. Bhattacharya-Ford
Prof. Richard Gombrich
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

Academic Advisory Council

Dr N. J. Allen
Dr Rohit Barot
Prof. John Brockington
Prof. Judith Brown
Prof. F. X. Clooney, SJ
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

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

Appendix two: Lectures and seminars

Michaelmas Term, October–December 2008

Hinduism I: Themes and textual sources

Prof. Gavin Flood

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

The importance of religion

Prof. Gavin Flood

That religion is of fundamental public concern cannot be doubted as we move into the twenty first century, central to global politics, cultural or identity politics, ethics and the socio-economic processes of late modernity, as well as to the contested claims made in its name. Yet never has religion been so misunderstood. Never has there been a time when the critical understanding of religions (of the kind that can be done within Religious Studies) has been more important and never has there been a greater need for such knowledge and critical understanding to inform public debate which so often lacks informed perspectives. Some disparage religion as irrational, making claims about the world that simply cannot be substantiated in the light of modern scientific knowledge. On this view religion is a series of propositions about the world akin to scientific theories. Apologists for religion react to this critique defending it on rational grounds, that its claims are indeed compatible with modern knowledge and scientific thinking. We only need to look around bookshops to see the proliferation of these kinds of works. Yet both critique and apologetic have fundamentally misunderstood the nature and importance of religion in people's lives. These lectures attempt to understand religions as ways of life, ways of acting, ways of responding to the strange world in which we find ourselves, ways of being in the world which make claims upon people and which primarily function to address questions of ultimate meaning at a bodily and temporal level in which human beings make sense of their experience.

Shivdasani Lectures

Navya Nyaya language and methodology: Padartha

Dr. Piyali Palit

The Indian model of philosophical analysis, technically devised by the Neo-Logicians, known as the Navya Nyaya school, places forth a *PRAMA*-oriented picture of the World (*visva*). This world features four basic constituents stated as (i) *pramata*, the knower, (ii) *prameya*, the knowables, (iii) *pramana*, the process of knowing, and, (iv) *pramiti*, the

knowledge achieved by the *pramana*. Nothing in this world is left out of these broad categories, i.e., each and every entity in this world must find its place in any of those characters noted above. To speak more specifically, all worldly entities must fall either under the category of *prameya*, the knowables or under *pramana*, the process of knowing; in fact while we speak or even think about the process of knowing, *pramana* also happens to fall under the character of *prameya*. Hence, to take a definite look into this character – *prameya*, was of utmost importance for the Indian philosophers to get a clear picture of this world. Neo-logicians adopted the Vaisesika theory of *padartha* and developed it through linguistic elaboration since for them this world appeared to be not only a *prameya* but also as *abhidheya* – verbalisable – which was accepted by all the philosophical schools. Practically, *knowability* and *verbalisability* are two basic properties of this world of our experience, and, virtually our experiences tell us how we know and how we express our experiences through language or try to communicate with others. The neo-logicians marked the process of knowing as ‘encoding’, i.e., internalization of the external world, while the process of expressing verbally was marked as ‘decoding’ or ‘*sabda-vyavahara*’. Before we go into details of these two processes, a holistic picture of this world as ‘*padartha*’ following the Neo-logicians will be discussed.

Cognition and Knowledge

Dr. Piyali Palit

This lecture will continue the themes of the first. Here we will focus on the process of encoding/decoding (*sabda-vyavahara*) following Navya Nyaya language and methodology.

Majewski Lecture

Two Kashmiri lives in the Calukya Deccan

Dr Whitney Cox, SOAS

From the eleventh century, there is evidence of a remarkable pattern of the circulation of goods, men, and texts between two seemingly unlikely corners of southern Asia: the Valley of Kashmir and the western Deccan (in what is now Karnataka). The broad contours of this mobile world can be traced through a variety of methods, including political history, numismatics, archeology, and the history of art. In this presentation, however, I will concentrate on literary evidence, touching on the lives of two Kashmirian brahmins who found employment in the court of the Kalyani Calukya emperor Vikramaditya VI. One of these men was a state official whose public career took place in the midst of a period of great institutional change; the other was a leading court poet and biographer of his royal patron. Looking at these two emigres together, we can better understand the world and mindset of the cosmopolitan Brahman literatus, and can begin to better chart the changing nature of the early-second millennium South Asia social order.

Shivdasani Fellow Seminars

Ontological Issues in Samhita

Dr Piyali Palit

In Indian tradition, oral transmission of the *Veda* unfolds the mystery of perfect linguistic behaviour, i.e., maintaining formal contiguity of syllabic structures or ‘*ekavakyata*’ and thereby avoiding possibilities of ‘*arthabheda*’ or misunderstanding. Reasons for such

linguistic structure have been well expressed in *Taittiriya Aranyaka* followed by the *vedangas*, namely, *siksa*, *pratisakhya*, *vyakarana* and *nirukta*. Illustrations in these texts reveal the fact that well-formed syllabic structures, learnt and pronounced in a fixed order, traditionally known as '*krama*' or '*anupurvi*' delivers the intended meaning as well as maintain the sanctity or authenticity of the *Veda*. *Varna-s* or *aksara-s* happen to be the micro units. On pronunciation in contiguity they form a string known as *vakya*, which also encases *pada-s* or short strings of *varna-s*. Formation of such syllabic strings has been noted as *samhita*, *sandhi* or *santana* in *Taittiriya Aaranyaka* followed by *Rk-pratisakhya* and *nirukta*. In this context we may also quote the Panini-sutra – '*parah sannikarsah samhita*'. Paninian grammar expresses an algorithm of these syllabic forms in about 4000 *sutra-s* or operative rules composed as short strings. Narration of *Mahesvara-sutra-s* and discussions in *Paspasha-kanda* of the *Mahabhasya* distinctly expresses the motive and analytic mode of scanning *sabda* available in the *Bhasa*. While the *Mahesvara-sutras* display formal conjugation of *varna-s*, the *vartika* – '*siddhe sabdarthasambandhe*' – brings forth nature of *sabda*, *artha* and their *sambandha* in contiguity, which was presumably taken up by Bhartrhari on exposition of Paniniya-darsana at a later stage (ref. *Sad-darshanamuccaya* by Haribhadra Suri).

Ontology of Bhartrhari's Shabdadvaita

Dr Piyali Palit

In Bhartrhari, we find the only exception who delves into explaining nature of *mantra-s*. He formalizes the *Mantrabhaga* through his unique theory of *aksara-brahman* or *Sabdadvaita* without violating the cardinal form of *ekavakyata* in tune with the traditionalists view. He spells this 'linguistic contiguity' through statements like '*anadi-nidhanam brahma sabdadvaitam yadaksaram*' etc. The concept of *aksara* unfolded in *Paniniya-Varttika* and *Mahabhasya* is also found to be very much relevant in the context of Bhartrhari's *Sabdadvaitavada*.

In the *Brahmakanda* of *Vakyapadiya*, he illustrates the algorithm of *mantras* lying in eternity as *Para Vak*, revealed to the *Rsi-s* through *Yogaja pratyaksa* or supersensory perception. At the *pasyanti* level their experience consumed (*sphutya/sphota-bhava*); while at the *madhyama* level these were stuffed in forms as *grahya/grahaka* which was considered to be transformation or *parinama* of *Para Vak*. These cognitive forms, while articulated through physical verbal organ, gained the status of *vaikhari*. The word '*Veda*' itself reveals the truth as stated. The empirical world, both internal and external, are wrapped up in this form and remain to be identical with *sabda*, although referred to as *padartha* or *artha* in terms of their *jnana-visayata* and *vyavahara-visayata*. *Asara-Brahma* in assistance with Kalashakti presents them as real entities though *padarthas* are nothing but *vivarta*, illusory perception of shell-silver or rope-snake.

Readings in Phenomenology

Seminar series convened by 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 literature and 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. The series carries on from last year and will begin again with a reading from the ‘father of phenomenology’, Edmund Husserl’s *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

The Lion of Durga

Dr Jim Robinson

Dr Robinson did his D.Phil. research on the Worship of Clay Images in West Bengal. An important part of this was the study of Hindu iconography and the festivals of West Bengal, including Durga puja. Recently he has become a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and is working on an article on an ivory figure of Durga in the V&A which was part of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Photographs taken during fieldwork in Bengal and amongst the Bengali community in the UK are now in the British Museum Asia collection and in the archives of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. Items such as *pata* paintings and *saras* collected during my research in Bengal are also in the Asia collection of the British Museum. He is currently a teacher of Religious Education in Oxfordshire. His fascination with Durga started from a very early age in India where he was born and brought up and he is now particularly interested in researching Durga puja in Calcutta during the British period from 18th–20th centuries.

Hilary Term, January–March 2009

Hinduism II: Hindu ideas of liberation (Paper 21)

Prof. Gavin Flood

These lectures will 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 will begin 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 will trace the development of devotion (*bhakti*) and examine *bhakti* and yoga in the *Bhagavad Gita* before moving into the medieval period. Here the lectures will describe some developments of *bhakti* in vernacular literatures, focusing on both texts that advocate devotion to iconic forms and the later texts that advocate devotion to an absolute without qualities. Here we will also examine the importance of ritual texts and the relation between ritual, devotion and yoga. Lastly we will trace the themes of liberation and path with examples from selected tantric traditions within Vaisnavism and Saivism.

While the lectures will place texts in their historical contexts, the course will not examine texts in a strictly chronological sequence, the stress being on theme. Throughout we will 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 of 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.

The importance of religion

Professor Gavin Flood

This series of lectures continues the series started in Michaelmas Term 2008.

Religious experience in psychology, anthropology and sociology

Dr Jessica Frazier

Using the metaphor of restoring the 'soul' of religious studies, these lectures examine the ways in which private religious experience has been problematised in recent scholarship, with worrying implications; now in our study of religiously 'Other' people there is a danger of dealing only with persons as cultural artefacts, with no subject or 'soul', no ghost in the machine.

These lectures look at how Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology approach the *inner* experience of religious persons. It revives hidden models of religious experience in the work of classic theorists such as Freud, Jung, Otto, Frazer, Levi-Strauss, Evans-Pritchard, Durkheim, and Weber, relative to the thought of more recent scholars such as Geertz, Boyer, Stoller, etc), and to contemporary theories of subjectivity. The goal is ultimately to lay the grounds for a renewed vision of religiosity and of the study of religion itself.

Hindu understandings of God

We find the idea of God in different religions and it is theologically interesting that semantic analogues of the category appear across the boundaries of traditions. This series of lectures explores Hindu ideas of God and raises questions about the meaning of God in human traditions and the idea of comparative theology.

Lecture one: Ideas of God in Hinduism

Dr Jessica Frazier

Lecture two: The theology of Ramanuja

Professor Keith Ward

Lecture three: The theology of Jiva Gosvami

Dr Rembert Lutjeharms

Lecture four: The theology of Utpaladeva and the monistic Shaivas

Prof Gavin Flood

Majewski Lecture

Bovine slaughter, media representations, and the construction of Hindu identity in Britain

Dr. Maya Warriar, University of Wales, Lampeter

This paper examines the series of events that took place in July 2007 leading to the slaughter of Shambo, a 'temple' bull belonging to a community of monks at Skanda

Vale in rural West Wales. The main focus in this paper is the transformation of Skanda Vale from a quiet 'multi-faith' devotional community in a remote part of the country, to a politically engaged 'Hindu' organisation at the centre of an international media storm surrounding the killing of Shambo. By examining the meanings and symbols brought into play by the contesting groups, as well as the different levels of conflict, this paper will examine the constructions of Hindu identity that emerged in media representations as a result of this controversy.

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 will focus on selected chapters.

Readings in phenomenology

Convenor: Professor Gavin Flood

This seminar series continues. This term we will focus on reading Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*. This three volume work covers a great deal and raises questions about the nature of text, action, history, fiction, memory and the very nature of existence itself. These volumes provide a critical engagement with issues in historiography and theories of the text.

Hinduism, non-violence and the costs of terrorism: towards an Indian mediation service?

Dr Thomas Daffern

This talk will address research into the history and philosophy of non-violence in Indian religious traditions, including Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. It will ask whether the stress on ahimsa in the Indian philosophical tradition is something worth preserving, even in the face of terrorist attacks such as most recently in Mumbai, and if so, how can that be done? The proposal to launch an Indian Union Mediation Service will be presented as one intelligent way to square this ethical circle of idealism versus realpolitik.

The origins and development of Shaktism

Bjarne Wernicke Olesen

This seminar will explore traditions focussed on the Goddess and examine the boundaries of Shakta traditions. We will examine different kinds of Shakta tradition, those within the boundary of Brahmanical orthodoxy and those outside of that boundary. We will raise critical questions about tradition, about 'etic' and 'emic' accounts, and about the relation of Indology to Anthropology.

Trinity Term, April–June 2009

The Majewski Lecture

Forming a Canon: The Literary and Political History of Dharmasastra

Professor Patrick Olivelle

This lecture will deal with the early history of the Hindu legal tradition and the formation of its canon of texts within the political contexts in which they were produced.

Shivdasani Lectures

Readings in the Upanishads

Professor Patrick Olivelle

Professor Patrick Olivelle is very well known and highly regarded for his work on early Indian religions. Among his many publications are *The Asrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution* (OUP 1993), *The Early Upanishads* (OUP, 1998), and *The Laws of Manu* (OUP, 2004). Among his research interests are ascetic traditions and the history of the idea of dharma. Professor Olivelle teaches at the University of Texas at Austin.

The Wahlstrom Lecture

Siddhas, Munis and Yogins but no Nath: The Early History of Hathayoga

Dr James Mallinson

The Nath order has long been credited with being the originators of hatha-yoga and the authors of the Sanskrit texts on its practice. Text critical study of those works and research into other sources for the same period show this not to be the case: not one of the twenty Sanskrit texts that make up the corpus of early (pre-1450 CE) works on hatha-yoga was written in a Nath milieu. Furthermore, no single sect can be credited with starting hatha-yoga. On the contrary, hatha-yoga developed as a reaction against the sectarianism and exclusivity of tantra and was available to all, regardless of sectarian affiliation.

Readings in Phenomenology

Professor 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.

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Earrings and Horns: Locating the first Naths

Dr James Mallinson

The Naths are ubiquitous in secondary literature on the religious culture of India during the last millennium, but they are very elusive in primary sources. This seminar will trace the development of the traits that set the Naths apart from other religious orders and try to pinpoint when they came together.

Appendix three: Journal of Hindu Studies

In partnership with Oxford University Press
www.jhs.oxfordjournals.org

Volume One

Introduction to the Journal of Hindu Studies

Gavin Flood

Hermeneutics in Hindu Studies

Jessica Frazier

Abhinavagupta's Philosophical Hermeneutics of Grammatical Persons

David Peter Lawrence

'Icon and Mother': An Inquiry into India's National Song

Julius J. Lipner

Rsis Imagined Across Difference: Some Possibilities for the Study of Conceptual Metaphor in Early India

Laurie L. Patton

Theologising the Inaugural Verse: Slesa Reading in Ramayana Commentary

Ajay K. Rao

Buddhism in Modern Andhra: Literary Representations from Telugu

Velcheru Narayana Rao

Philosophical Hermeneutics within a Darsana (Philosophical School)

T. S. Rukmani

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