



# newsletter

Easter Term 2001



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## Namaste From The New President

by Mridula Pore

**NAMASTE, Pranaam, Vannakam, Swaagatam, and Hello!**

I would like to start by welcoming you back to another term at Cambridge. I hope that you have all had a peaceful and refreshing holiday.

Last term the committee stepped down with a bang with 'Mastana 2001'. It was the biggest 'Mastana' ever, and a fantastic success. It was great to see so many of you enjoying the show, and taking part, either on stage or behind the scenes. For those that could not be there, you can read more about it in this newsletter.

As you will see below, a new committee has been elected, and I hope that we will carry on the good work that so many people have put into making the society a success. Our aim is to have something for everybody, however broad or deep their knowledge and interest in Hindu culture is. We hope to bring you a mixture of philosophy, music, dance, debate, art, spirituality, and

fun. We are here to shape the society to your needs and so, please, do feel free to contact us with any comments or suggestions.

We will shortly be holding a pooja. This will be a ceremony to worship Lord Ganesha and ask for his blessings. Everyone is most welcome to attend - it is open to members and non-members alike. This year also sees the return of 'Dhamaka' - the fantastic May week event where you can dance the night away to the sounds of raas-garba and bhangra.

If any of you have been to the CUHCS web-site recently, you will have noticed the new look. We'd like to make the web-site as interactive as possible, and would really appreciate any help with this, either as feedback, or articles. In future, we will publish all the newsletters online as well as in printed form.

I wish you all the best for the remaining term and I hope that you will be able to make some time for CUHCS in your busy schedules.

## The New Committee

**THE CUHCS AGM** was held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March, and the committee for 2001/2002 was elected. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you have any queries, problems or suggestions.

<b>President:</b>	Mridula Pore	(Sidney Sussex, mp291)	<b>Other committee members:</b>	
<b>Vice-President:</b>	Abhilasha Patel	(Newnham, ap282)	Alkesh Patel	(Trinity, aap32)
<b>Secretary:</b>	Sveta Alladi	(New Hall, spa24)	Nikhil Shenai	(Jesus, ns271)
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Devarshi Saksena	(Christ's, ds304)	Raghu Nandakumara	(Jesus, rn223)
<b>Publicity:</b>	Mitul Shah	(Christ's, ms411)	Vaibhav Gupta	(Christ's, vg223)

## Editorial

by Mitul Shah

**AS WELL as the new committee, this term sees the launch of the new look newsletter.** I hope it is as interesting and informative as the newsletters of the past.

It is my hope that it will continue and grow to be a real forum for CUHCS members to express their views and share their experiences - eventually I would like the newsletter to become more of a viewsletter. Between us, we have an

incredible knowledge base, and it would certainly broaden all our horizons if we pooled it. It definitely seems to me that the best way to ensure that the newsletter remains relevant to the issues of members, is if you have more of a direct input.

The CUHCS website is also being revamped. Why not visit and see the excellent work so far? We eventually want to develop the site into a premier source of information and communication for the Hindu community, both inside and outside Cambridge. In

order to achieve this, we need information on topics ranging from philosophy to festivals.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, then please contact me, and if you have any feedback, ideas, suggestions, or articles for the website then please email [webmaster@cuhcs.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@cuhcs.org.uk).

Finally, we all know that this term will be very hard for all of us, due to the stress of exams, and on behalf of the entire committee, I would like to wish you all the very best of luck.

## Atman and Parmatman - In The Words of the Great



*Atman is permanent and one. Effort is within man's control, not the fruit thereof. All he has to do, therefore, is to decide his course of conduct or duty on each occasion and persevere in it, unconcerned about the result. Fulfillment of one's duty in the spirit of detachment or selflessness leads to Freedom.'*

- Mahatma Gandhi



*'If a piece of timber be thrown across the flowing Ganges, one side of the water will appear to be separated from the other. In the same way, the idea of Ego makes the soul seem different from the Supreme Self. Really, there is no division between them.'*

- Sri Ramakrishna



*'Understand, O Mortal, that Atman is that intransient quantity which gives life - verily, Atman is the difference between life and death. It is infinite and all-pervasive. Know that to achieve Supreme Enlightenment, the Atman must be freed of all karma'*

- Bhagwan Sri Mahavir

By Nikhil Shenai

**"MAN is of the nature of his faith; what his faith is, that, verily, he is."** (Bhagavad Gita, second half of XVII-3)

I feel that this verse conveys one of the central messages of the Gita. The simplest interpretation is that a person and their faith are one. But depending on your understanding of the word 'faith', the meaning of the verse changes. According to the scholar (and former Indian president) Radhakrishnan, 'faith' here means 'a striving after self-realization by concentrating the powers of the mind on a given ideal', rather than blind acceptance of a belief. So faith is a person's internal attempt to understand and conform to their own ideals, not the external ideals of society. For example, they may

## Faith and Nature

value friendship, or aim to be a good person, or hold academic achievement in high regard. What a person truly believes in is revealed by the efforts and actions which come naturally to them – this is their faith and this is their nature. The attempt to act according to other ideals (which are unrelated to their own and so which they do not understand) will be fruitless, as it will be unnatural and without conviction. Hence the Gita's conclusion at the end of the chapter from which the first verse was drawn:

***"Whatever offering or gift is made, whatever penance is performed, whatever rite is observed, without faith...it is of no account hereafter or here."*** (Bhagavad Gita, XVII-28)

This second verse also stresses the importance of inward belief as opposed to external

practices, which are not the true indicator of a person's nature. This is similar to the message conveyed by the Buddha when he said:

***"The outward form does not constitute religion or affect the mind...the man in worldly garments may let his heart soar high to heavenly thoughts."*** (Sayings of Buddha)

Together, the three quotes above emphasize that religion is personal, internal and aligned to a person's nature. Religion (or caste) is unconnected to birth, class or ritual. So these ways in which 'religion' divides and categorises people today are unjustified. Religion has been (and is being) used as an excuse to divide people unnaturally. This abuse is an obstacle to the unity envisioned in the Gita and other holy texts.

## Man Ka Yatra: A Pilgrimage in Thought

By Sveta Alladi

**OVER the summer**, I was fortunate enough to be able to visit one of the holiest places in India as part of a family holiday. We visited **Rameshwaram**, a small island off the southeast coast of the Indian peninsula. It is known as the place where three water bodies meet - the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. The temple at Rameshwaram is an astounding piece of South Indian architecture and is magnificently set against a background of the tropical sea.

It is considered holy for many reasons. It is thought that Rameshwaram is where Sita was held captive by Ravana, and where Ravana was slain at the hands of Rama. To relinquish his sins, Rama worshipped a lingam of Shiva made from earth by Sita

and it is to house this idol that the temple was built. The stories of the Ramayana are depicted as figures on the two 100ft gopuram towers.



*The Rameshwaram Temple*

The Rameshwaram temple is well known for its long pillared corridors. One of the pillared corridors is approximately 1200m long and is supposedly the longest in India, if not the world. Pilgrims mainly come to

Rameshwaram to bathe in the 23 wells. Each well is thought to contain water from a different holy river in India, and to have medicinal purposes. Lord Rama is said to have collected water from each of the rivers to put into the temple.

Fully clothed, my family and I bathed in each of these wells in order to obtain the maximum blessing from God. At each well our temple guide poured three buckets of water over our heads after which we prayed at the two Shiva Lingams. Before entering the temple we also washed in the sea, which is also thought to have a spiritual significance.

I have visited many temples in South India but none quite as beautiful as Rameshwaram. Visiting the temple truly felt like being in Gods presence and it is a definite must for any Hindu.

## The Hindutva Philosophy: What is it?

*This Article Abridged From [www.hindutva.com](http://www.hindutva.com) - a Website Dedicated to the Hindutva Philosophy.*

**THE TERM "Hindutva" is derived from the two terms 'Hindu Tattva', which literally mean "Hindu Principles".** Now the question is, what are Hindu Principles, and what comprises the "Hindutva" outlook?

To answer this question we begin with the history of the Hindus. It is the history of a civilization which has developed in its natural state, without interruption, since antiquity. Its age is dated to be between five and nine thousand years. Hence, it is a prototype of how human civilization would have looked, if civilization all across the globe had been allowed to develop in its natural state. This is the relevance for us - to study Hindu Civilization, Hindu History and Hindu Culture.

The evolution of Hindu Civilization can be considered to be natural and continuing, as there is no last messiah in the Hindu world view. In fact this is what distinguishes it from the rest - this is why Hinduism is called a 'Living' idea, guided by the sum

total of human wisdom that is not considered to be embodied in one person, one book, or one period of human history. Hindutva is the articulation of this idea of continuity of thought, from which emerge the multifarious Hindu Principles.

Two instances of Hindu Principles that symbolize the outcome of freedom of thought are the pronouncements made not today, but four thousand years back by unnamed rishis that, "This world is one family" (Vasudaiva Kutumbakam) and that "The Universal Reality is the same, but different people can call it by different names" (Ekam Sat Viprah Bahuda Vadanti). In these two proclamations we see the seeds of globalism and freedom of thought, four thousand years before the world was to become the global village of today.

Thus in its true essence, Hindutva is a stridently assertive rational-humanist line of reasoning. And it is this essence that we have kept in mind, while

developing this website. At the level of practice, the Hindutva outlook boils down to upholding righteousness (Sat-guna) and fighting ignoble attitudes (Durguna). Taking poetic license, we can describe the practitioners of this outlook as "Heenam Naashaayati iti Hindu" (Those who uphold righteousness and fight ignobleness are Hindus).

Thus, far from being a narrow nationalistic doctrine, Hindutva is in its true essence, 'a timeless, universal compilation of human wisdom'. Hence it is also called "Sanatana" which means "forever continuing."

At this site, you will read about different aspects of the history and culture of the Hindus in that part of our globe which is the birthplace of Hindutva - known variously as Bharatvarsha, Hindustan or India. In the context of the history of India, the values of rationalism and humanism are a result of the freedom of thought which forms the core of the tradition of Hindutva.

# MASTANA 2001

## Flagship Event Most Successful Ever

By Devarshi Saksena

**AFTER weeks of planning, organising, preparation and rehearsals, CUHCS's 5th 'Mastana' was held on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.** Mastana is our unique showcase of the very, very best from the Indian sub-continent. It encompasses dance, song, music and comedy, and has firmly established itself at the heart of the Cambridge cultural calendar.

All proceeds go to Sewa International, a charity founded to relieve poverty, disease and helping those in need who have been affected by natural calamities, disasters and other suffering. The news of the catastrophic earthquake in Gujarat had meant that proceeds would now be directed, through Sewa specifically to relief projects there and it gave this year's event an added significance.

The big night, held at the University Concert Hall, opened with an excellently sung qawaali and the high standard set was maintained by enthusiastic performances including a veena instrumental, a polished solo dance from the film 'Dil Se', and a classical Raag Malkauns, again performed with excellent precision. An enchanting South Indian Bharatanatyam dance followed, and four tabla players then did a brilliant piece,

mesmerising all those in the audience.

The first half of Mastana was concluded by two comedians who took the roof off with their rendition of 'Tujhe Dekha To Yeh Jaana Sanam' performed, shall we say, with a slightly alternative edge to it - including a boy in a

followed, singing excellently and indeed getting all of those in the hall singing along to their favourites from hit films such as 'Roja', 'Maachis', 'Hare Krishna Hare Rama' and 'Seeta aur Geeta'. The penultimate act of the evening, was another well performed instrumental which included the mridangam, the morsing and the ghatam.

The show was rounded off by a finale with the Mastana organising committees giving it their all in a Bhangra-come-Rhythm'n'Bass dance (named the 'Mastana Masti Megamix'). The

Megamix was received brilliantly by the crowd and rounded off an excellent evening which not only gave an audience of 500 people three hours of top class entertainment but also helped to raise in excess of £3000 for Sewa International to channel into relief projects for those caught up in the devastation in Gujarat.

A big thank you to Mr Sudhir Gupta who, on behalf of Sewa, received the money raised, to all those involved in putting the show together and of course those of you who attended and showed how supportive the student community in Cambridge is!

Roll on Mastana 2002...!



*The Mastana Crew Showing Off Their Moves*

saree playing an electric guitar! Judging by the laughs that they got, this was a firm favourite with the audience and the talk of the interval during which guests were served with delicious Indian snacks.

The second half of the show began with 'Merghum Karakuthu', a modern dance performed by a group of eight girls that again won much favour with the audience, due to a combination of excellent choreography and a superb performance.

This was followed by an eclectic mix of acts, all equally as impressive including a bhajan and a solo piece on the sarod. A music group 'Bollywood Masala'

## Events This Term

**DUE to the exams this term,** CUHCS is holding less events than in Michaelmas and Lent. Nevertheless, here are two dates you should definitely keep free for your diary:

**POOJA:** We will be holding our termly Pooja this year on Tuesday May 15<sup>th</sup>. The pooja is conducted in Sanskrit but English explanations are given throughout. Details of venue will be confirmed by email.

**DHAMAKA:** Yes, the best party in May Week is BACK. Dance the night away Desi style - can you handle the beats of bhangra? Put Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June in your diary - Dhamaka is one thing you just can't miss! Please contact Alkesh Patel (aap32) for more details.