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Message from the President

By Mridula Pore

Namaskaar,

WELCOME BACK to Cambridge!

I hope you all have a joyful and prosperous New Year. As ever, the CUHCS committee will be bringing you a packed term, full of a whole range of events.

There will be the on-going discussion forums that are your chance to air your views and find out what others think. We will also be part of One World Week. Come to the 'Religions of the World' Fair-it's an opportunity to learn more about different faiths and discuss the differences and similarities between them.

For those Bollywood fans out there, we'll be showing the hugely popular 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai' in association with Christ's Films. Some of you may have listened in to 'Ekta', the new Asian radio show that we launched last term on Cambridge University Radio. We're planning to bring the show back for the Lent term. If you fancy yourself as a presenter and want to have a go, get in touch with Dev Saksena (ds304) as soon as possible.

If this is your first year at Cambridge, come and experience 'Mastana'. This is our largest event in the year and brings you a wide range of artistic talent from Cambridge. Dance, song, music, comedy - all brought together to raise money for our official charity 'Sewa International'. It's been a huge hit in the past, and I'm sure it will be again. Interested? Get in touch with Abi Patel (ap282) or Sveta Alladi (spa24) to find out more. For those of you who have been before, tickets will be going on sale in a few weeks - make sure you get them quickly!

Elections for CUHCS will be at the end of this term and all posts will be up for grabs. If you're interested in standing, please don't hesitate to get in touch with any of the current committee to find out more about what's involved.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the current committee for all the hard work they've put in. It's been a great year so far, and I'm sure that Mastana will bring it to a spectacular finish.

I wish you all the best for the rest of the term.

The Committee

Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you have any queries, problems or suggestions.

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

Editorial

By Mitul Shah

ARE HINDUS too passive? The explosive talk 'Arise O India' by the French journalist Francois Gautier last term led us to ask this question of ourselves. Like all substantive questions, there are no easy answers.

There have been a number of issues that have prompted this question. Many feel that Hinduism does not have the recognition it deserves in the West as a major religion today. Some believe that populist reports in the media of events like the Kumbha Mela, which focus only on outlandish and outrageous practices, have distorted the true spirit of the religion.

There have also been widespread reports of human rights atrocities towards the Hindu community in Bangladesh. Although a national problem rather than one of religion, the issue of Kashmir is yet to be resolved, and remains a point of contention within the Hindu community. Some think that political correctness in India has eroded Hindu traditions, and yet others think that too many Hindus worldwide have lost touch with their religion and been overwhelmed in an ocean of materialism and over-indulgence.

In such circumstances, it is small wonder that there are people who have come to the conclusion that it is time for Hindus to stand up for themselves, and make their viewpoints heard.

Thus, it is thought that

maybe Hindus should be more belligerent in the promotion of their faith, and that they should press to be given more coverage on television and in the newspapers to put across the true nature of Hinduism.

Some Hindus feel that the industrial water supply to Bangladesh should be suspended until the human rights record there improves. Others think that India should declare war on Pakistan for their alleged backing of terrorists.

Such a reaction is hardly surprising - after all, observing animals in the wild, the natural response to antagonism is retaliation. It may be perfectly justified - the idea that justice must be served is common to all religions and political ideologies around the world.

However, I personally am of the opinion that such action will be to the detriment of Hinduism in the longer term. Although such measures might succeed in their aims, they can serve only to degrade the moral core of Hinduism. I am proud to call myself a Hindu, and the reason I am proud is that Hinduism has, over its long history, always been willing to assimilate new ideas, and to respect differences. No two Hindus are alike, and I believe that the unity of Hinduism lies in this diversity.

It is true that during the media frenzy of the Kumbha Mela, Hinduism was negatively portrayed. In my opinion, the way to alter this perception does not lie in the press, but rather through personal interaction. By inviting others to

learn about our customs, and by learning about theirs, we will start to build a more understanding society.

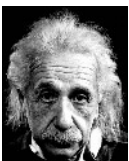
There is simply no excuse for the violation of human rights, or for terrorism. However, violent responses and displays of military might will serve only to accentuate tensions and further strain relations. Non-violence, when motivated by ethically sound reasons, has been proven to work on many occasions - Martin Luther King Jr. used it to protest against racism in America, and Gandhi used it to fight for farmers' rights in Champaran. Non-violent action can, and should, be used to resolve these present-day problems.

To me, true faith is not about violence, or about self-propagation, but rather about personal development (both ethically and spiritually). Passive is an odd word, with negative connotations. I feel that people of all faiths are too passive in such personal development. If we are active and assertive in our own self development, Hinduism, and the world as a whole will benefit.

However, using the bad policies of others as justification for those of our own making will simply result in the spiritual death of our religious aims.

To contribute to the discussion of this topic, and to listen to views other than those expressed here, come to the first discussion forum of term on Tuesday 29th January, at 7 pm in Chapel Court Room, Sidney Sussex College.

Mutual Respect - In The Words of the Great



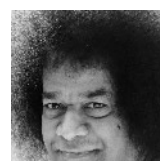
'We experience ourselves ... as ... a kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.'

- Albert Einstein



'Before we dare to think of freedom we must be brave enough to love one another, to tolerate one another's religion, even prejudices and superstitions, and to trust one another. This requires faith in oneself. And faith in oneself is faith in God. If we have that faith we shall cease to fear one another.'

- Mahatma Gandhi



'We do not need today a new religion or creed, nor a new system of education; nor need we create a new society. All we need are men and women who have pure and loving hearts. The transformation has to be effected in the minds of people.'

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Hindu Foods

By Dev Saksena

FOOD IS OF great importance to Hindus and Hinduism classifies food into certain categories, ranging from foods which can help to purify oneself to foods which cause disease and suffering. Here's a brief analysis of the different types of foods that exist:

'**Prasada**' is food offered to the gods. It is sanctified food. Before eating any food many Hindus offer the food to one of the gods. In this way they are eating the remnants of the particular god they offer food to, and therefore they become purified. Depending on which god the food is offered to, the prasada may be known as: Krishna prasada, Vishnu prasada, Siva

prasada, or Devi prasada.

There are three types of food: '**Tamasic**' (in the mode of



Fruit is known as a Sattvic food in Hinduism

ignorance), '**Rajasic**' (in the mode of passion) and '**Sattvic**' (in the mode of goodness).

'**Tamasic**' food is prepared more than three hours

before being eaten, food that is tasteless, decomposed and putrid, and food consisting of remnants and untouchable things. These types of food can cause one to be dull, sleepy and greedy.

'**Rajasic**' food is too bitter, too sour, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning. Rajasic food are meat, onions, hot pepper, garlic and very spicy foods. These foods cause distress, misery and disease.

'**Sattvic**' food is juicy, fatty and wholesome, and pleasing to the heart. Eating Sattvic food increases the duration of life, purifies one's existence and gives strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are grains, fruits, nuts and freshly prepared vegetables.

Makara Sankranti

the goal of life.

The great Bhishma, grandfather of the Pandavas, waited on his deathbed of nails until the onset of this season before finally departing.

In Maharashtra and in North India it is the season chosen by the Guru for bestowing his Grace on the disciple.

who work under him.

Bhogi

This is the day before the Makar Sankranti festival. On this day, old, worn out and dirty things are discarded and burnt. Houses and streets are cleaned. It is not only externally that things are "cleansed". The mind is also cleared of old habits. This is the spiritual significance of Pongal to a spiritual aspirant.

On Sankranti Day

Sweets, puddings and Khichkadi, (a mixture of rice and dhal), are eaten. On the feast of Sankranti, til (Sesame) is very important because it is said to have medicinal qualities in this season. They may mix it with jagari or sugar to make a sweet.

In North India, a ritual bath in the river is important on this day. In the hills of Uttar Pradesh it is believed that one who does not bathe on this day will be a donkey in his next birth.

Since it is also the season to fly kites, the evening sky is awash with colourful kites of all shapes and sizes.

By Sveta Alladi

MAKARA MEANS 'CAPRICORN' and Sankranti is the day when the Sun passes from one side to the other. This comes from the Sanskrit word "Shankramana" meaning "to begin to move".

The Sankranti of a month is considered auspicious because it signifies a fresh start. Throughout the year the sun passes through twelve constellations (similar to the 12 zodiac signs in Western astrology), one of which is Makara or Capricorn which occurs in the month of Paush.

This feast is celebrated on January 14th and is the only Indian festival which is not celebrated on a fixed day of the lunar month. In Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh it is celebrated as the three day harvest festival of **Pongal**. It is a time to give thanks to God for nature and a good harvest. In Assam it is known as **Bhogali Bihu** and in Punjab it is called **Lohri**.

To aspirants all over the world this day has a special significance. The 6 month period during which the sun travels northwards is highly favourable for aspirants for their march towards



The evening sky is awash with colourful kites of all shapes and sizes

Pongal

In South India the festival is closely connected with agriculture. Symbolically the first harvest is offered to the Almighty – and that is Pongal. During the festival the landlord distributes food, clothes and money among the labourers

MICHAELMAS REVIEW

A Summary of Last Term's Events

By Mitul Shah

MICHAELMAS is traditionally one of the busiest terms in the **CUHCS** calendar, and this year was certainly no exception.

It all kicked off with the Fresher's Squash. The excellent attendance rate, and the chilled atmosphere combined to make it the perfect opportunity to meet new friends.

Before long, it was time to celebrate Navratri in conjunction with the local Hindu community. There was energetic participation in both Garba and Dandia-Raas, followed by the serene Aarti.

Throughout the term, there were discussion forums. The topics included general debate on the

nature of religion, as well as on Dharma, Karma and reincarnation. We were fortunate in having the



Celebrating Navratri in association with the local Hindu Community

opportunity to listen to a talk by Francois Gautier, a world-class journalist, entitled 'Arise O India.' These events were most informative, and the alternative views put forward certainly helped put a different perspective on our

own ideas.

The largest event of the term was the Lakshmi Pooja and Diwali Dinner, during which attendees hungrily ate the mouthwatering homecooked food. Many thanks to Keshava for performing the Pooja.

CUHCS also launched a brand new radio venture last term. Named 'Ekta' (which means 'unity') the show on Cambridge University Radio aims to bring news, music, discussion, and entertainment from the Indian subcontinent to the students of Cambridge. The shows were great fun, and will be continued and developed in Lent.

All in all, it was a jam-packed term, with events to suit every taste. Look out for more of the same this time round.

Events This Term

DURING LENT TERM, CUHCS is proud to bring you a wide variety of events. These include films, discussion forums and, of course, the biggest cultural event in Cambridge, *MASTANA*. Here are the details:

DISCUSSION FORUMS: This term's forums promise to be topical and informative. They are very informal, and are open to all. This is a great way for both members and non-members alike to expand their knowledge, and hear alternative viewpoints. Our current timetable for this term is:

1. Are Hindus Too Passive? Tuesday 29th January, 7pm
Chapel Court Room, Sidney Sussex
2. Details to be confirmed.

Please note that details of discussion forums are subject to change, and will be confirmed by email.

ONE WORLD WEEK: CUHCS will be playing an active role in this year's One World Week. The aim of the week is to promote awareness of cultures around the world, and understand traditions different from our own. CUHCS will be holding a stall and presentations at the 'Religions of the World' fair. Details to be circulated soon by email.

KUCH KUCH HOTA HAI: When this film was released in 1998, it redefined the modern Bollywood movie, and the chance to see it on the big screen is not to be missed. It is to be shown in association with [Christ's Films](#), on Thursday 21st February at 9 pm in New Court Theatre, and will be fully subtitled. Arrive early to ensure entry. £2 will get you a raffle ticket for a prize, along with entry to the film.

MASTANA: This is our annual extravaganza of song, dance, and comedy from the Indian subcontinent. It is our flagship event, and brings an explosion of culture to Cambridge. Best of all, the money raised goes towards SEWA International, our official charity. The acts on display are of the very highest calibre, and *MASTANA* 2002 promises to be better than ever before. Tickets will go on sale shortly - watch this space! In the meantime, contact Abi Patel (ap282) or Sveta Alladi (spa24) for more information.

CUHCS ELECTIONS: These will be held at the end of term. Email Mridula Pore (mp291) for further details.

This newsletter is an open forum for all members of CUHCS, and the articles and information in it are based upon personal opinions. These do not necessarily represent the viewpoint of CUHCS on any particular issue. Hence, although we make every effort to ensure that the material is suitable, CUHCS cannot be held liable for any views expressed.