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Lent Term 2004

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Message From The President

Having recovered from the excesses of New Year's Eve and dragged yourself back to Cambridge, you're wondering how to get the most out of Lent term before the evil that is Tripos rears its ugly head after Easter. Well look no further to find the events that will spice up your term.

Lent is the climax of this committee's period in office and we are determined to go out with a bang! The term starts with 'Mother India', a classic Indian film shown in conjunction with Queen's Films, and Mastana auditions for you to show off your latent talent. Dilip Lakhani, a renowned Scholar and founder of the Vivekananda Centre will be coming to talk to us about Raja Yoga, the yoga of the mind as opposed to that of the body, often referred to as the 'true yoga'. We also have a groundbreaking interfaith dialogue with the CU Ahmaddiya Muslims, a chance to cut through the façade of supposed mutual hatred to learn about what Hindu Dharma and Islam have to offer the world. 'Chill n Chai' will combine classical Indian music with herbal Chai (tea); come and escape the tedium of essays and practicals and experience some Shanti (peace). The CUHCS AGM &

elections will give you a chance to have your say and get involved with the society; all committee posts are up for grabs. It's one of the most rewarding experiences Cambridge has to offer and you'll be organising everything from poojas to bhanga nights, nowhere else has so much variety.

Our flagship event is of course *Mastana*. Preparations for this explosion of Asian culture are well under way and this year's event promises to be the biggest ever, with more dancing, singing and comedy and that's just the presenters! The term ends with Holi, which this year includes the Kambridge Kabbadi tournament! A chance to throw colours at your mates and then wrestle them to the ground! Other unis are expected to challenge us for the Kambridge Kabbadi Crown! More details on all of our events will be sent soon by email and on the website.

Enjoy the term! I hope you have had as much fun this year with CUHCS as we have had organising it for you.

BADRI WADAWADIGI

Events This Term

FILM: "MOTHER INDIA" – In conjunction with Queens' Films. 9pm, Sun 18th Jan, Fitzpatrick Hall - Queens' College.

Mastana 2004 AUDITIONS - 1.30pm – 4pm, Sat 17th, Sun 18th, Sat 24th, Sun 25th Jan, Keynes Hall - King's College.

RAJA YOGA – A talk by Dilip Lakhani. 7.30pm, Thu 22nd Jan, Boys Smith Room (Fisher Building) - St. John's College.

HINDUISM & ISLAM: FRIENDS OR FOES? – A joint event with CU Ahmadiyya Muslim Society. 7pm, Wed 28th Jan, New Cellars - Pembroke College.

ONE WORLD WEEK: RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD FAIR – The largest interfaith event in Cambridge offers a unique opportunity to explore other religions. 7pm, Thu 12th Feb

CHILL n CHAI – 8pm Tue 17th Feb, CULanu Centre.

CUHCS AGM & ELECTIONS – 7.30pm, Mon 1st March, Dirac Room (Fisher Building) - St. John's College.

Mastana 2004 - 6pm, Sun 7th March, The Guildhall.

HOLI & KAMBRIDGE KABBADI – 2pm, Fri 12th March, Parker's Piece.

SANSKRIT WORKSHOPS – Every Friday beginning 16th Jan, Room L1, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Sidgwick Site.

Please note: Details of all events are subject to change and will be confirmed by email. Up to date information is available on the CUHCS website.

Reasons For Being Vegetarian

REASONS FOR BECOMING VEGETARIAN

Most people become vegetarian because they believe it is wrong to slaughter animals for food and are opposed to the suffering inflicted upon animals reared for their meat. The effect of meat production on the environment, such as the destruction of vast areas of rainforest for cattle ranching, is another reason commonly cited. Others may become vegetarian because of the links between meat production and famine in developing countries. The health advantages are another frequently given reason, particularly among adults. A dislike of the taste of meat and religious reasons may also be a factor.

SPIRITUAL REASONS

For every single action that we perform there is a reaction. In the Vedas it is mentioned that one who kills a cow will suffer the same fate for as many lives as there are hairs on the cow he killed. The reactions of karma equally affect those who kill, deliver, sell, prepare, cook, serve and eat the meal. Indeed all the major world religions advocate the ideals of vegetarianism:

The Annushasen Parva, Mahabharat: 'Undoubtedly all those human beings who prefer meat to several forms of food are like vultures.'

The Manusmrti: 'All supporters of meat eating are sinners.' It further states, 'One whose meat I eat will eat my flesh in the next life.'

The Christian Faith also says in Genesis (1.29) 'Behold, I have given you every herb-bearing tree in which the fruit of the tree-yielding seed, it unto you shall be for meat.'

Guru Nanak, Founder of the Sikh Faith: 'My disciples do not take meat and wine.'

Lord Buddha: 'Meat is food for sub-human beings'.

The Acharang Sutra of the Jain Faith: 'All creatures desire self-preservation, hence no creature should be slaughtered.'

HEALTH & NUTRITIONAL REASONS

Most modern killer diseases are associated with the over-consumption of fats, mainly animal derived. As early as 1961, the Journal of the American Medical Association said 90 - 97% of heart disease can be avoided by a vegetarian diet. Meat is suspected of causing a host of cancers such as stomach cancer, bowel cancer and many others. Food poisoning is also an ever-present threat. The high level of cholesterol in eggs means that they should be avoided if one wants to steer clear of heart disease. Nutritionally speaking, vegetables, fruits, nuts and grains are an excellent source of protein and are easier to assimilate than those of meat.



Grains – A Good Source of Protein



Fresh Fruit & Veg For A Balanced Diet

MORAL AND ETHICAL REASONS

In the UK alone, 800 million animals are slaughtered for food each year. Even though mankind is responsible for this, it expects peace and happiness for itself. Gandhi said the following about cow protection but the same sentiments apply to all animals: 'Cow protection to me is infinitely more than mere protection of the cow. The cow is merely a type of all that lives. Cow protection means protection of the weak, the helpless, the dumb and the deaf. Man becomes then not the lord and master of all creation, but he is its servant.' The next step in the progress of human civilisation should be the practise of respect for all living creatures.

CARNIVORE	HERBIVORE	US
Small salivary glands in the mouth (not needed to pre-digest grains and fruits)	Well developed salivary glands, needed to pre-digest grains and fruits	Well developed salivary glands, needed to pre-digest grains and fruits
Sharp, pointed front teeth to tear flesh. No flat back molar teeth	No sharp, pointed teeth. Flat back molar teeth to grind food	No sharp, pointed teeth. Flat back molar teeth to grind food
Acid saliva. No enzyme ptyalin to pre-digest grains	Alkaline saliva. Much ptyalin to pre-digest grains	Alkaline saliva. Much ptyalin to pre-digest grains
Intestinal tract only three times body length, so that rapidly decaying meat can pass out of body quickly	Intestinal tract 10-12 times body length. Fruits do not decay as rapidly as meat so can pass more slowly through body	Intestinal tract 10-12 times body length. Fruits do not decay as rapidly as meat so can pass more slowly through body

ECONOMIC REASONS

Around 10 million people are starving in the world today. Yet most of the fertile land in Europe and the USA is used to grow crops to feed animals. These are in turn consumed by human beings. This is a highly wasteful way of feeding ourselves; for example, every 16 pounds of grain fed to cattle produces only one pound of meat. It is estimated that reducing global meat production by a mere 10% would result in saving enough grain to feed the 10 million starving people throughout the world.

ANISH SHAH

Makar Sankranti – A Mouth-Watering Conviviality

Hinduism is arguably the most diverse religion of all, and the myriad ways and reasons for celebrating the same festival in different parts of India illustrate this fact as well as anything. One of the most important festivals on the Hindu Calendar, Makar Sankranti, is an excellent example. Makar stands for the constellation Capricorn and the Sankranti of a month is the day when the Sun passes into a new rashi (zodiac). The Sankranti of Makara is more auspicious because it is in the month of Magha, when the Sun passes through the winter solstice, from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn. Coincidentally, since it is a festival of the Sun, Makar Sankranti is the only Hindu festival to be celebrated on the same (English) calendar day every year.

Like most Hindu festivals, Makar Sankranti has an agricultural significance. It is a way of thanking the elements of Nature that have helped man. The festival is dedicated to Surya (Sun) and Indra (the Rain God), vital to the success of a crop season. In South India, the festival is celebrated as Pongal, a three day revelry, in North East India, as Bhogali Bihu, in Punjab as Lohri, in Gujarat as Uttarayan,

and in the rest of India, as Makar Sankranti.

Pongal, the South Indian festival, is a pompous affair in the villages. One can hardly stop admiring the ornate kolam / rangoli on the courtyards and doorsteps of houses each morning. The first day of the festival, Bhogi, is when people dispose off their old possessions, and it metaphorically represents giving up one's vices. The next day is Pongal, when paddy is reaped and pongal, a delectable preparation of rice and lentils, is offered to God. The last day, mattu pongal, is devoted to cows. The festival is concluded by visiting relatives and revelry.

In North India, a very important feature of Makar Sankranti is a ritual bath in a holy river. This is considered to wash off one's previous sins and mark a fresh and auspicious beginning to the Sankranti. A big fair is held at Triveni and Sangam in Allahabad, the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. People indulge in bajra roti (cereal) and Khichdi, a tempting dish made of rice and dal.

However, the place where the celebrations

are beyond any description is Gujarat. Makar Sankranti marks the beginning of the return of the Sun to the north and hence, is known as Uttarayan. In Gujarat, the clear blue sky and perfect weather conditions at this time of the year mean this day is celebrated as Patang Divas (Kite Flying Day). It is said that in cities like Ahmedabad and Surat, one can't see the sky as it is so full of kites, and the enthusiasm, fervour and competitiveness with which people fly their kites has to be seen to be believed. Besides kite flying, people indulge in the Gujarati culinary delicacies of this season – Undhiyo, a spicy mixed vegetable along with jalebi, a delicious sweet dish. As night arrives, youngsters struggle for the supremacy of sky and tie tukkal (paper lanterns) onto the kite strings.

Thus is celebrated Makar Sankranti in different parts of India, a unique, beautiful and scrumptious festival, showcasing religion and culture and the diversity that is so characteristic of Hinduism.

ANJAN
SOUMYANARAYANAN

Vedanta – The End Of Knowledge

The seed of the Indian thought-flow dawned from observing nature and the external world. This search eventually adjourned into an examination of the self within (our 'sat-chit-ananda'). The search of the outward thus merged into a curiosity for what lies within us all.

Vedanta is the science of self-awareness. The Upanishads are the final part of the Vedas, and that is where Vedanta incepts from. 'Veda' means knowledge and 'Anta' means the end. Therefore, Vedanta is said to be the philosophy which leads to the end of knowledge. This article aims to be a primer for the entrants into this final sphere of life.

This philosophy has undergone progressive evolution over the millennia and the Vedanta that I refer to is known as

the 'Kevala Advaita', that which does not discriminate between god and you. One of the greatest exponents of this form of Vedanta was Shri Shankaracharya. He summarised this philosophy as 'Brahma Satyam. Jagat Mithya. Jivo Brahmaiva Na Parah' (God only is real. The world is unreal. The individual is none other than God).

Vedanta tells us that the 'Self' (Brahman) which dwells in every being is one and the same with God. Every individual has the potential to realize their Godhead by the realization of Brahman. This self-realization is thus, not just a philosophy, but a direct experience, possible via meditation. It also describes the phenomenal world to not be separate

*The Self is the sun shining in the sky,
The wind blowing in space; he is the fire
At the altar and in the home the guest;
He dwells in human beings, in gods, in truth,
And in the vast firmament; he is the fish
Born in water, the plant growing in earth,
The river flowing down the mountain.
For this Self is supreme!*

(Katha Upanishad II.2.2)

from Brahman. Through the influence maya (spiritual blindness), we see the world as separate from us.

Hinduism emanates from the philosophies of the Vedic civilization. Vedanta is and shall be mainstay to this religion.

VALMIK

Michaelmas Term Review

The early Navratri festivities got last term off to a flying start with several new faces and many old ones joining the local community in celebrating garba. The beginning of the academic year always includes the hubbub of the fresher's fair and squash, where we were glad to welcome so many of you to the society.

'Bollywood Academy – the Rivals', our very own reality video night, presented by our comedy duo Anj & Bad, featured the modern epic 'Asoka'.

The Diwali Pooja and Dinner began with Pia's soulful voice, which set the scene for an uplifting evening of worship and

feasting. Raghu led the pooja with his characteristic wit and we are grateful for his explanations of the significance of the ritual.

This was followed by 'The Epics On Trial', an experimental debate on some of the best known and loved Hindu tales. It was great to see so many of you getting into the spirit of the debate and putting forward your views so keenly and learning together. Highlights included a proof of the non-existence of god and Anjan singing in Sanskrit! We had a huge positive response for this event, so look out for our intellectual events this term that promise to be just as interesting.

The term ended with a taster of what is to come with the MASTANA 2004 LAUNCH. The Launch included an impromptu performance of a Punjabi folk dance, as well as the committee act from Mastana 2003. We were swamped with applications for the Mastana Committee this year, with over three applicants per place. If you weren't lucky enough to make it onto the committee, then there are still plenty of ways to still get involved in Mastana, auditions are very soon and are a great way to meet people and learn something new. Do book a slot even if you are unsure of your ability. I remember not knowing the meaning of the word Bhanga before coming to Cambridge...



Diwali Dinner

Throughout the term, our weekly lessons in spoken Sanskrit continued. At these classes, those attending learned all about its history, grammar, interpretation and cultural impact. The lectures were conducted by one of the foremost Sanskrit scholars in Europe, Dr. H.V.S. Shastry, with his very unique fun filled teaching style. The first lecture was packed with amusing anecdotes - everything from how to make an alphabet using only chapattis and chutney to the distinctive aroma produced by a burning mango tree! Look out for more of the same this term, and the flexible nature of the course means that the content and pace of the lectures is set almost entirely by those attending.

MITUL KANZARIA



Diwali Pooja

The C U Hindu Cultural Society Committee 2003-2004

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(Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you have comments, queries or suggestions)

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