



HINDU CULTURAL CENTRE OF LONDON ONTARIO

62 Charterhouse Crescent, N5W 5V5, London, Ontario
(<http://www.hcclondon.ca>)

Board of HCC

President: Mrs. Prema Patil 680 1623
V-President: Mr. Chetram Singh 657 2119
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Treasurer: Dr. R. Harricharan 473 5715
Asst. Sec./Treasurer: Mrs. Kala Prasad 685 3345

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Mrs. Raj Gupta 472 1593
Mr. Narinder Kundra 633 1901
Mr. Tara Persaud 686 4905
Dr. Arun Prakash 474 2050
Dr. S. P. Singh 672 7540
Mr. P. C. Sircar 667 0939

NEWSLETTER

February 2004

MANDIR HOURS

Monday to Friday

8:00 am – 11:00 am and 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Saturday

Subh Prabhatam and Vishnu Sahastranama.
9:00 am – 11:00 am

Sunday

10:00 am – 1:00 pm. Arti to begin at noon.

Havan is performed on the first Sunday of the month. Sri Satya Narayan Katha is said every month on the day of Purnamashi.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT. On behalf of the Board, I wish you a very happy and prosperous 2004. It has been a great personal privilege to serve this great Hindu Community of South Western Ontario. The centre has been very active during the past year with the help of many volunteers and I sincerely thank them for their efforts. Each Board committee has functioned well and have produced good results. Decisions have all been made in a democratic manner with input from all elected Board members. When we assumed office in April 2003, we promised the community transparency in administration and involvement in management and I believe that, so far, we are fulfilling both. We are currently addressing the threat of litigation by an ex-employee of the Centre and we will keep you informed as developments occur in this matter. With the grace and

guidance of Lord Vishnu, it is safe to say that the Centre is making slow but steady progress.

Prema Patil, President.

DIWALI DINNER & CULTURAL SHOW. The Diwali Dinner and Cultural show, organized by the Festivals Committee of the Board at the John Paul Secondary School on November 15, 2003, was a resounding success. The very large audience was served with a sumptuous meal that was followed by a very entertaining Cultural Program. It began with performances by the children of HCC that included classical dances and a fashion show that were very well received. Then the famous husband and wife singing team, Afzal and Moonie Subhani from Toronto, accompanied by a talented musician from the Bollywood film industry initiated their program with a Bhajan, then entertained the massive audience with all types of current and old songs and took requests from the audience. The only complaint received from the gathering was that the program should have gone on much longer, since they were really enjoying themselves. The Board of HCC would like to thank the members of the Festivals Committee for putting on such a classy function. A number of individuals contributed both in money and in their labour to the success of this venture and HCC is grateful to them.

NEW YEAR'S DAY CELEBRATION. On January 01, 2004, Mr. Kishan Dhir and Dr. Suman Dhir organized the anniversary poojah of Lord Krishna on a grand scale. The event was very well attended. May Lord Krishna continue to bless the Dhir Family with good health and happiness.

REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION. India's 54th Republic Day was celebrated a day earlier in our temple on January 25, 2004. The function included patriotic songs by the some members of HCC. The program concluded with the India's national anthem that was sung by our children of the Bal Vikas Class. On this occasion, the Hindu Students Association (HSA) of the University of Western Ontario cooked and served the preeti bhoj. Every one enjoyed: daal-chawal, aalu-poori, and halwah made by the students in the morning in the kitchen of the temple. The event was very well attended.

UPCOMING EVENTS. The following festivals will be celebrated in our mandir.

Maha Shiva Ratri – February 18, 2004, 8:00 pm – 4:00 am.
Raas Garba – March 13, 2004, 8:00 pm – 11:00 pm.
Ram Navami – March 29, 2004, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon.
Sunder Kand Patth.
Holi – March 7, 2004, Cultural Program at 11:00 am. Holi will be celebrated after the preeti bhoj in the auditorium of the temple.
Mata-ki-Chowki – March 27, 2004, 7:00 pm – Midnight

PREETI BHOJ. This is a privilege that a member and his/her family has to provide preeti bhoj at the mandir. The family sponsoring it and their friends get the opportunity to cook and serve the food to the community members, who enjoy it in the form of "*Prasad from the Thakurji*". The Board of HCC thanks the following families and the group for their efforts and commitment in providing preeti bhoj.

January 18, 2004 – Dr. R. Harricharan and Mr. T. Persaud and their families.
February 29, 2004 – Dr. B Surti and Mr. Brij Saxena and their families.
April 11, 2004 – Dr. Merchea and family.
May 9, 2004 – Mr. Krishna Patil & Mr. Chetram Singh and their families.
May 2, 2004 – Shri Bala ji devotees.

There is preeti bhoj at the Mandir every Sunday. Also, many Sundays have been booked by anonymous members. Any member wishing to provide a preeti bhoj, to have a pooja in the temple, or to change the clothes of the murties, should contact: **Mr. Narinder Kundra (633 1901)** or **Mrs. Raj Gupta (472 1593).**

The Board of HCC gratefully acknowledges the efforts of those members who come early and regularly on Sunday mornings to help to prepare the food. They are: Mrs. Shashi Bawa, Mrs. Kanta Bhutani, Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Sharma, Mrs. Sudesh Arora, Mrs. Suman Sharma, Mrs. Suman Singh, Mr. and Mrs. B. Jajal, Mr. G. Trikha and others.

On February 13, 2004, there will be cleaning at the temple on a very large scale. The volunteers will be working from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Please drop by at your convenient time and contribute to this very worthy cause.

2004 CALENDERS. The Board has published a Calendar of Events for the 2004 calendar year. These are available from the Mandir at two dollars each. Please get yours early since we have only printed 300 copies.

RECRUITMENT OF PRIEST. The Board has spent over seven months looking for a well qualified and experienced priest to fill the existing vacancy at the Mandir. Applications were received from five priests, three of whom live outside of Canada. Immigration regulations require that the position must be advertised locally to give Canadian citizens the first opportunity to apply for this position. The position was advertised in the London Free Press of November 4 & 5, 2003 and applications were received from two priests who are living in Canada, both of whom are very well qualified for the position. The Board offered the position to Dr. Mohan Lal Mishra from Toronto. He is given until January 31, 2003 to let the Board know whether he will accept the position. We will keep the community informed of the progress in this matter.

ALLEGATIONS OF WRONGFUL DISMISSAL BY MR. RAJINDER MOHLA. On November 14, 2003, the Board received a letter from a lawyer representing Mr. Rajinder Mohla. The letter claims inter alia: "Rajinder has two concerns: firstly an appropriate financial package in lieu of notice and secondly some assurance that you (President) and the entire management committee at the HCC immediately cease and desist from making further defamatory statements about him to members of the community".

Mr. Mohla has authorized his lawyer to offer to settle this matter on the following terms.

- a). An immediate lump sum payment in the amount of \$13,800(6 months' notice)
- b). Payment of \$ 5,000 for moving expenses
- c). A payment of \$2,500 to be paid towards legal fees. Mr. Mohla's lawyer has also requested that Rajinder be provided a reference letter, in a form to be approved by him and/or his legal counsel.

This information is provided to the members of HCC since any payments made to Mr. Mohla would have to come from funds generated from you the members, for operating our temple and since this is your money, you should be aware of the facts. The Board has consulted a legal firm and will be acting on the advice of the lawyers.

THE ENCASUREMENT AROUND THE SHIVA LINGAM. A member of the congregation has drawn the Board's attention to the fact that the metal enclosure placed around the Shiva Lingam to prevent spillage is not consistent with the provisions of the Hindu Shashtras. The Board has consulted two North Indian and two South Indian Pundits in Toronto and also Dr. Mohan Mishra all of whom agree that the metal object around the Lingam is in contravention of the Hindu Scriptures. As a result, the Board plans to remove it and replace it with plexi-glass to prevent spillage. Any member of the community who has any objections to the plexi-glass being substituted for the metal enclosure is asked to contact the President or Secretary within the next two weeks and provide justification for maintaining the status quo. If no objections

are received within the next two weeks, the metal enclosure will be removed.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. The annual general meeting has been called on March 28, 2004. It will begin at 11:00 am in the temple. Terms of three current Board Members expire on March the 31st. Hence, there will be three vacancies on the Board for a 3 years term each, to be filled at the Annual General meeting. Dr. Rahul Manchanda has kindly consented to be the returning officer. In order to have an efficient and well run election process, the Board will appreciate if nominations for the three vacancies are sent to Dr. Manchanda before March 25, 2004 at the following address.

Dr. Rahul Manchanda
19 Woods Edge Close
London, Ontario N6K 4K8

For your convenience the nomination forms are attached with this newsletter. Sending nomination by March 25 2004 will allow the returning officer to pre plan for the elections and avoid any last minute confusion on the election day. It should be noted that this meeting is called for very specific purposes and only the members of HCC in good standing are permitted to attend and participate. Reports from the President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Trustees will be presented to the members. The outgoing office bearers of the Board will answer questions pertaining to the presentations made in the meeting regarding their stewardships during the year. If a member wishes to introduce a motion (or resolution), the member is asked to submit the motion, duly proposed and seconded, on or before March 15, 2004 to the secretary of the Board so that it can be included on the agenda of the Annual General Meeting, which will be pre-circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

The floor will then be handed over to the returning officer to conduct the election, which will be held in two stages. In the first stage, the three vacancies will be filled. The second stage will deal with the election of the office bearers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Assistant Secretary / Treasurer, from the elected members of the 2004-2005 Board.

We all realize the importance of this meeting. Therefore, the Board urges each member of HCC to make special effort to attend this meeting as it sets the future direction of the Centre.

PUBLICATION OF JAGRITI. The HCC will publish the spring issue of this magazine and urges the members to contribute articles related to Hindu way of life. The editorial board comprises: Dr. Asha Bhardwaj (Chair), Dr. Dev Sainani, Dr. Vipin Bhyana, and Dr. Anand V. Singh. Members of HCC, the Youths of our community and UWO Hindu Students are asked to submit articles on Hinduism, Hindu Religion in Canada and the Western World, and other related topics. The contents must be positive in tone, non-critical of other race and religion, non-defamatory, non-inflammatory and free from solicitation. The article should be

submitted electronically using MS-WORD as soon as possible to Dr. Sainani at dsainani@rogers.com. The articles will be reviewed prior to being accepted for publication and the authors may be asked to revise the manuscript.

REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION. Since this new Board was elected, its Constitution and Bylaws Committee has been reviewing the existing Constitution & Bylaws. This was treated as a priority because different people have put different interpretations to different aspects of the constitution over a period of time. This Board wanted to ensure that the Constitution was clear enough that it could not be interpreted in several ways. We were fortunate to obtain the gratuitous services of an experienced constitutional lawyer Mr. Harry Ramkhelawan, who, after reviewing our existing constitution, advised us that the entire constitution should be re-written. He volunteered his services on the committee that comprised Mr. Chetram Singh (Chairperson), Dr. Harish Puearelia, Mr. P. Bhandarkar, Dr. Mohan Merchea, Dr. Anand Singh and Mr. Harry Ramkhelawan (the lawyer). The committee has been meeting monthly over the last seven months and has now prepared a draft Revised Constitution that has been handed to the Board. After the Board has reviewed it, a copy will be sent to every financial member and enough time will be provided to him or her to study the document carefully. A general body meeting would then be convened to receive input from members and to approve the new Constitution.

MAINTENANCE OF THE TEMPLE. Our temple is in urgent need of repairs. The maintenance related jobs that need to be done are: cleaning of the carpet in the prayer hall, a good cleaning of the kitchen, flat portion of the roof may need a very careful look in the summer, the heating and air conditioning unit has not been serviced in the last few years, painting of the entire property, plumbing, proper grading of the land around the new building and so on. Then, there are ongoing works of maintaining the lawn in the summer and clearing the snow in the winter. In December, the following notes, categorised as Building Code Deficiency, were received from the building division of the City of London.

1. Steps serving front entrance to have uniform rise max 7 and 7/8 inches.
2. Guard required at the porch or the distance between porch and grade to be less than 24 inches.

The above deficiencies have to be corrected as soon as possible. In the spring, we shall be undertaking the above tasks on a big scale and asking support from the members. In the mean time, problems are fixed as they appear.

The heating system for the prayer hall failed during the month of January. The motor in the heating system broke down. The regular temple activities continued without the heat in the prayer hall. Attempts were made to warm up the place with small heaters, but the circuits were unable to hold the heaters. The Board deeply felt the inconveniences our members had during those days. It was also very heart warming for the Board to find that the members made no complaints and took it as if business was as usual. Thank you.

AWIC – London Chapter. Association of Women of India in Canada will be holding a meeting on Saturday, April 17th 2004 from 2.30pm – 4.50pm in the Masonville Branch Library, Sam Neill Room, 30 North Centre Road (opposite Zellers) London.

The guest speaker Ms. Heather MacLean-Meek, Social Worker, BSW, RSW, St Joseph's Health Care London will speak on: “*Support Services for Seniors* - information, guidance, living options, Community Care Access Centre of London, and support for family and caregivers. “
All are welcome.

For Information about AWIC, AWIC events, and AWIC membership please contact:

Mrs. Santosh Bhardwaj (President) – 652-9026
Mrs. Sudesh Arora (Vice-President) – 652-6914

The Ramacharitamans of Goswami Tulasidas

By Usha Tripathi

The Ramacharitamans, ‘The holy lake of Ram’s deeds’, the story of Ram and Sita is a source of religious inspiration. The story is familiar through readings, re-enactments, plays, films and works of art that depict scenes from the epic. This great epic of Hinduism, offers in the character of Lord Ram a model for the ideal Hindu life.

Tulasidas’s epic was written some four hundred years ago in the Avadhi dialect of Hindi belonging to the region around Ayodhya. He quite deliberately wrote in this language so that his work could reach as wide an audience as possible and thus bring benefit to all. Its theme is taken from the two great Sanskrit epics, the Valmiki and the Adhyatama Ramayan. The Ramacharitamans is divided into the following seven parts or kandas:

1. Bala kanda, 2. Ayodhya kanda, 3. Aranya kanda,
4. Kishkindha kanda, 5. Sundar kanda, 6. Lanka kanda (or Yuddha kanda) and 7. Uttara kanda.

The story begins with the birth of Ram and his three brothers Lakshman, Bharat, and Shatrughan. Its hero Ram, prince of the Suryavansha ‘the solar race’ is the embodiment of virtue (dharma). Through the machinations of a jealous step-mother he is sent into exile just when his father Dashrath was about to crown him as the King of Ayodhya. In order to save his father from breaking his vow, he goes into the forest with his wife Sita and younger brother Lakshman. There he fights many of the Rakshas (demons), whose King Ravan eager for revenge, abducts Sita and imprisons her in his palace in Lanka. Ram and Lakshman, aided by the monkeys led by Hanuman, build a bridge across the ocean and rescue Sita. Ram, having finally defeated Ravan in single combat, returns in triumph to Ayodhya accompanied by Sita and Lakshman and is made the King of Ayodhya.

The story is not told as a continuous narrative, rather it is presented as episodes, as a series of separate experiences each with its own length and character. The combination of Chaupais, doha, sorathas, chhandas add greatly to the beauty of the work. The poet is equally at home in quiet narrative in the tender relationships between parents and children, between brothers, and between husband and wife.

The Ramacharitamans is very much more than the retelling of a popular traditional story. As a literary work, it is of considerable aesthetic value, however it is encountered - whether by reading it, hearing it recited, or through the visuals during the Ramlilas. As a Dharmagranth, it constantly exemplifies and emphasises the finest ethical, devotional, and spiritual values of Hinduism. It provides a religious experience of very high order.

The recitation of Ramacharitamans is popular in North India. It is sung with devotion and reverence. It constantly supports the principles, standards, beliefs, and social structure of classical Hinduism and highlights the ideal relationship that should be held between the members of a family.

Tulasidas created a work of great power that is complete in the experience it offers to all who enter it. It is the drama of Ram, of God himself incarnated into the world struggling to overcome evil in the form of the demon Ravan establishing righteousness on earth. Ram, the lord, loves the whole of his creation, demons, humans, gods, and everyone, the devotees of Ram who love him as their lord according to their own particular nature.

Both as a poet and as a religious thinker Tulasidas occupies a high position in the literary and cultural history of India. He has been able to give the highest truths of religion and philosophy in a charming, graceful, and plain language. His concern is to direct the reader’s attention to Ram’s greatness and goodness. The audience at a Ramlila have little doubt that they are witnessing the drama of the struggle of good and evil - and the triumph of good. The Lord in his incarnation as Ram came to conquer evil as symbolised in Ravan and to re-establish righteousness on earth as symbolised by Ram Raj. The saviour God symbolism could be said to be the central structure of the Ramacharitamans. Tulasidas through the Ramacharitamans made available to a large section of society in India an embodiment of the great tradition. This accounts in part for its widely spread popularity.

