



Khayyaal

June 2011

President's Message

MALTI BIPIN VAGHELA

In coming issues, Khayaal aims to address some key areas in Indian culture and politics, whilst highlighting and celebrating the work of our peers. In doing so it aspires to strengthen the connections of our members with their roots, ensuring they leave Cambridge with a wider outlook and understanding of the world, and of our nation. Coupled with future events, this magazine allows this expression of opinion, debate and networking, which endeavours to inspire the leaders of our future.

Throughout history, Cambridge University has produced some of the most inspiring Indians of our age, including Sir Dorabji Tata (1877-79); world renowned mathematician and child prodigy, Srinivasa Ramanujan (1913-18), the second Indian to be elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society; Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh (1955-57); Nobel Laureates Amartya Sen (1957-63), previous Master of Trinity College.

With its foundations tied to Nehru's time at Trinity College in 1907-10, a society was founded as a platform to inspire learning, provoke debate and incite creative thinking, alongside building a strong community and understanding of Indian culture and heritage. The Society has responded to a changing nation, addressing important issues and events over the last century ranging from the Independence of the country, to its delicate but intricate political environment. In present times, we have already acted quickly to raise awareness of social issues in the 'India Against Corruption' campaign, and will strive to follow other such events in the future. The society is here to voice your opinions and I would strongly urge you all to get involved.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

From Your President IndiaSoc - responding to a changing nation	1
Editor's Note The seed, substance and stance of Khayaal	2
A Voice from the Past Jai Chitnavis, IndiaSoc President in 1984, reminisces.	3
Being Cambrindian!! "..make a difference where it counts." says Nitish Mehta	5

Upcoming

Masti

Our annual garden party
Thursday 23rd June 5-9pm
Sidney Sussex Fellows Garden

India Soc vs. SL Soc Cricket

Relive the glory of this year's World Cup final. Join in with the match or come and show your support
Sunday 19th June, 10am
Fitz Sports Grounds

*KHAYAAL is also published online as a blog.
Please visit <http://cuindiasoc.wordpress.com/>
to give us your feedback.*

Editor's Note

APOORVA RUKMANI JAYARAMAN

Welcome to Khayaal, the new monthly magazine of Cambridge University India Society.

THE SEED

A curious thought has often occurred to me – what would the contemporaries of Nehru at Cambridge have thought of him? Did fellow Indians have much of a chance to be in his company, did they allow themselves the leisure to be influenced, not necessarily by his ideas, but purely by his zealous passion for life? Or was this the privilege only of a select few?

It was this idea that drew me irresistibly to the India Society, one of the less focal lasting products of Nehru's vision, as a device that could facilitate crucial and priceless interaction between exceptional talent in the Cambridge Indian student community. It is rare that one would have the opportunity to be touched by greatness in its fiery and formative years, and I would consider my time as a Cambridge student quite incomplete if I were to pass over the experiences of warming up to the vibrant minds around me, several of whom are likely to become key players in India's future. Many of you may feel the same way.

While inescapable charm could be the trademark of the 'greatness' in some, for others, their true worth

could be solely manifest in their work. So then, what happens when our various fields or interests don't cross paths? How does one discover the mad scientist huddled away in labs or the eccentric writer prowling the streets of picture-perfect Cambridge? One is again left in the unlucky position of missing a gem in the woods.

Khayaal will be your avenue to discover those closet intellectuals. Khayaal will be a space where you can communicate the passion you invest in your work or simply give expression to the ephemeral and wonderful. Through Khayaal, India Society will be bringing great minds and thoughts literally to your doorstep.

THE SUBSTANCE

Khayaal will strive to be a space of words, that can capture a fleeting glimpse of the thoughts, aspirations, ideals and passions that propel the young Indian minds at Cambridge University. In our vision, it should

- capture in its pages a reflection of the collective energy, the promise and the failures, the depth and the mirages, of the so-called cream of a generation of Indians

- celebrate through its efforts the artistic, activist, revolutionary vibes of its members

- chronicle the history of what has now the distinction of being a community in its own right – of Indians at Cambridge University, and,

- be a platform that engages our minds outside the bounds of lecture

theatres and academic books, without being peevisish, apologetic or shy of doing so.

THE STANCE

- MAKING SERIOUS 'COOL'

It seems to be a natural repercussion of our undergraduate years to shroud our 'serious, meaningful' side in a timid allegiance to the cool and acceptable! Hopefully Khayaal can break the stereotype, if it exists, by flaunting serious, intelligent, daring, innovative to be the Cambridge "cool".

In this first issue of Khayaal, we bring to you interesting past and present perspectives on the purpose and activities of India Society.

THOSE WHO HAVE MADE KHAYAAL A REALITY

I must acknowledge Ragini Madan (Economist, Wolfson College) and former Grad Liaison Officer of IndiaSoc – our enthusiastic discussions and child-like idealism (often naively over-ambitious) laid the seed for Khayaal. I personally thank Archi Srini (Medic, Murray Edwards College) for her support and endorsement as a trusted critic. Most importantly, I must thank the current President of IndiaSoc, Malti (Physicist, Queens College), for the immense support she has lent to this venture, both in spirit and in action, and has in fact propelled what was an abstract existence in the minds of a few, into tangible reality.

A Voice from the Past

How Cambridge and The India Society changed my life

JAI CHITNAVIS

Late September 1982. Mother and younger brother dropped me off on the roundabout outside leafy Jesus Lane. My first day at Cambridge. My last day at home. By the time I reached my coffin-like room in New Court, Christ's College, the lump in my throat was getting smaller. Welcome to Cambridge young man!

Radio 1 that week couldn't stop playing 'Zoom' by Fat Larry's Band. It had been a challenging year. Whilst I had been completing A levels, the UK had been at war recovering the Falkland Islands from Argentina. Margaret Thatcher ruled Britain and Indira Gandhi ran India. Another iconic lady, Princess Diana, had just given birth to William, the future Duke of Cambridge.

Born in India, I had spent 10 years in England nurtured by a small and close family. Any pride associated with getting here evaporated upon meeting other students. And it has never returned. Cambridge is like that isn't it? A humbling place for us all.

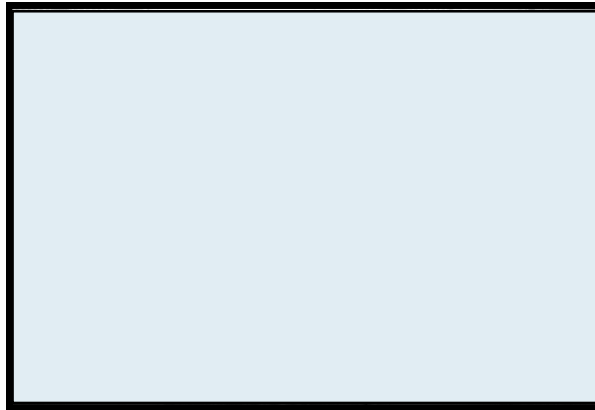
I found my medical studies challenging. Surfacing for air after a month locked in my room, it was good to make friends. Inevitably many were Indians like myself, with a history of life in this country. Outside lectures and practicals, mixing biochemicals and dissecting cadavers, they became my lifeline. By the Diwali Dinner, most of us had discovered the India Society. For many, it became a sort of home from home. We knew that past members had included prominent Indians such as Jawaharlal Nehru. But what brought us together most was fraternity and food!

The membership had two species.

'Indian Indians' and 'British Indians'. The former knew themselves quite well. The latter, perhaps not so clearly. The former sought to connect with England as it was then; the latter were more interested with India's

First task was to organise a committee. No shortage of talent. Much debate about how to choose. Whilst I and key members had won by a vote, other posts were up for grabs. Some wanted to compete with speeches.

My decision to select autocratically was not approved by all. A close friend has still not forgiven me for excluding him! Presidency had its price. Yet, those eventually assembled, and with whom I had the great privilege of working that year, were truly remarkable. Not sure I have ever since been part of such a talented team. Bright, articulate and enterprising, they now occupy senior positions in their chosen fields around the Globe.



Jai Chitnavis (third from right) and other members of the India Society Committee of 1984 with Late Shri T N Kaul, at Christ's College.

past and what they had lost or never had. Inevitably, there were differences but these were not significant. Having returned to Bombay (Mumbai) frequently since arriving in Britain, I fell somewhere between these groups. An Indian, growing up in England. As time passed, I became more involved with the India Society and by the end of the second year, became President.

“...we were by modern standards quite Neolithic. Most communications were done by hand or typewriter, then photocopied and hand-delivered.

No Google. No texts.

Fresher's Fair at Kelsey Kerridge, October 1984. Many new members joined amidst the crowded chaos of the day. Prince Edward (Jesus) walked by but did not take the bait! Can still recall seeing one pretty and smiling face signing up. Name? College? Studying what? Won't forget her easily....

1st November 1984. Woke to Radio 4 announcing the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Ignored medical sciences for the next few days. The India Society and its President were expected to respond. We organised a meeting which was very well attended. Tensions were high amidst the developing and unforgivable loss of life in India and abroad. A letter of sympathy was quickly despatched. My friends in The Sikh Society, whose meetings I used to attend, were inevitably saddened as were we all. Friendship was maintained amongst our student bodies even if contact was reduced for a while.

What else happened that year? We had the pleasure of inviting Mark Tully, then BBC India correspondent, to come and speak about his love for the Subcontinent. Philip Ziegler, biographer of Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, followed. The late TN Kaul, former Indian Foreign Secretary and deputy High Commissioner to Britain, also kindly came to talk to The Society. The committee used to 'reward' these guests with dinner in local restaurants which to us *then* seemed acceptable. Not sure I would feel that way now! I remember being startled when the last of these guests asked if he could tape our conversation over dinner. What was that all about? Secret service perhaps! Our itinerary extended to a scintillating Bharatanatyam evening with Shobana Jeyasingh, a talented dancer, who now runs a dance company. We included film nights focussing on Indian directors. Satyajit Ray's *'Charulata'* and other oldies were obtained as heavy film reels which I obtained by travelling to London, and back, by bus. *Twice*. Per film! How I would have appreciated today's computerised imaging technology...Indeed, whilst CUIS now uses email and mobile phone, we were by modern standards quite Neolithic. Most communications were done by hand or typewriter, then photocopied and hand-delivered. No Google. No texts. A lot of effort, yes but I suppose for me there was the joy of walking through one of the World's most beautiful universities. Physical, not virtual.

After the last of our garden parties in June, my time with 'Indiasoc' had come to an end. Our fairytale existence in Cambridge was replaced for me by the grimy clamour of the London Underground and Medical School. Eventually, I qualified as a doctor and then went on to surgical apprenticeship first in London and then in Oxford where I trained to become an Orthopaedic Surgeon and also did my Masters Thesis. Somewhere in between, I persuaded that pretty girl I first met at that CUIS stall at Kelsey Kerridge to marry me! In 2002, I was offered a post as a Consultant Surgeon in Cambridge and have lived and

worked here ever since. Indeed, I have returned to my roots and will soon commence the part-time teaching and learning of Anatomy at the Downing Site.

I am delighted to see that the India Society is still thriving. Looking back, today's members seem as wonderful as those I knew then. Perhaps things are less formal now. Certainly, the undergraduates seem more confident, self-aware and informed. Times have changed. Then, India was viewed as a Third World State. Despite widespread poverty and inequality, perceptions today are different and the future for the Land of the Tiger is perceived to be much stronger and richer. Then, India and Britain felt different; today to me they seem more similar. Indian, British what does it matter? Perhaps we have forgotten how closely linked we have been and for how long. I learned recently, for example, that the fabulous Staffordshire Hoard, comprising embossed and golden 7th Century artefacts, contains red garnet stone – mined in India. Trans-global trade preceding the East India Company by a millennium!

Is there anything I have learned from my time in Cambridge? Perhaps. Hindsight can be inaccurate and advice vicarious but here goes.

Firstly, for those of you who are young and fortunate enough to be studying here, ENJOY IT! These are some of your best years. It could all be down hill from now! That means don't spend all your time studying. Whatever your tastes, there is so much to do. Be confident. There is no doubt that, with application, you will succeed - even with a Third. No matter if you do not excel despite aiming high. Get over it. Life is about recurrent failure and success. Cambridge can be stressful. Indeed, two contemporaries from my College took their lives whilst studying here. Please don't join them. Get help.

Secondly, find out something about this University and Town. The World is in awe of the place and with good reason. You are sure to be asked about your years at University and it

would be better to be acquainted with its history. Also, glean what you can from your Tutors and contemporaries be that academic, social or cultural. Learn from them. Improve. There is a wealth of experience waiting to enrich you. It might seem implausible now but many of you will become leaders in your chosen fields. The years here will foster balance, judgement and responsibility. You can and may change the World for the better. Try.

Thirdly, make friends. You might never again be part of such a talented bunch of people. Some of them will stay with you for the rest of your life, whether you marry them or not!



JAI CHITNAVIS is a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon in Cambridge UK. He studied medicine at Christ's College, Cambridge. He was thereafter a clinical student at Charing Cross and Westminster Hospital, London. He completed a Master of Surgery Thesis in Oxford which investigated the causes and presentation of severe osteoarthritis of the hip and knee. He is now in Independent Practice in Cambridge where he manages The Cambridge Knee Clinic.

For more about Jai see <http://www.jai-chitnavis.co.uk/>

Jai Chitnavis was the President of Cambridge University India Society during 1984-85.

Being Cambrindian!!

NITISH MEHTA



**Jawaharlal Nehru
At Harrow**
(Photo Courtesy Internet)

On agreeing to write this article, I was given a few words on which to choose a subject on. These were 'India' obviously, 'Cambridge' and 'History'. I thought long and hard about what I could possibly write to link all these three buzzwords together, whilst still keeping it somewhat interesting! After deliberating, I realised that there was one very obvious and very fitting subject I was missing- that of a Cambridge educated history-writing man, the first and most long serving Prime Minister of India to date, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Nehru arrived in England, at the tender age of 15 at Dover in 1905, and boarded a train into London, where he was to spend his first two years in western education at the elite Harrow College. There weren't many fellow international students, particularly from India, and so it's a point of plainness that it was hard for him to get by alone, in an entirely new world. He recalled, 'Never before had I been left among strangers all by myself, and I felt lonely and homesick.' However Nehru quickly fit in to place with his fellow students, and after a slow academic start he pushed his way to being among the elite of the elite. This transpired into acceptance into Cambridge University, aged only 17, to read Natural Sciences at Trinity College. Arriving there, he lustily extolled that the room he'd got in Whewell's Court was probably amongst 'the rottenest rooms in the whole college.'

Amongst making the most of the aesthetic side of University (though there was no Soul Tree then), it was at Cambridge that the deep thinking took off, and the intellectual ideas really developed for Nehru. Young Jawaharlal soon established a deep and serious interest in Indian politics, reading about the struggles back home that had led to centuries of persistent unrest and distress. The Indian nationalist movement also grew more embedded within him,

and the socialist aims he so successfully and revolutionarily brought to

"Our chief defect is that we are more given to talking about things than to doing them."

Jawaharlal Nehru

India later in life were conceived. Such was the influence that the University had on Nehru- a really important fact for those who comprehend the genius he brought back to India.

The Indians in Cambridge had a society called the 'Majlis,' perhaps the discounted equivalent of today's India Society. They addressed the problems faced in India through debate and conversation, but Nehru never perceived the society to have been effective in a wider sense and was irritated by their joking manner. In his autobiography, 'Towards Freedom,' he says "more effort was spent in copying parliamentary and the University Union style and mannerism that in grappling with the subject," and this perhaps indicates why he instigated this very student society, the India Society. This connection with India would have been undoubtedly instrumental in motivating him to serve his nation in such an illustrious and unforgettable way. Nehru accomplished much in his life, lots of

which could be related directly to his education in England. Looking back on some of his policies as PM, things like rural planning, mixed control of the economy, and even the very bedrock of his ideology- socialism, were all notions taken from the front-running philosophy in the UK then.

The first prime minister had benefitted from the best of both worlds, just like the opportunity we've been blessed with. He developed the British culture and etiquette whilst at school, having experienced the riches of the Indian culture whilst younger, and then advanced his interest in politics, and gathered his thoughts, morals and opinions whilst at Cambridge. The next stage in the process to success for him, and for all of us to consider, is the application of that vision and that knowledge to the greater good to make a difference where it counts.

Nehru was able to implement his vision through his activity in negotiating India's independence, and in securing self-development and a world role for the nation alongside the great Mohandas Gandhi. He was the architect of the ideas of the same Congress that pushes India forward, to the very forefront of global politics today. Two other notable Cambridge graduates who have more recently applied their knowledge in the same way are Nehru's late grandson, Rajiv Gandhi, and the current PM, Dr Manmohan Singh. Rahul Gandhi, the next generation in Congress Party leadership is also an alumnus of the University. My point however isn't constrained to Indian national politics- people like Stephen Hawking, Oliver Cromwell, and even Mike Atherton illustrate it

equally well- let us make the most of the opportunities we've been so lucky



NITISH MEHTA is a second year Economics student at Churchill College. He was the President of the Cambridge University Hindu Cultural Society for the year 2010-11. His fundamental interests include religion and culture, sports and film, social sciences and business.

to have, not just for ourselves, but for all of those who haven't had that opportunity.

The India Society has only loosely been documented as being the brainchild of Nehru, but what it has brought to Indians and interested students and scholars alike through the years has been perhaps unrivalled - a connection with the land from where we originate, a medium through which we unite, a society through which we can celebrate our unique culture, our rich heritage, and our magnificent history. To think that this was largely made possible, in more than one way through Jawahar-

-lal Nehru, an Indian Cambridge graduate makes me, at least, feel privileged and proud to be a Cambrindian! •

FOR THE E-VERSION OF KHAYAAL VISIT

[HTTP://CUINDIASOC.WORDPRESS.COM/](http://CUINDIASOC.WORDPRESS.COM/)

Your feedback and comments will be most welcome.

WRITING FOR KHAYAAL

If you would like to write for **Khayaal** please contact the editorial team at aj328@cam.ac.uk. **Khayaal** welcomes articles from graduate and undergraduate students alike, with subjects which could range from your research to your opinion on current affairs in India, or which explore your dreams, aspirations or vision.

FEATURED PROFILES

Khayaal would also like to hear of any recent achievements or special news of its members—if you have won an award recently, if you have contributed to any special project, if you have published a seminal paper as part of your graduate research, we would like to feature your profile in our upcoming issue to share the news with the IndiaSoc community.