

# OM Newsletter for 2008-2009

Carnegie Mellon University's OM:  
The Spiritual Organization for Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs



## Presidential Note

Written by: Sudeep Yegnashankaran

OM saw a remarkable increase in its major event attendance this year. Navratri went from under 300 to over 360, Spring Garba from 200 to 260, and Holi from 300 to 400. This has been record-shattering growth by any standards. It is clear from these numbers that OM is well on its way to becoming a major part of the CMU community.

In addition to OM's large, established offerings, the Board pushed ahead by hosting some new, thought-provoking events, including the CRY Walk, Unity of Faiths, and a lecture on religious prophecies from one of the OM founders, Rajit Patel.

Another great trend this year was increased General Body involvement in our major events. The volunteers involved with the Navratri, Spring Garba, and Holi committees were all enthusiastic and instrumental in the success of these events. To all those who helped out, thank you for your hard work!

One of the main goals of the Board this year was to better define and

establish the way OM is run. This was achieved in two ways. First, a series of amendments were passed in January in order to facilitate the Board in updating and maintaining OM's constitution more regularly. Second, the Board has created an internal Wiki to help better streamline event planning. With these two changes, the Board hopes both to improve existing events and to create new ones.

All in all it has been an exciting year for OM, both for the Board and its General Body. As President, it has been my honor to help serve with such a wonderful group of Board members, and they should each be proud of their achievements this year. It has been a year of changes and hurdles, and you all performed marvelously.

Finally, I would like to thank the General Body, because if it weren't for you, we wouldn't be here. We hope you've enjoyed the ride so far, because there are even better things to come. The future looks promising!



In Picture to the Left:

Back Row (from left to right):  
Ravi, Sudeep, Aneesh

Front Row (from left to right):  
Preethi, Maneesha, Swetha,  
Anusha

Picture Credit:  
Joshua Debner

## OM Events

### 2008 Fall Semester

#### August

~Freshmen Barbeque

#### September

~SV Temple Trip

~General Body Meeting

#### October

~Gandhi's Birthday

~Navratri Garba

~Diwali HJ Temple Trip

#### November

~Diwali SV Temple Trip

~Unity of Faiths

#### December

~Finals Pooja

### 2009 Spring Semester

#### January

~General Body Meeting

#### February

~Proof Meets Prophecy

#### March

~Spring Garba

#### April

~Holi

~SV Temple Trip

#### May

~Finals Pooja

## Diwali Temple Trip

Written by: Aneesh Devi

For most students celebrating Diwali, it is a time filled with family and friends. Customary temple trips often occur during the days around the festive holiday. After students head off to college, there is an absence of this routine. But the Diwali temple trips look to fill that void, and the attendance will attest to it.

On the night of November 1<sup>st</sup>, a sea of students gathered at the UC turnaround while a few yellow school buses wait patiently. Undergraduate and graduate students were all mixed together. Many students were dressed in traditional Indian clothing. The



atmosphere was very lively and energetic. People were looking for a glimmer of their past traditions, and were looking to build new ones while at Carnegie Mellon.

At the Sri Venkateswara (SV) Temple, there were decorations and people everywhere. After the numerous poojas finished, the SV Temple had a fireworks show. In the cafeteria, the temple provided full Indian dinners at a very small cost for students. It was a very well planned event and a great opportunity for students to celebrate this special holiday at an auspicious location.

## Proof Meets Prophecy – Rajit Patel

Written by: Preethi Raju

OM has always been keen on not only promoting cultural events on campus, but also inspiring discussion about spirituality. This Spring, OM held a lecture and discussion about the relationships between various prophecies in relation to our everyday lives. The discussion was moderated by Rajit Patel, a lecturer at the University of Pittsburgh. The topic was centered on the beliefs of various

religions within the context of the various prophecies they propose and the events they predict. It was very interesting to learn how the viewpoints of various religions played into the current economic and ecological

downturn. OM hopes to continue to promote this type of conversation along the context of spirituality in the future.

**Interesting Fact:**  
Rajit Patel was one of the founding members of OM.



## Walk for Child Rights

Written by: Swetha Reddy

On Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, OM created a team of ten people to support CRY (Child Rights & You) in one of their annual events called the CRY Walk. The walk began on Saturday morning in Schenley Park and was a couple miles long. When we returned, they provided some light refreshments and spoke to all the teams about CRY and their endeavors. It was a fun experience and in support of an

extremely worthy cause. Since Spring Garba 2008, OM has been partnering with CRY. OM continues to lend support for CRY's events by attending their events and distributing information about their events to our email distribution list. Additionally, OM also donates proceeds from Spring Garba directly to CRY. It has been a great partnership and we absolutely love working with the CRY Pittsburgh team.

We hope to continue this relationship and do more for CRY in the future. For more information about CRY, please visit: [www.cryamerica.org](http://www.cryamerica.org).



## Navratri Garba Written by: Sudeep Yegnashankaran

Every Fall, OM starts the year with its annual Navratri Garba. Navratri, a time in the Hindu calendar to celebrate female divinity and the Fall harvest, is often celebrated in India with colorful and lavish dance celebrations known as Garbas. This year OM held its Garba on October 10 from 7:30 to midnight at the Holiday Inn near Pitt's Cathedral of Learning in Oakland. Buses ran every half an hour between the UC Turnaround and the Holiday Inn.

As people came decked in beautiful saris and kurtas, they were in for a night of dancing, food, and fun. From the beautiful decorations to the tasty food, people from many different

walks of life came and enjoyed the night. Whether you were an experienced Raas dancer or completely new to Bhangra, everyone found something to enjoy in the festivities.

With the success of the Spring Garba and Holi Committees in Spring 2008, the OM Board formed a similar decorations committee for Navratri, which was nothing short of successful. The potted lights and the draped saris were only some of the charming decorations that filled the Holiday Inn hall, adding much to the excited atmosphere of the night.

One of the most noticeable changes at Navratri this year was the



attendance. From just shy of 300 last year to over 360 people in one room is no small matter. But though some people had to share dandiya with their friends and the dance floor was a bit more snug than usual, that did not stop people from *nachna*-ing all night. Of course, with growing attendance, the OM Board must find creative solutions to best serve the CMU community for the future. Only time will tell what is in store for future iterations of this beautiful event.

## Freshmen Barbeque Written by: Ravi Mehta



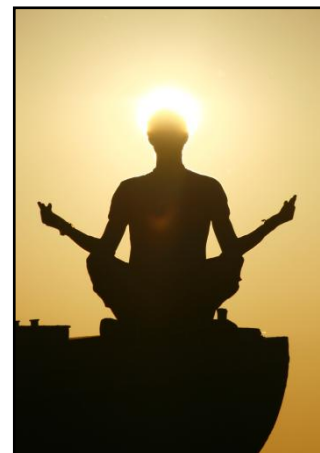
At the beginning of the academic school year, freshmen from all backgrounds gathered at the Fence to learn more about the South Asian organizations on campus. Every year, OM partners with Mayur-SASA, Chak De, and Tanah in this event to spread awareness of its activities. Bringing many returning students and friends together for the first time after summer,

the event was a perfect place for freshmen to socialize with all the upperclassmen who attended in beautiful weather. A good amount of interest was generated through signups for the OM email distribution list as well as signups for interviews for freshmen representatives. The barbeque was a great start to OM's year!

## Shanti Written by: Ravi Mehta

Shanti (formerly known as Stuti Sundays) is a weekly one-hour getaway from the materialistic world. During Shanti sessions, students engage in spiritual activity which includes prayers, yoga, meditation, and discussion. Although Shanti is traditionally led by Ravi Mehta, several other students have had the opportunity to lead sessions this year.

Impressively, students become very familiar with Hindu, Jain, and Sikh prayers, and their meanings. Students learn to discipline their body and mind through a posture in yoga known as shavasana, or dead-man posture. Shanti ends with an intellectual discussion that ranges over a wide range of spiritual topics.



## OM Board

2008-2009

### President:

Sudeep Yegnashankaran

### Vice President:

Ravi Mehta

### Treasurer:

Aneesh Devi

### Secretary:

Swetha Reddy

### PR Chair:

Preethi Raju

### Freshmen Representatives:

Maneesha Sakhuja

Anusha Venigalla

## Spring Garba

Written by: Maneesha Sakhuja

For the second year OM has put on an immensely successful event completely for charity. Last year Spring Garba was held to determine whether a UC Late Night Event with Indian food and activity booths could succeed. Garba is technically a dancing event, but was combined with food and activity booths including Henna, Calligraphy, Carrom, and new this year, Aromatherapy. It was clear from last year's turn out and amount of fundraising that the event turned out excellent. This year we raised 305 dollars from food sales and had over 257 people in attendance.

Just like last year all the proceeds from the event were donated to CRY (Child Rights and You) a non-profit organization that OM has partnered with for many events.

From henna to aromatherapy, the activity booths were thoroughly enjoyed. The henna table was a hit for both the girls and guys as was the calligraphy table, where OM's booth committee members wrote each person's name in Hindi. Many people enjoyed the two Carrom Board

tables along with the Aromatherapy booth sponsored by Helen Wang, the Donner House Fellow.

We ordered chaat, gulab jamuns, and samosas. The chaat was a great hit and was completely finished by the end of the night! We charged \$1 per item, and the proceeds were all donated to CRY.

Undergraduates as well as graduate students all enjoyed the dancing as always. Raas was the biggest hit of the night, but garba and bhangra were enjoyed by all as well.

We look forward to attendance for Spring Garba to continue to increase in future years!



## Holi

Written by: Anusha Venigalla

Holi is one of the two major OM events of the Spring semester. Traditionally held the Saturday of Carnival every year, this event not only marks the cultural significance of the Indian festival, Holi, but is also one of the most popular events during Carnival. This year, on April 18, 2009, over 400 people were drawn to Flagstaff Hill around noon to enjoy traditional Indian cuisine catered by Bayleaf, followed by an exciting two hours of throwing colored powder, running across the fresh lawns of Schenley, mud slides, and a bright sunny afternoon.

While the festival Holi, also known as the festival of colors, holds religious significance to many from the Indian subcontinent, at CMU, Holi represents an

opportunity for students of all cultural backgrounds to celebrate the fruits of the hard work involved with Carnival, a break from intense coursework, time to relax with friends and family, explore Indian culture, and is an integral part of CMU's unique student life.

The event is organized by the OM Board with help from the Holi Committee, a group of student volunteers. President Sudeep Yegnashankaran proudly announced during clean-up, "This year we sold over 380 tickets to lunch, and sold-out of colored powder packets!" The OM Board on the whole was surprised by the number students not acquainted with other OM events who attended. "The turn-out was impressive. I never expected so many people to



Photo Credit: Dan Chow

show up, especially not so many non-CMU guests! Holi makes me want to go to more of your events!" said David Winton, a freshman Math and CS major. With the enormous success of Holi this year, OM expects to host many more large scale events in the following years.