

Asha for Education – MIT Chapter

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Asha for Education presents **Penn Masala**: the popular Hindi a cappella group
A benefit concert to raise funds for children's education

Cambridge, MA. August 1, 2005 – Asha for Education, a non-profit organization dedicated to catalyzing socioeconomic change in India through the education of underprivileged children, presents a concert featuring Penn Masala, the premier Hindi a capella group. Penn Masala will be performing on Sunday, October 16, 2005 at 6:00 p.m. at the MIT Kresge Auditorium in Cambridge.

Penn Masala is a group of college students from the University of Pennsylvania who sing a medley of popular Hindi songs and hit English music, backing up their lead singers by creating all of the instrumental components with their voices. They have gained immense popularity and fame since their founding in 1996, singing to sold-out audiences all over the nation and touring across countries such as the United Kingdom and India.

"In the beginning, we were little more than random noises coming from the stage," one of the singers reminisced. Now, they are an icon of desi pop culture and the Indian-American experience. Since their early days, Penn Masala has perfected much more than its music; they have mastered the art of entertaining. They thrill audiences with their jokes, antics, and even dancing, from bhangra to the moonwalk — without missing a note.

The group has produced five complete albums (titled "Awaaz," "11 PM," "Soundcheck," "Out of Stock," and "The Brown Album"), as well as a full-length music video to the song "Chhamak Chalho" (which was in the top 10 on Asia's Channel V when it debuted in 1999). They also sang the soundtrack of the hit movie "American Desi." Penn Masala even recorded the first-ever fully original Hindi a capella song, "Desi Ladki," written and composed by one of the founding members of the group. "We've broken the boundaries between western and non-western music," they boast. Attend their October concert to find out if you agree.

This event represents the most recent production in Asha for Education's series of benefit concerts held each year. In past concerts, Asha has featured everything from renowned classical musicians, such as Amjad Ali Khan, to classical dance performers like Alarmel Valli. "India is an incredibly diverse country, and its artistes are just as varied. We'd like to showcase as many of them as we can for the Boston community," notes Mugdha Velankar, a volunteer at the Boston/MIT chapter of Asha. "With Penn Masala, we're adding yet another hue of South Asian culture to our palette."

Deprived of access to education in their childhood, a whole generation of Indians is growing up unprepared to face the economic and political challenges of the twenty-first century. "Asha is convinced that education is the key to socio-economic change in India. Through our concert series, we hope to involve the people of Boston, Cambridge and surrounding areas in our mission," explains Shyam Raghunandan, another Boston/MIT volunteer. **Asha for Education** is a zero-overhead group of dedicated volunteers from various walks of life. All donations to Asha are tax-deductible and go directly to the project groups being supported in India.

For more information:

- **Press Contact:** Amy Huff (617) 628-6333
- **Photos:** For a photo of the artistes or past Asha events, please contact Amy Huff
- **Tickets:** \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door (\$18 with a student ID, \$22 at the door & \$15 with an MIT ID, \$20 at the door). Available online at web.mit.edu/asha/pm
- **Websites:** www.ashanet.org/mit, web.mit.edu/asha/pm/, www.pennmasala.com
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