



Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

Holi Mahotsav 2012 Report for Media

Over three sunny autumn days Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Holi Mahotsav starting on Friday 23 March and finishing on Sunday 25 March 2012 at Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour, Sydney.

Nearly thousand artists performed during the festival days and represented a rich mixture of culture, spirituality and entertainment. The cultural performances included: Indian, Bollywood, Classical, Bhangra and belly dances, fusion and folk music, Punjabi songs, Balinese and Chinese performances and two surprise flash mobs which engaged into dance also around standing audience. The music and dance, yoga, prayers, meditation activities and dance and art workshops lasted for all three days. The visitors could enjoy delicious vegetarian Indian food and craft stalls.

The first day of the festival was dedicated to schools, young people and children. Thanks to the great support of the Department of Education and Communities of Government of NSW and Sydney Region India Calling Program many school groups participated with group performances and in art workshops. At the VIP session for school day Dr Phil Lambert, Regional Director of Department of Education and Communities of Government of NSW expressed his delight from the mutual cooperation and engagement of school children in stage and workshop activities. The special school day has become an annual tradition since this year.

Saturday was the day of spirituality. At noon time people had started to gather at Martin Place enjoying ISKCON Sydney stage performances while waiting for a street procession of more than 500 participants to start. Departing from Martin Place people passed through Sydney CBD and Sydney Town Hall and culminated into Tumbalong Park. The procession included Rath Yatra (hand pulled Chariot) of Lord Jagannätha. The ISKCON devotees chanted prayers and praises of the lord while pulling the chariot together with procession participants. The Sacred Holi Fire ceremony to drive away evil from the society was carried out in the form of a symbolic bonfire by S.P. Hrishikesha Bhattar, Temple Priest, on Saturday afternoon.

On Sunday the traditional practice of colour throwing took place in the designated area in multiple sessions throughout whole afternoon. This joyful activity brought many people of different cultural background together and was celebrated with happiness and harmony among the participants and viewers.

During the special VIP session held on the last day of the festival the special guests expressed the importance of such events as Holi Mahotsav and demonstrated their support and pleasure of being part of the celebrations. Among the respected speakers who graced the festival there were: Senator the Hon Kate Lundy, Parliament of Australia (representing The Hon Julia Gillard - Prime Minister); The Hon Craig Kelly, Member for Hughes, Parliament of Australia (representing The Hon Tony Abbott - Leader of the Opposition); The Hon Geoff Lee, Member for Parramatta, Parliament of NSW (representing The Hon Victor Dominello, Minister for Citizenship and Communities); The Hon Amanda Fazio, Opposition Whip, Parliament of NSW (representing The Hon John Robertson - Leader of the

GPO Box 4098, Sydney NSW 2001

Tel: 1300 BHAVAN (1300 242 826) Fax: 02 9267 9005 Email: pr@bhavanaustralia.org

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Opposition); Mr John Dallor, Vice President of Falun Dafa Association of NSW and Dr Phil Lambert, Regional Director, Department of Education and Communities, Government of NSW. Among other visiting VIP guests there were present: Mrs Madhu Dubey, Regional Director, Government of India Tourism Office, Australiana; Mrs Reeta Arora, Vice Consul, Consulate General of India; Amar Singh; Shila Mehta, eminent Kathak Dancer visiting from India and Andrew Jones and John Michel from Sahaja Yoga.

The success of Holi Mahotsav could not have been possible without the selfless untiring support of nearly thousand artists and performers from a large number of dance academies and cultural groups. We bow before and salute them with humility and greatest gratitude. The crowd passionately danced and sang with the performers and enjoyed every bit of the multicultural program. Our special thanks come to all performing artists: Shila Mehta – very special guest and internationally renowned Kathak dancer visiting from India; Sydney Region India Calling Schools represented by Mascot Public School and Cronulla Public School; Sydney Region Choir; Sahaja Yoga Music of Joy; Bronte Public School; Macquarie Grammar School; Sydney Region Band; Balanese Dancer Sisca Hunt; Kamyra Arora Sehgal; Alisha Singh; Indi Fuze Band; Komal and Benu from CQ University Sydney (Dance by Niraj Joshi); Mittal Shah; Prabhu OSONIQS Rhythm-In; Desi Girls; Mango Dance Studio, ISKCON Sydney; Shyam Dance; Chinese Lion Dance; Smirti Rau; Rangoli Girls; Vijay Jogia; Folk&Fun; Priya Dewan Bollywood Academy; Taal Dance Academy; Ghwazi Caravan; Geetanjali School of Dance and Performing Arts; SWASTIK; Indian Dance Center - Poornima Sharma; Lustre Pictures, Sandeep Verma - Flash Mob; Nupur – Jinnie De; Rhythm of Gujarat; Kurbat The Band – Nikhil; Tarana – Anwasha Goswami; Nep-Indo Fusion; Tigertown and Devinder Dharia.

The stage performances were provided with direction by our great masters of ceremonies: Karen Brabant, Poornima Sharma, Vijay Jogia, Dyasmin Sandhu, Divya, Dhingra, Monalisa Grover, Shalini Varmani, Ambika Asthana and Kalpana Shriram.

The food stalls during the Holi Mahotsav pepped up the festival by adding variety to the event. A wide selection of delicious Indian vegetarian meals, beverages and sweets was offered by renowned Indian restaurants: Govindas, Taj Sweets & Restaurant and Taj Mahal Tandoori. Stay Cool Tropical Sno and Go Cool Sugar Cane Juicery brought cooling and calming drinks and Circular Event brought colourful fairy floss.

Merchandise stalls and marquees offered great bargains such as traditional dresses, tops, fashion accessories, fancy bangles and artistic Henna art tattoos from Saileen Fashions. Lebara Mobile offered special SIM cards and discounted service plans for overseas calls. Vision Asia gave out discounted prices for their popular Indian channels package. Shen Yun Performing Arts presented the extraordinary Classical Chinese Dance show. Among other stalls there were: UAE Exchange Australia PTY LTD, Residential Projects, Desi Kangaroos TV, Incredible India, Macquarie Grammar School, AFL NSW/ACT and Sahajo Yoga Meditation marquee.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to our main sponsors and supporters: Lebara Mobile; NSW Government: Premier of NSW, Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW and Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority; City of Sydney; LAC City Central & The Rocks NSW Police; Australian Government: Department of Immigration; India Tourism,

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Sydney; State Bank of India, Sydney; AFL Multicultural Program, Sahaja Yoga and ISKCON Sydney.

We are grateful to our media supporters, Desi Kangaroo, The Indian, Indus Age, Indian Link Newspaper & Radio, The Indian Down Under, The IndoAus Times, Punjab Times, Masala Newline, Hindi Gaurav, Navtarang Newspaper & Radio, Nepalese Times, and the Epoch Times, Indian Times, SBS Radio, Chinese newspaper and ZEE TV who helped us in making this 2012 festival even brighter and more diverse.

We are grateful to Brendan Burke (Venue Hire Manager), Scott Eager (Venue Hire and Event Coordinator), Vanessa Nieuwenhuis, Graham and other staff from Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority for their valuable contribution in hosting this festival.



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