

Holi Mahotsav 2008

15 - 16 March 2008



The City of Sydney came alive in a spectacular festival of colours to celebrate friendship and harmony at the 6th annual Holi Mahotsav, organised by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia at the Tumbalong Park and Chinese Garden Forecourt precinct at Darling Harbour in Sydney.

The festival began with the traditional Rath Yatra, the holy procession of the chariot of Lord Jagannath from Hyde Park to Darling Harbour. The Rath was devotionally hand drawn by ISKCON devotees and fervently joined by Sydneysiders, followed by devotional prayers to invoke the blessings of the Almighty for a joyous and peaceful festival.



Uncle Max Eulo of the Tribal Warrior Association performed the symbolic smoke ceremony in the traditional Aboriginal approach to mark the beginning of the two day festival. This important gesture where traditional Indian chants filled the air along with the characteristic aboriginal tunes underpinned one of the basic philosophies of Bhavan Australia – let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

Over the weekend, the grand festival attracted tens of thousands of visitors who revelled in the colourful fusion of Indian music, dance, food and exhibitions.



Saturday evening witnessed the symbolic *Holika Dahan* (Holi Fire). The sacred fire ceremony symbolises the emergence of good over evil. Unlike in India where it is done in an open space where devotees walk around the fire and chant prayers, in Sydney it was observed by lighting a symbolic bonfire within a designated fenced area.

The color throwing session on the second day was enjoyed by children and adults from various communities alike. Boys and girls with color smeared faces and clothes enthusiastically wished a Happy Holi to everyone and looked forward to a colorful and bright new year. With chaos, laughter and thrill, it was interesting to see everyone enjoying and throwing colours in the designated area, whilst the rest looked on with delight, and perhaps even envy.



Seeing the fruition of his six years of dedication to uniting cultural diversity through arts, Mr. Gambhir Watts, president of Bhavan Australia, said, “I am immensely grateful to those who have travelled with me in the past five years turning Holi Mahotsav, the celebration of triumph over evil and the commemoration of truth peace and harmony, into mainstream grand Australian festival of harmony of today.”

He vehemently extended his appreciation to the support given by various organisations and government bodies, including: Sydney Harbour Foreshore





Authority; India Tourism Sydney; Reliance India Call, Community Relations Commission for Multicultural New South Wales; ISKCON; City of Sydney; Sgt. Stewart Lockery of NSW Police, the City Central Command of NSW Police and many others.

As the SHFA chief executive officer Dr. Robert Lang wrote in a message published in the 2008 Holi Souvenir magazine released during the event, “It is fitting that the Holi Festival – the colour of friendship

and harmony - is being held at Darling Harbour which has long been a meeting place for Sydneysiders, Australians from many cultural backgrounds and visitors from all over the world...Holi Festival holds a special place in Darling Harbour’s annual calendar and offers a wonderful opportunity to increase the vibrancy and diversity of the precinct.”

The Premier of New South Wales Hon. Morris Iemma MP congratulated Bhavan Australia and in his message said “May the spirit of Holi continue to inspire us by adding Gulal (colour) and creativity to our lives, and strengthen the spirit of friendship and acceptance among the diverse communities of New South Wales.”

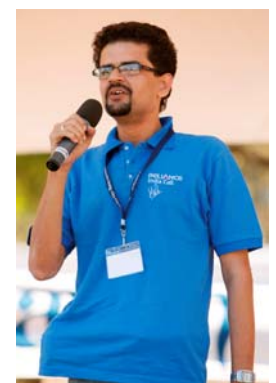
Hon Laurie Ferguson MP equally extends his enthusiasm and support in the event which he has attended several times previously. “We are fortunate that the Indian and Hindu Australian community has made Holi part of our evolving cultural calendar.”

Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison, Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship expressed his pleasure to contribute to the souvenir magazine on the occasion of Holi Mahotsav 2008 and blessed the Holi Mahotsav 2008 to be biggest ever in Australia. He said “Australia and India share a close friendship with many people from our respective nations living in India and Australia and travelling between our respective nations for work and holiday.”

Dr Stepan Kerkyasharian, Chair, Community Relations Commission For a Multicultural NSW while congratulating Bhavan Australia “for providing this major event for the enjoyment and education of the people of Sydney” said: “Holi, with its sense of unbridled fun, is a very practical form of harmony and community interaction...“It is a festival where unfamiliar cultural traditions would seem to be very accessible...”This festival continues to grow and attract more and more attention from the broader community and is now firmly establishing itself on Sydney’s cultural calendar.”

Robert M Goot AM SC, President, Executive council of Australian Jewry expressed his “great pleasure to send greetings on behalf of the Australian Jewish Community” and said: “Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, has made a most significant impact on Multiculturalism in Australia by facilitating intercultural activities and providing a forum for true understanding of Indian culture, multiculturalism and fostering closer cultural ties among individuals, governments and cultural institutions.”

Other dignitaries and community leaders contributing their message of goodwill and well wishes



included: Lord Mayors Ron Hoeing of City of Botany Bay, Sonya Phillips of Baulkham Hills Council, Robert Furolo of City of Canterbury and Nick Lalich of Fairfield City; Jynene Helland, International Vice President of Women's Federation for World Peace Australia; Dr Balasubramaniam, President, Hindu Council of Australia.

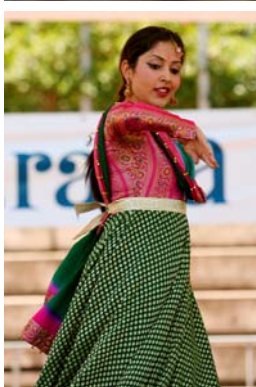
VIP sessions were graced by: Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda of Yoga in Daily Life; Her Excellency Sujata Singh, High Commissioner of India in Australia; Hon. David Borger MP representing the Premier of NSW, Louise Markus MP (Federal) Immigration and Citizenship; Gajendra Kumar, Regional Director, Government of India Tourist Office, Australasia; His Grace Varanayaka, President ISKCON Sydney; Mr Albert Vella, President, NSW Federation of Community Language Schools; Prof Abd Malak Immediate Past President, Federal Ethnic Communities Council of Australia; Raj Natrajan President, United India Association; Vish Viswanathan, Federation of Australian Indian Associations; Moninder Singh, President Punjabi Council of Australia; Vijay Singhal, Secretary Hindu Council of Australia; Harmohan Singh Walia, community leader; Dayal Yaduvansh, Consul representing the Consul General of India, Sydney. These well wishers and others provided their own insightful perspective of the colourful event and wished everyone a very warm, joyous and peaceful celebration.

During the festival Bhavan Australia launched their own charity Bhavan Cares for the benefit of the general public. For the special occasion, the charity teamed up with Red Cross in promoting their bipartisan activities towards the welfare and protection of all human beings irrespective of their cultural, social, religious, political background.

Inspirational and motivational exhibitions at the Chinese Garden included the Gandhi King Ikeda peace exhibition showcasing the legacy, power and importance of peace. The temple of Lord Jagannath by ISKCON had regular devotional prayer sessions providing a spiritual insight and the Yoga in Daily Life offered workshops and techniques which are performed by Yogic masters from centuries for the holistic development of the body and mind.

Kenzo Amour the internationally renowned French perfumes company honoured Holi Mahotsav by launching a special perfume named *Holi Hai*.

A variety of delectable Indian vegetarian favourites, beverages and sweets were on offer by renowned Indian restaurants such as Planet Bollywood; Indian Chaat House; Govinda's; Curries India; Taza Tandoori and others. Traditional Indian drinks such as the staple Holi beverage, Thandai, the ever popular, sugarcane juice, the refreshing and nutritious yoghurt drink, lassi proved to be the perfect thirst quenchers. And Esmail and Faraz Basiri brought the cooling and calming coconut water and the typical road side 'Gola' made from crushed ice, sweet syrup and spiced salt and fresh sweet corns.



Meanwhile, merchandise stands offered great bargains such as traditional dresses and tops from Saileen Fashions, fashion accessories and fancy bangles from Exotic India, latest DVDs and CDs from Music World, and artistic Henna art tattoos. Other stalls such as Ausindia Holidays, Vision Asia, Shaadi.com, Bharatmatrimony.com, Bank of Baroda, UAE Exchange, Melbourne Institute of Technology, Charindaa, The Indian Link and The Indian added variety to the festival.

The event was full of activity and fun with three young masters of ceremonies Sophil Raja, Mecki Ansari and Soiam Raja providing wit and direction to the cultural shows.

The crowd passionately sang and tirelessly danced to a mix of recent Indian favourites and dances, classical performances and high-energy numbers by the Ruchi Sanghi Dance School, Raghavan Nair's Indian Dance Centre, Bhangra and folk songs by Panjabi Sangeet Centre, Shruti Bose Dance and her troupe, Priya Dewan Dance Academy, Geetanjali School of Dance and Performing Arts, Contemporary Dance Academy and Nupur Dance School. Mayukh Sengupta's Hindi songs were well appreciated by the crowd.

Adding glitz and Bollywood glamour to the event were performances by Mango Dance Studio artists choreographed by the famous Bollywood choreographer Farah Shah. The Scottish Highland Dancers complimented the event with their dance spreading the Scottish cheer. Whilst all the professional performers kept the audience grooving, the real stars of the show were the talented little girls as young as five, giving their version of Bollywood hits.

The grand finale was presented by Ustad Sharshad and his disciple and son Yamha (affectionately known as Zakir Hussein of Australia) in *juggalbandi* – duet on Sitar and Tablaa followed by a long array of patriotic Hindi and Punjabi songs by the Anand Arora and his troupe supported by Yamha on Tablaa and Masse on keyboard.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is thankful to the Performers / Stage Managers / Volunteers who made Holi Mahotsav happen.

Masters of Ceremonies: Sophil Raja, Mecki Ansari and Soiam Raja

Stage Managers: Bhoji Watts, Jennifer Murtas, Manju Chand, Rajesh Katakdhond

Performers over both the days 15 March & 16 March 2008

Sikh Kirtan by Shruti Gurmat Sangeet Jatha; Coordinator : Harmohan Singh Walia

Tribal Warrior Association Inc, Coordinator: Shane Phillips; Performers: Arthur Tamwoi, Benelong Balangary, Ron Guivara, Uncle Max Eulo

Ruchi Sanghi Dance School; Coordinator: Ruchi Sanghi; Performers: Shruti Bhardwaj and Smriti Bhardwaj





Kavita Ponnuru

Amilee Saha & Group :
Coordinator: Amilee Shaha;
Performers: Amilee Shaha, Jyoti, Marion, Nishttha

Rakhi Birla

Zarmar Pandya & Group;
Coordinator: Zarmar Pandya,
Performers: Kitty, Prabhati, Swati, Zarmar



Raghavan Nair's Indian Dance Centre; **Coordinator:** Poornima Sharma; **Performers:** Poornima , Urvashi , Sanushka , Ashishna Bhim, Ashishna, Charlene, Janet, Natalie, Nicci, Akshara & Aiona, Ravi

Yoga in Daily Life; **Coordinator:** Bhakti Jhonson; **Performers:** Sita Fletcher, Surya Prakash Prose, Arjuna Welsh, Mokshanand Welsh, Pavitra Kiss

Tanya Goswami

Scottish Highland Dancers;
Coordinator: Karen McPhillips;
Performers: Elizabeth Munro, Emily Carr, Holly Anderson, India Anderson, Jessica Norman, Lauren Caunter



Richa Srivastava

Punjabi Sangeet Centre,
Coordinator : Devinder Singh Dharia.

Shruti Bose & Group; **Coordinator:** Shruti Bose; **Performers:** Anindita Saha, Dipta Tapasvi, Oona Banerjee, Rani Khan, Shrinkha Vinod, Shruti Bose

Priya Dewan Dance Academy;
Coordinator: Priya Dewan;
Performers: Deeksha, Divya, Isha, Kavisha, Priyanka, Shivani, Sohana, Soni, Sonali, Sunaina



Geetanjali School of Dance and Performing Arts ; **Coordinator:** Sharmila Maitra; **Performers:** Advika Kamboj, Anisha Krishnasamy, Debolina Chowdhury, Eesha Arora, Eesha Chitale, Emil





Rayhan, Erika Rayhan, Erina Rayhan, Kanika Choudhury, Medha Gupta, Moumita Chowdhury, Priya Basu, Ragini Sood, Ritika Bhattacharya, Sahil Arora, Shruti Yardi, Shuchi Gupta, Sonal Arora, Sonali Yardi, Tiana Malhotra.

Mango Dance Studio; Coordinator: Farah Shah; Performers: Alpa Gupta, Amanda Lovegreen, Amanda

Lovegreen, Ameer Ormaechea, Amita Salvi, Angharad Davis, Annika Karan, Anurag Kanwar, Claudine Haber, Daksha Dhanji, Daniella Mansour, Dhara Karunaratne, Dipali Goel, Divya Saxena, Farah Shah, Isabella Polgar, Kanika Nanda, Kartika Dubey, Kavery Dubey, Ketaki Kale, Kirsty Archer, Krithika Hariharan, Leoni Wishart, Lesley Branagan, Lesley Louchnan, Louise Reily, Maimoonah Ahmed, Manisha Prasad, Mathilda Luister, Mehnaaz Khan, Nerissa Jayasingha, Nilusha Guruge, Raghav Handa, Rajnita Kumar, Ronis Kumar, Sajna Shukla, Siksha Singha, Simran Hingorani, Stephanie Bauche, Sureyya Alkan, Tahlia Dias, Uzma Rayani, Valentina Angelovska, Vanessa Skipp, Viksha Muthanna, Vishal Prasad, Vivienne Cabraja, Zoe Wakelin-King.

Nupur Dance School; Coordinator: Manjusha De; Performers: Antara Chowdhury, Jaya Chowdhury, Promi Saha, Jyotsna Shimoga, Smriti Rao, Tanaya Barat, Misty Paul, Tithan Paul, Kanika Pathania

Contemporary Dance Academy;

Coordinator: Shwetambra Barar; Performers: Alisha Nandan, Anadita Taneja, Krishna Kumar, Kriti Gupta, Niyati Desai, Shauna Abel, Alisha Arora, Manasa Bhat, Nikita Naidu, Samiksha Rampersad, Sanjana Madhyasta, Tavishi Arora, Piya Sodhi, Riya Chowdhry, Sandhya Menon, Sanya Chopra, Anmol Arya, Elina Manirekar, Mayisha Srakar. Mehak Arya, Pallavi Suri,



Rachna Despande, Ruchika Mitter, Salonika Mitter, Tanvi Suri, Ashneet Kaur, Sanjana Nagesh, Varsha Krishnappa, Ayushe Arya, Bhavana Baht, Maansi Arora, Sanjana Chand, Shubhra Bajaj, Tarana Khunger

Anand Arora & Group; Coordinator: Anand Arora; Performers: Sharshad, Yamha, Masse, Anand Arora, Jasmine and Rajeshwer

