

Holi Mahotsav 2007—Report

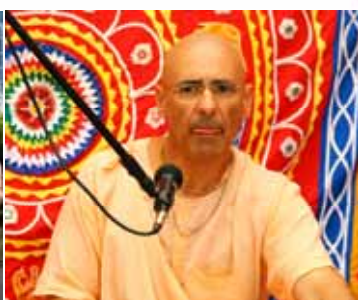
31 March & 1 April 2007



In one of the biggest celebrations of colors, friendship and harmony, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia celebrated the Holi Mahotsav 2007 at Tumbalong Park and the Chinese Garden Forecourt at Darling Harbor in Sydney. The two day festival was an exciting and vibrant mix of music, dance, color, exhibitions, food and festivities. The festival began with the arrival of the beautifully decorated chariot, 'Rath' of Lord Jagannatha, devotionally hand drawn from Hyde Park walking through the main streets of Sydney CBD by the ISKCON devotees. Celebrated fervently in Puri, Orissa, millions flock to see and pull the grand chariots in the annual Rath Yatra in India. In Sydney, it was a very beautiful occasion as Sydneysiders joined in, amidst divine chants of Hare Rama, Hare Krishna.



Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Gambhir Watts, president of Bhavan Australia, said “Holi is an auspicious occasion which essentially celebrates the triumph of good over evil it is a majestic commemoration of truth, peace and harmony. The colors and the festivities add a unique symbolic perspective to the festival bridging social norms and bringing people together: men and women, rich and poor, young and old, everyone irrespective of religion, caste, color or creed comes together to rejoice in the universal human spirit.” He further added, “As the festival grows, we have been enthusiastically supported by various organizations, both private and public sector that in their own way have helped us immensely to enhance this festival.





With various legends heralding Holi, it is reassuring that this festival provides an important base for the underpinning thought of strengthening the secular fabric of our country and providing a unique direction, especially to the youth and children to a dynamic multicultural society'.

On the occasion, a commemorative souvenir magazine detailing the significance and myths of Holi was also released. Encouraging messages from various dignitaries were also incorporated. Amongst others, messages from Mr. Sujan Chinoy, Indian Consul General in Sydney, Hon. Jon Howard, Prime Minister, Australia, Hon Morris Iemma, Premier, NSW, Mr. Stepan Keryasharian AM, Chair, Community Relations Commission, Mr. Shanker Dhar, Regional Director Australasia, Incredible India, Darren Gribble, Chair, Australia India Council, HH Sri Sri Ravishanker and HH Vishwaguru Paramhans Swami Maheshwaranada and His Grace Atmarama Das, President ISKCON congratulated Bhavan Australia and sent their warmest regards for the event. At the end of the first day, a traditional bonfire 'Holika' was also lit and amidst holy chants guests were invited to partake the warmth and cheer that traditionally symbolizes the burning of evil and the emergence of the good from the fire.

Engaging exhibitions at the event enthralled young and old alike. Amongst them, the Gandhi King Ikeda peace display which presented the legacy of creating Peace, the Incredible India display which colorfully





denoted the rich heritage of a young country which is 5,000 years old, India. The Art of Living Foundation display which aimed at providing a window in transforming lives and shared values. The ISKCON display in the form of a temple which reiterated the spiritual truth and the ways and means of realizing that truth. The Ayurveda College of NSW display which focused on understanding the brilliant powers of nature in the form of Ayurveda (the ancient Indian science of medicine) and its principles. The Yoga foundation display with its books and periodicals helped realize the importance of a holistic lifestyle as the ultimate answer for today's chaotic world.

A bevy of talented dancers, singers, models and performers some as young as five years provided the entertainment for the eager crowds. Performances ranging from the classic forms of dance including Bharatnatyam and Kathakali to the more modern Bollywood dance numbers were brilliantly performed by various dance and cultural schools. The audiences listened with rapt attention to the Yoga, Ayurveda and the Art of Living presentations. The Ayurveda live demonstration was particularly enjoyed by everyone especially the young children who crowded around the stage to marvel at the interesting Yogic techniques practiced by Indian masters from centuries. A special performance by Natraj Academy under the guidance of Mr. Avijit Sarkar, who is also the cultural director of Bhavan Australia, provided a mix of live entertainment from old melodies to the latest foot tapping musical rhythms. A



unique Bhajan and Kirtan session, devotional songs invoking the blessings of the Almighty was performed by ISKCON with a special devotee coming all the way from Vladivostok in Russia to join in the Holi celebrations.



Seniors who have contributed to the society were also honored and given plaques. All of them in their speeches spoke words of encouragement and motivation directed at the youth of today. Their collective wisdom and inspiration was cherished by everyone who appreciated their life long efforts dedicated to their respective fields. Amongst those who were honored included legendary cricketer – Sonny de Carvalho, Cricket writer Kersi Meher Homji, the laughter club founder in Randwick Dr (Mrs.) Kumud Kolhatkar, Mrs Vedavalli Srinivasan, chair of the seniors RAIN organization and others. Hon. Laurie Fergusson, MP presented the awards to the seniors.



A huge selection of delectable vegetarian dishes and mouth watering Indian sweets were presented by the leading restaurants in their stalls. Chiefly amongst them, Zaafraan, Maya Indian Sweets, Chutney, Govinda's and others added their delicious flavor to complete the Holi Mahotsav 2007 experience. Traditional Indian drinks such as the ever popular, sugarcane juice, the refreshing and nutritious Mango lassi and the typical road side 'Gola' made from crushed ice, lemon syrup and spiced salt proved to be the perfect thirst quenchers on the beautiful sunny day. A VIP session where dignitaries and sponsors were thanked for their support was also held on the second day. Amongst others Incredible India, Sydney Harbor Foreshore Authority, Western





Union, Qantas and Community Relations Commission were handed plaques. Amongst those who attended this session were Mr. Sujan Chinoy, Indian Consul General in Sydney, Hon. Barbara Perry, MP representing the premier of NSW, Harmohan Singh Walia, community leader and the deputy mayor of Burwood.



The color throwing session on the second day was particularly enjoyed by children and adults 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.



The Holi Mahotsav 2007 concluded with a bhajan and kirtan session by ISKCON devotees where members of the audience also joined in the rhythmic chanting. Visitors thanked Bhavan Australia for the exciting two days filled with joyous merrymaking. As the Holi Mahotsav 2007 drew to a close, everyone is now looking forward to the Holi Mahotsav 2008 which promises to be bigger and more enlightening and entertaining. With the conclusion of this major event, Bhavan Australia now looks forward to the other events throughout the year which again promise great learning under the thought and vision' let noble thoughts come to us from all sides'.



Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia is thankful to the below performers / Stage managers / Volunteers who made Holi Mahotsav happen

Indian Dance Centre - Coordinator: Poornima Sharma **Performers:** Poornima Sharma , Deepak, Ashishna, Sanushka Urvashi, Pooja, Anil , Kamal , Aman and Sukhwinder, Raj , Sanushka, Anil , Sukhwinder.

Random Kaos - Bengal Community Student Choir - Coordinator: Devmalya Mukherjee **Performers :** Sid Bose, Devmalya Mukerjee; Neel Mukherjee, Thamal Radjapaksa.

Natraj Academy Choir - Coordinator: Avijit Sarkar

Ruchi Sanghi Dance School - Coordinator: Ruchi Sanghi **Performers:** Niharika, Aastha, Nikita, Gargi, Anuradha, Shival, Shruti, Apeksha, Muskaan, Yukti, Shipra, Ankita, Isha, Tanika, Isha, Anika, Priyaka, Ankita, Neha, Vahishta ,Ihita, Poonam, Swati, Smritie, Cheryl, Nicki, Minal.

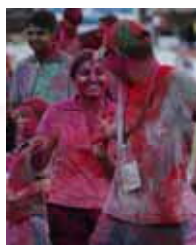
Urban Alliance Creation - Coordinator: Rickardo Wesley **Performers:** Nikhil, Ahmeezh, Kunal

Platinum Bhangra & Giddha Group - Coordinator: Harinder Kaur **Performers:** Karen, Harnoor, Jaspreet, Alex, Kenni, Lallie, Bilawal, Simran, Lovpreet, Harman, Riti, Nikita, Arzoo, Dolly, Rubline, Harnoor, lovleen, Pearl, Montu, Manu Rupri, Joyti

Priya Dewan Dance Academy - Coordinator: Priya Dewan **Performers:** Shivani, Sunaina, Deeksha, Divya, Priyanka, Pooja, Sona, Kavisha, Easha, Anam, Sohana, Shivani, Sonali

MLC School Indian Dance Club - Coordinator: Sunali Bhandula **Performers :** Divya Abraham, Sunali Bhandula, Jasdeep Sunner, Sanpreet Sunner, Harjiwan Jot Kaur, Sugandha Gupta , Tasnia, Si-Wei Khoo, Rishma

Geetanjali Dance School - Coordinator: Sharmila Maitra **Performers:** Eesha Chitale, Ira Goyel, Ragini Sood, Sheena Guha, Anagha Killeder, Shachi D'Silva, Srishti Yadav, Tanya Mokha, Avinash Kaur, Cheryl Sharma, Garima Sharma, Kamia Sood, Kanika Chaudhuri, Nidhi Kontham, Neha





Gupta, Shruti Yardi, Sonal Arora, Sonali Yardi, Sheena Guha, Gursimrat Kaur, Jashmine Kaur

Contemporary Dance Academy - Coordinator: Shwetambra Barar **Performers:** Piya Sodhi, Asha Hansen, hena Hansen, Abha Yadav, Shilpi Yadav, Neeru Agarwal, Nalini Agarwal, Sandhya Menon, Ayushi Arya, Tarana Khunger, Maansi Arora, Riya Chowdhry, Sanjana Chand, Sanajana Chandawarkar, Sanya Chopra, hubhra Bajaj, Aneesha Chawla, Noni Batra, Karina Jain. Sanaa Vhora, Inaya Vhora, Tavishi Arora, Alisha Arora, Sanjana Madhyasta, Samiksha, Rampersad, Salonika Mitter, Ruchika Mitter, Neha Murthy, Nikita Murthy

Performers of Bhavan's Institute of Indian Art & Culture : Zarmar Pandya, Manasi Kundup, Tanmayi Kundup, Mohana Sharma, Maharishi Raval, Prem Gangadharan, Tapan Desai.

Ghawazi Caravan Group - Coordinator: Devi Mamak **Performers:** Sandy Burrow, Cristie Fuller, Kathleen Sheean, Lara Bucknall, Catherine O'Brien

Meeyinz - Coordinator: Batool Zulfiqar **Performers:** Anuja, Charmayne, Pallavi, Nisha, Sanskriti, Nasha, Mehwish, Tinika, Diya, Priyanka, Arti, Monaz, Parizad, Nicki, Josh, Khyati, Manpreet, Nishad, Hasan, Mahveer

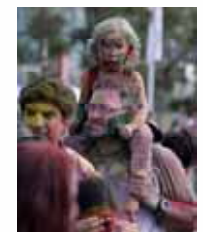
Jazba Coordinator: Avijit Sarkar **Performers:** Rucha Langhe, Sadiq Rehmani and Avijit Sarkar
Master of Ceremonies : Poornima Sharma, Nicole & Alice D'Souza, Swati Kapila, Moksha Watts, Swayam Raja,

Paran Nadeswaran

Stage Managers: Bhoji Watts, Manju Chand, Harinder Kaur, Avijit Sarkar, Nayana Purohit, Catherine Knox

Organisers: Govinda Watts, Nitin Patel, Rajesh Katakdhond, Prem Gangadharan, Utkarsh Doshi

- Rajesh Katakdhond & Utkarsh Doshi





Acknowledgments

Incredible India
www.incredibleindia.org

Sydney
Harbour Foreshore Authority

ISKCON SYDNEY

RATH YATRA

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Community Relations Commission
For a multicultural NSW

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