

Senior Citizens Host “Mata ki Chowki” At Global Mall

BY MAHADEV DESAI

Atlanta: When I read the Senior Citizens Program (SCP) announcement of “Mata Ki Chowki” at Global Mall, I wondered if the popular daily soap about a devotee of Mata Vaishno Devi, on the Hindi channel Sahara One was being re-enacted by the seniors in Atlanta. Even if that had been the case, I would not have been surprised as the SCP is well-known for its myriad diversity of programs spanning from visit to Bollywood flicks to Valentine’s Day celebrations to Fashion Shows by the Mothers and Fathers, Picnics, and you name it. Nevertheless, this recent “Mata Ki Chowki” event though not a soap on TV screen, was even better as the Seniors were delightfully treated to spiritually uplifting Bhajans, some with popular filmi drum beats adapted to devotional songs. It was clear the New Year had arrived for over 200 Elders at this Chowki at Global Mall as they readied themselves for a plethora of 2010 activities. Kudos!

The SCP volunteers Chinti Bali; Jyoti Dama; Isha Goyal; Minesh Modi; and Aruna Patel and Raj Razdan extended a traditional welcome on behalf of the SCP to a packed hall, with New Year greetings. SCP also welcomed the seniors of the Bhutanese Families who have recently migrated to Georgia from Bhutan, and were attending Mata Ki Chowki.

Surinder Bahl, a community leader associated with the Atlanta Chowki Group explained the significance of Mata ki Chowki, and his personal immense interest and faith in “Mata Vaishno Devi”. He gave a brief background of the Chowki Group, which has been celebrating Mata ki Chowki for the past ten years. Through these Chowkis, the group preaches about Mata, sings “Jagrata”, motivates devotees all over the world pay to pay

their respects through their prayers.

Atlanta Chowki Group is spearheaded by Inder Bery and has a team of dedicated, committed and selfless mellifluous and devotional singers-Inder Bery’s wife Kalpana Bery; Vinod Grover and his wife Santosh Grover; Harjeet; Kshama

look in its ornate finery with Mataji’s dazzling framed picture in the center of the Puja Mandap with colorful fresh flower garlands, all gracefully and philanthropically decorated by Atlanta’s professional wedding decorators Nita Govan who is the daughter in law of the sponsors Naranbhai and

Radhe. Then the dancing (has to be Garba) by the Elders as soon as Versatile Kshama Kakade sang in Gujarati ‘Pankhida, Mahakali ne jaene kahejo, garbo rame re’. This generated intense euphoria and positive transcendental vibrations in the congregation. The grand finale for this spiritual high being the “aarti” followed by prasad of halwa, chhole, fruits and dry fruits.

Five young girls (Kanchaks) who symbolically represent the Devi were invited near the stage and blessed with tilaks (vermilion) and prasad by the sponsors. The elders also availed the opportunity to felicitate and bless Anu Kathuria, who will soon be tolling her wedding bells. Such is the commitment and respect of young Anu and her sister Neena for the elders,



Raj Razdan and the volunteers with Inder Bery. Photos by Mahadev Desai.

Kakade and Kusum Bahl. Bahl added, “Divine Mataji (Sherawali Ma) symbolizes the holy trinity of Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. All the donations received by the Atlanta Chowki Group are given away to various charitable organizations like Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation; Sankara Eye Foundation; Sanatan Mandir; Shiv Temple, etc., etc. “At the request of SCP, contributions from today’s Chowki will be donated towards the construction of the Shiv Mandir in the northeast Atlanta.”

The stage with diyas (lamps), stringed lights, fresh fruits and prasad (offerings) wore a festive

Malvikaben Govan.

The congregation initially sat in rapt attention at the beginning listening to melodious prayerful Mataji, Krishna and Shiva devotional renderings, “bhaints”, to the accompaniment of harmonium, drums and cymbals by Inder Bery and Surinder Bahl. Soon the fervor picked up at the behest of Vinod Grover with clapping and singing. Panditji Kashi Nath also led the devotees in a rousing chanting of the dhoon, Shyam milade, Radhe



Sponsors at the aarti.

that they generously donated their first salary after starting work to the SCP, for its potential plan for a Senior Center.

Continued on Pg 17.....

Atlanta Telugu Community Celebrates Sankranti Sambaralu

Atlanta: Sankranti Sambaralu, an event organized by Telugu Association of Metro Atlanta (TAMA) on January 23 at Independence High School, Alpharetta, Georgia, to celebrate the festival of Sankranti, turned out to be a mega success with over 1000 people living in metro Atlanta, attending the event.

The event was flagged off with jyoti prajwalana by esteemed guests from Telugu community Dr. P.V. Rao, Dr. Hymavati Mikkilineni, Dr. Sujatha Reddy and TAMA president Mr. Madhu Tata followed by prayers to Lord Ganesha and Goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi.

Dances and shows describing the joy and importance of Sankranti were performed by local kids, who were not only dressed in traditional Indian attires but also in attires reminiscent of memories typically associated with Sankranti like Haridasu, Dudu Basavanna, gobbemmalu etc, to a rousing reception by the audience.

Choreographed by professional choreographers and enthusiastic mothers, our local children of various age groups entertained the audience

wonderfully with their graceful dances for Sankranti songs from movies like Soggaadi Pellam,

Koncham Kashtam, Saptapadi, Maska, Josh, Mallanna and even the Oscar winning song Jai Ho from Slumdog Millionaire.

As the local talent displayed their singing and dancing skills that kept the packed auditorium glued to their seats, one famous guest who graced the event all the way from Andhra Pradesh, played it to the galleries with his razor sharp wit and rib tickling comedy. And this is none other than popular artiste Guruswamy who is fondly called as ‘Reverse Gear’ Guruswamy, thanks to his unique talent of singing any song with as much ease in the reverse order as singing it normally. Guruswamy brought down the entire auditorium with his funny poems, hysterical satire on the quality of Telugu cinema tuned to amazing perfection along the lines of popular number Anaganana Aakasam from Nuvve Kaavali, songs sung in the reverse order, comical jokes and much more. He had the audience eating out of his hands for every act of his and they didn’t stop asking him for more and more.

Guruswamy was felicitated and honored by the guests and TAMA executive committee for his contribution towards the field of entertainment. He,

along with the other guests, released TAMA’s Sankranti magazine Maa Oori Maata at the event.

While wholesome entertainment for the entire family was one of the highlights of this event, sumptuous and delectable food, served by two popular local Indian restaurants, Sri Krishna Vilas Indian Cuisine and Swathi Indian Restaurant, was another talked about speciality at the event.

Ladies from Atlanta Telugu Community showed off their traditional rangoli skills replete with vibrant colors in the Rangoli competition organized by TAMA and sponsored by local film distribution company Ficus Media.

An event of this magnitude and grandeur would not have been possible if not for the unstinted support from the kids and parents of local community, unfailing help from numerous volunteers handling various tasks such as sound & lighting, photography, video recording, auditorium ushers, backstage volunteers, food volunteers among many other tasks.

The all new yet very enthusiastic executive committee members of TAMA extend their sincere thanks to the audience that graced the event, talented participants, guests of the event, Reverse Gear Guruswamy, grand sponsor of the event Prudential Insurance, various advertizers at the event and last but not the least, to volunteers that offered their voluntary support in making this event a grand success.



Dr. PV Rao, Dr. Hyma Mikkilineni, Dr. Sujata Reddy and Madhu Tata lighting the traditional lamp. Photo by Bytegraph.

Vaarasudochchadu, Neeke Manischchanu.

Along with programs centered around Sankranti, numerous kids performed wonderful dances to various hit Telugu film songs, some solo, some group dances and some medleys of popular numbers from movies like Ready, Bommarillu, Magadheera, Koncham Ishtam