

## NRI PULSE

Community News Magazine

414 Druid Oaks Dr NE  
Atlanta GA 30329  
Tel: 404-235-4998

Email: [contact@nrpulse.com](mailto:contact@nrpulse.com)  
[www.NRIPulse.com](http://www.NRIPulse.com)

### Publisher

NRIPulse Media Inc.

### Editor

Veena Rao  
[editor@nrpulse.com](mailto:editor@nrpulse.com)

### Contributors

Jyothsna Hegde  
Rati Kumar

### Columnists

Ravi R. Ponangi  
Mahadev Desai  
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar  
Kaushik Chokshi  
Rani Sharma  
P.S. Lakshmi Rao

### Art Director

Sonu Patel  
[sonu@nrpulse.com](mailto:sonu@nrpulse.com)

### Advertising

Veena Rao  
404-235-4998  
404-664-2805  
[nrpulse@gmail.com](mailto:nrpulse@gmail.com)

**NRIPulse Newspaper** is the monthly print edition of [www.NRIPulse.com](http://www.NRIPulse.com), and is published by NRIPulse Media Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, duplicated, reprinted or stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

**Disclaimer:** Any views or opinions published in this newspaper are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the publisher. NRIPulse News Magazine accepts no liability for the errors and content of advertisements in the newspaper.

**Subscriptions:** NRIPulse News Magazine is available FREE at major retail locations in Atlanta. Want NRIPulse at home? Only \$10 for six issues. Mail us a check/M.O (see address above) along with your mailing address.

# Lending A Helping Hand To Bhutanese Seniors

BY SURYA JILLUDIMUDI & RAJ RAZDAN

Atlanta: Senior Citizens Program (SCP), Shakti Mandir and SEWA International USA (SEWA) independently organize numerous events during the year and offer a variety of opportunities to get involved and make a positive difference in our respective communities. This recent can-do attitude of these partners joining hands made a big difference when they hosted a Senior Citizen event at the Shakti Mandir in south Atlanta on a hot July 18, 2010 to honor the Bhutanese seniors and other seniors with the purpose of benefitting the Bhutanese community who had to leave Bhutan in distress and sought refuge in Georgia a few years back.

The population of Bhutan mainly consisted of two communities of Drukpas and Lhotshampas. In 1985, as the domicile controversy gained notoriety with crisis proportion in Bhutan, the Bhutanese government began to expel ethnic Nepalese-Bhutanese and the Lhotshampas from Bhutan. For more than 15 years they lamented in UN refugee camps in Nepal. Resettlement camps/relief projects also emerged in Australia, Canada, Europe, etc. Subsequently and due to the generosity and the openness of the US society, the Bhutanese refugees were also allowed to migrate into various corners of the USA, including Georgia. Presently, as reported, there are 30,000 refugees in the USA which is expected to double by 2012, according to a SEWA- USA report.

Rallying for the relief efforts for the Bhutanese, the various Hindu organizations, especially SEWA USA (non-profit tax exempt organization), Hindu Temple of Atlanta, VHP, etc. have worked collaboratively and relentlessly since 2006 to help rehabilitate the Bhutanese refugees in the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Like any ethnic migration, they (Bhutanese) too underwent cultural as well as mental shock to adjust to the new environs without adequate funds to survive.

"Many times, a good idea becomes a catalyst for a rapid social transformation. Bhutanese migrants still have miles to go before they can overcome the overwhelming cultural and economic constraints. We have always believed that the challenges faced by the Bhutanese refugees in Georgia cannot be completely addressed by the well-meaning government alone but by a concerted effort and constant assistance by the diverse communities, especially Hindu communities of Georgia, towards the education, housing, transportation and employment needs of the Bhutanese migrants," said Swadesh Khatoch of SEWA USA.

Considering the magnitude of the crisis, the relief effort could not have been adequate. Nonetheless, the joint relief efforts slowly helped overcome the challenges faced by the migrant refugees from Bhutan. Since then, the Bhutanese migrant community has started adjusting to their new land of shelter, called America. Their children have started going to school and slowly endeavoring to be part of the cultural tapestry of the USA.

Shakti Mandir, a generous co-host of the Senior/Bhutanese July event:

Shakti Mandir co-hosted this socio-religious Senior Citizen event generously to benefit Bhutanese Refugee cause at their Temple in Lake City near Jonesboro. It was very obvious from the outset that all partners and the participants were inspired to do their bit of service to make this diverse planet a better place for all the communities.

As the Bhutanese and other senior members got

seated, the program commenced with the prayer song (aarthi), by the priest of the Shakti Mandir followed by various spiritual songs (Keerthans and Bhajans) with the backdrop of beautifully ordained deities. All the seniors participated in chanting of spiritual songs led by melodious community activist (and attorney)



Neera Bahl who was accompanied by social worker Sunny Thakker on the drums (Dholak).

The spiritual program was followed by a sumptuous lunch for the record attendance of 250 seniors including 150 Bhutanese from 10 different Apartment camps. The food was facilitated by volunteers Ashwin Patel, Bhiku Patel and other members of the Shakti Mandir team. Arranging of the vans for transportation of the seniors and other logistics were courtesy Bobby Patel of Shakti Mandir and SEWA-USA officials.

The highlight of the event was the Bazaar organized by the Senior Citizens to benefit the Bhutanese with clothes, household goods and other basic neces-

sities in their time of need. The clothing donations were largely due to the combined effort of the Sindhi Sabha of Atlanta, numerous families and individuals Asha Advani and Meenakshi Bhatia, and many other anonymous donors from Georgia. Even a computer was donated by Girish Modi-a senior himself.

"Volunteerism and Philanthropy was at its best considering the warm reception and the hospitality for over 250 participants was successfully executed. SEWA USA volunteers (helped by Shakti Mandir, Art of Living and SCP volunteers) came with a convoy of more than 20 vans and cars and handled the commute with grace and care," acknowledged jubilant Raj Razdan, Exe Director of the SCP. The yeoman effort of Shakti Mandir team, Co Sponsor (Dr Jaimini and Madhavi Dave), Senior Citizen Program volunteers (Shashi Sidhaye, Nalini Bhindi, Jyoti Dama, Bharti Patel, Ranjan Patel and many others) and SEWA-USA officials (Swadesh Katoch, Srikanth Konda, Surya Jilludimudi and Rakesh Pathak) was appreciated by presentation of bouquets to their Volunteers. The program turned to be a grand success providing a welcome change to an otherwise hackneyed life of the senior Bhutanese.

"This joint effort showcased how individuals can and should join hands to give back to their communities in the spirit of service and commitment for creating a positive change in the lives of a struggling Bhutanese refugee community in the USA. Such missions provide noble and selfless service opportunities for various Indian American organizations across Georgia to engage in collective public service activities that is bound to result in a happy and cohesive collaboration for a noble cause," Razdan added.



## ALL HINDU PRIEST SERVICES



**Mallikarjuna  
Sarma  
Swayampakula**  
*Hindu Priest*

**All Religious Services Performed  
Home & Community - Travel Anywhere**

- ◆ Astrology
- ◆ Vastu sasthanam
- ◆ Muhurthas
- ◆ Poojas, Vratas
- ◆ Homas, Weddings
- ◆ Cremations

(404)-483-9512 (Cell) (770)-573-4311 (Home)  
Email: [msswayampakula@yahoo.com](mailto:msswayampakula@yahoo.com)