

A Grand Celebration at Arya Samaj Greater Houston

Minu Garg and Bhushan Verma

After a four-day celebration of the Silver Jubilee of Arya Maha Sammelan of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha America (APSA) at Arya Samaj Greater Houston (ASGH), it seems as if it was a dream. Thanks to all the great ASGH teams who worked tirelessly for months preparing and for the last four days executing the plans for this event to near perfection.

The logistics/transportation and welcome/registration teams did a great job welcoming, transporting and making the visiting guests comfortable. Several guests commented that the transportation coordination and hotel arrangements were flawless. Kudos to all the members of these committees and over 20 volunteers who agreed to drive our guests with a smile whether from/to the airport or hotel or ASGH.

A parallel youth program was conducted in the DAVS building and went extremely well. The youth trip to NASA and Kemah were also organized very well by the youth committee. It was so good that over 10 adults tagged along on this fun trip. They all came back very happy thanks to the Youth team.

The meals team put together one of the best menus ever served in the last 10 Maha Sammelans. We even catered to their desire to have chooran to digest it! The only problem was people were fed too much too often with too good food. That is not a bad complaint to handle though. Thanks to the meals committee for doing such a stellar job.

The audio-visual team who, even though short-handed, did a fantastic job of juggling numerous microphones and recording most of the event. The new thing that we did for the first time in APSA was to provide live streaming of the event, which will most likely will be adopted for the future Sammelans. Still pictures were taken by two volunteers and played real-time on the lobby and dining hall TVs.

The cultural committee did an outstanding job of presenting a well coordinated and very high quality program that has set new standards for the APSA cultural events. From the beautiful singing of Shiv Sankalp Mantras by our little DAVMS champs to the reverberating sounds of our home-grown orchestra as well as the highly entertaining skits and songs, left the audience not only in awe but also full of respect for our cultural presentations. Each and every one of the performers pitched in to their fullest extent and made sure we maintained the honor of Arya Samaj, presented items that were completely in tune with the beliefs of our outstanding institution. On each evening our key singers, Smriti ji, Vinita ji and Priya and Richa Gulati all sang from their hearts and mesmerized the audiences.

When Ranjan ji presented the soul of "Bharat" skit, his passion for drama was very evident. The audiences were floored by all the wonderful costumes, their acting and specially the theme of

the play. The Modi ji curve ball was brilliant! People were doubling up watching Arnav make those hand movements like a "Neta". Rani Jhansi, Shivaji, Virjanand Ji, Swami ji, Bhagat Singh were all played very well.

The Havan committee prepared and conducted Yajna on the three Kunds on all three days with a clock-work precision. Prior to the Sammelan, the decoration team had done an excellent job decorating the lobby, main hall and dining hall with good taste and a fine ambiance that all visitors appreciated. Many other teams (communications, fund-raising, planning) worked in the background to make this Sammelan such a success.

It has been a huge endeavor for all the teams of ASGH, but certainly we have left a positive impression of our Arya Samaj, its Schools and all the wonderful people who were serving selflessly to make this a landmark celebration.