

# Ram Leela 2010

Ram Leela 2010 enthralls Houstonians



Lord Ram  
strings the  
Gandiva  
bow to win  
the hand of  
Sita in the  
Swayamvar.  
Photo: Bijay  
Dixit

The first ever Ram Leela presentation in Houston was a huge success in every sense — attendance, the scale and size of production, and applause and kudos from the audience.

Enacted by over 130 performers and students of the Kusum Sharma's Shri Natraj School of Dance (all local to Houston area), Ram Leela 2010, a theatrical style and dance enactment to glorify the life story of Shri Ram was presented on Oct. 23, Saturday, at Cullen Performance Hall, Univ. of Houston. The cast included close to 60 children of all ages.

The play was organized by Shri Sita Ram Foundation, USA (a non profit chaired by Dr. Arun Verma).

It was a feast to the eyes, ears and the soul, at the Cullen Performance Hall, University of Houston. The script was concise, costumes flown from India for the occasion were bright and colorful.

All the stage sets were elaborate and beautifully decorated by Anuradha ji of Mandap creations, Houston. The presentations were awesome, performances amazing and special effects spectacular.

The show was choreographed and directed by Kusum Sharma. The Play had the audience enthralled, enchanted and mesmerized during the three hour performance, with 1,500 full capacity crowd.

The audience cried, laughed and jumped off their seats in excitement all through the show. The show culminated with Ravaan Dahan on the stage. The special effects all through the show with fireworks at key junctions, confetti spread during Ram Sita wedding all added to the allure.

Countless compliments were showered by many on the organizers and the performers; e.g. Dr. V. Mathur said "The quality of the play was beyond any one's expectations". Dr. Durga Aggarwal chimed in that "It was equivalent to a Broadway quality show". Similar sentiments were expressed by numerous members of the audience. The play received standing ovation at the end of the performance. All in all an extraordinary play for the very first time in Houston.

The program was so spectacular and divine that many devotees in the audience felt the presence of Lord Ram among them.

Judge Ed Emmett honored 1st Ramleela in Houston by his presence, and brought in a proclamation declaring 23rd Oct. 2010 as the RAM LEELA DAY in Harris County.

Senator Cornyn and Gov. Rick Perry sent letters congratulating the Indian community and wishing them a Very Happy Diwali and Dussehra.

Congratulatory messages also were sent by Governor Rick Perry and Senator John Cornyn. Governor Perry said, "As Governor of Texas, it is my pleasure to extend greetings to everyone in the Indian community celebrating Dusshera and Diwali.

"Symbolizing the triumph of good over evil, the festival season of Dusshera and Diwali is a time for enthusiasm, hope and happiness. I commend you all for gathering to celebrate your ancestry, traditions and faith. Congratulations to Shri Sita Ram Foundation for organizing the first Ram Leela play in Houston. Your hard work is creating a stronger sense of friendship and unity within your community. First Lady Anita Perry joins me in sending best wishes to you all."

In his message to Houston Hindus, Senator John Cornyn said, "I send my best wishes to you on the occasion of Diwali. I recognize this festival holds great significance for Indian Americans and South Asian Americans alike, and I commend your efforts to bring together these communities.

"The message of tolerance, compassion, and victory of goodness over evil taught by Diwali presents reason for us all to celebrate, regardless of our religious or ethnic background. As Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and others come together to celebrate the festival of lights, we are reminded that as Americans, we cherish our right to freedom of religion.

"Moreover, I am pleased that this event reflects how the Houston area has become such a strong cultural center for Indian Americans. As many of you know, it is my privilege to serve as the co-chairman of the Senate India Caucus, which I founded to educate members of the Senate about the special relationship that exists between the United States and India. Cooperation between our two nations means not only increased economic opportunities, but is also built upon common commitment to fostering the fundamental principles of freedom, democracy, security, and the rule of law throughout the world.

"I appreciate having the opportunity to represent the interests of Texans in the United States Senate, and you may be certain that I remain committed to strengthening U.S.-India relations in the years to come."

Shri Sita Ram Foundation, USA plans a similar play with many new features next year in 2011, during the festive season of Dusshera & Diwali . In all likelihood this is expected to become an annual feature in Houston.

Shri Sita Ram Foundation, USA wishes to thank the Indian community, various organizations including members of Hindus of Greater Houston and the temples in Houston who supported the program. A heartfelt thanks are offered to all the performers who gave their 100%, and countless volunteers who selflessly worked to make this event an unforgettable one.