

The TFAS 25th Anniversary Celebrations Overview

- Anand Paluri, Convener; Ramakrishna Seethala, Co-Convener

Dear participants, volunteers and attendees of the TFAS 25th Anniversary Celebration:

On behalf of the TFAS Executive Committee and the Event Committees, we want to thank each one of you who is directly or indirectly involved in the success of this event. Undoubtedly, this is one of the, if not the, largest event undertaken by TFAS. Based on all the feedback we received so far, everyone seems to have enjoyed the program, food and the company. This would not have been possible without your assistance and participation. We want to thank you for that.

We had staggering number of people attend this event, which included a lot of on-site registrations. Our tradition of waiting until the last minute continued, irrespective of our best efforts to advertize the event and offer incentives for early registration. We do not claim that the event was flawless, as an event of this magnitude tends to have some minor hiccups and we had our share. We will learn from these and implement "lessons learned" on future events. Similar to what we learned during the lunch with lot of people waiting, we immediately improvised by dinner time and things went a lot smoother. One thing we can say is that all of us gave our best effort for this event and the results speak for themselves. We extend a special thanks to all the sponsors and vendors.

For those of you who have missed this event, following is a description based on a press release we put out immediately following the event:

Telugu Fine Arts Society celebrated its 25th Anniversary in a grand way at the Royal Albert Palace in Fords, New Jersey. The celebrations were kicked-off on May 23rd with a star-studded banquet dinner. Over 800 people were in attendance. TFAS recognized several individuals from local Telugu community for their excellence in Singing, Classical Dancing, Literature, IT, Business, Community Service, Youth Activities and Distinguished awards for services to TFAS organization. Entertainment was provided by local youngsters with beautiful dance numbers. Event Convener Anand Paluri presented the TFAS history and its role. Evening program included Swaramaadhuri a musical concert. Approximately 1,000 people attended this event, which was graced by the New Jersey Deputy Speaker and Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula. The 25th Anniversary special edition of Telugu Jyothi called "Prgathi" prepared under the guidance of Mr. Bhavaraju Murty and his committee members, was released on May 23rd by Assemblyman Chivukula and was distributed to all the attendees next day.

Main day celebrations were held on May 24th at the Royal Albert Palace. Over 2,500 people from across the USA including far away states like California, Texas, Kansas and Florida attended the day-long celebrations. The program started with His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Chinna Jeeyar Sawamiji lighting the lamp. This was followed by a prayer, dance "Telugu Vaibhavam" (written by Sri Jonnavittula and Sri Gangadhar was the singer/narrator)

by 100 youngsters who danced for 45-minutes non-stop to narrate Telugu literature from its origin to current times. The inaugural dance number was so vibrant that it brought joy of tears to many in attendance for the dedicated effort by the local children and the composition by the extremely talented local dance teachers. Guests from India in the audience and other US Telugu organizations wanted these kids to come to Hyderabad or to their events and give this performance. HH Swamiji talked about the spirituality, inner peace and happiness. The program continued with address to youth by Prof. Sudarshan Acharya, classical and non-classical dances, hari katha, mayala pakhir drama, fisherman (Jalari) dance, telugu pop songs by Naveen Dalawai, and many other attractive variety items. Vempati Ravishanker enthralled the audience with authentic Kuchipudi dance program. Mr. Mahesh Saladi, Arundhati, Girija Penumathy, Geeta Gollapudi and Manju Bhargava served as Master of ceremonies. The banquet day and main cultural programs were organized extremely well by Manju Bhargava with the help of Girija Kolluri and cultural committee. Registration was handled very well by Lakshmi and Ramanamurthy Mallela with the help of Indira Yelamanchi.

After the lunch, the event was graced by the Governor of New Jersey Jon S. Corzine who thanked the community for its contributions in the areas of cultural diversity, economy and various professional fields. The Governor then addressed the Business Seminar session that was held to provide timely information regarding the current economy, stimulus package, finances and investment, immigration and outlook for the future. Health and literary sessions were also held on parallel tracks. CME Credits session was headed by Dr. Ravi Venkataraman, where over 75 physicians attended. Literary session under the guidance of Dr. Janani Krishna was held. Over 200 people attend this session, where a Telugu jeopardy was held along with literary discussions.

The evening prime time program included dance and fashion show by the local youth and followed by a star fasted Dhamaka. Many artists from Tollywood were in attendance including Dr. Brahmanandam, Prakash Raj, Tarun, Rojaramani, Sunitha, Vinod Babu, Guruswamy, Ramana Murty, Kalpana, and Lahari. For the first time ever in the US four famous music tollywood directors, Chakri, G. Anand, Koti and Vandematharam Srinivas, all performed on the same stage and entertained the audience past the midnight.

The current Executive Committee consisting of President Damu Gedala, Vice President and co-convener Ramakrishna Seethala, Secretary and Convener of the Event Anand Paluri, Treasurer Indira Yelamanchi, Cultural Committee Chair Manju Bhargava, Membership Committee Chair Lakshmi Mallela, Youth Activities Chair Girija Kolluri, IT Chair Satya Nemana, and the Community Services Chair Rohinikumar Vemula, along with several event committee chairs, co-chairs and advisors worked hard for over 6-months to plan, organize and execute this event. The event was a grand success and was the

largest such event undertaken by the Organization. In celebrating this event Mr. Paluri said that this is the time to reflect on achievements of the past and recognize those who have selflessly dedicated their resources for the common good in promoting culture, heritage and literature. However, moving forward a vision must be created and the current charter of the organization must be revisited to address the current social conditions and needs. TFAS is a non-profit organization formed in 1984 to expose the second generation of Telugu children to the culture and values of Andhra Pradesh. President Gedala expressed his gratitude for the hard work that was put in by several individuals to pull off this event.

New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine, CEO of NJ School Construction Corporation Kris Kolluri and Assemblyman and Deputy Speaker Upendra Chivukula were in attendance during the business session to share their insights into current economic conditions and various

business opportunities. TFAS recognized the past presidents and presented Distinguished Services Award to Dr. K.V. Rao and Jyothi Rao and Aadarshadampatulu award to Ramakrishna and Vijaya Chalikonda and remembered the services provided by Late Kidambi Ragunath and Late Jonnada Ramakrishna.

Another highlight of the celebrations was Andhra Style lunch and dinners which everyone enjoyed. The Organizing Committee recognized Mr. Albert Jasani, Managing Director of the Royal Albert Palace for the service.

Several attendees complemented that this event is one of the best Telugu program in recent years in North America. The event was well covered by TV9, TV4, TV Asia, MAA TV and American Telugu TV.

The organizers of the event, President Gedala, Convener Paluri and Co-Convener Seethala thanked all the donors and volunteers for supporting the event.



