

# RAKSHA BANDHAN 2018

On Thursday the 26th of July, Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia Inc – South Australia (VHP SA) chapter, created history by organising the first ever Raksha Bandhan in SA.

VHP SA, host and coordinator of the HOTA Forum (Hindu Organisations, Temples & Associations) of South Australia for the year 2018, chose to celebrate Raksha Bandhan due to its strong focus on family values, female empowerment and the celebration of universal fellowship.



Aim of HOTA forum is to facilitate interconnectivity among the various Hindu organisations and to create additional value with greater focus on the needs of the local Hindu community.

The event was very successful in presence of over 250 community leaders and representatives from 36 organisations of Australians who came here from across 5 different countries - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Fiji and Nepal.

The event was hosted by young MC's - Smt. Varuni Badrinath, Smt. Nisha Kanhangad and Smt. Deepti Pandey and - featuring performances by local artists.



Smt. Varuni Badrinath, Smt. Nisha Kanhangad and Smt. Deepti Pandey hosting the event.



Students of Vedic and Cultural Centre of Australia chanting shlokams.

In the backdrop of shlokam chanting by young students of Vedic and Cultural Centre of Australia (VCCA), the event started by Deepa Prajawalan (lighting lamp) by a group of esteemed female community leaders. After the prayers, children sang the Australian National Anthem.

A Bharatanatyam solo performance by Dr Geetha Sadagopan gave a wonderful start to the cultural performances with the blessings of Ganesh.



Dr Geetha Sadagopan and members of Bangladesh Puja and Cultural Association entertaining the audience.

Soon after, the team from Bangladesh Puja and Cultural Association, performed to the song of Nila Anjanaghana Kunj by the legend Rabindranath Tagore and left everyone mesmerised.

In the welcome address, VHP SA President Shri Rajendra Pandey explained the idea behind Raksha Bandhan event with the need for organisations and community to come together for tackling the bigger and wider issues that are of critical importance for not only our development in Australia but also for wellbeing of our people.



Rajendra Pandey addressing the welcome speech.

Rajendra Pandey exhorted the community leaders to focus on imbibing Hindu traditions in their communities as our Vedic values promote respect for women. He emphasized that the increase in

rate of domestic violence can only be curbed by prevention and for that we have to go back to Vedas and our Dharma.

Ms Katrine Hildyard MP, Shadow Minister of Multicultural Affairs, attended the conference representing Leader of Opposition Hon Peter Malinauskas. She addressed the community organisations gathered together and applauded Vishva Hindu Parishad for providing a platform where people from diverse backgrounds can connect with each other.



Ms Katrine Hildyard



Ms Angela Evans

Ms Angela Evans, Mayor of City of Charles Sturt, addressed the audience on behalf of the council and encouraged the organisations to co-operate with each other for achieving better outcomes for the community. She praised the idea of finding the religious belief as a common thread that binds the 35 different organisations and using it to coordinate the effort to make South Australia prosperous and to strengthen Australia.

Smt. Nisha Kanhangad, VHP volunteer, stressed on the spiritual importance of Rakhee and its origin. She highlighted that traditional Rakhi or Raksha is offered by Sisters to bless their brothers and not seek protection. This is similar to the Raksha tied in by priests when we visit temples or organise religious sacraments.

Special guests of the evening – from Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS), South Australian Police (SAPOL) and South Australian Ambulance Services (SAAS); were honoured for their protective service to the community by Hindu community women, who tied rakhee's to the representatives to thank them and to bless them.

The community leaders were then invited to tie rakhee to a person they didn't know before to establish a caring relationship. Everyone then participated in a vow, 'I am tying this Rakhi as a promise to protect you and together we will protect Australia'.

Each organisation was introduced individually to rest of the gathered community members, to help forge a relationship that will last a life-time.



Shri Raja Mohan Kambhoji, President of Shri Shirdi Saibaba Community and Cultural Org of SA, accepting the baton of HOTA Forum from the host of 2018.

Each year a new partner organisation nominates to be the host for the HOTA forum. Shri Raja Mohan Kambhoji, President of Shri Shirdi Saibaba Community and Cultural Org of SA, accepted the baton of HOTA Forum to host 2019 events. In his acceptance speech, Shri Raja Mohan highlighted his vision for the organisation, activities of the centre.



Shri Kambhoji: highlighting vision of Shri Shirdi Saibaba Community and Cultural Org of SA

Hon Jing Lee MLC, Assistant Minister to the Premier, congratulated Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia for bringing together 35 organisations from 5 different countries together. She spoke about spirituality in Buddhist tradition and related it to the Sanatan Dharma followed by Hindus. She expressed her support for the initiative of coordinating HOTA Forum in South Australia and urged the community organisations to continue to support each other.

She referred to the reason as to why number '8' is considered lucky number for Chinese Buddhists and how it signifies infinity and the eightfold path that is important for her community and encouraged the Hindu community to live by their Dharma too.



Hon Jing Lee MLC: impact and interconnectivity of santana dharma with other religions of the world.

A major focus of the evening was the 'Tejaswini – Woman of Substance' awards. Hon Jing Lee presented Tejaswini award and certificates to all winners that included Dina Giriprasad from Saaketham Adelaide; Manju Khadka Regmi from Adelaide Nepali Samaj Australia; Neeta Naik from Adelaide Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav Samiti; Neha Pritesh Patel from Shree Swaminarayan Temple Adelaide (under Narnarayan Dev, Bhuj Kutch);



Winners of Tejaswini – Woman of Substance awards with Hon Jing Lee.

Dr. Tripti Kana Dey from Bangladesh Puja and Cultural Society of South Australia; Hinabahen Patel from Shirdi Saibaba Community and Cultural Organisation of SA; Sasilekha S Nair from Bharthyeea Hindu International Malayalee Association; Kavitha Tangeda from South Australian Telangana Association.

A panel of independent judges reviewed all the nominations to pick one person who had contributed the most to Hindu community in South Australia and unanimously agreed on Dr Tripti Kana Dey. Hon Jing Lee handed over the winning trophy to Dr Dey to recognise her for the unwavering commitment to the Hindu community.

Hon Jing Lee also honoured 36 Volunteer Award winners nominated by each HOTA Partner organisation. 13 Youth Award winners received a



Volunteer award winners with Hon Jing Lee.

certificate and a personal letter from Hon Jing Lee. The Assistant Minister and VHP SA co-contributed to the cash prize of \$50 that was given to each young person as a prize money to encourage them to continue pursuing interests in community work, religion and classical art forms.



Dr Tripti Kana Dey: inspiration to her self-less volunteering work.



Youth award winners with Hon Jing Lee.



Members of the Bharateeya Hindu International Malayalee Association performing Chenda.

**Detailed list of award recipients is available in the souvenir (insert hyperlink).**

The final performance of the night was a traditional Kerala Chenda (drum) ensemble from Bharateeya Hindu International Malayalee Association. They kept the audience throughout their performance at their feet.

Ms Helena Kyriazopoulos, CEO of MCCSA, acknowledged the performers by giving each of them tokens of appreciation.

All of the performances were of the highest quality and a testament to the diverse and ancient art forms of the subcontinent. Showing a variety of different skills and talents, the artists were impeccable in their preparation and output.



Ms Helena Kyriazopoulos handing over tokens of appreciation.



Dayawati Pandey representing Hindu Women Forum facilitating the chief guest.

Volunteers of Hindu Women Forum facilitated the special guests by handing over Tulasi plant to each one.

A formal vote of thanks was presented by Shri Ritesh Waghela, from BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, the host for HOTA Forum in the year 2020.

The gathering concluded with a gala dinner.



Ms Helena Kyriazopoulos handing over tokens of appreciation.



Volunteers of the Vishva Hindu Parishad - SA chapter, the backbone of the event, posing with the chief guests.