

||Om Shri Gurubhyo Namah||

Shri Bhavanishankaraya Namah

Shri Matre Namah

Shri Dattaguru Sankirtana

“Digambara Digamabara Shripada Vallabha Digambara”

Talmaki Wadi resounded with these divine chants on 18th of December 2010. The Mumbai Prarthana Varga staged its Annual play on Lord Dattatreya on the eve of Shri Datta Jayanti Raupya Mahotsava.

“Guru's grace is indispensable. One has to surrender oneself totally and unreservedly at the feet of the Guru. His Grace awakens 'Jnana' (illumination) by which we can recognize the Reality of Brahman, which is the real self of all.”- One of the principle tenets of the Dattatreya tradition was revisited and reinforced through the depiction of Lord Dattatreya's Avatara in a dramatized version enacted by 136 Prarthana children trained by 36 teachers from 17 Prarthana Centres in Mumbai.

Flashback Nov 29th 2009- our beloved H.H. Sadyojat Shankarashram Swamiji in a discussion regarding the theme for the next year's Prarthana play, directed that since 2010 would be the silver jubilee year of the Datta Jayanti Mahotsava organised by the All Chitrapur Saraswat Youths Trust, the dramatisation should be on Lord Dattatreya.

The Prarthana play was scheduled for 18th December. Prarthana Core team members, teachers and children were, since May, involved in putting together yet another mega event. This was the Samuhika Gurupujan to be performed by Prarthana children all over India and USA on 29th of October 2010.

There was no time to lose now! Sudhir Balwally maam, Project Manager for the event, visualized and scripted the play. With less than three weeks in hand it was a challenge indeed to put the entire act together, choreograph the dances, set the music, and decide on the costumes, the sets and props. Keeping in mind the need for austerity in view of the theme, the sets and the props were kept minimalistic. Experience of the past years helped in planning and organizing this drama production. Skits and dances were allotted based on the number and age group of children in each Prarthana Centre.

Teachers then began regular practices with Sudhir maam keeping an eagle eye on each Centre, guiding and instructing the teachers when required. He visited Prarthana Centres along with Shrikala Nalkur, an enthusiastic Yuvati from Borivali, who choreographed the dances to the music given by the very talented Darshan Kulkarni, a Grant Road Yuva. Shrikala travelled as far as Virar and Dadar to teach the dances, and Darshan spent long hours composing the music tracks with Sudhir maam and then rehearsing with Vaishnavi Balwally and Kaivalya Nadkarni our talented in-house vocalists. Yuva-s Pranav Nagarkatte from Goregaon and Abhang Gulwadi from Pune provided accompaniment on the tabla. Vaidehi Savnal, a Dadar Yuvati, researched and provided the scenewise background photos & pictures. Riddhima Savkur, yet another Yuvati from Talmakiwadi choreographed the 'Kolto' scene of the play.

Geeta Koppikar pachi best known for her special effect tricks on stage, ingeniously and magically created a miniature 'Dattatreya' with the help of three little children from Goregaon and Khar. This trio was amused by the amount of attention they received and thoroughly enjoyed their moment on stage.



Smita Nagarkatte pachi who was costume consultant for the production studied the entire script and decided to keep the costumes simple yet elegant to match the era. She guided the teachers about the kind of head gear, 'malas' and attire suitable for each of the characters. We are sincerely grateful to - our

sponsors who have specifically requested anonymity, parents who got outfits stitched for their children specially for the event, all our well-wishers and the maams & pachis of Talmakiwadi for their wholehearted, unstinting support.

A grand rehearsal was scheduled on a day prior to the final performance wherein children got the actual feel of the stage and the placement of spot lights and mikes. Feedback was given as and when necessary to teachers and children by our director Sudhir maam. On the day of the final performance 18th Dec, children and teachers came in early to rehearse as much as they could. Soon it was time for dressing up and getting ready for the show. Jaipal Mallapur maam ensured that there were plenty of batata-wadas and lots of mango juice to go around. Every child, teacher and volunteer-parent needed plenty of energy to last through the entire evening!



The drama opened with an understanding of the Datta Avatara. **Dattatreya** – a Universal Guru manifested in the recess of time of 'Kaliyuga'. Shri Dattatreya had **twenty four** teachers from nature "many are my preceptors", he told King Yadu, "selected by my keen sense, from whom acquiring wisdom freely, I wander in the world.... **The earth, air/breeze, sky, fire, the sun, pigeon, python, sea, moth, elephant, ant, fish, Pingala the courtesan, arrow-maker, infant/playful boy, the moon, honeybee, deer, bird of prey, maiden,**

serpent, spider, caterpillar and water are my twenty four preceptors. Some of these perceptions with their underlying lessons were presented by the children to the engrossed audience.



The play then went on to enumerate the incarnations of Lord Dattatreya- Shripada Shrivallabha, Shriguru Shri Narasimha Saraswati, Shri Gajanan Maharaj and Sai Baba of Shirdi. Special focus was given to our own Shri Chitrapur Guruparampara, it is believed that H.H Shankarashram Swamiji II is none than Lord Dattatreya Himself. Our Samaj has been blessed twice over since. H.H.Pandurangashram Swamiji is also believed to be an incarnation of Lord Dattatreya. The Datta Jayanti Mahotsava

at Talmaki Wadi was started with the blessings of H.H. Parijnanashram Swamiji III twenty five years ago. The Mahotsava is now one of the main annual events celebrated under the aegis of Shri Chitrapur Math. This is nothing but the grace of Lord Dattatreya in the form of H.H Parijnanashram Swamiji III.



The story was narrated in a Kirtankar's style with narration interspersed with kirtans glorifying Lord Dattatreya. This provided the Prarthana children with a platform to display a variety of skills, whether it was dialogue delivery during narration, singing during the kirtans or dancing. The presentation held the audience in rapt attention with its unique style all through.

The ultimate finale was a splendourous sight to watch. The senior Prarthana boys held the "palki" which seated the pratima-s of His Divine Grace Parama Pujya Parijnanashram Swamiji III and of Lord Dattatreya. The Talmaki wadi pachis rapturously sang the Arati and bhajans. Children, teachers and the audience too joined in. It was a divine sight to watch Parama Pujya Sadyojat Shankarashram Swamiji taking the arati during the



palki. Thus concluded yet another memorable event and the Prarthana children and teachers, grateful for the opportunity to do something special for Pujya Swamiji, offer it all at the lotus feet of our Beloved Guru and Guruparampara.

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