

Maharashtra Foundation's Annual Fund Raising Event, 2012

Generally it is very busy for Indian communities in last few months of the year. Navaratri festival, family Diwali celebrations, the American tradition of "Thanks Giving" and then Christmas to end the year keep us socially busy. Maharashtra Foundation (MF) also holds its annual fund raising event around the same time. Last year the event was held on 27th October 2012. It was a pleasant evening at WW-Plainsboro High School SOUTH, New Jersey. Manisha Kelkar, a dedicated social worker from the U.S was the key note speaker and Kumar Ketkar, a reputed journalist from Maharashtra was present as chief guest.



Approx. 200 well-wishers and supporters of Foundation attended the evening. The program started with Maharashtra Foundation Geet. On behalf of board of directors of Maharashtra Foundation, Vinata Kulkarni, the Emcee for the evening, welcomed the audience, guests and key note speaker. MF President Shaila Vidwans introduced MF's work. After introduction of the key note speaker and chief guest, Shaila Vidwans felicitated these dignitaries. Plaques were presented to outgoing members of the board Anirudha Kinare and Anjali Limaye. Mr. Ramesh Sarva, who has been associated with the Foundation since its inception and who assisted in MF's financial and accounting work for more than 25 years was also felicitated. In appreciation of his work for the MF, Vishwas Sahasrabhojani who is MF's volunteer/liaison person in Nagpur and who has been coordinating MF's work in India for past several years also was presented a plaque which his friend accepted on his behalf.



Kumar Ketkar is a vice president of South Asian Free Media Association with offices in Lahore and Delhi. He is involved in women's movement in South Asian countries. He shared his thoughts with his insightful speech.

He said that there are 2 billion people in South Asia, almost one third of the global population, of which 1 billion are women. Many of these women are missing from birth or later. The threat to women is not only from the economic sanctions but also from social and cultural sanctions that the fundamentalists impose on women. He mentioned case of attack on Malala by Taliban and said that thankfully despite the fundamentalist atmosphere, 1000's of women gathered to protest against Taliban. He commented on how the abortion issue was affecting the election pattern in U.S. also and that "global human cause/global women cause" needs to be addressed.

Manisha Kelkar has been Executive Director of Manavi, a women's rights

organization based in NJ, USA that works to end violence against women. She has been involved in social justice and social change work. She shared her valuable work experience. Six women working on violence against South Asian women came together to form



Manavi in 1985. When people are hurt, they need help "right now" and that is how "Safe House" or Asiana came into existence. She also talked about Legislation "VAWA" – Violence Against Women Act which provides special assistance in domestic violence cases.

After Manisha Kelkar's speech, there was a presentation of MF's journey through a short- 10 minutes DVD film. The Youth Team, Sharmilee Vaidya, Shreya Marathe, Shruti Marathe and Sanjeevane Vidwans, presented information about foundation's various projects.

Shirsh Gupte, Ankush Karnik, and Hemant Marathe explained the various ways to the audience, for how

they could help in Maharashtra foundation's projects.



The audience was generous and sum of \$181,000 was collected in donations and pledges during a short span of 30 minutes.

After a short break for soft drinks and snacks, the program resumed with one of the attractions of this fund raising event, an English Play "Tryst with Destiny", written and directed by Amita Deepak Jha. It was presented by Washington DC area artists. The play started with scenes from Gujrat of early 20th century. It was a great experience to watch a real brilliant play. Director Amita Jha's research and visual backdrops were very creative.

The rendering by all artists was magnificent. Gandhiji and Jinha were stunning. Nehru also was superb and displayed the emotional exhaustion very well. Maulana was perfect to express the Congress Muslim mindset. Director took a rational and balanced perspective of the dilemmas and frustrations of the leaders at that time.

However, there was no reference, direct or indirect - to Subhashchandra Bose and Sardar Patel. In spite of its serious nature, the play was very well received by the audience, taking them through the time machine experience.

Ankush Karnik, Maharashtra foundation's board member, expressed vote of thanks to all, without whom, this event would have been impossible.

MF fund-raising event has been the tradition for many years. It is possible to hold such events only because of all donors and supporters of the Foundation. Also the volunteers put in tremendous efforts to bring about such events and the board of directors of Maharashtra Foundation takes special note of the support of these volunteers. The evening ended with a sumptuous dinner.

- Shaila Vidwans

Below are few moments captured from the Play: Tryst with Destiny"

