

## Festive Mood Marks Ramanavami and Vishu Celebrations

By Nimmi Raghunathan

TUSTIN, CA – **T**he Chinmaya Mission ‘Mithila’ center here, was the hub of festivities over the weekend of April 12 and 13 when Ramanavami and the Kerala new year Vishu, was celebrated in traditional style.

\*\*\* *Ramanavami* \*\*\*



Devotees gathered in front of the altar where the ‘Ram Parivar’ deities are enshrined, on April 12 to chant the Sundarkand.



In well coordinated tones, they sang the glory of the Lord in the evocative verses of Sant Tulsidas.



The same evening saw the gathering of young, local talent. The cultural program opened with a Ram bhajan rendered by the students of the Irvine-based music teacher, Padma Kutty.



This was followed by a slew of classical music and dance items as well as skits presented by 60 children. While parents stood by with pride, nervousness and confidence went hand in hand for the little ones and youth as they staged their items.





By the end of the three hour program, everyone was in concurrence that culture and talent was being nurtured well in the community. On April 13 while the two balavihar sessions were in progress, adults were led in a Ram puja and imparted words of wisdom by Chinmaya Mission Los Angeles' head acharya, Swami Ishwarananda.



\*\*\* Vishu \*\*\*



The evening of April 13 saw over 150 people congregate and participate in the Tamil and Kerala new year celebrations. While it was of significance for people from Kerala, the crowd itself drew more than a fair share of people from other linguistic backgrounds. For them it was a cultural treat: the symbolic decorations, the prayers and the food were all in the time-honored style.



In one corner of the hall was ensconced a mirror flanked by two pillars bearing lit lamps and in front were a number of fruits including a priceless, giant jackfruit! While the mirror reflected the earth's bounty multifold, devotees hoped for the same kind of prosperity for the coming year. In keeping with this, the Lakshmi Ashtothara Archana was performed.



Swami Ishwarananda touching upon the human yearning for happiness and the constant clamor for more, in his new year message asked that devotees look within and be grateful for what is already there.



Prior to this the celebrations began with a Lalitha Sahasra Namavali and the Lalitha Ashtothara Archana to mark two years of Devi puja being conducted at Mithila.



Resident Acharya at 'Kasi' center, Br.Girish Chaitanya quoting from several texts including the Devi Mahatmaym from the Markendeya Purana, spoke of the significance and primacy of Devi upasana. Those in attendance were led by CMLA devotees in melodious bhajans invoking several gods from the pantheon.



At the conclusion, all present were served prasad which consisted of a conventional Kerala festival meal prepared by volunteers.



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