

ANNUAL REPORT AT THE GENERAL BODY MEETING
Bharatiya Temple of Lansing
December 6, 2009

Manohar D. Naga, Chair, Board of Trustees

My Dear Friends,

2009 has been a very interesting year. It started off as a very tough year. The mortgage payments started this year and our funds dried up. An austerity plan, namely tightening our belts, was implemented. We tried to figure out how to improve our revenues. The first thing we thought about was how to attract more people to the temple and utilize our facilities. We have to have more programs here. We relaxed the rental policy so that the temple could be utilized better. We also asked our members to conduct programs every Sunday.

For our 1st Sunday program we requested Mrs. Meena Sharma to come back and take a lead and I think this program is being conducted and attended very well. Mr Ajay Bhargava took the lead in the 2nd Sunday program with birthday and anniversary havan. This has been a very successful program. Under the leadership of Mr. Gyan Taneja, Mr. Jaglan and the Arya Samaj group, the third Sunday havan program has been going well. On 4th Sundays, Jain families have been conducting program. Along with it Mrs. Seethalakshmy Gopal has taken the lead in conducting Vishnu Sahasranaam recitation program.

We started doing concerts at the temple. We would like to expand these programs with more community involvement. This year, as part of a health initiative, we did a walkathon in August with great success, not only as a community event but also as a fund-raiser. It raised about thirty thousand dollars. We propose that this become an annual event of the temple to be conducted on first Saturday in August every year.

As we completed this beautiful facility, East Lansing High School asked us if they could host the Baccalaureate function at our temple. We were successful in hosting this event with our friend here, Pratin Trivedi, coordinating. This was a very successful event with our children looking back at our institution with great pride. Such a program had never been hosted here.

We also did SETU – our anniversary program, and a weekend retreat conducted by Swami Bodhananda with sponsorship by Vivek Subramanian and others.

Our festivals, every one of them, have been a great success. These festivals have been run as a focus group managed in a very successful fashion. Each focus group raises a lot of money and also does the event in a very organized fashion and this again is a tribute to our great community. This is all conducted in a beautiful manner and this may be something we should capitalize upon in how we run our temple.

Our Balvihar program is also run steadily and consistently by Mrs. Shashi Karve. Our youth program is being run by Madan and Dianne Syal. Bhagavad Gita classes are managed beautifully by Dr. C.A. Reddy.

Finally, our kitchen has been completed under the leadership of Dr. Sudhakar Kulkarni.

Twelve families in our community led by Dr. Sundari Rajan have supported the soup kitchen this year.

During this year as we managed our cash situation, we have a long standing policy with our priests that I would like to share with you. That is when they go out for priest services we encourage our devotees to write the checks for their services to the temple only. Our community has a tradition of giving cash dakshina to the priests. Despite the policy being in place, this continues. This year the Board took the position that these dakshinas received by the priests shall be reported. This requires only reporting the sum received and not share it with the temple. This created a rift between priests and the Board. The Board stands by its position that all compensation should be reported.

The above was the report for 2009. Now let me give you my views on where we go from here in 2010.

When we created the constitution we created rules for becoming member of the temple. One of the deterrents we have in attracting new members is the requirement to have paid at least \$250 in donations to the temple. This is on top of the \$150 that is required for annual membership. This is difficult to some families and to a lot of young families that we have. So the Board will be proposing a constitutional amendment to do away with this requirement and make membership contingent simply on paying the annual membership dues. Also there is a request to change the annual dues for membership. The \$150 per year was established long time ago and that number needs to be revised.

The Board will deliberate on the revised numbers and a request will be sent to the members in the first quarter of 2010 to approve. The constitution committee will be lead by Sunit Patke.

We have a beautiful facility, our kitchen is well equipped. We need to look at how to provide lunches every Sunday by a team of volunteers, have people sponsor the event and ask people to pay a small fee to get lunch at the temple like other temples so the kitchen can generate some revenues.

We have a large, young, transient community in our town that come here and who are willing to pay for services. We need to restructure the services and payments so more services are available and generate revenue.

Once one of our priests left during this year, we went out to look for a replacement priest and invited applications. We received applications from a lot of good candidates. We have not made a final determination and kept our options open. We have to look at our

budget for next year. The priest selection committee has interviewed some candidates including the temporary priest and one priest in India.

The election nominating committee headed by Mr.Minesh Mody has had difficulties in attracting volunteers to serve on the board of trustees. Based on my involvement and studies, being associated with our temples over many years, I also had discussions with past Chairpersons of our temple and looked at other temples. They use a different structure for management of the temple. They use two levels, one level of operating board and one level of executive board. The executive board looks at policy setting, fund raising, long term vision, etc. The operating board looks after day to day operations of the temple. In an effort to attract younger people I would like to propose this. On a trial basis for the next year create an operating board of seven people who will look after Kitchen, religious services, Balvihar, Facility mgmt, cultural programs, spiritual discourses, and rental services.

One of the impressions, from talking to the young people, seems to be that to serve on the board you either have to be rich or old or both. I think that is wrong impression and all are welcome here.

Another important thing that we look forward to is that it is 12 years since the consecration and it is time for us to do the Kumbhabhishekam. A lot of planning will have to go into this function

I thank all my associate members for a great job working with me this past year to serve our community. I thank all of you and the Lord for having given me this opportunity to serve.