

## Jai Jinendra and Jai Shri Krishna



Our modesty stops us from blowing our trumpet. But I feel that we have achieved in one year far more than ever before.

I have broken this report in three parts:

1. Functions we have been organising for many decades. Here we have improved considerably
2. New functions and improvements to our home that have been done in a short time. Here we have made significant improvements.
3. Major outstanding items

All our programs have been a roaring success.

**The Vadil** group were allowed this year to form their own committee to run and organise their functions without interference from the main body. I have to say this has been a hugely successful exercise and the Vadil members are happy with the set up. With vigour and enthusiasm, they have also applied for a grant and by the time this goes to press you will be aware of nearly £9700 grant obtained. We are grateful to Surbhiben Khona for conducting Yoga classes for the Vadils, and to Shakuben and the volunteers for providing hot delicious lunch on Fridays.

Nitin Parekh was the coordinator for Ram Navmi celebrations held on 4<sup>th</sup> April. Bhajan and kirtans were provided by Rajubhai Parmar and party. About 125 attended, with Mahaprasad being prepared in house by Shakuben and volunteers.

This year the **Janmastmi** celebrations on 8<sup>th</sup> August were the most successful ever in the history of Navnat. For the first time we had a non EC member, Mukeshbhai Dadia from Vaishnav Vaniks as a coordinator and Ramesh Shah as a shadow co-ordinator. The inclusiveness and thorough planning with countless meetings paid dividends. We had over 35 stalls with an overall attendance in excess of 1,500. On our beautifully mowed field, all had good time. Outdoors, the stalls that requested power had unlimited supply for stalls. Indoors in the main Hall we had religious programs - the Krishna dance presented by a South Indian Group particularly held everybody's attention. For the first time we started having in house control of the sound system. We had MPs and local Councillors in attendance and support from the Fire Brigade and the Police.

**Paryushan** was celebrated from 17<sup>th</sup> Aug to 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. Bhupendrabhai was the main co-ordinator. We had morning and evening lectures by Tej Shahib, which proved to be very interesting with Tej bhai touching on everyday subjects. Hot lunch and evening meals were cooked in house by the volunteers lead by our Shakuben. They even slept on the premises to provide this excellent service during Paryushan. I feel that we should appreciate their services. Please join me in a round of applause for all the volunteers. Evening Bhavna was provided by Vikram Nizama and party.

**The Diaro** was held on 28<sup>th</sup> August with. Bharat Varia as the co-ordinator. Again a hugely successful and sold out event. Music from Vikram Nizama and party kept us entertained till early hours. After an initially noisy start, we soon adjusted the sound levels. This was the first time that a vast majority of the attendees stayed to the end until the musicians stopped out of tiredness. It makes all the hard effort put in organising an event worthwhile when we witness such enjoyment by our community members. Truly rewarding.

**The annual Pritibhojan** was held on 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. Mahendrabhai Kothary was the main coordinator. Again a lot of preparation work had gone in which enabled us to have a very smooth flow of our Navnatees for food. Of course this would not have been possible without the help of our volunteers, both inside and outside, assisting with car parking and security etc. I would like to thank all the volunteers without whose help such functions would not be possible. I would like to thank the Bhagini, Youth, Bridge Club and the Vadils for their help. For the first time, we have now created a volunteers data base.

This year we did something very different at PritiBhojan. We provided the following health assessment clinics; cardiac, dental, eye and anti smoking. Dr Ameet Bakhai organised the medical side. This was a hugely successful event and we had problems in restricting who could benefit as most attendees wanted to avail of this facility. The upstairs gallery, above the main entrance to Hall was used. Perhaps in future, we may need to consider having a separate large marquee. The support from the medical field was truly impressive. Our thanks to Dr Ameet Bakhai.

Please join me in applauding the team in medical camp including all the volunteers who had the tough job of initial screening.

**Navratri** was celebrated from 19<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> Sept. Bharatbhai Parekh was the coordinator, with music supplied by our trusted Vikram Nizama and party. Week day attendance was less than 150 but Fri and Sat we had strict control and did not allow more than 750 following the complaints received in previous years of high numbers causing chaos. We had a visit from Tony McNulty, Harrow MP and Cllr Navin Shah, member of London Assembly. They congratulated us on increasing our cultural activities.

This year with the car parking lights having been installed, the security was much less of a problem.

Again with the help of Bhagini and Youth, the festival was very smooth running.

We have to applaud a very young man Vikesh N Doshi. He is only 17 but looked after our sound system and video projections on a totally voluntary basis, thus saving us a small fortune in fees.

**Chopda Pujan** was celebrated on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. This was an exceptional event as the Maharaj (priest) did not turn up. In the true community spirit Anilbhai Parekh took over the ceremony and with the help of others we successfully completed the Chopda Pujan. I was fortunate to be present with Nitinbhai Parekh and we partook in the ceremony for Navnat.

Sadly we had to cancel the Diwali celebration, as very little interest was shown. Perhaps the damage done in previous years will take time to remedy.

**Kitchen Activities.** Shakuben and the volunteers manage our kitchen and regularly cook in house for the Friday Vadil group. Their service has been above the call of normal volunteering sewa and I sincerely feel that we should applaud the dedication of these silent volunteers

**Graduation.** This event is regularly in part sponsored by Jayantilal Vithalji Doshi and family. Rameshbhai Shah has been a long time coordinator. He has selflessly given time in organising this annual event and has got it down to a fine art. The average attendance is 50 graduates. This year, to encourage higher attendance, the guest prices were reduced by 50%. We appreciate the hard work done by Rameshbhai.

**Navnat Darpan** has improved drastically in quality and the costs have been reduced. One side of A4 page costs us approximately £80. Increasingly more material is going on to the Website. A subcommittee has been formed led by Reshma Mehta. She has also admirably done the editors job in Jayubhai Doshi's absence. Reshma, Jayubhai and the sub com are doing a very difficult and at times thankless task. In my mind both of them are doing a wonderful job in keeping our members informed. They need to be applauded.

Nitin Parekh, **Treasurer**, has implemented financial controls to ensure proper accounting of all income and expenses. He has also presented regular Management **accounts** and prepared full year's budget. In my memory this is a first. He submitted the accounts to Auditors in time and all the queries have been answered. We shall have signed audited accounts by the time this article is published. Again Nitin has diligently worked extremely hard in getting the accounts ready on time. We also appreciate the support from his family as he was in the middle of moving house, running his practice and still managed to prepare the accounts on time.

**Variety show/40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** was celebrated with full razzmatazz on 20<sup>th</sup> March. The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary coordinator was Nemish K Mehta. His team included, Roopal Mehta (Youth), Amit Lathia (Youth) and Dhiru Galani. For the first time all the seats were sold within 2½ weeks. A lot of hard preparation was undertaken from stage lighting to practice by participants. It would be difficult to include all the names of the volunteers but I shall risk it and name some who I believe have contributed exceptionally. Radha Malkan did a tremendous job of decorating the Hall. Vikesh Doshi and Anuj Dodhia for their contribution in sound, lighting and staging, Reshma Mehta in producing the souvenir, Preety Mehta a general assistant for Variety Show, Roopal and Amit in chasing all the participants and ceaseless practice sessions. No doubt there are lots more volunteers from kitchen help to graphics design without whose help this function would not have been of such a high standard. Nemish, Roopal and Amit have undergone rapid induction and hands on training and have learnt to stay calm against all odds. Again this is a remarkable contribution, full of enthusiasm from these young people especially in their first year in Office. This was a joint production with Bhagini and Youth.

The **Navnat web** site is another success story. As promised at the last AGM, the web site was up and running by April 2009. Controlled by our webmaster Nemish Mehta, the site is up to date with latest news and pictures of

events and functions. The success of Announcement for prathnas, sadadi, education achievements, births, deaths and other events is truly remarkable. There are 946 Navnatees registered on our website. Only registered folks receive announcements. I am thankful to Nemish for his dedication in increasing the numbers of users and keeping the site up to date. On three occasions we had to increase our bandwidth, as after each day of Paryushan and Navratri, folks were logging on our website to see photos. We are first in terms of people being able to tentatively book the hall on-line. With various dedicated e-mail addresses folks can easily contact us and leave feed backs.

The services to broadcast Navnat related news provided by Surendra Mehta, Mahendra Kothary and Dhiru Galani have now become redundant. We are thankful to them for this service which was invaluable.

### **New improvements**

Last month we installed **internet** at Navnat Centre. The plans to have a computer learning centre in the sport room for our Vadils are well under way. It is envisaged to create a mezzanine floor in the sports room. Estimated building costs are likely to be £8k. Vadil and Bhagini have made repeated request to start computer classes. Initial work in terms of servers, number of computers is in hand. We will also be able to remotely monitor security cameras and transmit live functions over the net.

The **security cameras** covering the car park entrances and inside the building should have been installed by the time this goes to print. The **sound limiter** that can limit the volume of any sound systems will also be in place.

We have **redecorated** the dining hall, reception and the corridor to the main Hall. This was overseen by Kamlesh Mehta. He has put in a lot of effort and brought in the discipline of not stacking or storing tables against the walls in the hall. The room looks so much cleaner. Only the carpet cleaning is left. The reception has been tidied with all the clutter removed and shoe racks cleverly repositioned behind the swing doors.

**New Hall.** Our unused sports toilets were converted into a very useful descent size hall. This project was also overseen by Kamlesh Mehta, with initial cover from Kishore Mehta and Dhiru Galani. In the process we now have additional gents and ladies toilets. We have received nothing but praise for the New Hall and toilets from our members. You will all agree that Kamlesh needs a round of applause from us specially this being his first year in the committee. This project cost us £35,000 and we will be soon knocking on doors for uchhavni.

**Family days.** This has been the brainchild of Paresh Mehta to increase activity at Navnat Centre. Attendance has been rising as this concept spreads within the community. In summer months we meet on Friday evenings. This has run without any disturbance to the Bridge Club. Shakuben and her volunteers provide hot meals at a nominal cost of £2.00; children under 12 are free. In winter months we meet on Sundays. Activities include, walking, children's club, badminton, soft ball, Yoga, table tennis, pool etc. It is also an ideal time to catch up on gossip and have a chinwag. Soon we shall be able to put a meaning to the word "home" at Navnat Centre. I think this is a good concept and we need not only applaud Paresh but also support this concept. It is interesting to note that even with lots of practice for the variety show going on simultaneously, there has been no drop in the Family Sunday attendance.

For many years we have talked about appointing **staff at managerial level**. At last we have appointed an Admin staff on a trial basis. He is well versed in working with Community. He will oversee the work and liaise with contractors; ensure maximum publicity of our Hall in various community newsletter; respond to Hall bookings on line and to general queries etc take over the Hall bookings and membership workload.

We had a successful **EGM** to approve the changes to the Constitution. In yet another first, it was most unusual that we had the required forum in time. With few changes recommended the Constitution was approved. We were fortunate to have had input from some of the most experienced folks within our community and their guidance was most valuable. Nitin Parekh was the co-ordinator, Jayanti Doshi, Anil Parekh (helping from Dubai via e-mails), BT Shah, Bhupendra Shah and Dhiru Galani were on the subcommittee.

Combined with EGM we had an open **Sports day** and it was agreed that any money made would be diverted to Navnat Youth Sports activity. Nearly £1k has been ring fenced for Navnat Youth activity, with an additional £500 having already been spent on sports activity. Even for a windy day the attendance was high. In house competitions were held and Trophies were issued to the winning teams

### **Outstanding items**

At present our pitched roofs are in good condition. Unfortunately the **two flat roofs** need extensive repairs or may possibly have to be replaced. During heavy rains water does seep into the building. The front flat roof over the balcony has developed a centre bow where water is collecting. To replace this roof will put us back approximately £6k- £9K. The back flat roof will be another £5.5k and all the gutters need cleaning. Perhaps by the time you read this the front flat roof may have been replaced.

We have to put a container at the back of the Hall to store dining tables, chairs, blankets etc. We have already made a door that will lead into the container. Once this is done the Hall will look much tidier.

It is now nearly time to repaint the **Main Hall** and the entrance lobby. Sadly even though this has been ear marked we have not been able to do it for lack of time. Entrance lobby and the main Hall has suffered a lot of damage resulting from stacking chairs against the wall. It is planned to make good all the dents and apply two finishing coats of paint. There are couple of dents in the floor, which will be repaired and the floor sanded and polished again.

Sadly for me we have **two very expensive projects** that need addressing. Our **air-conditioning and heating** has never worked satisfactorily in spite of having spent nearly £65,000. We have asked several Consulting firms to give us a report initially and then will decide how to progress this further. In the meantime we have to use big electric blow heaters. The second project is the **kitchen**. The chipboard cabinets are in very sorry state. We need to redo the kitchen with stainless steel cabinets and a facility for a "chowk". We are now looking at possible rebuild of kitchen.

At the last AGM we did talk about hosting a **dinner for the volunteers** to say "thank you" to them. We have for many years taken their service for granted. I truly regret that we have not managed to do this.

### **Overview.**

I am pleased to report that the activities of all the subsidiary bodies are progressing well. We have had extensive support from **Bhagini, Vadils, Youth, Bridge and Golf**, at all the major events and we are thankful to them.

We have a big property and with a professional approach we can make it better.

The new incoming committee will face enormous tasks in managing our premises and to increase its usage. My recommendations are that a permanent Building Committee is appointed not only from EC but from the wider Navnat Community especially using those with hands on experience in the building, electrical, and IT fields.

I would like to thank all my colleagues in the EC, Bhagini, Youth, Bridge, Golf and especially all the volunteers without whose collective help it would not have been possible to achieve the above.

Overall the massive improvements have been made possible by the inclusiveness of our community members and the team work shown by the Executive Committee. For the first time EC took a bold step in choosing people outside of EC but from within our community members to be coordinators of big projects.

Now where is that elusive trumpet? I wish to blow ever so loud, as I and the EC are really proud of our achievements this term.

But we are not complacent. We look forward with positive attitude and with your help we shall be able to take Navnat to new heights.

**Dhiru Galani**  
**General Secretary.**