

Everything is Possible if we Keep our Focus and Determination: A 11-Year-Old Boy at the Tulsi Mandir Shows us the Way

Ramesh D. Kalicharran

In the majestic hall of the imposing Tulsi Mandir which exudes an architectural splendor and artistic elegance, another major marvel was unfolding over last weekend. It was one for the history books. As people gathered for the 20th session of the Tulsi Mandir's Ramayana Yajna, an air of expectancy enveloped the hall. The serenity that pervaded could match that of Rishikesh, India. Every member of the audience kept their eyes glued to the "Vyaas Aasan;" while their ears rendered undivided attention to the proceedings. No, the person of central interest was not a rock star; neither was he a celebrity. Rather, it was a 11-year-old boy who walked gracefully and occupied that hallow seat called the "Vyaas Aasan." Pt. Darshan Maharaj delivered a stirring "pravachan" (sermon) that was part of the commemoration ceremony held in honor of the Tulsi Mandir's opening.

The young Pandit in the making, is the son of the Tulsi Mandir's Spiritual Leader, Pt. Lakeram Maharaj, who is the founder and visionary of the Tulsi Mandir. Pt. Lakeram said that he also had the privilege to read a Yajna when he was at that age. The young Pandit, Darshan Maharaj, was in training since he was 3 years old, observed his proud father. Pt. Darshan read the night (Friday) before and made a huge impact on the audience. Many of them returned the following night (Saturday) to listen to his erudition of the Hindu scriptures. And they were not disappointed.



The 11 year old Vyaas - Rajeev Maharaj (Darshan) on the 20th session of the Yajna at the Tulsi Mandir, located at 103-23 111th St. Richmond Hill NY 11419.

Pt. Darshan Maharaj read from the Kishkinda Kanda of the Ramayana, and solemnly asked the capacity audience to follow the noble examples of Shri Hanumanji and Sugriva. "We must pray to the Lord with compassion and devotion," he noted. Pt. Darshan also hinted that there had been a few criticisms of the Mandir Project, but that these were smothered by their achievements and high sense of accountability. Such criticisms only caused them to deepen their resolve to build this masterpiece, which

will be a lasting glory to the Lord and the Mandir's devotees.

The young Pandit was not ruffled by this major spiritual calling. And he has been equally cognizant of his social responsibility, too. He invited the Mandir's devotees and supporters, for example, to help him bring to reality a full kitchen arrangement at the Mandir. And they responded admirably to his pleas.

What the young Pandit demonstrated, too, is that the chronology of "age" is not necessarily a barrier to spiritual growth.

Once an individual is fired with devotion and a clear vision, he can achieve the goals that he sets for himself. Old age does not necessarily mean maturity, neither does a young age necessarily denote immaturity.

As a token of appreciation, Pt. Darshan's friends at the Mandir, presented the young Pandit with a citation. Pt. Lakeram Maharaj also received a citation from his devotees in recognition of his strong leadership, vision and accomplishments.

We commend Pt. Lakeram Maharaj for his astute leadership as well as all his devout followers for building this amazing shrine, which is a living testimony to Hinduism's resilience, despite being challenged by multiple materialistic forces. Pt. Chandradath, the Assistant Priest, was also praised for his contribution at the Tulsi Mandir. He too, is an eloquent speaker. The Chairman of the proceedings was Roy Brijlall, who, as usual, did an excellent job.

Humanitarian and Community Leader, Dr. Tara Singh, was very impressed with the Mandir's progress and with the verbal facility of the young 11-year old Pandit. "The young Pandit did not only make his family and Mandir devotees proud, but also, the entire community." Turning to the young Pandit, Dr. Tara notes: "You are an inspiration to all the young people here as well as to all the adults." Looking at the Mandir's architectural grandeur, Dr. Tara further stated, "the Tulsi Mandir is the most elegant Mandir in New York City." And the audience spontaneously erupted in applause.



L to R - Roy Brijlall the MC, Pt. Lakeram Maharaj, the Vyaas, and Dr. Tara Singh



A cross section of the audience at Tulsi Mandir during the 20th session of the Yajna



Pandit Lakeram Maharaj flanked by Nirjala & Chandar Mohan.



(R to L) Pandit Lakeram Ramdatt Maharaj Priest-in-charge of the Tulsi Mandir, his wife Karam Devi, his eldest daughter Aartie, his younger daughter Priya, in front with Pagri & Vyaas Darshan extreme left is Kali.