

## FOJSS (UK) DIWALI MELA 2016

Whilst some were still cooling their heels and some hadn't had even managed to catch their breath from the 'Centre to Coast' cycling event in late August, an idea of holding a cultural evening as the next FOJSS UK charity event was pullulating in the unstoppable and dynamic Sunil's brain. The idea of Diwali Mela 2016 was born.

On 13 Nov 2016, frantic activity was going on since morning at the Woodside Hall in Hitchin, the venue for the Diwali Mela. On the programme, a promising Bollywood musical evening to start at 4.00pm by a band called 'Side Partition' comprising of professionals from banking and medical background. The stage management team did a fantastic job of decorating the hall and setting the stage, etc. A few stalls were also set in the entrance hall. One selling jewellery, another for anyone who wanted 'henna' applied on their hands, a meditation stall and one providing information on JSS activities.

Archana was the lead anchor for the evening program who introduced the first classical performance by the very talented little Aditya.

People started to trickle in and before long the hall was full (and perhaps number of attendees exceeded the hall capacity!). Yay we were doing good. Following a brief introduction by the FOJSS Secretary, Sanjay Gupta, 'Side Partition' band became the star attraction for the event with performances by Moushmi, Priti Madhav and Kunal who enthralled the audience by a string of bollywood melodies both from yesteryears and the 'now'. However, Mohd. Rafi, Kishore kumar, Lata and Asha Bhonsale were clear winners taking back many of us to the bygone era (Unapologetically I am biased). For the uninitiated however, there was bidi jalayele jigar se ... !

Coupons for food were selling like hot cakes (no pun intended). Samosas, vadas, and gulab jamuns with kulfi were the favourites. Of course the 'thirsty' kept on stepping out of the hall to the 'watering hole'. Our raffle ticket selling team comprising of some very young enthusiasts (Rishit and Krish), did a fantastic job of encouraging people to lighten their pockets- all for a good cause. Kislaya Thakur as the chairman of the group gave a presentation about the work done by JSS in India and FOJSS in the UK and the progress made thus far.

And then the sedate mood took a break and on the stage came scintillating dance performances by children, with mums not far behind. Notably amongst these were Srishti, whose svelte and gracious moves were awesome, Tanvi's expressive dance routine classy and professional, whilst Meeta's thumkas gave Mrs Nene a run for her money. And it seemed the tone for the evening was set as this was followed by upbeat contemporary songs by side partition. Just in the case the mojo was waning, came Anshu Dhelaria and her dance troupe on stage almost setting it alight with their enthusiastic and boisterous dance performance.

Sonia took centerstage at the end with the much awaited raffle draw. The ginormous first prize hamper was bagged by a very chuffed Anil Kambli who suddenly found himself surrounded by people all claiming to be his best friends - sure the few bottle necks peeping out of the hamper had nothing to do with it!. Second prize hamper was in Vivek's pocket (erm.. yes he had 'big pockets' as he bought the maximum number of raffle tickets). The third prize, a rather mahoosive bottle of Prosecco was claimed by Deepali.

And that was it ! the evening had come to an end with a vote of thanks from Sunil. The very satisfied and happy but very tired core group including Sunil, Seema, Ashish, Sonia, Priya, Aditya, Lipi, Sanjay, Amod, Archana to name just a few, and the selfless 'Side Partition' band headed home for a very well deserved rest.









Needless to say the event had been a great success. This certainly would not have been possible without the overwhelming support of everyone who travelled from far and near to attend the programme. We not only raised a tidy sum exceeding our expectations to go towards JSS in India, but also rejuvenated the community spirit and indeed increased awareness about the work FOJSS UK is involved in. Direct donations to FOJSS and pledges for volunteering made the event even more worthwhile. Hopefully we have inspired people to contribute towards the charity's aims in any way they can.

Kapila.

FOJSS UK would like to extend a special thanks to the following:

Side Partition

*Ranit Shail (Synthesiser), Zohair Abbasi (lead Guitarist), Rajit (Bass Guitarist), Shouvik Ghoshal (Vocal), Priti Madhav Padhi (singer), Mousumi (singer) and Dr Kunal Joshi (singer). Drums- Andres Pellegrino. Tabla- Dr Pranav Kukreja*

Dance Groups

1. *Srishti, Kaya, Sara, Matusha and mums.*
2. *Aapti, Ayushi, Deepti, Ambika, Daksh, Kiranjot, Prahan, Ruhani, Twisha, Vishnu, Mums*
3. *Gargi, Isha, Richa, Sara, Tanvi*

Hitchin Thespians for providing the venue







*See you next year!*