

**From:** The President of Hindu Samaj Mandir, Mahwah, NJ

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**HAPPY NEW YEAR: BRIEF REPORT AND A BIG THANK YOU: THIS WAS THE YEAR OF A MIRACLE**

Dear Devotees and Friends of Temple:

With the amazing grace of our Gods, we have entered the 21st year since we began our journey to build a great Temple. Our Temple honors diverse manifestations of our Gods celebrating dozens of traditions under one roof making us unique, secular, multicultural , diverse yet ONE . Together , we weave ONE garland out of different flowers and we become a rainbow of many colors. We believe "ONENESS" to be the ultimate destiny of the world living in harmony ,so beautifully captured in the idea of VISHVA KUTUMBA in our ancient civilization.

Every day in our Temple we hear multiple languages ,see different modes of worship, experience meditative and contemplative reflections , experience hugs our dedicated volunteers get and meet wonderful people seeking consolation from the pain they are in. The community center hums with activities infused with the spirit of selfless service.

This year has seen amazing growth. Hundreds of Pujas, dozens of big religious events, the vibrations of thought provoking devotional bhajans; over 300 new families joining making us 3000 plus ; four priests from different parts of the country meeting spiritual needs , performing weddings, anniversaries, memorial services and more. The joy on the faces of over 300 students learning chess, violin, debate, 4 languages, deeper aspects of our culture, several forms of dances and music . The halls filled with giggles of students who are forging long lasting friendships. Meditation, yoga , health fair and rocking senior programs provide opportunities to relax, share and rejuvenate; the weaving of fresh garlands for Gods and counting the donations received by the Temple by those who come to bond thru service; 30 volunteers cooking Prasad every Sunday with cuisines from different parts of India ; legal and social services for the needy ; most successful gala with over 450 in attendance celebrating our evolving story; colors of Holi and presence of over 10,000 in the first ever County wide celebration of Diwali with real fire works! Wow, what an amazing year!

We completed several capital improvement projects : canopy over the front stairs and walkway to the elevator and, the sound proof glass wall in the balcony of the Temple to enable two religious programs to happen simultaneously . In addition, the Golden Arches that rise high into the sky to kiss the feet of our Gods were repaired. Thanks to all of you who made specific donations for these projects.

With your generosity, we are closing this year with the highest donations ever - nearly \$900,000 Plus \$150,000 in commitments to come in 2017, crossing a million dollar mark! Audited reports done every quarter and, at the end of the year will be posted on website soon after the audit committee finishes its work .

We will not rest till all the remaining mortgage is paid off. Just imagine , If every family donated just ONE DOLLAR A DAY for 3 years , we will have no mortgage ( currently nearly \$3.6 million) to worry about. We hope you will seriously consider this request and help the Temple become debt free. Monthly expenses of the Temple, salaries of Priests and part time administrators, maintenance, utilities and mortgage payments run around \$50,000 a month. Your donations are the only source that helps the Temple meet its obligations.

#### THIS WAS A YEAR OF A MIRACLE

The VIDYA GANESHA Temple with the water fall and lotus pond on outside the main Temple has a unique story . BLACK GRANITE LORD GANESHA was a gift from an American peace activist; the 60 year old rare tri color beech tree under which LORD GANESHA sits was a gift from an American friend of the Temple ; the new pond and the 4 antique pillars were a gift from an American landscaper. At NO COST to the Temple , a very unique and holy place for Ganesh Visarjan was created with the generosity of anonymous strangers all of whom were attracted by the universalist philosophy of Hinduism. An antique red mail box stands next to LORD GANESHA inviting you to drop your secret prayers for the Priests to read and ask Gods to fulfill your wishes .

#### THE MIRACLE: W's DREAM

In March of this year, "W" had a vision that he would meet a person from his past life at a Temple which had two GANESHA'S - one carved out of pure white marble , the other out of pure black granite . He searched and found our Temple which is blessed with two GANESHA statutes. In April, as we were celebrating the festival of Holi, he came to pray. And, not surprisingly he met the person , his ancient friend from past life! The cycles of birth, rebirth and human connections that endure was experienced by two "strangers" right here at our Temple. Before leaving , with a peaceful yet chilling voice he said, "I have to leave this earth soon to take care of someone I have a duty towards". He died 3 months later , couple of days before the "new ancient friend " he had met at the Temple , lost a loved family member of his in India. We recently learned from W's lawyer that in his will, he left our Temple 100,000 dollars. His gift celebrates the love

and respect for our everlasting connections with each other - across races and religions, beyond colors of skins, thru eons, thru cycles of birth and death and thru joy and pain.

This year we adopted new governance by laws which will be published on our web site soon. On January 1, 2017 our younger sister Vasantha Ambat ji steps into the role of our new President along with a dedicated team of volunteers. The names of all on the managing committee will be announced by Vasantha ji on the Temple website. Vikesh Mahendroo ji who has guided us so ably in last three years and I will continue to serve on the management committee. We are honored that the baton is being passed on to the younger members of our community. We hope you will continue to support and engage in seva with shraddha and help our Temple to become a great institution. I personally thank each one of you for the love and support you blessed me and Savita with. We salute our dedicated volunteers without whose seva, none of this would have been possible. Happy new year. Peace

Dinesh Khosla  
Outgoing President  
sevak for ever