

# Maheshwari Mahasabha celebrates silver jubilee

A CORRESPONDENT

The Maheshwari Mahasabha of North America organized the silver jubilee celebration of its Maheshwari/Rajasthan Pariatv convention, on board a cruise ship.

On the cruise, the Mahasabha decided to adopt 350 villages in India and to establish Ekal Vidyalayas (one-teacher schools) at a cost of more than \$110,000.

During the January 3-6 convention, on board the *Carnival's Sensation* from Florida to the Bahamas, its members pledged another \$100,000 for charitable causes, including scholarships for needy students in India, the US and Canada, aid to victims of natural disasters and for a hospital in Rajasthan.

A call by chief guest Rameshwaril Kabra, national president of the Friends of Tribal Society, a sister organization of the Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation in India, inspired the Mahasabha to adopt the villages. The one-teacher schools project, aimed at promoting literacy among villagers, is executed by the Foundation.

The convention was attended by 400 members from the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Middle East and India, and included 70 youths and 30 senior citizens.

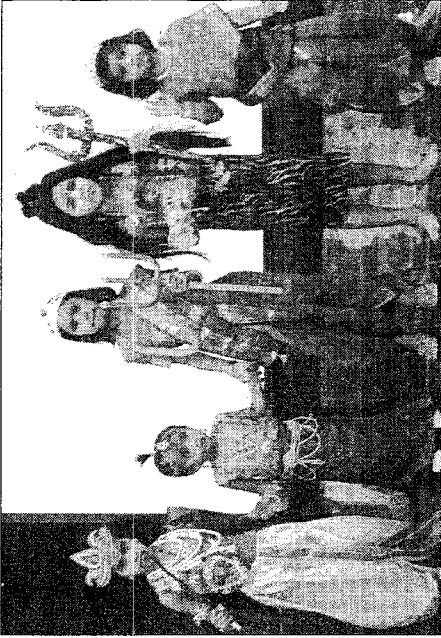
The convention achieved the goal of promoting family values and the feeling of an extended family, said Dr Seema Rathi, MMNA president and a New York-based ophthalmologist. Dr Braham N Taparia was the convention's convener while Dr Renu Khator, president of the University of Houston and chancellor of the UH system, was one of the speakers.

The Maheshwaris hail from Rajasthan in India. More than 1,000 Maheshwari families have made their home in the US and there are over 1.4 million Maheshwaris in India. Traditionally Hindu, staunchly vegetarian, and strongly business-oriented, the group, also called Marwaris, is known for its saving ethic and financial skills. Founded in 1983, MMNA ([www.mmna.org](http://www.mmna.org)) has seven regional chapters, six subcommittees and an education foundation.

'This was our 25th year, so I wanted to make it a memorable event, not only for MMNA, but also for all those who attended the convention,' Dr Taparia was quoted as saying. An Indian chef on the cruise made it possible for the attendees to have traditional Maheshwari delicacies, which is prepared without onion or garlic, he said.

Several people were recognized for their contributions including Uma Ghurka, for professional excellence; Raashmi Jakhotia, for maintaining traditional heritage; Jagdish Kumar Ladha, for research excellence; Dr Khator, for special academic achievement; Vijay Pallod, for special contributions to society; Jyostna Jajoo from India and Ravi Jakhotia, for art/performance; Ramesh Bhutada, Jugal Malani and Pankaj Maheshwari, for business leadership.

Jajoo, Dr Sanjay Sahay and Jhakhotia were the convention artists and performers. Entertainment also included a fancy dress event depicting characters from the scripture, and an antakshari contest.



■ Attendees at the convention

■ Children dressed as Hindu deities

Women members of the MMNA Sakhi subcommittee deliberated in a separate session, led by Vrushi and Rachita, on issues important to family matters, preserving Maheshwari culture and developing entrepreneurial skills. Health related topics were discussed by Dr Brij Malani.

The Rajasthan Business Association conducted a business session that included a panel on 'Business Entrepreneurship Challenges, Lessons, Achievements and Future Opportunities in Global Business.' The panel members included Ramesh Bhutada, founder and CEO, Star Pipes, Houston; Narsigdas Daga, managing director, Operations, LML, Kanpur; Kishor Ghurka, founder and CEO, Thermopads Group, Hyderabad; Dwarka Kalantry, founder, Tap Consulting Practice, New York; Dr Khator, and Pankaj Maheshwari, founder and CEO, NetMatrix Solutions, Houston. Jayant Somani moderated the discussion.

Chandra Shekar, a priest from India, presented the *Udak Shanit Par* prior to sailing in Bloomington, and also on the ship for safety on the ocean. His New Year message was: 'Be in *anand* (joy) and distribute *anand*.'

Spiritual inspiration also came from Baba Maurya who mesmerized the audience with his art and humor. At the convention, a senior subcommittee was formed to address the needs of seniors in the US. Youth were given prime place at the convention and were urged to carry forward the rich culture and tradition of the Maheshwaris.

The convention decided to open chapters of MMNA's education wing in Hyderabad, Jodhpur and Mumbai, in addition to the existing ones in Nagpur, Nanded, Amravati, Pune, Indore and Sri Dungargarh.