

Chattanooga Ganeshotsav

Bhushan Karle

Where do I begin? I am so happy to report that about 25 adults and 15 kids gathered and celebrated a Ganeshotsav in Chattanooga as a Marathi group. Ever since we moved to this scenic city in Tennessee in 2005, we had heard of Marathi families but no one knew enough of them to get organized as a Marathi group. Finally this year, with the help of Sheila and Dane Boyington, Bhushan and Manjiri Karle organized the gathering of people who love Marathi culture, especially related to Ganapati Baappaa moraya. About half the families were purely Maharashtrian. The remaining families were such that one of the two in the couple was Marathi or they had grown up in Mumbai/Pune and knew a lot of Ganapati Aarati's and culture.



The setting was fabulous - at the edge of the Tennessee River sits the Boyington family's palace like home where we gathered. We brought the Moorty from Patel Brothers in Atlanta. A potluck menu with traditional Marathi dishes got organized. As people arrived, so did Ganapati Baappaa in the loud chants of Moraya. Atharvasheersha and Maha-aarati followed with Ganesh Bhajans in between. Decorations were fantastic, homemade. The backdrop was the gorgeous river. Once the Aarati and Prasad were done, we started the process of Visarjan. We were so fortunate that the river was accessible within the family's backyard. In full "josh" and fervor, we took the Ganapati idol to the water, climbing down some tricky stony steps and with three dips, let Baappaa float away into the water, requesting HIM to come again early next year (Pudhachyaa Varshi Lavakar Yaa).



This was the most amazing Visarjan for me in the 15 years I have been in America and these sentiments were shared by many in the group later. After the Visarjan, we got back in the house and a round of introductions followed. New friends were made. Then came the food - oh it was delicious. Shrikhand-Puri, Aamti-Bhaat-ChatNee, Modak, Pedhe, and Puranpoli, It was awesome. After conversations and networking, we disbanded with hopes of getting together as a Marathi group again soon. I am not sure if this is the beginning of Chattanooga Marathi Mandal - only time will tell that. But we are certainly going to make memories and tie-ups as a group. We have an email list, a printed directory and a Facebook group. Next time you are passing through the Scenic city of Chattanooga, Tennessee, please feel free to say "Ram Ram" to some of us.
