

1st Annual Convention

August 21, 1999 North Virginia



The first annual convention of the newly-founded association was held on August 21, 1999 in North Virginia. Shri C.M. Bhandari, Consul General of India, Toronto (Canada) was the chief guest of honor and the convention was attended by about 250 Uttarakhandis from various parts of USA and Canada. Uttarakhandi artists gave a very impressive and grand three-hour cultural show-"Uttarakhand Cultural Evening in USA".

It was indeed pleasure to see people of every age group joining hands to show their love, support and dedication for the homeland. The ambiance, essence and the spirit in the hall created a true picture of Uttarakhand, which not only brought back the sweet memories of the motherland, but also gave all of us an opportunity to relive it.

The evening started with an exhibition "Uttarakhand at a glance" that portrayed the culture, heritage and rituals of Uttarakhand and highlighted the natural scenic areas that attract millions of tourists from all over the world. A cultural program that included dances, songs, dramas and oral and visual presentations, all depicting the people of Uttarakhand their everyday life, followed this.

The cultural program, like any other conventional Indian program, started with the Vandana, remembering the all mighty and praying for a successful and happy event. A group of children and adults melodically sang "***Humko Munki Shakti Dena***" and in fact generated the spiritual



setting in the auditorium. A welcome/inaugural note followed this by Shri L. S. Adhikari, President of the UANA. Shri Adhikari in his speech welcomed all and thanked the members for their initiative, help and support and appealed to every one to keep this determination alive. He also introduced the Chief Guest of Honor, Shri C. M. Bhandari, Consul General of India, Toronto, Canada. Mr. Bhandari in his message valued the organization's efforts to keep Uttarakhand's traditions and rituals alive in a foreign land. Two songs followed the keynote speaker's message. The first described the natural, social and religious splendor of the motherland and on the other showed the love and dedication of the people for it. "***Rani Bahurani***" the famous folk song

certainly brought back some memories and started a steady flow of sentiments and emotions. The dance item "***It happens only in India***" performed by kids of various ages, deserved and rightfully received a standing ovation by the audience. On a lighter note, a short comedy skit genuinely showed the dilemma of an old man in the big city and generated good laughs. "***Ajeeb Dastan Hai Yeh***" followed this; the famous Hindi song that was a big hit then and was loved by the audience.

"***Chaumaas***" the dance describing the beauty of ***Chaumaas*** season in the Uttarakhand Hills and the joy and happiness the rainfall brings, produced the same character at the auditorium. The authenticity of the performance and costumes was truly remarkable. This was followed by a short comedy skit, this time depicting the dilemma of a "***Pradhan ji***" on the road.



"***Uttarakhand ke Log***" illustrated the daily life of the people living in Uttarakhand, beyond and abroad and their love for the motherland. "***Hai Teri Rumala***" a dance item fairly described the beautiful women of Uttarakhand and the accessories that adorn them. This was followed by "***Mere Manke Udgaar***" a poem describing the crisis in Kargil.

"***Akkal ke Dushman***" portrayed the antics between two rich men and their foolish servants.

The participants who came from the various parts of the USA and Canada presented the next segment (Eight items) of the cultural program. Saurabh Kukreti from Chicago danced on a latest hit from the Bollywood, "***Ruk Ja o dil deewane***". His rhythmic moves and gestures charmed the whole audience. This was followed by a talk by Rajiv Rawat who came from Boston. The topic of his talk was "***Uttarakhand and Uttarakhandis***". He gave an impassioned speech about the need to carry on the struggle of the Uttarakhand Andolan for the liberation of all her peoples and the salvation of her environment. "***Saun ka Mahina***" a song by Renu Bhatt from Seattle, expressed the feelings of a woman during the monsoon season. This and a Hindi song by Kanchan Pandey of Boston remarkably spawned the music notes once again in the hall. The play titled "***26 January***" by Parashar Gaur, Soni Gaur, Madhuri Bahugana and Sheila Pherasi of Toronto, Canada beyond doubt portrayed the desires of an Uttarakhand woman to go to New Delhi to see the Republic Day parade. This was followed by Two songs "***Swarg Tara***" by Chahya Kotnala and "***Pulari Tue Dekhi***" by Madhuri Bahugana. Both of the presenters are from Toronto, Canada. After the songs, Kapil Gaur performed acts of different Bollywood actors. This wrapped up the items by the visiting members of the organization.

The next item was a song "***Dhebra Hurch Gini Mera Bakra Hurch Gini Mera***". This song showed the desperation of a man who lost his Lambs and goats and pleading to people to help him in locating them. This was followed by a dance "***Meri Syali Basanthi Kauthig Jaula Hum***". In this dance sequence a jeeja is luring his saali to go to a mela with him, typical jeeja-saali antics. A message

followed this by Mr. P. D. S. Negi, the patron of UANA. Mr. Negi, in his message, congratulated all the participants and organizers for a successful show.

The cultural show concluded with the national anthem "***Jana Gana Mana***" followed by dinner.