

# Dandiya Raas: The Celebration 2006

Like every year the Dandiya Raas event inevitably proved to be a culmination of strategic and adept planning backed up by hard work put in by the enthusiastic Asha Eindhoven volunteer team. Pre-planned booking of the hall, advertising, selling of tickets, setting-up and decorating the event venue, and this time also making available a special room for kids, everything converged together during this evening when many gathered to celebrate the very famous Indian folk dance *Dandiya Raas*. 2006<sup>th</sup> edition of Dandiya was held on 30<sup>th</sup> September on the floors of Hagenkamp in the technical town of Eindhoven in the Netherlands.

Dandiya Raas is also anticipated eagerly by all *desis* (Indians), since despite being away from their homes; they can still enjoy the festivities of Dandiya Raas. Dandiya Raas is equally alluring to many foreigners, who are inquisitive to get acquainted with Indian culture and cuisine. Dandiya Raas event has made a remarkable progress since its inception in 2003. There has been a tremendous increase in number of people attending and enjoying Dandiya fervour. From 100 in 2003, the numbers have climbed up close to 300 in 2006. This incredible increase in attendance is really encouraging to the organizers, namely Asha Eindhoven and Indo-Dutch Association.

The famous Dandiya dance is done with colourful sticks and people of all ages, men, women, children dance together, mostly in circles or in pairs. The speciality of this dance is that it comprises of a few simple steps. If one gets to understand the basic technique, which is relatively not that tricky, one can fully get involved and sway to the rhythm of dandiya music hitting sticks of his or her respective partner on the beats in a synchronised manner. Mostly people are dressed in colourful Indian costumes. Some of the foreigners also adorn themselves with Indian dresses.

The function started around 6:00 pm in the evening. Some half an hour later, the hall sprang to life with people and the sights of appetising and mouth watering Indian snacks laid meticulously on the table. Soon, people began to queue in front of the coupon counter to purchase coupons for the different Indian snacks, and very rich flavoured mango drink, popularly called '*lassi*'. The famous *Bombay bhel*, *aloo-tikki* from North, *batata-wada* and South Indian special snack of *idli* were being served. The menu was already handed over to the guests at the introduction counter, however extra help was also provided to the foreigners helping them in making more informed choices.

Formally, the dandiya event began at 7:00 pm with our coordinator thanking the people for participating in such large numbers. Soon, the dance floor sprang to life with young girls putting up enthralling dance performances on a medley of different popular *Bollywood* songs, which deservedly ended up with fervent claps of adoration. The special performance of the night was the Dandiya dance performance, done by some 12-15 ladies, thus bringing the Gujarat culture on the floor of Hagenkamp.

But, this was just the beginning!! Soon, impromptu explanation of dance steps by volunteers to uninitiated people followed. Some skilled people and enthusiasts were already ready with dandiya sticks in their hands. The beginners watched steps of those gyrating on the dandiya beats and soon they were also able to join them and

with some quick learning started dancing and hitting the dandiya sticks like a pro!! Slowly a time came when people were dancing to the rhythm of music and adjusting their movements according to the beats. The already festive and vibrant atmosphere got further enhanced by the announcement of the winners of the lucky draw at regular intervals.

The eagerly awaited dinner was still there in the evening agenda. The dinner was served around 9:00 pm and the dishes looked very tempting: *Chole*, mixed vegetable, *pooris*, *chitrnam* (kind of south Indian rice), *raita*, *paw-bhaji*, desserts including *gajar halwa*, *gulabjamuns*, *paisam*, etc. The serving was done very systematically, though it was difficult for some to resist themselves until their turn came.

Well, good times do not last forever. The time flew and soon, it was time to close!! The volunteers though tired, still had the feelings of satisfaction and relief. However, we are our biggest critics as well. We challenge ourselves and look forward to an even bigger and better Dandiya Raas in 2007...Overall, the fund raising event was a success as the underlying purpose of blending celebration with the noble cause of generating funds to support educational needs of underprivileged children in India, was well attained.

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## Some captured moments

