

on 2007/3/6 22:49:02 (159 reads)

Anantha Krishnan, Hinduism Today correspondent, Chennai

CHENNAI, INDIA, March 7, 2007: The spacious hall is packed to the brim, in fact overflows, and the singer on stage casting a spell on the audience with his high-pitched voice that stirs responses rarely seen in a concert hall. Yes, it is December in Chennai, the southern-most city in India, when the strains of music fill every nook and cranny as the annual music and dance festival is in full flow. We are not experiencing a concert by a leading Carnatic musician as is usually the case during this festival time but a bhajan session given by Sri Vittal Das Jaya krishana Dikshidhar, who comes in the lineage of the legendary Harikatha exponent Sri Senkalipurram Anantharama Dikshidhar. No other show during the entire month-long festival attracts such a gathering, and then you think, often open-mouthed: how is all this possible and that too on a Sunday morning during this nippy Tamil month of Margazi! People walk in, clad in traditional garbs with bhajan books on hand and are in their seats an hour before the show - tell that to those folks who talk of "Indian Time" (ie, always late)! "I set my alarm at 3a.m. to get here on time," says Ravi Iyer, a middle-aged man in his sparkling white dhoti with matching sacred ash on his forehead, who resides in one of the far-away suburbs. For the benefit of those who can not manage seats inside the hall, CCTVs are set-up outside and chairs are provided.

The bhajan singer on stage is flanked by young boys in dhoti and tufts providing percussion and voice support while the full-throated audience filling the vast expanse of the hall evokes a meditative mood. This soulful music matched by depth of devotion lifts the heart to magical heights. Engulfed by intense energy and total surrender set in by raw and earthy chanting voices with an underlying chord of bhakti, people immerse themselves in divine experience.

With the Gods in various hues on stage forming the backdrop, Sri Vittal Das Jaya Krishna Dikshidhar's Bhajan program starts at 7 a.m. and the non-stop session lasts for about couple of hours everyday for two weeks at the Krishna Gana Sabha in T.Nagar. This morning event has been part of the festival season for the past nine years. Because of the response it triggers, it is being held in another part of the city during August. With all the talk on "diluting Hinduism," if one were to attend this, even on just one morning, would

realize that this is indeed "Hinduism today," very much alive and flourishing !
