

JANMASHTAMI

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spelled out another compelling fact of life: when you are poor, the cheapest thing is happiness.

Then, Kher dwelt elaborately on the concept of failure and success in all walks of life. Failure is an event and a person does not fail, he said. He also categorically disapproved of parents who perennially pressure their children to be at the top of the class.

“There are different ways to learn life and I always celebrated failures,” Kher said. He was never a bright student academically nor was he an accomplished actor in his childhood. In fact, his first school play in the fifth standard was a flop, according to Kher, but his father presented him with a bunch of wild flowers and said it was not for failing, but for trying. When you celebrate failure, it takes out the fear of failure, Kher said.

“My gyan (knowledge) is based on my life experiences” he said and he humorously narrated his botched role in William Shakespeare’s play - The Merchant of Venice. He started learning English in the fifth grade.

Kher urged parents to make their children face life’s experiences and challenges so that the children can feel and learn from them.

After graduating from the National School of Drama with a gold medal, he came to Bombay to try his luck in acting, but had to sleep at the railway station like a homeless person. He never give up and with his parents and grandparents’ encouragement, succeeded and today was on a big stage addressing thousands of people.

Kher had some advice for the younger generation as well. Respect your parents and grandparents and don’t treat them like a piece of furniture. Be comfortable with who you are and never get scared of messing up. Look at life from a comical point of view and “live life” to the fullest because every moment is important.

Kher’s speech was not merely full of morals or dos and don’ts. He talked about hunger, not of a poor man, but hunger to make the nation great. He alluded to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s efforts to take the

country forward in this context and reiterated the need to do good for the nation.

“People love me not because I am an actor, but for the love I show for the country,” Kher concluded.

Sanjay Jajoo served as a lively Emcee while HGH President Partha Krishnaswamy appealed for funds for Kerala flood relief. Sewa International has collected \$250,000 from generous Houstonians for relief work.

Earlier, after a ceremonial procession, and opening of the attractive booths set up by the local temples and community organizations, a costume contest was held for children of all ages.

Winners of the costume contests were: Group A: First - Kridhay Laddha, Second-Stavya, Third-Riya Agrawal and Vansh Sarda with Juhi Bhutada

Group B: First -Avik Sudeep, Second - Agrima Gupta, Third - Ramon Soni with Nikunj Lohiya

Group C: First -Saumya Gupta, Second - Neson & Suhas, Third - Purti Ravi

Two Houstonians were recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award - CEO of Star Pipes Ramesh Bhutada and Beth Kulkarni. A well-known philanthropist, Bhutada who has served the community unstintingly with his time, effort and resources said he was humbled to receive the award and reiterated Anupam Kher’s words on encouraging and “recognizing our children for trying.” The Akhil Chopra Unsung Heroes Award was presented to Richa Dixit, Manish Khatri and Nisha Bhatia.

Event Chair Girish Naik observed that this celebration was very special to him because two iconic personalities who he “always looked up to for inspiration and guidance – Ramesh Bhutada and Beth Kulkarni were receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award.”

Sangita Bhutada’s stunning and vibrant Rangoli – the year’s theme being “makhn chor.”

First time attendee and IMAGH Secretary Saeed Pathan said that the Janmashtami celebrations and the atmosphere brought back wonderful childhood memories of the festival in India.

The event was possible due



The Global Organization for Divinity’s display of Lord Krishna’s birth scene inside a prison won the first place for outstanding booths.



to the generosity of its major donors: Jugal Malani, Ramesh Bhutada, Swapnil Agarwal, Rahul Mehta, Tilak Agarwal, Arun Verma and Vijay Pallod. Members of the Young Hindus of Greater Houston (YHGH) also contributed substantially to the

smooth execution of the event. YHGH President Raj Salhotra stated “The 2018 Janmashtami celebration showcased Houston’s wonderful tradition of diversity. It was wonderful to witness the outpouring of support from Houston’s youth. We are excited

to work with youth from across the city to build an organization that represents Hindus from all backgrounds.”

HGH officials and volunteers sported a special saffron colored vest, specially procured from India by Gopal Agarwal.



Baby Krishna costume contest participants at the Janmashtami celebration on Aug. 25 at George R. Brown Convention center, Houston. Photo by BIJAY DIXIT.

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