

DIDI BAHINI SAMAJ VICTORIA



VIRTUAL TEEJ CELEBRATION 2021 “Preserving Culture-Raising Hope”

Background and Introduction:

Among many festivals that are celebrated by Nepalese women, Teej is regarded as the most significant festival. Teej is a very special day and holds significance in the lives of women. Women, on this day, wear colourful dresses, bangles, jewellery and women sing and dance on the traditional songs with a full sense of freedom and enjoyment. It is a festival celebrated as an occasion of (re) union with parents, brothers, and sisters and a sense of joy and happiness.

This year Teej was observed on September 9, 2021. Didi Bahini Samaj Victoria (DBSV), since 2013, has been organising Teej Celebration every year but it was only in 2015 when DBSV began to do it more inventively with the concept of “Preserving Culture-Raising Hope”. This replicates DBSV’s intentions behind festivity, that is, celebrating and upholding our culture and tradition on the ground of Australia and raising funds to support Nepalese women who have been victims of sexual assault (rape) in the mid-western region of Nepal. For the provision supporting these women, DBSV has been working in partnership with AAWAJ, a non-governmental and non-profit social organization raising voice against violence and discrimination of children and women in the Midwestern region, Nepal.

As every year DBSV celebrated the festival of Teej. However, this year due to the ongoing Covid pandemic and considering Covid restrictions we organised a virtual Teej celebration via Zoom. Hundreds of women from around Melbourne and Australia participated in the online program which was flooded with music, dance and fun. The decision to hold an online celebration proved to be a blessing in disguise as around 100 Nepalese women joined the festival online. The various sessions included sharing views, DJ music, group dance performances.

Program description:

Virtual Teej Event 2021 organised by DBSV on the occasion of the Nepalese women significant festival 'Teej' was held on the 9th of September 2021 from 3 to 6 pm via Zoom. Zoom link details was sent to various Nepalese women via various social media platforms and Facebook posts. As a symbol of love, connection and special bond Teej special dar including teej message wishing cards by the president of DBSV Dr Jamuna Parajuli were distributed among Nepalese women living in Victoria and regional Victoria before the event day. The dar also reflected the sense of invitation for the celebration and togetherness. The program was successfully facilitated by Anju Adhikari, Julie, Kamala Chalise Homagain and Amrita Gurung. Besides, there were DBSV teams and volunteers, DJ who impressively fulfilled their tasks and played an essential role in the overall success of the event. Participants and their family members shared their joys and best wishes with each other during the virtual event.

Program Objectives:

One of the major objectives behind the celebration was to praise and promote Nepalese culture, tradition and beliefs here in Australia. Furthermore, with the celebration, we intend to support marginalised Nepalese women in Nepal who have been the survivor of sexual assault (rape) by raising funds to provide expense for the anticipation of safe short- term accommodation including other basic supports such as legal advice and counselling, medical treatment, family and social mediation process. Most prominently, our help provides a direct influence on re-establishing these women by developing their capacity and confidence and prevent them from further exploitation. Moreover, the event also intended to generate a platform for women to boost their confidence through dance performances and public speaking. We also did our best to provide and generate various occasions where women get opportunities to learn various program organisation and management skills, team works and partnership skills by collaborating with internal and external stakeholders. In addition, this year we tried to support and promote two young and vibrant women entrepreneurs via creating platforms through our Teej special Dar.

Program Implementation:

With the COVID pandemic and the current restrictions in place, it was considered impossible to celebrate teej which was planned to be held in Melton City Council Hall. However, meetings with EC members exhibited and expressed a high level of interest and proposed to organise a virtual teej event instead to continue our ongoing determinations aligned with the Teej celebration. A further meeting was organised including both EC and unit coordinators and members to discuss and explore more ideas on how we can continue the celebration and fulfil our pledges to support women in Nepal. Hence, the organisation and celebration of DBSV Teej started with the planning and preparation for the Teej celebration and distribution of teej special dar. Following the rituals, the DBSV team invited women and girls to come and join to celebrate the festival. Major highlights of the event were Teej special dar, fundraising messages and virtual Teej event.

- a. **DBSV Teej special Dar:** On the first day of Teej celebration, a special feast is served to the women in the house. As this year Teej celebration was organised virtually due to ongoing Covid restrictions, the DBSV team thought of sending teej special dar to women living around Melbourne as a token of love and care. For DBSV teej special dar, two young and vibrant entrepreneurs: Amy and Sangita played an essential role to prepare and organise dars. After the announcement of the virtual event, participants were requested to register their name for teej special dar. Surprisingly, huge numbers of women from around Victoria and regional Victoria registered their names. By the end of the registration process, DBSV had around 500 women from different parts of Victoria including Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Shepparton. The dar distribution program was scheduled for 2 days i.e., 7th and 8th of September 2021. DBSV volunteers from around different parts of Melbourne played impressive role and their hard work, dedication made it possible to organise, pack and distribute teej dars.



Amy Shrestha.



Sangita Pathak



DBSV Teej Special Dars and wish card

- b. **Sending invitation and fund-raising messages:** One of our commitments associated with the Teej celebration every year is to help women and girls who are survivors of sexual assault or family violence in the Mid-Western part of Nepal. Hence, we intended to collect around \$ 5000 via our Teej event this year as well. But with the ongoing Covid pandemic restriction it seemed to be impossible. However, with our strong determination and commitment, we tried to use alternative sources to raise funds urging every Nepalese community member to raise their hands for this noble cause. Various fundraising messages were posted and sent via social media platforms including emails were sent to prospective sponsors for the donation. We also intend to collect a small number of donations from all DBSV team members including EC And Unit Committees. Facebook posts and messages were delivered including infographics to aware of the cause behind our celebration and fundraising.
- c. **Online Teej Event:** On the day of the event, 9th September 2021, the event zoom link was opened at 14:30. Participants started joining and gathering at the online event and started wishing each other. Before the official teej event start, the vaccination awareness videos were shown. Vaccination awareness videos were made by the DBSV team members from various suburbs. Dance songs were played by DJ and all participants danced from everyone's home cherishing the moment and enjoying every bit of the song. The event also included acknowledgement of the country and 2 minutes of silence with closed eyes by all participants. National songs, both Nepalese and Australian, were played and all were requested to stand in their places and sing national anthems respectively. The official teej function was started following the opening ceremony of the Teej program with Teej poem by program host Anju Adhikari. A short introduction of factors behind Teej Celebration and Teej wish was delivered by Dr Jamuna Parajuli, President of DBSV.

On the occasion, short video messages from Vivienne Nguyen, Chairperson | Victorian Multicultural Commission and Cr Kathy Majdlik, Mayor| Councillors, Melton City Council were also displayed. Similarly, a message readout of Lizzie Blandthorn MP- State labour Member for Pascoe Vale was done by one of the program facilitators, Julie. They were a crucial part of our virtual teej celebration which not only provided a platform for best wishes and greetings for the participants but also marked the day with an acknowledgement of our culture and tradition in the foreign land. In addition, there were other activities including various dance performances performed by all participants including a dance performance by West group, Aintree group, Dandenong group, Geelong team, Craigieburn dance group, Mernda dance group, East dance group. The dance performed by the Glenroy group in a vaccination awareness song was the major highlight. The dance song was created by the Glenroy team members to raise awareness and to encourage community members to get Covid vaccination. The program officially ended at around 6 pm with thank you speech by Amrita Gurung and Teej wishes by all participants. This was done by spreading both hands.

Program Evaluation and Conclusion:

The event was well planned and therefore everyone associated with the planning process played an important role in the overall success of the event. There was the division of work, teams and volunteers who impressively fulfilled their tasks. Program arrangement and coordination with external and internal stakeholders were arranged by the Aintree team with great efforts. Dr Jamuna Parajuli, President and Vice President Prabha Shrestha of DBSV played an important role in supervision and overall management throughout the journey.

The event concluded with massive success and a positive note. The small, but vibrant Nepalese women groups gathered online and remained strongly connected to tradition and culture observing and following their customs, rituals, prayers and beliefs thoughtfully. Overall, the feedback from participants specifies a high level of happiness and gratitude. There were many positive remarks about the DBSV teej special dar and also regarding the management of virtual teej celebration, the organization, structure and process of the program.

Some Snapshots and Feedbacks from our Teej Dar recipients:





Namuna Bhattarai Lamsal is with **Didibahini Samajvictoria**.
8 Sep · 🌐

Thank you so much sister society Victoria (DBSV).... 🙏
🙏🙏
Even though I couldn't go to Mait in Teej, I felt like Maiti sent me home. ❤️❤️❤️



Gita Chapagain
8 Sep · 🌐

Happy teej all of you
Thanks you **Didibahini Samajvictoria** and **Jamuna Parajuli** for yummy Dar.



Bhima Kandel Nanu is with **Didibahini Samajvictoria** and **Barsha KC**.
8 Sep · 🌐

🙏🙏 thank you **Didibahini Samajvictoria** for this special, unforgettable and valuable surprise teej dar and gift .it makes me really joyful.thank you once again and happy teej to all of you. special thanks to **barsha kc didi**. ❤️❤️



Geeta Nayak Chhetri is 🙏 feeling thankful with **Didibahini Samajvictoria** and **Subash KC**.
8 Sep · 🌐

Teej 2021 🙏🙏 Thank you so much for the yummy dar delivery **Didibahini Samajvictoria** 🙏🙏



Anju Shrestha is with **Annieta Bhandari**.
8 Sep · 🌐

Thank you so much **Didibahini Samajvictoria** for this wonderful daar..I still consider myself a postnatal mom so its a perfect daar for me..Despite being in lockdown, got this from our sisters, so really blessed.

Happy teej in advance ❤️❤️.



AarShree Kc is with **Rajesh Kc**.
7 Sep · 🌐

Thank you **Didibahini Samajvictoria** for beautiful teej Dar surprise gift.... 🙏🙏🙏



Some glimpse of online teej Celebration:

