

## [Dressing for Heaven](#)

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CHARITY

## Dressing for Heaven

Top models grace Delhi fashion show of the Gods

Prabha Prabhakar Bhardwaj

India's top fashion designers--Ritu Beri, Reena Dhaka, Anju Modi and Atlier Samde--joined together to offer Delhites something unusual during Diwali: a Goddess fashion show. As festival fireworks lit the evening sky over Delhi's upscale South City Country Club on November 3, master of ceremonies Shamshir Luthra stood inside on the fashion catwalk and opened the charity show with a powerfully chanted "Aum." For the next hour, glamorous models paraded tasteful modern outfits for five forms of the Goddess: Saraswati, Lakshmi, Parvati, Durga and Kali.

Dress, ornaments and music were coordinated to the traditional depiction of each. Vina music accompanied the white with gold trim fashions of Goddess Saraswati; the male models wore equally elegant dhotis and held flutes. Lakshmi arrived on stage in a lotus-shaped palanquin carried by four men. Magenta and pink colors were combined in all Her dresses (modeled by Mehar, Shikkha and Aparna) and out-of-season lotuses were abundant. Goddess Parvati

(portrayed by Rohini) drew gasps from the audience as she appeared on stage with a large and very alive python. She wore the yellow and orange colors of her austerity performed to win God Siva. Goddesses Durga and Kali came together, the women in red, the attending men in black, to depict Kali's ultimate triumph over the demon Rakat Bhij.

There were critics who felt the show a mockery of religion. South City Club manager Ms. Preeti Singh objected to the depiction of Parvati as untraditional. But the overall reaction was positive. A temple-like mood had been created, one too in which the Deities were approachable and full of life.

The show was the inspiration of Dr. Ramesh Kapur. His Unitech company began in 1971 with four persons and US\$1,500 capital. Today it is a US\$24-million-dollar company with 10,000 employees. Proceeds from the entire mela (of which the fashion show was a part) went to Mobile Creches, India's largest nongovernmental organization. They provide on-site child care for working mothers at construction sites across India.

Show organizer Meenu is an ex-journalist, now Delhi "event organizer" with her own version of feminism. She advocates the strength of womanhood, the concept she used to develop the divine shakti of Devis. As a journalist, she had covered many fashion shows and was always distressed at their superficiality. Dr. Kapur's program gave her the opportunity to produce a fashion show with some meaning, and perhaps to even set a new trend toward elegant outfits for both men and women based upon ancient tradition. Hopefully, many

countries will extend a welcome to this utterly divine show.