

# Himalayan Fair

[www.himalayanfair.org](http://www.himalayanfair.org)

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Benefit for Humanitarian Grassroots Projects in the Himalayas Celebrates 23<sup>rd</sup> year**

### ***Shabaz , Chaksam-pa and Ancient Future join Mongolian Throat Singers at the Fair***

BERKELEY—(April 11, 2006) The Himalayan Fair Committee presents the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual *HIMALAYAN FAIR*—A Benefit for Humanitarian Grassroots Projects in the Himalayas. Award-winning dancers and musicians will represent the great mountain cultures of Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Mongolia while vendors of art objects and savory food from as far as Kathmandu hawk their wares—on Saturday, May 20, 10 AM to 7 PM and Sunday, May 21 10 AM to 5:30 PM at Live Oak Park, 1300 Shattuck Avenue @ Berryman, North Berkeley, CA, wheelchair assistance & facilities. Requested donation at the gate is: \$8 single, \$15 couple, \$20 trio, children 12 and under are free. This event is the only one, anywhere, that brings together all the Himalayan cultures in celebration.

*“The entertainment at the fair ranges from Mongolian throat singers to Classical dancers from the southern tip of India--and everything in between.”*—Barbara Framm, entertainment co-producer.

One ambles among tents and booths scattered under the towering oak and redwood trees of the park. There is the spicy aroma of food baking over charcoal, vibrant colors in booths and whirling on dancers, sounds of bells, singing, laughter and Tibetan long-horns and seeing those rare Mongolian Throat Singers featured in National Geographic. It is one of the few places where Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Christians and secular folk gather in peace, to share and learn about cultures. The Fair provides a rare trip to a unique Himalayan festival without leaving the Bay Area.

During the past few years the Fair has raised over \$180,000 from gate donations, which goes a long way when you convert the currency. This year's Fair is raising money for projects such as *Prism Bangladesh*, building arsenic free wells, *Kham Aid Foundation*, providing educational scholarships, and *The International Women's Sewing Group* supporting education projects for children.

*“We live in a nation where the self is isolated, and in Himalayan cultures the self is connected to other people, to a larger force and landscape. It's important to help people who can benefit from the basic things we take for granted: access to food and clean water, medical equipment and treatment, school buildings, education, clothes to wear and mattresses to sleep on.”*

—Barbara Mercer, Himalayan Fair Director

Founded in 1984 by Arlene Blum, the first woman to scale Annapurna, the annual outdoor celebration grows larger every year. Vendors come from as far as Kathmandu. The *HIMALAYAN FAIR* offers a wide variety of award winning stage performers (for adults and children) produced by Katherine Kunhiraman Co-Director of the *Kalanjali: Dances of India*, and Barbara Framm Assistant Director of *Odissi Vilas: Sacred Dance of India dance company*. The entertainment features a range of international groups performing their traditional music and dance with vibrant ethnic costumes as well as some well known world beat groups like Shabaz and Ancient Future. New to the Fair this year, Vidya, with Prasant Radhakrishnan and his band giving

a new twist to Carnatic music, featuring South Indian saxophone!

This year marks the welcome return of Chaksam-pa to the Fair. A locally based Tibetan Dance and Opera Company, directed by Shurzur Tashi Dhondup, Chaksam-pa presents authentic traditional dance, music, and costumes from Tibet. In addition, fairgoers will be treated to classical Odissi dance by Odissi Vilas: Sacred Dance of India, North Indian Kathak dance presented by Chitresh Das Dance Company, “Bollywood Splash”, Bollywood-inspired film dances, Mirage and Echo of Mongolia featuring awe-inspiring acrobats and throat singers, local Nepali and Tibetan community groups presenting dance and music, and the traditional offering by local dance schools of Bharata Natyam, classical South Indian dance.

The weekend event, supported by The City of Berkeley, *East Bay Express*, KPFA Radio 94.1 FM, *The Monthly* and the North Shattuck Association, offers access to non-profit organizations providing travel information, health reports, mountaineering assistance, current news concerning the Himalayas and related charitable organizations. As a benefit for Nepalese, Tibetan, Indian, Afghani and Mongolian projects, the Himalayan Fair Committee carefully researches the recipients to insure that the money raised by the gate donations and booth rentals goes directly to children’s scholarships, medical equipment, clean water, nutrition resources and other aid.

The Fair's purpose is in sympathy with Milarepa the 11<sup>th</sup> Century Tibetan Buddhist, poet and hermit saint who said:

*To give alms to the needy with compassion  
Is equal to serving Buddhas in the Three Times.  
All the happiness one has is derived from others  
All the help one gives to them  
In return brings happiness.*

**Barbara Mercer** fell in love with the Himalayas and its peoples when she accompanied her friend Arlene Blum on the return trip to the Annapurna region in 1984. She has helped organize the fair as part of the Himalayan Fair Committee since 1985 and has been the Director since 1991. However by vocation she is a psychologist in the Bay Area. She is also a writer and photographer. Barbara has returned to the Himalayas many times to trek, for social/psychological projects, and has studied the Nepali language for many years.

**Arlene Blum** led the **first** female expedition, up the world's 10th highest peak—Annapurna in 1978. She was part of the Bicentennial Everest Expedition in 1976, setting an altitude record for American women. Her climbing feats were preceded by a career as a biochemist at University of California, Berkeley. Arlene is a keynote speaker, leadership and inter-cultural trainer and her recent memoir *Breaking Trail A Climbing Life* was published in fall 2005 by Scribner. The paperback is scheduled for release soon. Arlene "founded" the Himalayan Fair with a Tibetan teacher, Lama Kunga of the Ewam Choden Center, when they decided to call a picnic gathering of Tibetan and Nepali residents with their friends in Berkeley, creating the first official Himalayan Fair in 1984.

**Katherine Kunhiraman** is the director of Kalanjali: Dances of India, based in Berkeley CA. Returning from 12 years in India in 1972, Katherine and her husband, Kathakali-dancer K.P. Kunhiraman, founded their dance school Kalanjali, dedicated to the promotion of Bharata Natyam, the classical dance of South India. Kalanjali is well-known in the Bay Area, and throughout the Indian dance world, for producing world-class dancers and bringing renowned artists from India on a yearly basis to perform in Berkeley and throughout the Bay Area. Katherine has been associated with the Himalayan Fair for over 20 years, gathering the finest local and international artists, both community-based and professional, to perform at the Fair.

Live or phone interviews with **Barbara Mercer, Arlene Blum, or Katherine Kunhiraman** the Entertainment Producer, rehearsal visits, as well as photos can be arranged by contacting Ralph Davies at 510.834.7435

of interest:

[www.himalayanfair.org](http://www.himalayanfair.org)

<http://www.himalayanfair.org/prism.htm>

<http://www.ektaonline.org/~shabazmu/music/>

<http://www.tibet.org/chaksampa/About/index.html>

[http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/15/SPGM9G8ABB1.DTL&hw=arlene+blum&sn=001&sc=1000)

[bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/15/SPGM9G8ABB1.DTL&hw=arlene+blum&sn=001&sc=1000](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/15/SPGM9G8ABB1.DTL&hw=arlene+blum&sn=001&sc=1000)

<http://www.arleneblum.com>

<http://www.tibet.org/chaksampa/>

<http://www.odissivilas.org>

<http://www.ektaonline.org/~shabazmu/>

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