

Masala! Mehndi! Whisky!

Contributed by ANNA-KAISA WALKER, Special to The Globe and Mail
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There was no wine, but lots to toast at a recent gala, Anna-Kaisa Walker writes. Photography by Janice Pinto

The weather is chillier, but the atmosphere in the Arcadian Court was tropical - maybe it was the brilliant pink, turquoise and gold saris, the heat from the chickpea masala, or the warm applause for the South Asian community's leading lights, who gathered for the Desi News-Grant's Community Achievers Awards on Sept. 7.

Several hundred guests showed up for the glittering gala dinner and toasted the evening's 23 honorees with whisky - in fact, Grant's Family Reserve was the event's co-sponsor and the only booze served at the bar, despite guests' entreaties for wine.

Actress Anita Majumdar danced a rollicking Kathak hip-hop mash-up from her one-woman play, *The Misfit*.

Among the feted were software magnate and philanthropist Aditya Jha, the Toronto Community Foundation's Rahul Bhardwaj, Canadian Space Agency vice-president Virendra Jha and Penguin Canada president David Davidar.

Jyothi Basrur gave an emotional thank you as she accepted a special award on behalf of her late sister, Dr. Sheela Basrur, who steered the city through the 2003 SARS crisis and died of cancer this June.