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N Swamy Mrs, Pattie Cortese and Vice Mayor Mr, Dave Cortese N Maheshji

Balaji Temple Holds Bhakti Kala Sagar Program

By Prasad Karuba & Priya Chawathe

ALVISO, CA: Saturday, June 16th 2007 was an auspicious day for Balaji Temple of 5004 North First Street, Alviso, CA 95002. The first cultural program "Bhakti Kala Sagar", organized by devotees was successfully held and enjoyed by all who participated. It was a day of prayer, dance, song, good food, good words and good company (satsang).

Devotees had been waiting for this beautiful day to come into reality in the form of a cultural event to be enjoyed by young and old alike. People from all walks of life and far away places marked this calendar event to be. Devotees and friends of Balaji temple worked with love and dedication for many weeks in preparation, and together they made it a successful and memorable event.

The day started with Head Priest Sri Narayana Swamiji decorating the radiant statue of Lord Hanumanji and seating him in the beautiful chariot (Ratha) during the chanting of the sacred religious mantras. Coconuts were offered and Aarti and beautiful bhajans were sung. The Ratha Yatra procession began from the new temple site and proceeded to the cultural event site at George Mayne Elementary School, Alviso.

Devotees, dressed in their best attire, sang bhajans and chanted mantras with Sri Narayana Swamiji. The dholak and other musical instruments were played along with the traditional rituals of the puja. The sight and sounds were beautiful to behold.

Every devotee and friend participating had the radiance of love and joy during the Ratha Yatra. The Ratha (chariot) was so beautifully decorated that it caught everyone's attention. Upon arrival at the venue, the Ratha was received by devotees and members of the temple.



Honored guests were San Jose Vice Mayor, Dave Cortese, his wife, Mrs. Pattie Cortese, and K. Priyanka Goel daughter of Mr. Prabhu and Mrs. Poonam Goel. Presse reporters and photographers also attended the beautiful event.

The program started with receiving of guests. Next, the Vice Mayor Mr. Cortese and Priyanka Goel lit the lamps and Sri Narayanji began the program with prayers. The Balaji Temple Souvenir book, written and sponsored by devotees and Narayana Swamiji, was released by the Honorable Mayor, Ms. Goel, Sri

Narayana Swamiji and Mr. Mahesh Nihilani.

Shawls and flowers were presented to the distinguished guests. The Mayor gave an inspiring speech honoring the values of non-violence and unity in Hinduism. He welcomed Balaji Temple to San Jose and said the City was looking forward to Balaji Temple being built because it would be both good for the temple and the community and the relationship would promote peace, unity and goodwill, unity and goodwill.

Devotees were enthralled by his charitable words of praise and encouragement and felt so happy that the temple would be located in such a broad-minded city.

The Bhakti Kala Sagar Cultural Program began at 4:00 pm with wonderful cultural performances.

Against the backdrop of temple architecture and a wall hanging of Sri Balaji, all the performances gave the appearance of being performed before the Lord. The effect was stunning. The wonderful array of performances offered to the Lord included: Bharatnatyam by Neela Moorthy of Los Angeles, Odissi by Seema Chakravarty and her students, Kathak by the Tarangini School of Kathak, KuchiPudi by students of Madhuri Kishore School of dance, and Balaji students of Balak School.

The Tabla was played beautifully by Shaunak Adkar. Children of Balaji Temple recited the Mantra (prayers) with sweet enthusiasm.

The headline performers of the program were well-known Hindustani vocalist Nachiketa Sharma accompanied by Ravi Gutala (Tabla) and Vijay (Harmonium). Their performance was entirely beautiful and inspiring. The trio received a standing ovation from the audience. The students of Mr. Nachiketa Sharma also gave outstanding performances on Tabla, harmonium and vocal.

Throughout the program a raffle was held to raise funds for the temple construction. Prizes were generously donated by devotees and local businesses and included diamond jewelry, electronics and gift certificates with the Grand Prize being a cruise for two people for five days to Mexico or the Caribbean.

The Bhakti Kala Sagar program was choreographed by Mrs. Pushpa Dhar who also served as Mistress of Ceremonies. The vote of thanks was given by Maha Lakshmi Dasi. Lakshmi Vittala Dasi, Secretary of the temple, spoke about the temple's vision.

Vice President of the temple, Vishal Sanghal work continuously to ensure the smooth running of the event. Fundraising Committee Chairpersons were Mr. Mahesh Nihilani and Mr. Mohinder Sethi. Guests of honor were Mr. Prabhu and Mrs. Sudha Dev from London, England, Mr. Shiv Kumar and Mrs Rani Mehta and Mr. Prasad Kuruba from Phoenix, AZ.

Sri Narayana Swamiji addressed the audience with a speech on "God is One, All are One" {Ekam sat vipra bahuda vandanti}. He spoke about his vision for the temple in which he described a temple as a place given to us by God to worship, adore and serve Him.

He mentioned that God is our eternal Father and Mother, the One we come from and the One we return to and that the most important spiritual law is to have gratitude to the One who is behind everything.

"Bhagyada Lakshmi was sung by lady devotees of the temple accompanied by Mrs. Bhagyarati Bindu on the keyboard.

Mahaprasadam organized by Ashok Chawathe and Sanku Mukherjee was served after the event. Delicious ladoos, chole, rice pulau, tamarind rice (puliogare), kausambari salad and dal vadas were made by devotees at the new premises.

The Bhakti Kala Sagar program an auspicious beginning in Alviso for devotees as they look forward to their dream of a temple to Lord Balaji becoming reality.