

Balaji Temple Hosts Gana Homa, Geeta Vaibhavam Concert

By a Staff Reporter

More than 300 people attended a Gana Homa and a Geetha Vaibhavam concert at the Balaji Temple May 16 in San Jose, Calif.

The day's activities began with ritual ablutions to Ganesha and Hanuman. Swami Narayananda, founder and president of the Balaji Temple, then performed a gana homa, with the help of priests Manoj and Vitthaladas.

Rajendra Narurkar, treasurer of the Balaji Temple, told India-West that gana homa is performed to offer peace to the world. At the end of the puja, sweets were placed into the fire to purify the souls of all participants. Serial entrepreneurs Prabhu and Poonam Goel were the guests of honor for the gana homa.

The Hanuman Chalisa was recited 108 times in praise of the monkey god. Following the homa, participants embarked on a barefoot rath yatra, chanting the Hanuman Chalisa on the journey to nearby George Mayne Elementary, where the Geeta Vaibhavam concert was held.

The concert began with the traditional lighting of the lamps; San Jose city councilman Ash Kalra lit the first lamp and Prabhu Goel lit the second. Narayananda then made a short speech, reciting from the Bhagavad Gita: "Remove me from untruth to the truth, from darkness to the light and from death to enlightenment."

Students of the Shruthi Swara Laya, an institute of South Indian classical music and dance, gave a concert under the direction of Anuradha Suresh, who founded the school in 1998.

"Anu Suresh has put together a program to honor the Lord," said Rajesh Kamath, Balaji temple sec-

retary, adding, "Today's program shows Anuradha's dedication to her students and all of them seem like flowers in a garland."

"God is love and when children perform for God, the love comes out," said Kamath.

Eight young participants first performed a geetam to Lord Ganesha, followed by songs in praise of Vishnu and Rama. Vocalists were often accompanied by instrumentalists Ravi Sridharan and Gopal Ravindran on the mridangam, and Srinivas Kommu on the violin. Manasa Suresh performed a solo Carnatic vocal, followed by a bharatnatyam dance depicting the Navarasa by students of Vidya Venkatesan.

Local politicians attending the event included Santa Clara County supervisor Dave Cortese, and San Jose city councilmembers Kansen Chu and Ash Kalra.

Chu spoke of the new Balaji temple proposed for the Alviso area of San Jose, saying that he welcomed the Hindu community to the diverse neighborhood.

Narurkar told India-West the first phase of the new 12,000 square foot temple would be completed at the end of 2010. The city has approved plans for both the first and second phases of the project, he said, adding that in the second phase, a parking structure, yoga and meditation studios and a kitchen to feed the homeless would be added to the existing structure.

The project will cost \$2.5 million to complete. The planning committee has raised \$45,000 thus far, and hopes to borrow \$500,000 against its existing home to complete the first phase, said Narurkar.

The May 16 event raised \$2,000 for the new structure.



Swami Narayananda (center) performed a gana homa May 16 at the Balaji Temple in San Jose, Calif., as priests Manoj and Vitthaladas assisted (far left). Temple secretary Rajesh Kamath (left) and guests of honor Poonam and Prabhu Goel (right) are also shown. (Balaji Temple photos)



Several local politicians attended the concert, including, from left to right: Santa Clara County supervisor Dave Cortese and his wife Patty; Daisy Chu and San Jose city councilman Kansen Chu; San Jose City councilman Ash Kalra; Swami Narayananda; and serial entrepreneur Prabhu Goel.