

## Makara Sankranti Celebrated at the Balaji Temple

**P**ongal/Makara Sankranti were celebrated Jan. 14th, at the Balaji Temple in Sunnyvale, Calif., with a *homa* and Shiva Kavacha *abishekam* ceremony in the morning and *rudrabishekam* in the evening. The morning ceremony featured a new Shiva *kavacham*, made in India and donated to the Balaji Temple by Phani and Ramakrishna Yadlapalli for the occasion of Makara Sankranti. The evening *rudrabishekam* was well attended. This ceremony was enhanced by Lakshmi Kary's donation of 14 gallons of fresh cow's milk from Sacramento. Swamiji explained the significance of Pongal/Makara Sankranti.

The Pongal festival in South India is a day of triumph. Symbolically, the first harvest is offered to the Almighty — and that is Pongal. Pongal is the festival during which the landlord distributes food, clothes and money among the laborers who work for him.

The day prior to the Makara Sankranti is called the Bhogi festival. On this day, old, worn-out and dirty things are discarded and burnt. Homes are cleaned and white-washed and lovely designs are drawn with rice-flour



N. Swamiji, Phani and Ramakrishna

on the door front. The roads are swept clean. Swamiji reminded devotees that it will not do to attend to these external things alone. Cleaning the mind of its old dirty habits of thought and feeling is more urgently needed. Burn them up, with a wise and firm resolve to tread the path of truth, love and purity from this holy day onwards, he said. This is the significance of Pongal in the life of the spiritual aspirant.

The temple will celebrate the sixth anniversary of the Sri Balaji and Mahalakshmi moorthies arrival from India Feb.11-14. For more details, visit [www.balajitemple.net](http://www.balajitemple.net) or call (408) 203-1036.

— Allen Mulch