

S.V. Temple Newsletter



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Pongal or Makara Sankranthi - Significance

Pongal or Sankranthi is the first Hindu festival that comes in the beginning of the English New Year calendar. This is the only festival in Hinduism that uniquely follows a solar calendar and is usually celebrated on the fourteenth of January every year.



The literal meaning of the word Pongal is ‘overflowing’.

People on Pongal day follow the tradition of boiling fresh milk, allowing it to boil over the vessel and then preparing a sweet dish out of it. Pongal or Sankranthi brings to mind colorful kites, Rangolis, decorative bulls, sugar canes, the Sun God, and finally the sweet dish Pongal which is made of milk, new rice, and jaggery. It is a harvest festival celebrated for four days long all over by Indians. Makara Sankranthi symbolizes the termination of winter season and the beginning of the spring.

Sankranti is derived from the word 'sankramana', meaning a 'change'. It is on this day the Sun enters ‘Makara Rasi’ (the zodiac sign - Capricorn), hence it is also called 'Makara Sankranti'. When the sun is in the northern hemisphere for a six month period, it is called Uttarayana which marks the “day” for devatas. For the remaining six month period the sun is in southern hemisphere which is called Dakshinayana and is considered as “night” for devatas. So, on Pongal day the sun starts traveling from the southern hemisphere toward the northern hemisphere—that is from the Tropic of Capricorn toward the Tropic of Cancer—bringing us into the Uttarayana phase with this festival. In Hinduism, Uttarayana is considered a preferable time to start any

special auspicious occasions like marriages, housewarmings or the 16 sanskaras.

The historical importance of this day is that the king Bhagiradha, with his great power of meditation, brought the Holy River Ganga on to the earth into a place called Ganga Sagar, also known simply as Sagar.

Pongal or Makara Sankranti is celebrated for four days and each day has a special significance. However, as this is a harvest festival, it is celebrated more grandly in villages. All rituals performed during the festival period are gestures of thanksgiving to nature and are dedicated to Surya, the Sun God.

The first day is called “Bhogi” which marks some newness. People on this day arrange a bonfire called “Bhogi flames” and burn old wood and dirty unwanted things, which symbolically mark the beginning of a new life. All houses are cleaned, white washed, and decorated with colorful Rangolis. In the evenings, some families arrange ceremonies like “golu” and “bhogi pallu” for kids. This day is celebrated as Lohri or Magh Bihu / Bhogali Bihu in some places of the north.

Pongal or Sankranti day falls on the second day. People prepare sweets and different cuisines, visit each other houses and exchange greetings. Some people visit temples and offer prayers thanking God. A special dish called tilgurs/tilguls meaning laddoos made of sesame seeds and jaggery is famous in Maharashtra for this festival.

The third day is called Mattu Pongal or Kanuma and is meant to offer thanks to the cattle. Cattle are given bath and decorated. Bull fights and cock fights, also called jallikattu, take place in the evening of this day. Some people worship cows and feed them with a sweet dish made of rice.

The last day is called Kanum Pongal or in some places also known as Mukkanuma. On this day people go out for a picnic and spend happily the whole day enjoying delicious food with friends and family. Thus ends the 4 day celebrations of auspicious festival Pongal or Sankranti which is highly regarded by Hindus.

Dhanurmasa Vratam - Goda Kalyanam

“Masaanaam Margasheersham” – says Lord Krishna in Bhagavat-Gita. This means “Of all the months, I am Margaseersha” which can be interpreted as Margaseersha is the most auspicious of all the months. The utmost auspicious “Dhanurmasam” starts in Margaseersha month.

Dhanurmasam is not an individual month in any Vedic Calendar. But it begins when the Sun enters the Dhanur rashi, the zodiac sign Sagittarius, and extends for a period of one month, as long as the Sun is in the same zodiac sign. So, this period of one month is noted as Dhanurmasam. And it ends with Makara Sankranti as the sun enters Makara rashi, the zodiac sign Capricorn. Usually it falls in mid-December (Margaseersha) to the mid-January (Pushya masam) time frame. During this time, devotees of Lord Vishnu observe a vratam called Dhanurmasa Vratam which is also called Shri Vratam, Goda Devi’s Tiruppaavai Vratam, Andal Vratam. So, this one month is more favorable to all the Vaishnavites to worship Lord Vishnu and His forms along with Goda Devi / Andal Alwar.

Goda Devi is believed to be the incarnation of Goddess Bhodevi. About 5000 years ago, there lived a person named Vishnuchittar (also known as Periyalwar) in Madhurai, Tamil Nadu, who was a great devotee to Lord Vishnu/Krishna and was one of the main Alvars of the 12. One fine day morning, he found a baby girl in his Tulasi garden. He brought her up with most love and affection and believed that he couldn’t find another garland to Lord Vishnu than the girl he found and hence named her Kodai (meaning garland) who in time became Goda.

Like Vishnuchittar, Goda also grew up with great devotion towards the Lord Krishna. Even as a child she sang songs on Krishna and danced in front of His idol. This great love towards Lord Krishna made her feel that He was her Husband. One night the Lord appeared in Vishnuchittar’s dream and told him to bring his daughter to Srirangam and that he would marry her. Vishnuchittar accordingly reached Srirangam and Goda ran into the temple sanctum and upon reaching the Lord, effulgence departed her body and her heart merged with Lord Ranganatha and she was seen no more. and her name stayed forever.



Andal composed and sung 30 verses in Tamil on praising the Lord. These 30 verses are named as Tiruppaavai. Tiru is similar to Sri and means beautiful or sweet and paavai means garland of hymns. She performed this Tiruppaavai vratam in Dhanurmasam and at the end of the vratam she married Lord Ranganatha in Srirangam. Since then, it has become a custom for many devotees to perform the Dhanurmasa vratham by singing the Tiruppavai and offering one verse a day to Lord Krishna.

Sri Andal became one of the 12 Alvars. They indicate that Andal was sent to earth to inculcate devotion among humans.

Mother Goda showed us the path in the form of Tiruppavai vratam which is the substance of whole Vedas. The main intention behind this vratam is the well-being of the world (loka kalyanam) and one has to achieve the divine bliss. This vratam ends with Goda Kalyanam. Goda Kalyanam will be performed in all SriVaishnava temples and Goda Devi Tiruppaavai is a must-recite in strict Vaishnavaites households all over the world.

The Sri Venkateshwara (Balaji) Temple priests recite Tiruppaavai, every year during Dhanurmasam. Chanting of Vishnu Sahasranama Parayana all 30 days and followed by Goda Kalyanam on the last day of Dhanurmasam takes place in our temple. May we all shower under the blessings of Lord Vishnu.

Sri Ramanujacharya

Sri Ramanuja (1017-1137 CE) was a well renowned philosopher-saint, social reformer and most importantly the founder of Sri Vaishnava sampradaya. Ramanuja's celebrated system of philosophy is called Visishtadvaita or qualified monism (non-dualism) which means God alone exists and everything else that is seen is His manifestations or attributes. Sri Ramanuja is considered as the most important guru or teacher for Sri Vaishnavas in Hinduism. He followed and showed the same path of qualified non-dualism to His disciples. Therefore he is referred to as acharya and is known as Ramanujacharya.



Sri Ramanujacharya was born in a Brahmin family to Asuri Kesava Somayaji Dikshitar and Kanthimathi Ammal in the year 1017 AD at Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, India. He was born with auspicious marks on his body and brilliance in his face with divine traits similar to what Sri Lakshmana (brother of Lord Rama) possessed. It is believed that Ramanuja is none other than Sri Lakshmana who does His duty with devotion and dedication to Lord Rama and who was the incarnation of Adi Sessa. He was brought up in a very religious family who were great devotees of Lord Srimannarayana. From childhood, Ramanuja was highly intelligent and had an ability to understand the great philosophical points. At his young age he lost his father and was living with his mother at Kancheepuram. There he mastered all the Vedas and Shastras under Yadavaprakasha, a great teacher of Advaita Philosophy. Within 16 years of age he became a proponent of Vedantic philosophy. He was married to Tanjammaambal, at age 17. Later, with the advice of his childhood mentor Kanchipurna, Ramanuja travelled to Srirangam to meet Kanchipurna's own guru Yamunacharya who was a great philosopher of Visishtadvaita. Yamunacharya had died prior to Ramanuja's arrival. But he accepted Yamunacharya as Manasika Acharya and took up his guru's uncompleted tasks. Those were: 1) Writing Visishtadvaita Bhashyam to the Vyasa bhagavan's

Brahma Sutras 2) Perpetuating the name of Parasara, who was the author of Vishnu Purana and 3) Perpetuating the name of Saint Sathakopa.

Ramanuja realized that his life as a householder was interfering with his philosophical pursuits and so sent his wife to her parent's home and became a Sanyasin. He wrote a book called Vedanta Sara (the essence of Vedanta) at age 33. Later, he wrote various books like Vedantha Sangraha, Sri Bhashyam, Gita Bhashyam, Sharanagathi Gadyam, Sriranga Gadyam, and Sri Vaikuntha Gadyam etc., to promote the Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya. He visited all the Vaishnavite shrines in South India including Kashi, Badrinath and Kashmir so on to cultivate visishtadvaita based on the Vedas and the Alvars Divya Prabandham.

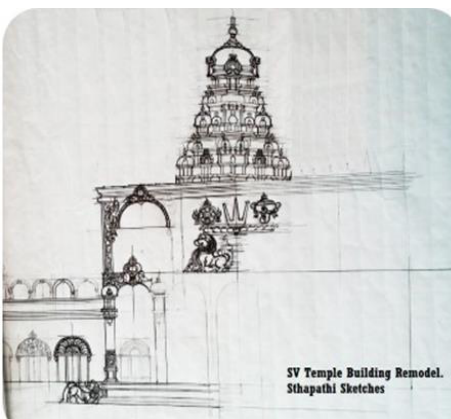
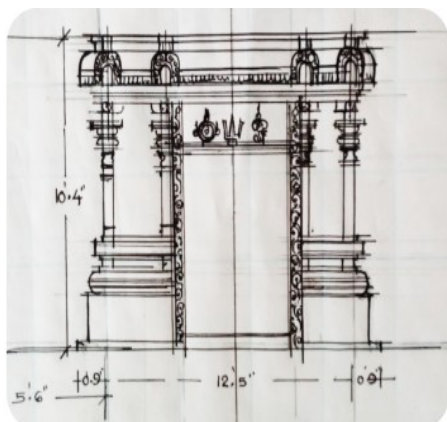
Finally he reached Srirangam and became the head of the Mutt (religious institution) there and continued his service of preaching on Visishtadvaita philosophy and developed Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya. By then his name and fame spread wide and became a popular teacher, philosopher, and guide that attracted many people who became his disciples later. He established many Sri Vaishnavite temples and Mutts. He established a system to perform the daily rituals and procedures necessary to Vaishnavite temples (eg: at SriRangam and at Tirumala) and which are followed to this today. He established a temple for Sriman Narayana in a place called Thirunarayanapuram (called as Melkote) in today's Karnataka state near Mysore. He gave new insight into Vaishnavism and became well known as its foremost saint. He lived for 120 years and attained Vaikunthapathi (Heaven) in 1137 in Sri Rangam, Tamil Nadu.

Sri Ramanujacharya revitalized Hindu Philosophy and popular religion so much that nearly every aspect of Hinduism has been influenced by his work. His life and work show a truly unique personality, combining contemplative insight, logical acumen, charismatic energy and selfless dedication to God. For this, he is rewarded with the title of "Sri Vaishnava Siddhanta Nirdhaarana Sarva Bouma".

Our SV Temple follows the guidance of Sri Vaishnava Sampradaya while performing the rituals for Lord Venkateshwara. Every month on the third Saturday the temple performs Tirumanjanam (Abhishekam) to Jagadacharya Sri Ramanuja. We invite everyone interested to take part in this grand monthly event at our temple to attain spiritual eleva-

S.V. Temple Updates and Future Plans

Mulavirat and Temple Remodeling— Our temple pranaprathistapana event will be this year (most probably in the middle of 2015) but the date is not yet fixed. Our Balaji mulavirat and other stone murthis were shipped from Chennai in the middle of December 2014 and are expected to be in Minneapolis by the end of January 2015. Our temple was visited by staphathi Paramshivam garu in Mid-August 2014 and remodeling plans were drawn and plans were made for the installation of our Mulavirats.



Temple Fund Raising—Temple will need lot of funds to perform pranaprathistapana and remodeling activities. So, Management has decided to start fundraising and the firstfund raising event was started

with Goda Kalyanam, a Kuchipudi dance ballet directed by Mrs. Sujatha Akurati and Mrs. Purnima Dasari, well known dance teachers from Minneapolis. The event was organized by Kalanjali- SV Temple Cultural Committee, Vishala Pamulaparthi and Haritha Chimata. The dance Ballet was held in Stages Theatre at Crystal, MN and



more than 200 people attended and it was a great success. The event was also reported on TV5 news channel all over India and USA.



Temple Bylaws — Over the past Two years, the present leadership circle members of the temple worked on to rewrite the temple Bylaws to expand the Board to Eleven members and also to develop an organization with Executive and Operating committees. Newly developed Bylaws are approved with some modifications by the present board Madhu Reddy, Dr. Jyothsna Reddy and Dr. Pothapragada Venkateswarlu . In the Bylaws added a section on the Founders of the Temple to recognize Sri Madhusudhana Reddy and Smt.Dr. Jyothsna Reddy as Temple Founders, based on the Financial support and self less service to establish the Temple in Golden Valley and later shifted to City of Edina. A general body meeting was held on December 20th to present these updated Bylaws to our community . In the general body meeting, membership levels and the election process were explained in detail. An election commissioner was chosen to conduct elections in March /April 2015. We would like everyone interested in serving on the board and operation committees , please contact present Board Members to participate in the elections.

Temple Priests— At present we have three priests. We have applied visa for our fourth priest and hopefully he will be here by the end of March 2015. This year, our priests started to perform Visesha Sudar-sana Homam at devotees' homes and this has been an instant successful and was very well received.

Temple Founders -

Smt. Dr. Jyothsna Reddy and Sri Madhusudhana Reddy

Upcoming Festivals in 2015

Date	Event
January 1	New Year Day Celebrations
January 13	Bhogi
January 14	Sankranthi/Pongal
January 15	Kanuma
January 26	Ratha Sapthami
January 30	Bheeshma Ekadasi
February 17	Mahasivarathi
March 4	Holi/Vasantothsavam
March 20	Ugadi/Gudi Padwa/Cheti Chand
March 28	Sri Rama Navami
April 3	Hanuman Jayanthi
April 14	Tamil New Year/ Vishu/Baisakhi
April 20	Akshaya Tritiya
April 23	Sri Ramanuja Jayanthi
May 2	Sri Nrisimha Jayanthi
May 3	Sri Tallapaka Annamacharya Jayanthi
May 13	Hanuman Jayanthi
May 13	Shani Jayanthi

SV TEMPLE 2015 Calender -

Devotees can get the printed SV Temple 2015 Calendar copy from the temple on or after January 1, 2015 by offering a \$5 donation to the temple.



Religious & Cultural Events since August 2014

Below is the recap of the cultural/religious events that have taken place since August 2014. We thank all our volunteers and organizers who have made these events a great success. We look forward to your continuing support in the coming years.

1. **Samuhika Vara Lakshmi Vratam** — August 8, 2014.
2. **Temple Anniversary** — August 9, 2014. Sudarsana Homam with 108 couples and Srinivasa Kalyanam were performed.
3. **Sravana Poornima Celebrations** — August 10, 2014. Yajurveda Upakarma was performed in which Temple provided all the supplies including sacred thread needed for Upakarma. Rakhi Pournami celebrations also took place.
4. **Sri Krishna Janmashtami** — August 17, 2014.
5. **Vinayaka Chavithi** — August 29, 2014. Ganesha Homam and Vratam were performed. A huge *laddu* prepared by the food committee was auctioned. These proceeds will go towards the costs of bringing *Mulavirat* from India.
6. **Sri Viswayogi Viswamji's visit** to the Temple — September 6, 2014.
7. **Sri Unni Krishnan at SV Temple** — SV Temple arranged a meet and greet event with Sri Unni Krishnan in which community members learnt tips for learning Carnatic music.
8. **Dasara Celebrations** — September 24-October 3, 2014. The nine days of Navrathri celebrations were held in the temple with Ashta Lakshmi Kumkumaarchana, Lalitha Sahasranama Parayana along with Bommala Koluvu, Gouri Puja and Saraswathi Puja. SV Temple organized Dandiya dances on September 27th in which many devotees have participated. Delicious food was prepared and served by the temple food committee. Dandiya dances are featured dances of Navaratri (Dasara) evenings in North India. These dances were originated in Gujarat are generally performed in Goddess Durga's honor. The sticks of the dance represent the sword of Goddess Durga.
9. **Diwali Celebrations** — October 23, 2014. As every year, this year also SV Temple organized fireworks and food along with 5 days of Vissha Lakshmi Puja. More than 500 families, with great delight took part in the worship and celebrations of Diwali festival. Many devotees from nearby cities also visited the temple.

Religious & Cultural Events since August 2014Contd.)

on these festival days. On this day, temple was closed for few hours due to Solar Eclipse and reopened at 6 PM.

10. **Radha Kalyanam** — October 25, 2014.
11. **Diwali Cultural Talent Show** — October 25, 2014. Kalanjali – Cultural wing of SV Temple coordinated a talent show for Diwali. Various cultural and musical performances brought the Indian community together.
12. **Karthika Pournami** — November 6, 2014. Rites like Sri Satyanarayana Swami Vratam and Maha Lakshmi Deepa Puja took place in the temple. Every year in Karthika masam, essentially on Mondays (October 27th, November 3rd, 10th, and 17th), temple priests perform Sri Rudraabhishekam to Lord Shiva.
13. **Goda Kalyanam Dance Ballet** — December 13, 2014.
14. **Dhanurmasam** — December 13, 2014 to January 13, 2015 (Tiruppavai Chanting for 30 days).
15. **Vaikunta Ekadasi and New year's Eve**—December 31st, 2014

Goda Kalyanam Dance Group Members



2015 School Class Timings & Holidays

Sunday Class Schedule	
9.00 am – 10.00 am	YOGA class for adults and kids
10.00 am – 10.15 am	ASSEMBLY (Prayer and Announcements)
10.15 am – 11.00 am	LANGUAGE classes
11.00 am – 11.15 am	SNACK time
11.15 am – 12.00 pm	Culture Class
11.15 am – 12.00 pm	Music Class
2015 School Holidays	
March 29 - April 5	Spring Break
May 24	Memorial Day
June 6	School Anniversary Day

Special Events.

Temple will send emails to Devotees.

Date	Event
January 1	New Year Day Celebrations
January 13	Goda Kalyanam Start from 6PM
January 13	Bhogi Pallu for Kids
In April (TBD)	Natya Manjari Dance Competition
May 2-3	Naadotsavam (Carnatic and Bhakthi Star 2015)

S.V. Temple School (SVTS) Updates

SV Temple School had orientation on September 7, 2014 and classes started on September 14th. We have a new school management team this year. Mrs. Lakshmi Subu is the principal and Mrs.Vimala Muthyala is the Vice Principal. Dr.Jyothsna Reddy continued as School Director. We also have a lot of new teachers this year, who are very energetic, passionate and committed to the temple school and to our community. They teach our Indian traditions, history and culture, languages, classical music and Yoga & Meditation to our younger generation to carry on to future. All our classes are small / well focused and have syllabus for each subject and we have filled all classes for this year in the first week itself. We have assembly on every Sunday where all the kids participate and learn shlokas and start their day with prayers. The teachers take rotation to organize them. We have scheduled parent teacher conferences and we have just finished one in the middle of December where the teachers met with parents of kids to discuss the progress. Our school anniversary will be on June 6th and we will post more details on temple website. During that time all Kids will participate and perform what they have learned through the year. We are still looking for more teachers for all subjects (Hindi, Telugu, Music and Culture class) and if anyone is interested, please contact temple management to participate. SV Temple would like to thank and appreciate all our present school teachers and management for their commitment.

Comments and Articles

We invite all readers, devotees, followers, students, teachers, and writers, etc. to submit devotional stories, essays, and experiences to S.V. Temple Newsletter Editor. After the newsletter committee's review, articles will be published in the upcoming issues of the newsletter. Editor of the newsletter will have all the rights to modify the articles to address language, grammar, and space-constraint issues. Since the audience of this newsletter come from various age groups, we request you to send articles that everybody can understand. Make sure that your articles are helpful in educating the readers in devotional field and encourage them to follow *dharma*. Also, you can send comments on the published articles and ideas for new articles that you want to see. You can email your articles to Uma Vempati and Gayathri Vempati at news@svtemplemn.org.



Sri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple Main Phone # 952-835-2250

Yo Nithyam Achyutha Padambuja Yugma Rukma
Vyamohithah Thaditharani Thrinaya Mene
Asmath Guroho Bhagavathosya Dayaika Sindho
Ramanujasya Charanau Saranam Prapadhye!!

In utter devotion, I surrender to the feet of Sri Ramanuja,
My Acharya divine, the deep ocean of mercy and love,
He who possess all the auspicious qualities and who is ever
enamored by only the golden lotus feet of Lord Achyutha, and the
eternal treating of every other treasure as nothing.

Thanks from S.V. Temple:

S.V. Temple earnestly thank all our generous donors, wonderful devotees, learned priests and dedicated volunteers who help to make our Temple a marvelous place of worship.

Temple Hours:

The temple is open weekdays from 9:30 AM to Noon & 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM
Saturday and Sunday from 9:30 AM to 8:00 PM

Please **visit** www.svtemplemn.org for updates and details.

SV Temple (Balaji) Reg.sv center inc. IRS non profit 501(c) (3) Organization
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