

# Adiyongal Thirumadal

ISSUE 33

A SYDNEY ANDAL GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the **THIRTY THIRD** issue of Adiyongal Thirumadal !

Various Sydney Andal bhagavathas actively participated in the Sydney Andal Group's flagship events GGG utsavam and Sri Andal Kalyanam Sat Jan 13th and Sun Jan 21st 2018 respectively.

Our group has started the 750<sup>th</sup> thirunakshathiram year for Swami Vedantha Desikan with regular Skype chanting of his stothrams and prabandhams. If any devotee is interested to take part in it, you may please send us an email to **sydney.andal@gmail.com** and we will send you the skype invite.

In the next chanting we will include Varadharaja Panchasath, Vairaghya Panchakam and Saranagadhi Dheepika from Desika Sthothraani and Paramapadhabhangam from Desika Prabandham.

Regular monthly chanting of Thiruvoimozhi to celebrate Nammalvar Thirunakshatram, Visakam is taking place at bhaagavatha's thirumaaligai. If any devotee is interested to host at their place, please contact us through the above email ID.

Please send us your feedback or comments to **Sydney.andal@gmail.com**

Please visit our website **www.sriandalsydney.org** for latest updates.



**GGG Utsavam and Sri Andal Thirukalyanam 2018**

## Swami Vedantha Desikan Sri Narayanan Sampath

I attended a function to celebrate the 750 birth anniversary series of Swamy Thoopil Vedantha Desikan at a private home on 18 January 2018. I was quite impressed with the proceedings of the day and I congratulate the hosts Sri Suresh Varadarajan and Srimathi Radha Suresh. I have been thinking of such a celebration myself as Sri Desikan happens to be our religious Guru and also my brother is the President of Desika Sabha in Secunderabad, India.

Swamy Vedantha Desikan lived between years 1268 and 1370 AD and this year is his 750th birth year. He was a Vaishnava Guru, preacher and philosopher and a disciple of Kidambi Appullar alias Sri Aathreya Ramanujachariar in the lineage Swamy Ramanujaa who existed between years 1017 and 1137 AD.

Swamy Desikan was born to Sri Ananta Suri and Totaramma in Thoopul, near Kanchivaram. It was considered that he was on the order of Lord Venkateswara of Tirumala Tirupathi. Also, it is believed that Swamy was incarnation of divine bell of Sriman Narayanan, born to continue preachings on Vaishnavism. Swamy Desikan was born in Vishwamitra Gotram and Shravana Nakshathram. He was named Venkatanaadha.



Venkatanaadha was educated and trained by his scholarly maternal uncle Kidambi Appullar, who was considered as the direct descendent of Swamy Ramanujar. This uncle also initiated Venkatanaadha in Bramhacharya Upanayanam at the age of seven; and then to joined him into the Sri Vaishvaite School of philosophy through Panchasamskara to master Divya Prabhandham, Vedas, Puranas and Sastras. By the age of 20, he had mastered all the skills taught to him and became a scholar without any peer in his age group. He was married at 21 Tirumangai, who was also known as Kanakavalli. Venkatanaadha rose to the status of an "Acharya" at the age of 27. It is believed that he was conferred with the title of "Sarva Tantra Swatantra" (one with the capacity for independent thinking and originality in any field) by no other than Ranganaayaki Thayaar herself. He was adorned with the title of "Vedantha Desikan" by Lord Ranganaatha of Srirangam.

## Swami Vedantha Desikan (contd)

After becoming an Acharyas in the Ramanuja tradition, Vedantha Desikan went to Thiruvahindipuram (near Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu) after his aacharyan Swamy Kidambi Appullar taught the Garuda manthiram and spent several years meditating on Garuda,, who gave the Hayagreeva manthiram and after chanting this continuously Lord Hayagriva appeared before Desikan and gave Himself a deity of Hayagriva for daily worship. From then on Lakshmi and Hayagriva became his Ishta Devatha.

Swamy Vedantha Desikan composed numerous works of literature in several languages such as Sanskrit, Tamil, Prakrit and Manipravalam. All these works will live through ages speaking about his mastery of languages and excellence in the traditional knowledge known as "Gyana". Swamy Desikan travelled extensively covering Kanchipuram, Thirupathi, Brindavan, Ayodhya and Badrinath preaching Ramanuja's philosophy through discourses and literary works. After many years of Desa Sancharam including Melkote and Satyagala (near Kollegal) Swamy Desikan returned to Srirangam and settled down there.



Swamy Desikan went on pilgrimage tours to several holy places or kshetrmas such as Tiruk Kadigai, Tiru Ayodhya, Kaasi, Srikoomam, Purushottam, Mathura, Avanti, Badarikasramam, Puri, Brindavan, Dwaraka, Triveni etc. before returning to Kanchi. He travelled toTiruvallikeni, Tiruvallur, and allied Chola ruled Kshetrmas; Tirumalirumcholai, Srivilliputtur, Thirupulani and allied Pandya ruled Kshetrmas.

Sri Vedanta Desikar also wrote extensively on devotional works on Acaryas, treatises on Vishishtadvitha commentary on Bhagavat Gita, secret doctrines on Vaishnavism,

Thus Swamy Desikan has made a very good impact on those who know of him, although his name is not as popular as Swamy Ramanujar. Still, one can go on writing on his preaching and teachings, although there are not much literature available compared to Swamy Ramanujar.

It is a great gift that I got an opportunity to write on this great Acharyan, for which I am indebted to Sri Andal Sydney Group.

### 29. Work at Srirangam

Ramanuja heard from people about the change of heart in the new Chola King, who succeeded the fanatic Shaivaite king. He realised that all the sufferings of his father were due to the punishments meted out to the pure devotees of the God. He restored free religious practices. Restriction placed on Vaishnavaites were removed. Hearing this Ramanuja felt happy and relieved.

He decided to move to Srirangam from Melkote. He first went to Thirumalirum chalai and worshipped Sundarabahu Perumal (Azagar). He realised that in one of Andal's pasuram in "Nachiyar Thirumozi" she said that she has presented 100 potful of butter and will present Perumal with 100 potful of "Akkara Adisal" (a special preparation of rice, sugar and clarified butter), when her marriage with Perumal eventuated. Ramanuja felt that because she merged with Perumal when she went for marriage, she would not have got the chance to fulfil her vow. Ramanuja therefore presented the 100 potful of Akkara Adisal for Azagar. Because he did this like a brother, this incident is cited in Sriperambathur during holy bath (thirumanjanam) for Udayavar.

"Iyndhu kudikku oru Sandhadhiyam, Andal Thamaukku Annalaana Perumal" He then went to Sri Villiputhoor and had darshan of Perumal and Andaal. When He went to worship Andaal, Andal showed her real form from the idol and addressed him as his elder brother (Annan). When the song in praise of Andaal (Vaazi Thirunamam) is sung, it says she is younger to the saint of Sriperambathur "Sriperambathur maa munikku pin aanaal thaana vaaziye"

Ramanuja then went to Alwar Thirunagari (birth place of NamAlwar) and reached Srirangam and bowed before Sriranga pathi. He then reached his mutt. Kurathu alwan who came to know of Ramanuja's arrival in Srirangam, went with his wife and Parasara bhattar and bowed before Ramanuja. By then Ramanuja was about 100 years old and Kuresar who is elder in age to Ramanuja was also frail.

Without informing Ramanuja, Kuresar prayed to perumal for blessing him a place in His abode (Vaikunta Prapthi). Perumal blessed him and all those associated with him by granting Vaikunta Prapthi. Coming to know of this, Ramanuja asked what was the urgency for this request. Koorathu alwan said that he wanted to reach there first to be ready to receive Ramanuja when he decides to come there.

In due course, Alwan keeping his mind focussed on the lotus feet of Ramanuja shed his mortal coil and reached heavenly abode. All his disciples and friends were in deep grief. Ramanuja announced to all of them that Parashara Bhattar an erudite scholar and divine personality was the fit person to lead the Vaishnavaites in the future. He made him the head of the mutt with due ceremonies. The mortal coil of Alwan was consigned to the fire on the banks of the river Cauvery.

## Ramanuja's Life and Teachings - Contd

All of Ramanuja's disciples had immense merit, like Govindan who saved Udayavar from the evil plan of Yadava Prakasa, Kidambi Aachaan who could not bear the Ramanuja prostrating on the hot river bed to Thirukotiyur Nambi.

Andhra Poorna, for whom Ramanuja was god, took upon himself the service of looking after Ramanuja and giving him boiled milk at specific times. Ananthalwan who set up a flower garden "Ananha Sarasu" for the flower service of Thirvengadam udayan as desired by Ramanuja, was also one of Ramanuja's favourite disciples



Similar to Ramanuja's disciples developing deep love and devotion towards Udayavar, he also had love and respect for them. Ramanuja remained in Srirangam for close to 50 years i.e. before going to Thirunarayana puram and his return after the Chola king's death. During that period, Ramanuja's five teachers reached heavenly abode. By then he had a following of thousands of people, young and old, men and women, literate and illiterate, children and youth. Vaishnavism reached its peak and Udayavar felt that he had fulfilled his life's mission.

The wordings that he set right Lord Ranganatha's wealth "Then arangar selvam anaithum Thiruthi Vaithaan Vaaziye" is true, as the changes he made are in vogue even now. He set up a schedule for the performing of the various functions in the temple, making and distribution of prasada, chanting of Vedas and Prapandamas. He also invested in artists and workers, set up income streams etc for maintaining the huge temple complex and arranged for carrying out major repairs to the temple.

After completing all these, Ramanuja handed the administration and running of the temple to the king Agalanga Chola, who helped Ramanuja to formulate the procedures and systems. All the things we see happening today in Srirangam is due to Ramanuja's foresight and efforts, which should be remembered.

(to be continued...)

## Who is a Srivaishnava

Swamy Parasara Bhattar had a new disciple. The disciple wanted to know how to identify a Srivaishnava. Swamy sent his new disciple from Srirangam to Tirumala to ascertain from the great devotee Ananthazhwan as what were the qualities of a Srivaishnava. The disciple though bit amused with his Gurus instructions proceeded to Tirumala which took him almost a week to reach.

Being too hungry he reached the thirumaligai (ashram) of Sri Anantazhwan and expected some good hospitality from the intimates there. The Ashram was full of bhagavathas and they were having the prasadam. He did not have a proper place to sit along with the bhagavathas to have the prasadam. He had to wait until everyone finished their prasadam which took a long time as there were a good number of pilgrims who had come for thadhiaadhanai (partaking prasadam).

After some time, Ananthazhwan noticed the new person standing far away. On enquiring from his disciples, he understood the new devotee did not have prasadam yet. He felt sorry that he has yet not partaken the prasadam though he came from a very long distance and arranged for his prasadam. Then Ananthazhwan enquired where he came from and what purpose. The disciple promptly replied that his Acharyar Bhattar had sent him to ascertain the qualities of a Srivaishnava from his holiness and he was waiting for his audience.

Ananthazhwan briefly replied that a Srivaishnava must be like a **crane, a hen, salt and disciple like you.**(*Kokkaippol iruppaan, Kozhiyaippol iruppan, Uppaippol iruppaan, Ummaippol iruppaan*".) The disciple afterwards went into the chambers of Swamy's Ashram .He pleaded to know the inner meanings of the statement. Swamy Ananthazhwan out of compassion gave the explanation as below:

**A crane** lives along with the aquatic creatures near a lake. Though the river has different variety of fish, the crane picks up only that fish which **fits its mouth** and leaves that which doesn't suit her. A Srivaishnava must pick up this quality of a crane. There can be several interpretations of Veda, Upanishads and ithihasa by various acharyas but a Srivaishnava will **concentrate only on those truths which belong to his faith** and those which can be adopted and followed by him.

**The Hen** while moving around heaps of food will pick up the food which is needed, which is the essence and rejects the ones which is not worth. Similarly a Srivaishnava will **pick up that is essential truths that give him to Atmagynam and upliftment from this samsara.**

**The Salt** provides the taste in Food but you cannot see it. Its absence will be clear from the food. Similarly a Srivaishnava will do all the kaimkaryam but will not promote himself and will remain in the background. A true Vaishnava **would be self-effacing while imparting taste to the lives of others.**

**A second explanation is the salt retains the same taste both externally and internally.** Similarly a Srivaishnava should be connected with the LORD both internally and externally. The external signs like Urdhua Pundram and Tulasi malai etc may project one as a Srivaishnava but if he/she lacks the devotion to their acharya/Sriman Narayanan they are not true Srivaishnavas. The last quality was like the **disciple himself** , which means the Vaishnava who had come from Srirangam did not show any disrespect to the bhagavathas or publicise his personnel closeness to Bhattar and demanded to be respected etc. . Instead he was patiently waiting for his turn for prasadam and **exhibited humility** .This is a special quality of a Srivaishnava who keep their ego in check always.

The entire incident reveals that one must reflect on philosophical truths followed by **our** revered PoorvaAcharyas to **attain Vaikuntam** (get out of the cycle of birth and death) and always **be humble** and **do kaimkaryam** to Acharyar, bhaghavathas and Sriman Narayanan.

Varththai 47

47. அக்கரைக்கே விட்டேனோ குஹப்பெருமானைப் போலே

47. akkaraikkE vittEnO guhapperumAlaip pOIE

Following the word of Dasaratha, Rama decided to go to the forest for 14 years. Sumanthra acted as his charioteer and took Him, Sita and Lakshmana in a chariot to the banks of Ganges and left them at a town called Srungiberapura. There, the hunters were ruled by their king Guha. He received Rama with honor and offered his kingdom to Rama to rule. Ram refused his offer. Guha also hosted them at his place. Rama spent the night at Guha's place and asked him to take them across the river the next day. Guha took them, as well as their weapons and other items, to the other side of Ganges in a beautiful boat.

Later, when Bharatha and others came to the same place to meet Rama and plead with Him to return, Guha carried them all in 500 boats across the river. For his noble service to the Lord, Bharatha and his retinue, our elders respectfully refer to Guha as Guha Perumal. Pen Pillai wonders about this and asks "Did I help the Lord and His devotees reach the other side of the river like Guha did?"

Varththai 48

48. அரக்கனுடன் பொருதேனோ பெரிய உடையாரைப் போலே

48. arakkanudan porudhEnO periya udaiyAraip pOIE

When Rama, Sita and Lakshmana left sage Agastya's ashrama and left for Panachavati, on the way, they met an old vulture. When they asked who he was, the vulture replied "My name is Jatayu and I am your father Dasaratha's friend." Rama bowed to the vulture and enquired about him and his antecedents. Jatayu replied "One of the wives of Kashyapa Prajapati was Thamra. In her clan was born Vinata. Vinata had two sons Garuda and Aruna. To Aruna were born two sons - the elder is Sambhati and I am the younger, Jatayu. I am living in this forest and I will accompany You while You are here", and blessed them.

So, Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Jatayu all went together to Panchavati. Jatayu stayed close to the ashrama where Rama was staying. Rama told Lakshmana "We have been separated from our father. So, let's stay under the wings of Jatayu".

Later, Ravana planned to abduct Sita and used Mareecha to trick and get Rama and Lakshmana away from Her. As he was carrying away Sita, Jatayu intercepted them. He tried to talk Ravana into giving up this bad idea and release Sita. When he did not listen, Jatayu began waging a great war with Ravana. He broke Ravana's chariot and attacked him fiercely. In the end, Ravana managed to cut Jatayu's wings and feet and threw him to the ground. He then left with Sita to Lanka. When Rama and Lakshmana came looking for Sita, they saw Jatayu lying in the ground. Jatayu told them what happened, performed mangalashasana to Rama by calling Him 'Ayushman' and then gave up his life. Due to that and the great respect Rama had for him, our acharyas referred to Jatayu as Periya Udaiyar. Thirukkolor Ammal who has been thinking of the great kaimkaryam by bagavathas also recalls this and asks "Did I fight with Ravana and dare to give up my body and soul, like Periya Udaiyar did?"

## Whatsapp Vishayangal

Thiruvencatamudayan is the Lord of the Seven Hills. He is also called Ezhumalayaan. Let us see what are the Seven Hills and how did they get their names. In Sanskrit the words aadri, achalam, saila, parvatham all mean hill.

1. **Sri Sesa-saila:** Once there was a fierce competition between Adishesan and Vayu Bhagavaan to determine who is mightier. They selected Meru-malai as their referee to judge. Adishesan gripped the Meru-malai very tightly to withstand the hurricane force of Vayu Bhagavaan. All manushyaas and devas went to Indra to seek refuge from the mighty blow of wind. Indra came down to seek a compromise between Vayu Devan and Adishesan. Adishesan while thinking about the plight of the common people, his grip slightly slipped. Since Vayu Bhagavaan is blowing in full force, a piece of Meru-malai got removed and fell down as a small hill. This hill is called Sesaadri, since it came out from the loosening grips of Adishesan.

2. **Garuda-achalam:** At the request of Sri Varaha Perumal, the former presiding deity of Thirumala, Garuda brought from Sri Vaikuntam, where this hill is used for the amusement (Leela kreedha parvatham) of Bhagavaan. This hill is called here as Garudaadri since this was brought to earth by Garuda.

3. **Venkata-aadri :** In Sanskrit "vaem" means paapam and "katathi" means to go away. In Tamil, "kathan" means burden or borrowings (கடன்), which are the karmas and "vaem" means to burn (வெந்துதல்). This place being the abode of the Lord, who removes all our karmas, is called Venkataachalam.

4. **Narayana-aadri :** In this hill, a Brahmin by the name Narayanan did penance for a long time. The Lord appeared before him and asked what he wants. The Brahmin asked that this hill should be named by his name. Since then this hill is called Narayanaadri.

5. **Vrishabha-aadri :** In this hill there was a devotee of Siva, who troubled all other Saadhu devotees. Siva sought the help of Perumal to correct this devotee. Perumal appeared as a hunter and shot him with His arrow. At that time he realised his mistakes and prays that even though he was a devotee of Siva he has caused many devotees to suffer and in order to remember him as evil doer and Lord the evil destroyer and every devotee stays protected by Him, he requested this place (hill) to be named after him as Vrishabhaadri.

6. **Vrishha-aadri:** There was a man by the name Vrishha who did penance for more than 1000 years. When Lord appeared before him, he requested that who ever visits this hill should get the benefits of my penance and should live in a righteous way (dharma maarga). Hence this hill was named after the man as Vrishhaadri. Slokam 15 of Sri Venkatesa Suprabatham has reference to these hills.

***Sree seshasaila garudachala venkatadri | Narayanaadri vrisshabhadri vrisshadri mukhyam | Akhyam thvadeeya vasathe anisam vadanthi | Sree Venkatachalapathe! thava suprabatham***

7. **Anjana-aadri:** Anjanai who did penance for want of a illustrious son with full for doing service (kainkaryam) to Lord. Lord appeared in this hill to fulfill Anjanai's wish. To her born was Anjaneya. Hence this hill is called Anjanaadri. In our next visit to Thirumala let us recognise the stories behind the names of these Seven Hills. **Om Namo Venkatesasya!**