

Adiyongal Thirumadal

ISSUE 12

A SYDNEY ANDAL GROUP NEWSLETTER

MAY 2016

You are reading the twelfth issue of Adiyongal Thirumadal !

With the grace of Sri Sridevi Bhoodevi Padmavathy naayika sametha Sri Venkateswara Perumal, kids and young teens performed **Bala Kainkarya Seva** while young adults entertained with some sath vishayams. It was a real treat for the bhaagavathas who attended this program despite the inclement weather.

We would like to update some development on upanyasams during Sri Ramanujar 1000th Birthday celebration in 2017 and seek early interest in hosting the upanyasams in your thirumaligai and views and feedback to organise this effectively. In March edition of Adiyongal Thirumadal we informed about Deveraja Swamigal's willingness to visit Sydney during this time of high demand in India for Upanyasakars due to Ramanujar's 1000th thirunakshatram celebrations, thanks to the effort of our Mohan swamin. Though the dates are yet to be finalized, it is likely to be in the 2nd week of February and we are working for upanyasams in Sydney from 11th to 17th Feb. We will keep you informed on the progress.

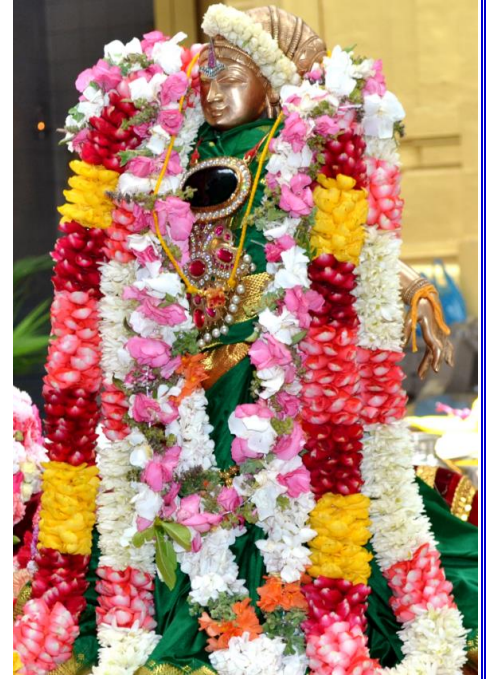
This year, Ramanuja's 999th Jayanthi is celebrated on **Sat 7th May** at 5.30pm. The venue is Scout Hall, 61A Good St, Westmead NSW 2145. Followed by pooja by Shri Hrishikesa Bhattar we will have chanting of Eramanuja Nootranadhi, Ethirja Vimshathi, Ethiraja Sapthathi and Sriranga Gadhyam. If time permits, Emperumaanar's other two gadhyams will be chanted.

Commemorating Emperumaanar's thirunakshatiram, we are bringing out few special articles in this madal on Swami Ramanuja for your reading pleasure.

Sydney Andal Group expresses its sincere thanks to all the contributors, including the contributor from Singapore, for their time and effort in writing wide range of articles on Swami Ramanuja and our Sri Vaishnava sampradayam.

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

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



Note the dates in May

May 04 – Varaha Jayanthi

May 09 – Akshaya Trithi

May 10 – Emperumaanar

Thirunakshathiram

May 20 – Nrisimha Jayanthi



Varadanin aaru varthaikal- by Smt Vasumathi Harish

Kanchipuram or Hasthigiri (Athigiri) is abode to Sri Devadirajan, (Perarulalan, Varadan and Devadirajan). Sri Varadaraja Perumal temple is one of the 108 Divya Desams of Lord Vishnu. The Azhwars have visited this holy place and sung songs in praise of Athiyuran. The idol of Sri Perarulalan, also known as Athiyuran, is made of Fig tree. The temple is located on the top of the Athigiri (Hasthigiri) hill. There are 24 steps climbing the hillock Hasthigiri. Even the stones on the compound wall are 24. The anantha pushkarini has 24 steps. According to Visishtadvaita philosophy, the number of achit (Inanimate) entities is 24. After we cross the 24 steps, the top floor is the 25th entity, Jeevatman. From this top floor, there are some more steps to reach the garba gruham of Kanchi Varadan. Devadirajan is the 26th entity.



Tirukacchi Nambi (Kanchipoornar) was one of the sishyas of Sri Yamunacharya (Sri Alavandar) and he was involved in the "Tiruvaala vatta" (fanning) kaimkaryam to Devadirajan at Kanchipuram. He had the great and unique honor of having conversations with Sri Varadaraja Perumal as he performed his kaimkaryam. Every evening the Lord would arrive at the "Kacchikku vaithan Mandapam" and Swami Tirukacchi Nambigal would start his kaimkaryam. At the same time, Swami Ramanuja was at a stage in his life where he had a number of doubts regarding the sampradayam. He had just separated from his teacher, Yadavaprakaasa, over interpretation of Upanishad sentences, and was in genuine need of a teacher. He approached Tirukacchi Nambigal and requested Tirukacchi Nambigal to ask Devadirajan about all the questions that had been troubling him and he was seeking answers to. So one day while performing the "Tiruvaala vatta" kaimkaryam to Varadan, Perarulalan noticed that Nambigal was unusually quiet. On enquiring, Nambigal informed Varadan about Swami Ramanuja's request. Immediately the Lord pronounced the six tenets (in Tamil referred to as Aaru Vaarthaigal). Kanchipuram kshetram is unique because of these six tenets as they form the backbone of the Swamy Ramanuja Sampradayam.

Those are:

1. Ahameva param tatvam. अहमेव परम तत्त्वं | The Lord said that He was the Ultimate God or Paramatman.
2. Darsanam bheda eva cha. दर्शनम भेद एव च | Siddhantam or Philosophy is not Advaitam, but based on the separate entities of Achit, Chit and Iswara. Understanding all the three entities as one, was wrong.
3. Upayeti prapattisyat. उपायेती प्रपत्तिस्याद | Means to reach the Lord was Ultimate surrender or saranagati.
4. Antima smriti varjanam. अंतिम स्मृति वर्जनं | Such persons who have surrendered to Him, need not remember the Lord at the last moments in the death bed, to get Moksham.
5. Dehavasane muktisyad. देहावसाने मुक्तिस्याद | Moksham will be granted when the body with which he surrendered, is cast off after death, in this birth itself; he need not have to wait for all papa or sins to be expended.
6. Poornacharya samasrya: पूर्णचार्य समाश्रयः | Swami Ramanuja should seek Swami Periya Nambi [महा पूर्णा] as his Acharya.

Swamy Ramanuja was ecstatic on receiving the Aaru varthaigal from Tirukacchi Nambigal. He then proceeded to the next phase by getting initiated by Sri Periya Nambigal at Madhurantakam.

Let us look at the six tenets from Devadirajan in detail:

1. **Ahameva param tatvam** - I am the only Supreme Being and God. This means that Lord Varadaraja is the Supreme Devatha. There is none above Him. The statement also asserts that other demi gods are not real gods and He is the only Supreme Being.
2. **Darsanam bheda eva cha** – Our sampradayam is based on Bhedam i.e. there is a marked difference in the three tatvams (entities). Unlike Advaita philosophy propagated by Adi Sankaracharya, which establishes no differences in the tatvams because there is only one tatvam. So Advaita philosophy is based on Abhedam (No differentiation). Lord Varada asserted that there does exist difference in the different entities as achit tatvam (non-sentient) is different from chit tatvam (sentient) and these tatvams are different from the Iswara tatvam (paramatma) which is the supreme.
3. **Upayeti prapattisyat** – The only way to attain Moksham (Salvation) is through performing Saranagati (Prapatti). There are many ways leading to Moksha such as Karma Yogam, Jnana Yogam and Bhakthi Yogam. But these ways is highly difficult to practice and achieve. At the same time they will take several births for achieve. This is why Lord Krishna describes all these ways in the Bhagavad Gita and finally gave the essence in the 18th chapter. This is known as the “Charama Slokam” that Saranagati is the easiest way. Lord Varada reiterates this path to moksham here.
4. **Antima smriti varjanam** – This means that it is not compulsory that a person eager to attain moksha must remember the God and pray to Him at the time when his soul departs from his body. All sastras say that at the time when the soul leaves the body, the person should think of the Supreme God in order to go to the Heaven. For persons who adopt Karma Yogam, Jnana Yogam, Bhakti Yogam to attain moksha, this last minute prayer is compulsory. But a person who takes Prapatti (Saranagati) as the only upayam (method) to attain moksha, it is not compulsory for him to think and pray to God at the time of his death. This is a real boon given by Paramatma to the Prapannas (those who have surrendered). After the MahA VarAha Moorthy destroyed HiraNyAkshan and arose out of the ocean waters carrying BhUmi Devi on His powerful tusk, our compassionate Mother requested the Lord to instruct Her on the sure way to save the destitute human beings from their SamsAric afflictions and for them to attain mOkshAnugraham. Our Lord responded to His divine consort and blessed us all, their children, with the powerful and reassuring Varaha Charama sLOkam (part of Varaha Puranam) sTithE manasi susvasTE sarIre sathi yO nara: dhAthusAmyE sTithE smarthA visvaroopam cha maamajam tatastham mriyamANam thu kAshDapAashana sannibham aham smarAmi madhbhaktham nayaami paramAm gathim(Meaning): This whole world is my body. I have no birth or death. When a devotee of Mine maintains his mind in an auspicious state, his body in the healthy state-- where the dhAthus of the body are in equipoise-- and thinks of Me in that state and seeks Me then as his firm refuge, I do something unique for that devotee, when he is totally unconscious like a log or stone during his last moments. At that time, I lead him via archirAdhi mArgam to My Supreme abode to perform niThya kaimkaryam for Me there. This is My unfailing assurance.
5. **Dehavasane muktisya** – Moksham granted as soon as the body with which the prapanna surrendered is cast off after death. This means that one can attain moksham at the end of the present birth itself. He need not take many more births for washing out all his sins to attain moksham. Those who follow the methods other than Prapatti to attain moksha, have to follow that particular method to its core; that means, there should not be any lapse in following that method. It is a lengthy process and it will take several births to complete the process; by this process he washes out all his accumulated sins; only then he can attain moksha. Therefore for such persons moksham is not guaranteed at the end of the present birth itself. There were also earlier theories which said that one should be a Brahmin by birth to attain moksha, and the other caste people must take birth as Brahmin in this world for attaining moksha. This is also clarified by the above sentence of Lord Varadaraja. Irrespective of the caste or creed, even an animal or bird can attain moksha at the end of the present birth itself, if they adopt Prapatti and surrender to the Almighty.
6. **Poornacharya samasryaha** – Lord Varadan's wish is that Swamy Ramanuja seek out and have Swamy Peria Nambigal as his Acharyan.



Varththai 10. mudhaladiyaip peRREnO agaligaiyaip pOIE 10. முதலடியைப் பெற்றேனோ அகலிகையைப் போலே

Mudhaladi refers to the Lord Rama's divine feet.

Gauthama maharishi's wife was named Ahalya. Hearing about her great beauty, Indra became enamored with her. When Gauthama maharishi went to the river to take a bath, he took the rishi's form, approached Ahalya and enjoyed her. Before Indra could leave, Gauthama rishi came back and saw him. He cursed Indra that he would lose his masculinity. He also cursed Ahalya "You will become a stone and perform penance for a thousand years. At that time Sriman Narayana will be born as Sri Rama and will be brought here by Vishvamitra. You will be released by the touch of His divine feet and

then can join me". Gauthama rishi then left the place.

After a thousand years, Vishvamitra rishi took Rama to his place for the protection of his yaga. After the completion of the yaga, he took Rama to Mithila. On the way, he brought Him to Gauthama's ashrama. By the touch of His feet, Ahalya's curse was removed and she became pure. Gauthama rishi also came there at that time and accepted her. Thirukkolor Ammal is asking "Did I have the great fortune of gaining the touch of the Lord's divine feet like Ahalya did?"

Varththai 11. pinchAyp pazhuththEnO ANdALaip pOIE 11. பிஞ்சாய்ப் பழுத்தேனோ ஆண்டாளைப் போலே

Andal was born as the incarnation of Bhudevi in the garden of Periyazhvar under a Tulasi plant in Sri Villi Puttur. Vishnu Chittan or Periyazhvar was overjoyed and brought Her up in his household as his own daughter. Not surprisingly, Periyazhvar's love for Sri Krishna also manifested in Andal and She developed great love for Sri Krishna even at a tender age. Her love came out as two great works Thiruppavai and Nachchiyar Thirumozhi which are part of the 4000 Divya Prabandhams.

She carried out Marghazhi Nombu or Vrita assuming her to be Krishna's lover and her friends as gopis. Tiruppavai has been commented by great acharyas as the essence of all the 4 vedas. In both the works She declared Her surrender to the Lord and that She would not belong to any other. It is said that She wrote Thiruppavai at the age of five!

In his Upadesa Raththinamalai, Manavala Mamunigal states:

anju kudikkoru sandhadhiyAy AzhvArgal
tham seyalai vinji niRkum thanmaiyaLAy - pinjAyp
pazhuththALai ANdALai nALum paththiyudan
vazhuththAy manamE magizhndhu

Thirukkolor Ammal used the same words mentioned by Manavala mammunigal and asked "Did I show great love for Sri Krishna at a tender age like Andal did?"

Acknowledgement: Sri TCA Venkatesan's write up and Sri U Ve V V Ramanujam Swami (to be continued...)

SWAMI RAMANUJA and THIRUMALAI-APPAN - Swami Ramanuja restored the Sangu & Chakra to the Lord of Seven hills at Tirumala, previously when they were given by the Lord to the King Thondaiman Chakravarthy. People started believing the Lord on the Hills was Shiva/Skanda/Durga. It is because of Swami, we have Perumal in Tirumalai now. Based on that, we sing the Kattiyam of Ramanuja as "Appanukku Sangaazhi Alittha Perumal"



To execute the verses of Nammalwar - 'Sindhu Poo Magizhum Thiruvengadam', Swamy Ramanuja sent one of his disciples - Sri Ananthawan Pillai to establish a Nanadhavanam at Tirumala now named as, 'Ramanuja Nadhavanam'. It was Swami who laid down the regulations to be followed in executing kainkaryams to Thiruvengadamudayan like Friday thirumanjanam by reciting Nacchiyar Thirumozhi, Thomala Sevai (pic in right) and appointed Peria Koil Kelvi Appan Jeeyar of Tirumala to supervise the same. Even today one can see Swami Ramanuja's Vigramam (pic in left) in Bashyakara Sanndhi, Tirumala with Upadesa/Gyana Mudra (left hand-Varadha



Hashta, right hand-pustaka hashta) because Swami here is Acharyan to Thiruvengadamudayan himself.

ANNAN RAMANUJAR for ANDAL - Andal and Swamy Ramanuja share a special relationship.

Andal had a desire to offer 100 tada (containers) of butter & 100 tada (containers) "akkaravadisal" to Thirumaliruncholai Emperumaan which she expressed through her 'Naacchiyar Thirumozhi" that Swamy



Ramanuja fulfilled. After this when Swami Ramanuja arrived at SriVilliputthur, Andal came out of her Archa Avathara Sammadhi, and called him "Anna" (elder brother) - "Koil Annan". Vazhi Thirunamam of Andal as "Perumpudhur Mamunikki Pin Aanaal Vazhiye! Sri Ramanujar on his routine was in parikrama on the streets around the temple and was just in front of Peria Nambi's house while he was reciting 18 th pasuram of Thiruppaavai. And, that he was totally absorbed in the contents of the pasuram and the scenes which were unfolding one after the other. He had transported himself to that Dwapara Yuga because of divine attraction and had forgotten the

reality.

This particular pasuram 'Undhu Madhakalitraan Odatha Tholvalian' gives an account of the process of awakening Nappinnai - wife of Sri Krishna who was in deep sleep by stating how strong her father-in-law Nandagopalan is. Ramanuja just knocked at the doors of Peria Nambi's house and the door was opened by a small little girl, the daughter of Peria Nambi - Athuzhai. Ramanuja, who had transported himself to the Aayarpadi of yesteryears, thought the door was being opened by Nappinnai and momentarily fell at her feet taking the little girl as Nappinnai.

SRI RAMANUJAR - THE SANYASI - Peria Nambi's wife and Ramanuja's wife happened to draw water from the well at the same time and their pitchers collided in the well. Thanjammal scolded Periya Nambi's wife and picked up a big row saying that she could not use the water polluted by Periya Nambi's wife as the latter belonged to a lower sub-sect. Peria Nambi and his wife could not bear this insult and they left Kancheepuram immediately without telling Ramanuja, as they did not want to complain against Thanjammal. When Ramanuja returned home and ascertained what had happened, his fury knew no bounds .and totally alienated him from his wife. When Thanjammal left for her father's house to help him perform her sister's marriage. Ramanuja availed himself of this opportunity to leave the house and became a sanyasi (Saint).

Sri Ramanujar - interesting facts and anecdotes – contd

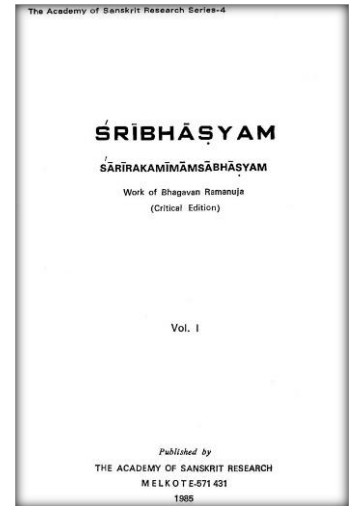


SRI RAMANUJAR – THE SANYASI (contd). While you can see the idol of Sri Ramanuja in all temples wearing the saffron robe of a sanyasi, in Maduranthakam you can see it adorned by white clothes as a grihastha as he had not yet become a sanyasi here. It was there that he received deeksha (vows of Sanyas) from his Guru Periya Nambi, who performed the Pancha Samskaras to Ramanujar under a Magizham tree within the temple precincts. Ramanujar had actually started from Kanchi on a journey to Sri Rangam, to meet Periya Nambi there and join as his pupil. However, unknown to him, Periya Nambi had already started from Sri Rangam in search of Ramanujar. The Guru and Sishya met at Maduranthakam where he attained sanyaasam

SWAMI RAMANUJAR – ONLY DISCIPLE WHO BECAME GURU TO HIS FORMER GURU - Wherever Sri Ramanuja Muni went, Mudaliyandan and Koorathu Azhvar always flanked him and the trio became a familiar sight in Kancheepuram. The third important disciple was none other than Sri Yadavaprakasa (once guru of Sri Ramanuja himself). Advised by his mother, who had great faith in Sri Ramanuja, the guru sought shelter in the Mutt and took sanyasam from his own former disciple. His new name was Govinda Jeeyar and as requested by Sri Ramanuja he wrote a treatise “Yathi Dharma Samuchayam”.

RAMANUJA’S STRUGGLE IN WRITING COMMENTARY FOR BRAHMA SUTRA – SRI BHASYAM

Ramanuja was told that before he attempted to write a commentary to Brahma Sutras, he should study Bodayana Vriddhi, the only copy of which was available with the Kashmir Raja. Along with Koorathu Azhvar and a few disciples, Ramanuja went to Kashmir and met the Raja and told him his purpose. The Pandits in the Durbar opposed the lending of Bodayana Vriddhi for his perusal. With great difficulty, Ramanuja obtained the book and left towards South reading it on the way with Koorathu Azhvar whenever they were taking rest. The Kashmir Pandits were not reconciled to Ramanuja's taking away their book and so they arranged for a few men to follow Ramanuja and waylay him on his march to the South. When the Kashmiris overpowered them and took away the book, Ramanuja felt greatly disappointed. Koorathazhvan came forward and consoled him saying he had already read the book completely and remembered every word of it. Ramanuja realised that Koorathazhvan was an eka chanda grahi, viz., one who can accurately remember whatever he has read or heard once only.



Sri Ramanuja has been given many divine titles at different points of time.

AAM IVAN MUDHALVAN -title given by Aalavandhar (when Aalavandhar recognized Swamy Ramanuja is none other than Bavishyat Acharyan which was held in aaradhanai by all poorvacharyas

RAMANUJA MUNI - titile given by Kanchi Varadaraja Perumal, while Swami accepted 'Sanyasa-ashrama'

Sri Ramanuja has many names, which were given at different points of time

1. **Ilayazhwar**- Name given by Thirumalai Nambi at the time of his birth.
2. **Ramanujar**- Name given by periya nambi during his pancha samskaram at Madhurantakam.
3. **Yathirajar**- Meaning king of Yathis or sannyasis - Name given by DhEva PerumAL during sanyAsAshrama svIkAram.
4. **Udayavar**- Name given by Namperumal on Ramanuja's arrival at Srirangam. When he arrived there Lord Ranganatha. declared Yathiraja as responsible for this world and "other" world. Nitya Vibuthi and Leela Vibhuti.
5. **Godagrajar** - Name given by Srivilliputhur Srivaishnavas. Another version is since Sri Andal Herself called him anna or elder Brother Sri Vaishnavites from Sri Villiputtur from where Andal hails called him by this name.
6. **Appanukku Sangaazhi Alittha Perumal** - Ramanuja submitted to Tirupati Venkatesa Perumal the Sangu and Chakram as a result of the dispute whether the main deity at Tirumala is Shiva or Vishnu. Hence he is known as Appanukku Sangaazhi Alittha Perumal.
7. **Namkovil Annanaar** (elder brother)- Name given by Aandal when Ramanuja went to Srivilliputhur Temple and offered 100 cups of sweet porridge (Akkaaravadisal) to Maaliruncholai Azhagar in Madurai, as per her wish which was expressed in Nachiyar Thirumozhi.
8. **Thiruppavai Jeer** – When Ramanuja sung the Thiruppaavai songs while he went for begging he was termed by the people of Srirangam as Thiruppavai Jeer. Also there is another interpretation ie. name given at Srirangam after Ramanuja swooned on seeing Athuzhai, daughter of Mahapurna, mistaking her to be Nappinnai (since he was so absorbed in the meanings of Thiruppavai pasuram).
9. **Bhasyakarar** – As per the wish of Alavandar, Ramanuja wrote the Commentary [Bhashyam] to Brahmasutra in accordance with Thiruvaymozhi, and so he became famous by this name. Also it is said the name was given by Saraswati at the Sri Bhandaram library in Kashmir because of his authorship of Sri Bhasyam.
10. **'PanchaAcharya Siidar** – When Ramanuja sat at the feet of five Acharyas, he was termed as thus.
11. **Emperumanar** . Name given by Thiru Koshtiyur Nambi. After making Ramanuja come to Tirukoshtiyur 18 times from Sri Rangam in view of preparing him to receive the meaning of Moola Mantram Nambi, gave him the meaning and asked him not to teach anyone who is not prepared. But Ramanuja climbed the temple Gopuram straightaway, called out for people and taught them the mantra. Nambi was not impressed on hearing this and said by doing this Ramanujar will go to hell as he disobeyed his Acharyan's directions, Ramanuja sought his pardon saying he was aware of this but he thought if crores of people benefits after hearing this, he was prepared to go to hell. On hearing this, Nambi realised Ramanuja's benevolence and called him Emperumanar.
12. **Lakshmana Muni**- Name given by Thirumaalai Aandaan.and Thiruvaranga PerumAL Arayar
13. **SatagOpan Ponnadi** given by ThirumAlaiAndAn.
14. **BhUthpursar** given by Adhi KEsava PerumAL of SriperumputhUr.
15. **DhEsikEndhrar** given by ThiruvEnkatamudayaAn.

Sreemathey Ramanujaya Namaha

(to be continued...)

Ramanuja Sampradayam in a nutshell - Sri Suresh Varadarajan

Vaishnavism is a major branch of the Sanatana Dharma. Vaishnavites are followers of Vishnu. Within Vaishnavism there are 4 main sampradayas.

Sampradayam	Philosophy	Main Acharyan	Deity who is the head of the lineage
Sri Ramanuja Sampradayam or Sri Sampradayam	Vishishtadvaita	Ramanujar	Lakshmi
Brahma Sampradayam. Gaudiya Sampradayam is linked to Brahma Sampradayam	Dvaita	Madhvacharyar Chaitanya Maha Prabhu belongs to gaudiya sampradayam	Brahma
Rudra Sampradayam	Shuddhadvaita	Vallabhacharya	Rudra
Kumara sampradayam	Dvaitadvaita	Nimbarkar	Four Kumaras

Ramanuja Sampradaya is a conflux of three great Vaishnav traditions namely the Bhagavata tradition, the Pancharatra tradition and Vaikhanasa. After seeking clarification from Deva Perumal of Kanchipuram, Ramanuja was the first Acharya to systematically elucidate the Vishishtadvaita philosophy inherent in the Vedas and was also the pioneer in bridging the gap and strengthening the bond between the similar Vaishnava traditions.

The origin of this sampradaya's unique sort of devotionism which is marked by the preponderance of a philosophical notion of surrender and servitude to Vishnu "Saranagathi" and "Kaimkaryam" owes its origin to the Azhvars and most importantly, to Nammazhvar.

In simple words Ramanuja the relation between the infinite and the finite is like that between the soul and the body. Hence non-duality is maintained, while differences can still be stated. Soul and matter are totally dependent on God for their existence, as is the body on the soul.

Till Ramanuja's time if someone was interested to move forward in their religious life they were tested on intelligence, patience and humility and they had to serve a guru for several years before the knowledge was imparted. Ramanuja changed the required qualification from one's ability and just placed importance on one's keenness to know and made the path to salvation available to everyone who is interested. He prayed and obtained from Sriman Narayanan the authority to grant Vaikuntam to anyone who has the connection to Ramanuja. To make this obvious he created a system whereby one has to undergo Pancha samskaram (5 acts) which will establish the connection with Sri Ramanuja.

Right since the time of Ramanuja the Sri Sampradayam has been led by various monastic establishments and Acharyas appointed by Ramanuja himself or his valid successors. During his lifetime Ramanuja had appointed 74 Acharyas to propagate Sri Vaishnavism. Various famous Acharyas like Mudaliandan Swamy, Ananthazhwan, Thirukuruhai Piran Pillan, Varada Vishnu Acharya, Kidambi Achhan, and Parashara Bhatta were also entrusted with the responsibility of initiating people into this Sampradayam and propagating Vishishtadvaita. Through this lineage, many notable institutions such as Vanamamalai Matam, Parakala Mutt, Ahobila Mutt,

Andavan Ashramam, Chinna Jeeyar Ashramam, etc. have been functioning as organizational nerve centers of the Sri Sampradaya for many centuries. Today, there are more than a 100 notable Sannyasis and Acharya Purushas with thousands of disciples serving the cause of Vishishtadvaita. The Acharyas dedicate their lives to provide spiritual support to individuals seeking the path of Sharanagathi or absolute surrender under the unbroken lineage that traces back to Bhagavadh Ramanuja.

Tirunarayanapuram – by Smt Vasumathi Harish

Adiyen wishes to prostrate at the holy feet of Sri Yadugiri Nacchiyar sametha Tirunarayanan and Acharyas to share the experience of adiyen's trip to Tirunarayanapuram (Melkote).

Adiyen had to go to India in February 2016 for a few days (4 days) so adiyen wanted to visit at least one divya desam and it was adiyen's bhagyam and Swami Ramanuja's kataksham that adiyen could visit Tirunarayanapuram. So adiyen along with my brother hired a car from Bangalore to Melkote. We set out very early in the morning, since being a weekend, the traffic was expected to be quite heavy. Roads are very good and travel is no longer an issue as it used to be. We reached Tirunarayanapuram (Yadavadri, Yadushaila and Melkote) around 9 AM.

Melkote is located about 35km North East of Srirangapatna on the banks of the Cauvery in the Pandavapura Taluk, Mandya District of Karnataka. This small town's hub of activity is centered around the temples. This is home to two temples, the Cheluvanarayana Swamy (as in Kannada) Temple (Tirunarayana perumal koil) and the Yoga Narasimhar Temple. The Cheluvanarayana temple is one that dates back to the Kretha Yugam. Brahma's manasika puthras, the Sanathkumaras, brought their father's pooja idol 'Lord Narayana' and installed it in Melkote. The Moolavar is a majestic (Ajanubaahu) tirumeni, so beautiful that you can't take your eyes away from Him.

The Utsava Moorthy is Selvapillai or Ramapriyan and is said to have belonged to and worshipped by Lord Rama and the kings of the Surya Vamsa dynasty for generations. Later this idol was given to a king of the Chandra Vamsa (Lord Rama's Son Kusa's daughter was given in marriage) and was worshipped by Lord Krishna and many generations. There is also an interesting anecdote how Ramapriyan (Selva Pillai) was brought to Melkote by Swamy Ramanuja from the Delhi Emperor. When the Muslim kings invaded South India, they took away all the idols and one of them was Ramapriyan. So Swamy Ramanuja went to Delhi to meet the Emperor. The Sultan said since they had taken so many idols he could not know which one was Ramapriyan. He also said his daughter, Bibi, was always playing with the idols. So Swamy Ramanuja requested the Sultan's permission and went to Bibi's room. Bibi was so much in love with the extravagantly beautiful figure of Ramapriyan that she continued to play with Him. Swamy Ramanuja called out saying "Selva Pillai, Inge Vaaraay".



And Lo and Behold, the next second the beautiful figure of Selva Pillai was seated in Swamy Ramanuja's hands. The Sultan was amazed at this and allowed Swamy Ramanuja to take the idol back to Melkote with him. It is said that Bibi could not bear to be separated from Him and followed Swamy Ramanuja to Melkote. The Lord came in a dream to the temple Bhattar and said that since Bibi's love for Him was so great, she too should be worshipped as one of his ubhaya nacchiyars.

The other temple is the Yoga Narasimhar temple, the impressive temple stands on top of the Yadugiri hill at a height of 1777m above the sea level. This temple houses the majestic idol of Narasimhar in a seated position with the yogapatta. This temple is considered to be one of the seven holy shrines dedicated to the worship of Lord Narasimhar. One of the most famous beliefs about the temple is that the idol of the deity was installed by Prahlada himself. The temple also finds reference in the Vedic literature dating back to thousands of years.

Tirunarayanapuram contd

When we reached the temple, the divyaprabandha ghoshti was going on, adiyen was so thrilled to sit down and recite a couple of pasurams. An interesting feature of the temple is there is a separate sanctum sanctorum for the Utsavar, Selvapillai, not seen anywhere else. There is a shrine for Swami Ramanuja. Outside the temple, there are shrines for Vedanta Desikan, Manavala Mamunigal and other acharyas. The Bhattar informed us that after the veda parayanam there would be teertha prasadam. So we went and had the darshan of the Yadugiri Nacchiyar thayar.

Since it would take at least an hour we decided to go and have the darshan of Yoga Narasimhar. It is quite a climb and the Bhattar did tell us it would take more than an hour to go and come back. So he was advising we wait and finish the teertha prasadam. Mostly people go earlier in the mornings to have the darshan of Yoga Narasimhar. Since adiyen had been to Melkote before but had not seen Yoga Narasimhar, we decided to climb the hill. As we approached the bottom of the hill, we realized that there were more than 400 steps, quite steep as well. We were just deliberating about going up when a nearby flower seller heard us and said, if you have a car, you can get to the next level and from there its about 150-200 steps only. It was as if perumal wanted to make it easier for adiyen so adiyen could not come up with any more excuses to go and see Him. We then took the car as far as it could and then started the climb. All adiyen could think was the "Kaarunyam" He has shown by making things so much easier for this "mandha budhi". There was a lot of crowd at the sannidhi and we finally



had the darshan of this majestic Narasimhar. We spent several minutes atop the hill and the view of the town below was just so wonderful. Adiyen was thinking no wonder Swami Ramanuja had one of his conditions requesting srivaishnavas live in Melkote even if in a thatched hut. The temple has a beautiful bell donated by the Mysore Parakalamatam. We took quite a lot of photos.

After the Yoga Narasimhar darshan, we climbed down and walked through the streets to head back to the Cheluvanarayana temple to get teertha prasadam from both Tirunarayana perumal and Yadugiri Nacchiyar. Shri Velukkudi Krishnan Swamy has mentioned in many of his upanyasams that when you visit Melkote, you should have a taste of "Thuni Thenguzhal". Adiyen went and requested at the madapalli. Unfortunately the Bhattar advised that unless there is an order they do not make it. Maybe adiyen can get the bhagyam next time. There is a Chinna Jeeyar Matam behind the temple where you can get very good lunch. Adiyen had had this before and it was very delicious. On enquiring we found there would be another hour wait. We decided we were not so hungry. We had some snacks and fruits with us. So decided to give lunch a miss and headed back to Bangalore. The trip back was quite fast and by 2.30 pm, we reached Bangalore.

Moolavar : TiruNarayanan

Thayar: Yadugiri Naachiyar

Utsavar : Selva Pillai (Sampath Kumaran, Rama Priyan)

Utsava Thayar: Kalyani (Selva Nayaki)

Yes, He is the leader

Ramanuja went home and told his mother and his aunt Sridevi that he lost his way and by god's grace reached home. Meanwhile, Yadava Prakasar and his disciples reached the banks of the Ganges and spent a few days. One day when Govindan was taking bath in the Ganges, A Siva Linga floated into his hands. When he showed it to Yadava Prakasar, he was happy and praised Govindan as having divine aspects. He also said that he got the Linga because of his bath in the Ganges. From that day people called him "Ullankai kulirndha Nyanar" meaning a great devotee who brought the Linga in his palm. On the way back Govindan took leave of the party and went to Kalahasthi to consecrate the Lingam that came to him in the Ganges. He became a leader of the devotees and stayed there.

Ramanuja spent most of the time with Thirukachi Nambi, who did fanning service (Thiru alavatta kainkaryam) for Varadaraja Perumal and Perundeivi Thayar. Perumal used to speak with Thirukachi Nambi. Thirukachi Nambi was a great vaishnavaites and the disciple of Alavandar. Ramanuja learnt quite a lot during the interactions.

When Yadava Prakasar returned back from his pilgrimage to Kanchipuram, he was surprised to see Ramanuja. He told Ramanuja that he was heartbroken when Ramanuja went missing. Ramanuja just said that he lost his way and by God's grace reached back Kanchi. Yadava Prakasar realised Ramanuja's intellect and his genuine intent to pursue learning. He therefore with good intent invited Ramanuja to attend his classes and taught him the vedantic works.



When this was all going on, Alavandar the great Vaishnava Acharya from Srirangam came to Kanchi to worship Lord Varadaraja. At that time he saw Ramanuja coming with Yadava Prakasar. By just looking at Ramanuja's handsome form and divine disposition, he realised that He will be his fit successor to lead the people in the vaishnavaites path to reach the lotus feet of Lord Sriman Narayana. He also heard from Thirukachi Nambi about Ramanuja's intellect and verbal dual with Yadava Prakasar. He did not have much time to spend in Kanchipuram and to meet and talk to Ramanuja. He therefore prayed fervently to Lord Varadaraja to enlist Ramanuja into His service and guide him to establish the vaishnavaites philosophy and to lead the Vaishnavaites.

(to be continued)

Bala Kainkarya Seva – photos

KINI KANNAN - DRAMA



DANCE & BHAJANS

