

Adiyongal Thirumadal

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Sri:
Srimate Ramanujaya Nama:



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To celebrate Ramanujar's sahasrabdhi in a bigger scale to create more awareness amidst Sydneysiders all the functions relating to Ramanuja sahasrabdhi took place in the Sri Venkateshwara temple. So instead of the usual weekend celebration after his thirunakshatram, this year SRJ took place in SVT on 1st May, Monday when the whole world celebrated this momentous occasion. Instead of the 10 day celebration, our Udayavar 1000 th celebration was for 3 days. On Saturday the 29th it started with chanting of Thiruvoimozhi, as per the tradition in the Indian temples, when 5 decades (500 pasurams) were chanted. On Sunday it continued with 4 more decades. The number of people who took part in these was not an indication of what is to happen on the following day,

Amidst much traffic chaos on usual Monday morning, about 80 to 100 devotees turned up and the function started sharp at 9.30 am with the final 100 pasurams of Thiruvoimozhi. A strong vibration started at the temple and everyone started to feel this. This was followed by Thirumanjanam for Ramanujar amidst chanting of Vedas like purusha suktham, shree suktham and Sri Vasudevachar who regularly chants these at the temple led a group. The crescendo picked up few notches. All the devotees enjoyed the elaborate thirumanjanam for Udayavar and when you looked at Perumal and thayar you could see happiness in their eyes. When the thirai (screen) was closed for alankaram Smt Bharathi Venugopa who was visiting from India for a music concert and our own Chi. Rohit Ramesh sang few songs and devotees were offered some "muzhangai vazhivara" chakarai pongal prasadam from the temple. After this the devotees started chanting Eramanusa Nootranadhi. Due to the practice at home, several WhatsApp guidance by Sydney Andal devotees and regular monthly chanting on Thiruvadirai (Ramanujar's thirunakshatram) through Skype had helped most, if not all of the devotees to join in this chanting and the whole place was highly charged and each was elevated to bliss. This phenomenon was felt by everyone as was clear from the discussion which followed after the function was finished.

There was a symbolic representation of our sampradayam in the happenings that day. While the thirumanjanam was done Ramanujar was facing in the opposite direction to Perumal and all the devotees even put prasadam, flowers etc in front of Udayavar in preparation for the offering. However when the screen was removed Ramanujar was actually facing Perumal to receive His blessings, mariyadhai etc. Unknown to the devotees, Bhattar had changed the direction after the thirumanjanam behind the screen. So it appeared Ramanujar confirmed his saranagadhi principle by saying now that you all have confirmed your sambandam(relationship) by chanting Eramanusa Nootranadhi (where there are several stanzas we chant there is no one else but you to take us to Vaikuntam) follow me and I will take you to Perumal Thiruvadi. After satrumurai, all devotees had prasadam. Our special gratitude to Smt. Sowjanya swami for preparing a huge share of the prasadam along with few bagavathas from our group. After taking prasadam there was a short meeting to reiterate the group's vision and future support needed for the benefit of the old and new members. A questionnaire was handed over to be filled in. A further email has been sent with the questionnaire with a request to fill in and send back at the earliest. Even if you did not attend the meeting, please fill in and send it as this will form the basis of future coordination and other activities. The meeting in short summarised our group's vision and objective3 is to get saranagadhi done ASAP and follow what our acharyas have asked us to do i.e. kaimkaryam. We have requested many of you to volunteer and do the kaimkaryam. We request both husband and wife to either discuss and fill in the questionnaire or respond individually as there are questions which pertain more to husband and vice versa.

Varththai 33

33. இளைப்பு விடாய் தீர்த்தேனோ நம்பாடுவான் போலே

33. iLaippu vidAy thlrththEnO nampAduvAn pOIE

In Sri Varaha Purana, Sri Varaha tells Bhudevi the greatness of singing His praise and the benefits that it gets to the devotee. This is known as Kaisika Mahatmyam and in it is the story of the devotee Nampaduvan who sang the Lord's praise all the time.

In south India near the Ksheera river was Siddhashrama. Here a low caste person would come every day early in the morning from a long distance and sing the Lord's praises. He did this for several years. Sri Varaha called him 'mama gAyaka' and therefore his name became Nampaduvan.

Once upon a time in the month of Karththikai on sukla paksha Dvadasi, he stayed awake in the night and left very early to go sing about the Lord. On the way, a brahmarakshas caught him and wanted to eat him. Nampaduvan requested the brahmarakshas to let him go so he can go and sing; he promised that he would return and allow himself to be eaten.

The brahmarakshas did not trust him and Nampaduvan listed number of sins he would suffer if he did not return. However only when he swore that he would get the sin of equating Sriman Narayana with other devatas if he did not return, did the brahmarakshas let him go. Nampaduvan went to Thirukkurunkudi ivyadesam, sang about the Lord and returned as promised. The brahmarakshas was a brahmin called Somasharma in his previous birth.

Because he committed a sin during a yaga, he was born as a brahmarakshas. Determining that he would be liberated only by Nampaduvan, he asked for the fruit of Nampaduvan's singing that night so that he may let him go alive. Nampaduvan did not agree.

After some more requests, finally Nampaduvan agreed to give him the fruit of his singing one song sung in the Kaisika meter. Receiving that, the brahmarakshas was liberated, was reborn in a good family and finally attained moksha.

Pen Pillai highlights the ekakra (single minded) Bakthi of Nampaduvan and how that led to his liberating even a brahmarakshas and asks "Did I sing and liberate someone from their birth as arakshasa like Nampaduvan did?"

Varththai 34

34. இடைகழியில் கண்டேனோ முதலாழ்வார்களைப் போலே

34. idaikazhiyil kaNdEnO mudhalAzhvArgaLaip pOIE

Mudhal Azhvargal are the first three Azhvars to appear in this world. They are Poygai Azhvar, Bhoothaththazhvar and Peyazhvar. They were born in three different flowers in the divyadesams of Kanchi, Mallai (Mahabalipuram) and Mayilai (Mylapore in Chennai). Having been given the flawless knowledge by the Lord they went from one place to another every day and experienced Him.

One time the Lord decided to bring them all together in the divyadesam of Thirukkovalur. It was a dark and stormy night. First Poygaiyazhvar arrived and sought shelter in the ashrama of Mrugandu Maharishi. He was resting in the idai kazhi (the area between the front and back of the house) area. Soon after Bhoothaththazhvar arrived to the same place and asked to be accommodated.



While one person can lie down two people can only sit comfortably in that place. Then came Peyazhvar and the narrow space was only adequate for three to only stand. Shortly after that the three Azhvars realized that a fourth person was in the place and pushing against all of them. In order to see who the fourth person was Poygaiyazhvar first lit a lamp through a verse - "vaiyamthagaliyA vArkadale neyyAga veyya kadhiron viLakkAga" - this became the first verse of Mudhal Thiruvandhadhi. In this verse, Azhvar made this world the cup, the ocean as the ghee and the Sun as the light.

Bhoothaththazhvar lit another lamp through a verse - "anbE thagaliyA ArvamE neyyAga inburugu sindhai iduthiriyA" - this became the first verse of Iradam Thiruvandhadhi. In this verse, Azhvar made his love as the cup, his passion as the ghee and his thought as the lamp.

In this light, Peyazhvar saw the Lord with His divine consort and sang the verse "thirukkaNdEn pon mEni kaNdEn". This became the first verse of Moonram Thiruvandhadhi. All three Azhvars thus saw the Lord in the narrow area of the ashrama and sang the first pasurams of the Nalayira Divyaprabandham.

Thirukkolor Ammal asks the question "Did I receive the grace of the Lord to see Him, like the first three Azhvars did?" remembering the incident above

Ramanuja's Life and Teachings Sri Ramesh Varadarajan

EMBAAR - Udayavar and Govindan reached Kanchi and prayed fervently to Varadaraja perumal. They then went to meet Thirukachi Nambi. Ramanuja praised Govindan's devotion to his guru and his concern for all living creatures and requested Nambi to bless Govindan with heightened devotion towards his Guru. After coming to Kanchi, Govindan lost a bit of his colour and appeared sad because of separation from his Guru. Ramanuja therefore asked two Srivaishnavas to accompany Govindan to Thirupathi and leave him there with his uncle Peria Nambi. Ramanuja stayed in Kanchi with Thirukachi Nambi and was worshipping Varadaraja Perumal.



Embar at Madhuramangalam - Govindan eagerly went with Srivaishnavas to meet his uncle and reached his uncles house and stood at the entrance. Hearing Govindan's return, Thirumalai Nambi remained indifferent. Some people who were there went inside the house and requested Nambi to accept Govindan. Nambi flatly refused. Peria Nambi's wife requested Nambi to accept Govindan and feed him, even if he doesn't like to talk with him. Peria Nambi said that nobody will feed a cow which had been sold and angrily told her to ask Govindan to go back to Ramnuja.

Govindan without taking anything returned with the two Srivaishnavas and fell at Ramanuja's feet. He held on to his feet and requested him to accept him as his disciple and not as a brother. Govindan served Ramanuja the same way he served Thirumalai Nambi. After sometime, Ramanuja with all his disciples returned to Srirangam. On the way, Ramanuja went to Yangyesar's house at Ashtasahasram and stayed for one night and accepted food offered. They then went back to Srirangam. Govindan understood why his uncle turned him away and realised that it was for him to accept Ramanuja as his guru for his own advancement.

Govindan's service to Ramanuja was exemplary and he understood Ramanuja's needs and carried them out even before he was asked. Few of his fellow disciples became jealous of Govindan. One day one of them praised govindan for his excellent service. Govindan acknowledged that comment saying it was indeed exemplary. Govindan's comment was carried to udayavar. Udayavar asked Govindan if he was proud of the praises heaped on him.

Govindan replied that people are born in this world many thousands of times and the knowledge about how these things happen is known only to people like Udayavar. Of all the births, it is difficult to get a human life. Even after getting this, without striving to realise the soul, people engage in more mundane and lower level things. So when somebody praises an idiot like him, he considered such praises as the praises to his guru. Hearing this comment, the other disciples were appreciative of Govindan's attitude.

Oneday, Embar was seen sitting on the front verandah of a prostitute's house. This was conveyed to Ramanuja, who chided him. Govindan explained that he heard that lady singing the praises of Udayavar and he was spellbound and sat there till she completed that song. Those who listened to this realised his unparalleled devotion to his guru.

Govindan who was married remained in his guru's service without being involved in any physical relationship. Govindan's mother complained to Ramanuja about this aspect. Ramanuja asked Govindan to spend the night with his wife. That day as per the orders of Ramanuja he went to bed with his wife. He spent the whole night talking about the glory of the lord. This information filtered back to Ramanuja.

Ramanuja told him that he can't behave like a sanyasi while being married, as it is against the prescribed code of practice. He further said if he had full control of his senses, he should take sanyas rather than be like that. At this, Govindan said that he would like to embrace sanyas. Ramanuja with the permission of Govindan's mother gave sanyas to Govindan. Ramanuja gave him his own name Empermanar to Govindan. Govindan who is reverent towards his guru feared to use his Guru's name and changed it slightly to Embar.

(to be continued...)

Bliss of Brahman and 6 enemies!

भीषाऽस्माद्वातः पवते । भिषोदेति सूर्यः । भिषाऽस्मादग्निसश्चेन्द्रश्च । मृत्युर्धावति पन्चम इति ।

सैषाऽऽनन्दस्य मीमाँसा भवति ।.....ते ये शतं मानुषा आनन्दाः ।.....स एको ब्राह्मण आनन्दः । श्रीत्रियस्य चकामहतस्य ।

It is due to the fear in the Brahman the wind blows, sun rises, fire, Indra and death (Yama, the 5th) do their respective duties. This marks a vital position for vishishtAdvaitis. The verse provides evidence to bhedam tattvam (Sri Varadarajar says – darshanam bheda eva ca). Vayu, Surya, Indra, Agni, Yama, etc are different functional entities to Brahman, however, He being the indweller of all, pervades all and He alone exists. The rest of the creation exists on the principle of multiplicity because of Him. This is a short explanation of VishishtAdvaitam.

So, what is this Brahman, how can it be explained? Can it be explained? The Upanishad makes an attempt: Consider a human well versed in scriptures, full of good desires, firm, determination, vigor and strength. That person has all the wealth, fame and victory in the world. May the happiness of this person be the highest happiness of human = X and UoH = Unit of happiness

100X = 1 UoH of human gandharva ;	100 UoH of human gandharva = 1 UoH of celestial gandharva
100 UoH of celestial gandharva = 1 UoH of pitrus;	100 UoH of pitrus = 1 UoH of gods by birth
100 UoH of gods by birth = 1 UoH of gods by karma/rites;	100 UoH of gods by rites = 1 UoH of Devas
100 UoH of Devas = 1 UoH of Indra;	100 UoH of Indra = 1 UoH of brihaspati
100 UoH of brihaspati = 1 PrajApati;	100 UoH of PrajApati = 1 UoH of Brahma!

Therefore, 1 UoH of Brahman = $100^{10} * X$, or = $100^{10} * \text{UoH of one human}$

It means to say in simple terms that the happiness of Brahman cannot be measured

At every stage of describing the step by step happiness from human to the Brahman, Upanishad says, " श्रीत्रियस्य चकामहतस्य " which means – "so also of the one well versed in Veda and without selfish desires!". It is repeated 10 times. Unpacking the meaning behind a repetitive verse is to stress the importance of studying Vedas and to be rid of 6 enemies. The six enemies are – kaama (selfish desires), krodha (anger), moha (attachment), lobha (greed), mada (delusion) & mAtsaryam (jealousy). Sutram says, trividham narakasyedam dvAram naashana Atmanah, kaama krodhastatha lobhas tasmAt etat trayama tyajet. There are 3 doors to narakam – kaama, krodha and lobha. These 3 destroy the Atma gunas. Therefore every effort must be made to drop them.

Ashta Atma gunas or 8 qualities of the Self:

Daya – love and compassion for all beings (birds, animals and humans)

Kshanti – forbearance and patience ; Anasuya – absence of jealousy

Sauca – cleanliness and maintain both physical and mental purity

Anayasa – effortless – opposite of stress and exertion – maintain an air of lightness in all situations

Mangala – maintain an air of auspiciousness around you, be cheerful and happy

Akarpanya – It is the opposite of being a miser. Be generous and behave in a dignified manner (do not demean self)

Aspriha – It is the opposite of grasping tendency or excessive desire. Accept imperfection and see the uselessness in selfish desires.