



# RAMANUJA DARSHANAM

(Philosophy of Ramanuja)

श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः



*Sri Ramanuja in Sri Perumbudur*

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## Ramanuja Darshanam

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### About the Cover image

The cover of this issue presents the image of Sri Ramanuja at his birthplace - *Sri-perum-bUdhUr* - a town about an hour west of Chennai. This idol is very special to all VaishNavas. It is said that sometime before Ramanuja left this earth for *SriVaikuNTam* (the abode of the Supreme Lord, where all souls are in a state of permanent bliss serving the Lord), his devotees wanted to install an image of him at his birthplace. So, they approached Ramanuja, and sought permission. Ramanuja gave permission, and the idol was made. This idol is said to be an exact image of how Ramanuja was during his life. When the idol was shown to him, Ramanuja embraced the image. Ramanuja's devotees believe that through this process, he transferred Himself onto this idol. This idol was then installed at *SriperumbUdUr*. Our elders teach us that, when this idol was installed at *SriperumbUdUr*, Ramanuja in *Srirangam* (just before leaving for *SriVaikuNTam*) experienced a momentary weakness, as his life and power was transferred to this idol. This idol (*vigraham*) can be seen today, at *SriperumbUdUr*.

## BLESSINGS FROM SCHOLARS AND ELDERS

T Parthasarathy

Everything about *Emperuman* (Our Lord) Sriman Narayanan is sweet. *Emperumanar* (Sri Ramanuja) describes *Emperuman* as ‘*Akhila Heya Pratyaneeka KalyANaikaAtana Svetara Samasta Vasthu VilakShaNa Ananta GnAnataika SvarUpa*’ (*Emperuman* is just opposite to all base qualities. He has only beneficial qualities. He is different from all other things. His *svarUpam* (Nature) is of infinite knowledge and bliss). *Nithyasuris* (The eternally-free souls who reside with the Lord) enjoy him always in *Nithya vibhuti* (The Supreme Abode). (*Sada Pashyanti Suryaha*).

Nammazhvar’s experience in *ThiruVayMozhi* 3.8.6 is “ChevikaLAIARA Nin Keerthik Kaniyenum kavikaLE \* kAlappaN thEn uRaippaththuRRu \* puviyinmEl ponedum chakkaraththu unnaiyE \* avivinRi Atharikkum enathAviyE” (My ears are filled with the songs of your fame. It sounds as sweet music all along the time. My soul will long for you with your golden discus.)

*Bhagavad Gita* also informs the reactions of *Bhaktas* in chapter 10.9 ‘*Mathchittha madhghathappraana bhodhayantha: parasparam kathayanthascha mAm nityam thushyanthi cha ramanthi cha*’ (My *bhaktas*’ minds are always occupied with thoughts and actions of mine. They exchange their experiences with each other. They are pleased in telling about and hearing about me).

In *Eedu* 36,000 for the *pasuram* ‘*nedumARkkadimai seyvEnpOl*’ Nampillai observes ‘*than thiruvadikalai paRRinAr thiRaththilE avan mikka vyAmOhaththai paNNuvAnAnAl avan virumbinAraiyarO namakkum paRRAvaduppathu*’. *Emperuman* loves very much his devotees (*adiyArs*). We too should love the *adiyArs* dear to HIM.

*Upadesa RatthinamAlai* 37-38: “*pArulagil AsaiyudaiyOrkkellAm AriyarkAL kURumenRu pEsi varambaRuththAr pin*”, “*emperumanAr dharisanam enRE ithaRkku namperumAL pErittu nAtti vaiththAr*”. Preach this to all those who are desirous of learning it. Thus, the old practice was stopped and the new system was named as “*Emperumanar* (Ramanuja) *Darsanam*”.

Ramanuja Matham is bringing out this quarterly journal “*RAMANUJA DARSHANAM*” for the benefit of *bhaktas*. *Adiyen* (this devotee) prays to *Emperuman Sriman Narayana* to bless this venture and make it a success. Let all the *BhAgavathas* (devotees) enjoy.

## EDITORIAL

Mohan Sagar

Through the kind blessings of our *poorvacharyas* (Spiritual Teachers of the past and present), and in service to *Bhagavad Sri Ramanuja*, the Lord Whom He Adores, and all the Devotees, the members and supporters of VEDICS, Inc. are pleased to bring you this first edition of *Ramanuja Darshanam*, the magazine for and about Sri Ramanuja and His Vision. This magazine is for everyone who is interested in gaining a proper understanding of the Eternal Truths contained in the Vedas.

Sri Ramanuja was a renowned 11<sup>th</sup> Century scholar, theologian, and social reformer whose profound life and message was an expression of his lucid and thorough understanding of the Veda (the Eternal Wisdom of the Universe). This understanding has been shared with all of us over the centuries through *Sri Ramanuja Sampradayam* (Sri Ramanuja's Tradition), the religion of *Sri Vaishnavism*, a vibrant and community-oriented spiritual path that expresses itself both individually and collectively as pure love for *Sriman Narayana* (The Supreme Lord), selfless service to His Devotees, a positive approach to life, and a helpful and compassionate attitude towards the world as a whole. Key to this tradition is the recognition that its universal and practical principles are available to all, irrespective of race, caste or gender.

It is this egalitarian vision that is the inspiration behind this magazine. Our purpose is to share a small sampling of the profound philosophical wisdom and rich tradition that form the religion of *Sri Vaishnavism* with everyone - the devout practitioners, the interested newcomers, even those who are just curious to learn more about the faith - with the hope that it will spark a whole new interest in *Ramanuja Sampradayam* that will carry it well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond.

The staff of volunteers that makes this magazine possible includes erudite scholars and sincere lay followers, all of whom are dedicated to providing you with a broad perspective on *Ramanuja Sampradayam*. Regular articles will include a featured *Divya Desham* (one of 108 Sacred Temples that the Sri Vaishnavas revere), stories recounting the lives and contributions of the *Azhvars* (Mystical Saints) and *Acharyas* (Spiritual Teachers), Great Sri Vaishnava Works, a Question and Answer Section, and Moral Stories that can be appreciated by children and adults alike. We will also have a feature on our cover, the greatness of the *utsava vigraha* (processional image) of *Bhagavad Sri Ramanuja* at a particular *Divya Desham*, and a calendar listing all the important Sri Vaishnava

and Vedic holidays. We may even throw in some practical tips on how to live the Sri Vaishnava way in this fast-paced modern world.

The measure of a magazine is seen in the involvement of its readers. So, we would like to invite all of you who would like to delve deeper into Ramanuja Sampradayam to join the Vedics chat group, [Ramanuja@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Ramanuja@yahoogroups.com). Many of the subjects that will be covered in the magazine will be discussed in a more detailed interactive environment that will certainly be beneficial for those wanting to learn and share more.

We hope that you will find Ramanuja Darshanam an informative resource for furthering your own spiritual pursuits. Please share this magazine with your family and friends, such that all may know the wisdom, peace, and quality of life that is offered to all of us through Ramanuja Sampradayam.

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## WHO IS RAMANUJA?

*Mohan Sagar*

Sri Ramanuja is the renowned 11th Century philosopher, devotee, and humanitarian who serves as the paradigmatic leader and central figure in a vast lineage of scholars and mystics belonging to the spiritual path of Sri Vaishnavism, a monotheistic religious tradition of India that has been described by both Eastern and Western scholars alike as being the most complete in its understanding of the Vedas, the Eternal Truths. His contributions to this spiritual path were so vast, that Sri Vaishnavism itself has come to be known as Ramanuja Darshanam, Ramanuja's Vision.

Sri Ramanuja's nine great philosophical and devotional works validated and united his lucid understanding of ritual and philosophical ideals of the Vedas with the devotional outpourings of the Azhvars, the twelve mystical saints that form the basis of the Sri Vaishnava experience. Such a synthesis of scholarly understanding and heartfelt devotionism lies at the center of Sri Ramanuja's philosophy, which has come to be known as Visistadvaita, qualified monism.

Visistadvaita suggests the idea of a Personal Supreme Being, known in Sanskrit as Srīman Narayana (the refuge for all souls), Who is at once the Great Lord and Master of the Universe, and also the Divinely Merciful and Loving Protector, Who is ever striving to redeem souls from the bondage resulting from ignorance and false ego. The unifying factor

between the Supreme Being and the individual souls is Divine Love, which is expressed by the Lord in His constant desire to protect and save, and is expressed by the devotee through adoration, surrender, and selfless service. The goal of human life in the Sri Vaishnava path is to awaken this Love for God in our hearts to a level that brings peace, strength, and higher purpose to this life, and eventually, salvation through a natural and heartfelt submission to the Lord's Boundless Grace.

In addition to being a prodigious thinker and esteemed religious leader, Sri Ramanuja was also revered for his magnanimity and humanitarianism. His instructions to his disciples were that the message of the Sri Vaishnava path should be shared with all, irrespective of race, caste, creed or gender. Such an open and inclusionary attitude allowed the Sri Vaishnava message of love and service to God and His Creation to break through the rigidities of caste and communal segregation and reach every corner of India. Such a peaceful revitalization of Vedic thought would directly and indirectly elevate the spiritual ideals of India for centuries, influencing such great souls as Ramananda, Tulsidas, Kamban, Pothana, Guru Nanak, Kabir Das, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mirabai, Swaminarayan, and most recently, Mahatma Gandhi.

During his time on earth, Sri Ramanuja appointed 74 of his closest disciples to serve as keepers and propagators of this proper understanding of the Eternal Truths. These 74 disciples and their continuous lineage of successors up to the present day have come to form the Acharya Paramparai, the lineage of Spiritual Teachers. It is this lineage that each and every person is given the opportunity to link to in their formal initiation into the Sri Vaishnava faith.

This link is likened to a beautiful necklace, which is depicted in the illustration on page 6. Sri Ramanuja serves as its main jewel, and the lineage of teachers that preceded him and follow him are precious gems that come to completion at the clasp, the Lord Srīman Narayana Himself.

A Sri Vaishnava's daily spiritual practice includes meditation on this lineage. Along with one's own immediate Acharyas, the meditation proceeds through the necklace, which lists the Acharyas in reverse chronological order as follows:

- Sri Manavala Mamunigal
- Sri Thiruvaiyozhi Pillai
- Sri Pillai Lokacharya
- Sri Vadakku Thiruvudhi Pillai
- Sri Nampillai
- Sri NanJeeyar



- Sri ParasaraBhattar
- Sri Embar
- Sri Ramanuja
- Sri Parankusa
- Sri Yamunacharya
- Sri RamaMisra
- Sri Pundarikaksha
- Sri Nathamuni
- Sri Sattakopaya
- Sri Vishvaksena
- Sri (Maha Lakshmi, the Divine Mother)
- Sridhara (SrimanNarayana)

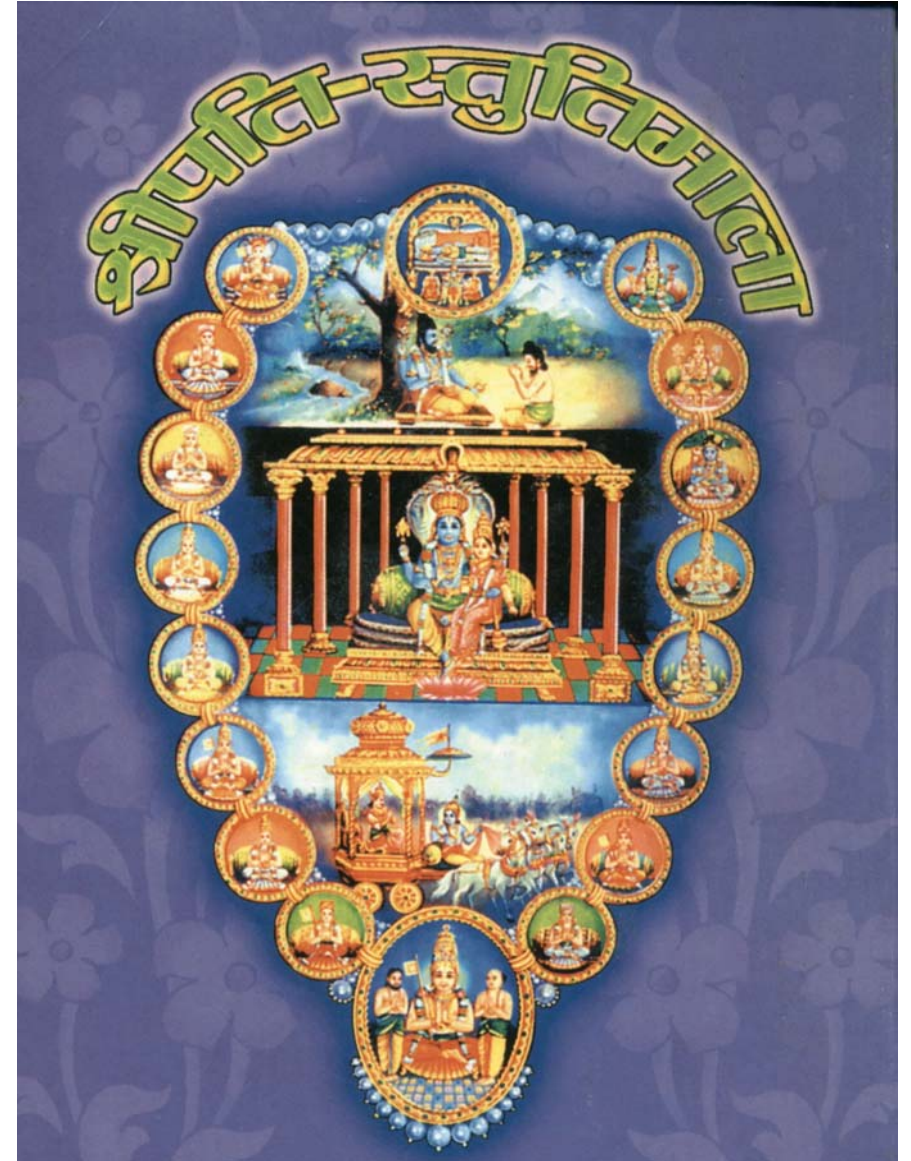
The chain is garlanding the rahasyatrAyam, the three Great Secret Mantras, that every Sri Vaishnava meditates upon daily to understand his/her true nature, the nature of God, and the relationship of Divine Love that binds us to Him Eternally.

The first of these mantras is known as the Moola mantram, which was revealed by Sriman Narayana Himself to His Disciple Nara in his Nara-Narayana avathara. The second mantra is the dvayam, which the Lord revealed to Sri, the Divine Mother. The last of these mantras, and most well-known is the charama sloka, which was revealed to Arjuna by the Lord in His avathara as Sri Krishna in Sri Bhagavad Gita.

While they may continue to be known as "secrets", it is solely through the Compassion of Sri Ramanuja that these mantras were made available to anyone and everyone. Indeed, in a paradigmatic example of his resolve, Sri Ramanuja proclaimed the greatness of one of these mantras from the top of a temple tower immediately after his Acharya had revealed it to him under the condition that he reveal it to no one else. When confronted by the teacher for what was an act of blasphemy, Sri Ramanuja replied that he would risk eternal condemnation if it meant that just one soul could achieve the Lord's Highest Abode. It is at this point that the Acharya, Thirukoshtiyur Nambi, in awe of his kindness, would proclaim him to be EmperumAnAr, our Lord of Lords. And it is for this Kindness, this Magnanimity to the point of self-sacrifice that can only be on par with God's Own Love, that Sri Ramanuja forever remains in our hearts and lives as not only the Greatest among our Spiritual Teachers, but also as our savior.

The next page shows our teachers depicted as a beautiful necklace. Please note that the beginning and ending of the necklace is Lord Narayana.

## THE NECKLACE OF OUR ACHAARYA LINEAGE



## FOLLOWERS OF RAMANUJA & LORD NARAYANA

*Compiled from the teachings of Dr M.S Rangachari*

One of the fundamental qualities of a follower of Ramanuja Sampradayam is, although one must be completely tolerant of other beliefs, on a personal level the devotee maintains exclusive monotheistic devotion to the Supreme Lord, Srīman Narayana, as one's sole Refuge and Protection. The reason for this is not just dogma or blind faith, but is the result of a logical understanding of the purpose of spirituality as it is taught in the Vedas and as it is revealed to us by our Acharyas.

For every human being, faith is very essential towards leading a purposeful and productive life. That faith should be based on sound principles and should be derived from a proper understanding of the venerated practices and teachers of the past. Faith such be of such a nature that it frees one from worrying about the past, the present or the future, encouraging a person to focus instead on living a productive and good life, such that not only the individual but all those around that individual are benefited. To gain such an attitude that leads to the Good, one must be safe in the knowledge that he/she is being guided and cared for by the Divine.

To have such a faith, one must follow a path that is lucid and straightforward, free of contradictions and discrepancies. Consequently, it must be directed towards One Being, One Supreme Good, One Absolute Truth. That One Being should be all powerful such that we know that He can easily save us from what would otherwise be an unending web of accumulated sins that bind us to our false egos and our material desires. At the same time, that Being should be very compassionate, forgiving, and accessible, so that we can be rest assured that we can turn to Him in spite of our sinful nature. He must also be impartial to everyone such that He readily accepts anyone and everyone who turns to Him, irrespective of their caste, race, gender or station in life. He must also possess many charming and wondrous qualities such that we are easily drawn to Him. And, He must be one who loves us unconditionally, and who is willing to accept our unconditional love in return. Such a being would easily be accepted into our hearts and lives.

Given our human foibles, however, even if such a being were to stand before us at this moment, telling us that He is the One that we are seeking, our nature would be to doubt Him. So, In addition to all the Divine Qualities, He must be one whose supremacy has been proven by what others have taught, and is time-honored and proven. Over the

ages, great people should have consistently worshipped Him, and that worship should be consistent with the books/revelations that tell us of such a Person.

Our Acharyas teach us that the Vedas, which form the basis of any Indian spiritual system, emphatically declare that such a Lord is none other than Srīman Narayana, the Supreme Being Vishnu, the consort of the Goddess Sri, the refuge of all souls. Great saints and mystics have worshipped Him through the ages, and have passed on their legacy to others. Ramanuja adopted this legacy from them, and has shared this great treasure with all of us through his lineage of Teachers. It is for this reason, that followers of Ramanuja put their complete trust in Srīman Narayana as the Way and the Goal of Life.

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## GREAT SAINTS AND TEACHERS

*TA Varadhan*

This section will provide information about great saints and teachers whose birth anniversaries (*thirunakshattiram*) fall in the next three months. The vedics website (<http://www.vedics.net>) contains practical guides for commemorating the anniversaries of these great souls.

In this issue, we present information about two great saints - (i) thoNdar-adi-podi-Azhvaar (ii) thiru-mazhisai-Azhvaar and (iii) srī Kurattaazhvaan. Azhvaars are mystic saints who were blessed with divine knowledge by the Lord, and whose outpourings known as the *divya-prabhandham* (divine verses) are venerated as the highest source of devotional/philosophical knowledge.

### **thoNdar-adi-p-podi-AzhvAr (see vedics.net for pronunciation):**

Literally translated, the meaning of this Azhvaar's name is the Azhvaar who is "the dust of the feet of the devotees of the Lord". This is a tamil name. The equivalent in Sanskrit is "*BhaktAngrirENU*". His original name was *vipra-nArAyaNa*. Vipranarayana was born near Sri Rangam, and was brought up by his parents to be a devotee of the Lord. After his childhood, he moved to Sri Rangam, and started performing service laced with deep devotion to the Lord of Sri Rangam - Lord Ranganatha. His primary means of service was collecting flowers and basil leaves (*thiru-th-thuzhaay, thuLasi*), making garlands out of them and offering it for adoring the Lord everyday. While living such a devout life, a dancer (*dAsi* - a group of people in ancient times who performed dances in temples for the enjoyment of the Lord), with some deceit and

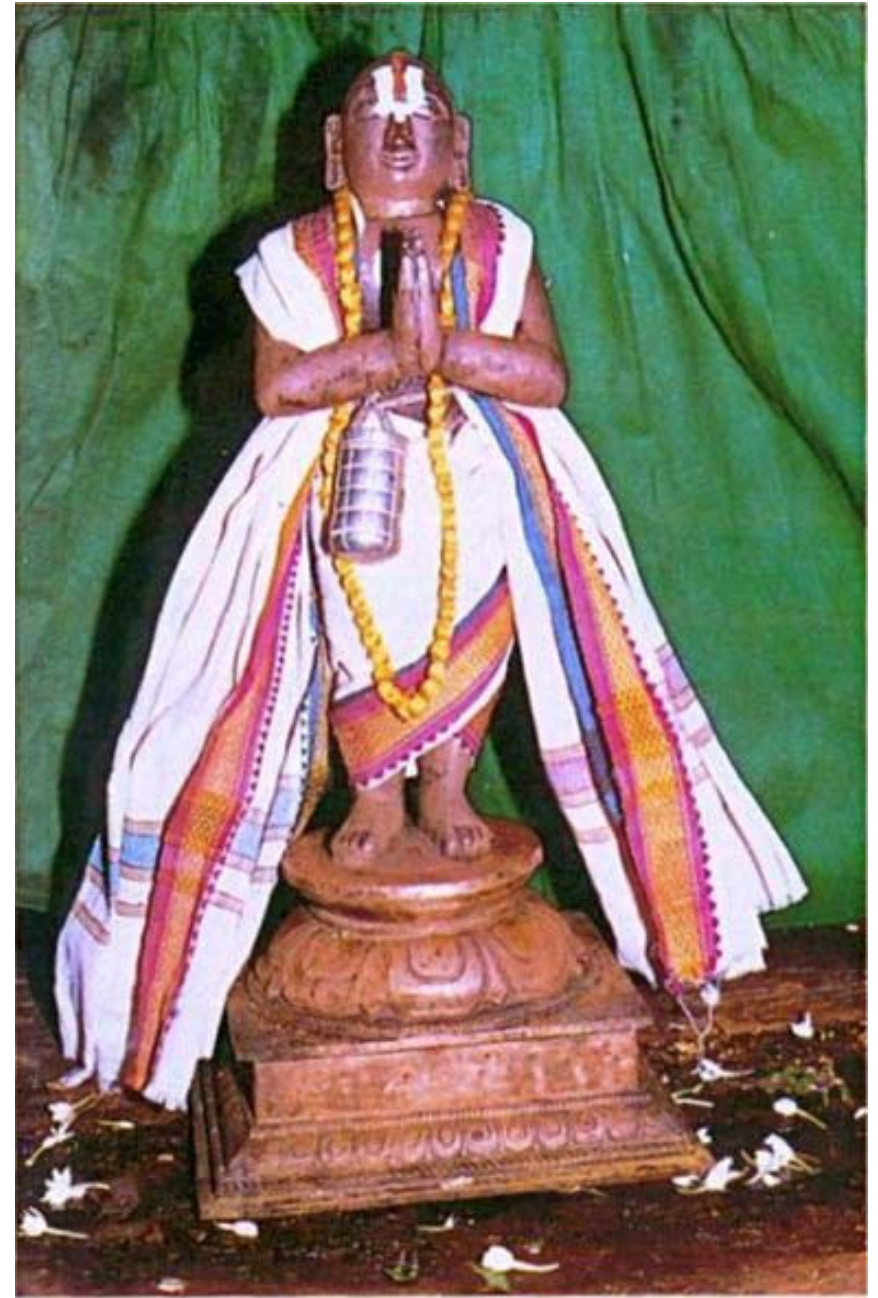


considerable effort, attracted him and made him fall in love with her. After Vipranarayana fell in love with her, she moved to a village near Sri Rangam. Vipranarayana, in his illusion and demented state, forgot all about the Lord, and went to her house. She refused to let him in, and he stayed outside the house day and night praying for her to let him in. Seeing his state, the Lord and Lakshmi decided to change him. They enacted a few incidents, and Vipranarayana realized his wandering away from the truth and his true state of serving the Lord. He came back to srIrangam, and to atone for all his sins, he took the name of thoNdaradi-p-podi, and started performing service to ALL devotees, irrespective of where they came from. The Lord blessed him with diving knowledge; he gave us two works – *thiru-p-paLLi-ezhuchchi* and *thiru-mAlai*.

Thiru-p-paLLi-ezhuchchi literally translates to “the waking up of the diving”. It is sung everyday in most temples when the early morning rituals start. *Thiru-mAlai* translates into “divine garland”. It is an emotional outpouring on the Lord of Sri Rangam, and contains many verses where the Azhvaar thanks the Lord who blessed him with grace in spite of his many shortcomings. The anniversary of this great saint falls on 01/01/2003.

**thiru-mazhisai-AzhvAr: (see vedics.net for pronunciation):**

This AzhvAr’s name is derived from the holy place where he lived – it is called *thiru-mazhisai*, and is currently a suburb of the city of Chennai in India. His original name was *Bhakti-sAra* (the essence of devotion). This AzhvAr practiced many different religions in his quest for the truth. He got disillusioned with every one of them, and was fortunately, through the divine will, taught by one of the earliest Azhvaars known as *pEy-AzhvAr*. *Bhakti-sAra* found the truth in Vaishnavism, and became a great devotee of Lord Sriman Narayana. His affection and concern for the Lord, and his relationship with Him is legendary. The Lord of *thiru-vehaa* (a place in current day kanchipuram), *yathOkthakAri* or *sonna vaNNam seydhA perumAL* (the Lord who did as instructed!) is said to have adhered to this Azhvaar’s commands and have left the town for a day, and on the Azhvaar’s commands, come back. Similarly, the Lord of *thiru-k-kudandhai* (present day Kumbakonam, in Tamilnadu), *Araavamudhan* is said to have listened to the Azhvaar’s pleas to stop getting up to welcome his devotee, the Azhvaar who came there to worship Him. To this day, we can see the Lord there in a posture that is between completely lying down, and sitting. This AzhvAr gave us a composition called *thiru-ch-chanda-viruttam* (*chanda-viruttam* is the name of a form of Tamil poetry; *thiru* is added as it is holy poetry). This Azhvaar’s anniversary falls on 01/21/2003



Idol of Thondaradippodi Azhvaar at his birth place  
(Image from ramanuja.org)



*Idol of Thirumazhisai Azhvaar at his birth place  
(Image from ramanuja.org)*

Suggested prabhandhams to recite on these AzvArs' appearance days:

**thoNdar-adi-p-podi AzhvAr:**

- thiru-p-paLLi-ezhuchchi (in the first thousand of the 4000)
- thirumAlai (in the first thousand of the 4000)

**thirumazhisai AzhvAr: (1/21/03)**

- thiru-ch-chanda-viruttam (in the first thousand of the 4000)
- nAnmugan thiruvandhAdhi (in the third thousand of the 4000)

**DIVINE PLACES – SRIRANGAM**

*Napinnai NC*

**Presiding Deity:**

*Sri Ranganatha* (The Lord of Srirangam), also known as *periya perumAL* (the foremost Lord) - reclining on *AdisEsha* (the foremost devotee/servant of the Lord, present in the form of a serpent, coiled up serving as a bed to the Lord) in a posture known as *bujanga sayanam* (reclining with the hand supporting the face), facing south. The procession deity is called *Azhagiya maNavALan* (the handsome bridegroom), or *namPerumAL* (Our Lord).

**Divine Consort:**

*srI ranga nAchchiyAr* (The queen/goddess of srIrangam), also known as *srI ranga nAyaki thAyAr* (The consort of srI ranganAtha)

**Temple Legend:**

Eons ago, *Lord RanganAtha* (in the exact same form as He is present in *srIrangam* today), was worshipped by Brahma in a place known as *satyaLOka* (one of the seven worlds according to Vedic literature). During a period, known as *trEtha yuga* (one of the four ages per Vedic tradition), He was worshipped on earth by a king known as *IshvAku*, the son of *Manu* (the author of a code of conduct known as *manu smriti*). This deity passed on through the generations to Lord *rAmA*, who presented it to *vibheeshaNa*, the king of Lanka after the *rAmAyaNa* war. On the way to Lanka from Ayodhya, the Lord was attracted by *srIrangam* and wanted to rest there permanently. He promised *vibheeshaNa* that He will grace him and Lanka by facing South (Sri Lanka is directly south of *srIrangam*).

**Salient Aspects of the temple:**

*vimAnam* (the name of the tower above the presiding deity's sanctum): *srI ranga vimAnam*, also known as *praNAvAkruti vimAnam*

*Theertham* (name of the holy tank whose water is used for various purposes in the temple): *chandra theertham* {the most prominent one, currently present}

This temple has a unique arrangement. It is believed to be designed by *satya varma* (the divine architect) himself. There are seven *gOpurAs*



(towers), named after the seven worlds, present in each of seven *prAkArAs* (passages around the temple). There are several sanctums for various incarnations/forms of Lord VishNu in these seven *prAkArAs*. There are also numerous sanctums for great teachers and saints of the religion in these *prAkArAs*.

### Divine Outpourings on the Lord:

Srirangam is the **only** holy place that has been sung by 11 AzhvArs with a total of 247 verses. One of them, *sri thoNdar-adi-p-podi* AzhvAr sung exclusively about Lord ranganaAthA. *sri parAsara bhattar* composed magnificent Sanskrit *stOtrAs* (praise verses) on the Lord, the key among which is known as *sri rangarAja sthavam*. *Sri vEdAnta dEsika* composed a magnificent *stOtra* called *sri pAduka sahasram* (1000 verses on the Lord's holy feet) here.

### Great Teachers and Saints:

Srirangam has been, and is the seat of the Sri VaishNava religion. Given that, all the great teachers and saints have lived in Srirangam, and have propagated the religion from there. The following is a partial list of important sanctums present -

- (i) All the AzhvArs (12)
- (ii) *sriIman nAthamuni*
- (iii) *sri yAmunAchArya (ALavandAr)*
- (iv) *sri rAmAnuja*
- (v) *sri kUrattAzhvAn*
- (vi) *sri parAsar bhattar*
- (vii) *sri nampiLLai*
- (viii) *sri piLLai lOkAchAriAr*
- (ix) *sri vEdAnta dEsika*
- (x) *sri maNavALa mAmunigaL*

### Other important facts:

- (i) Ramanuja established Srirangam as the seat of learning (following the footsteps of *yAmunAchArya* and *sriIman nAthamuni*), established all the temple procedures and services and established families to render specific services to the Lord. He was followed by great teachers like *sri parAsara bhattar*, *sri nampiLLai* and *sri piLLai lOkAchAriAr*. During the life of *sri piLLai lOkAchAriAr*, *sriIrangam* was invaded by the North Indian rulers, and the temple procedures were lost. Two generations later, *svAmi*

*maNavALa mAmuni* reestablished the temple procedures, rejuvenated the *rAmAnuja sampradAya*, and made Srirangam the seat of learning again.

- (ii) A method of propagating the concepts of SriVaishNavism using song and dance, called *araiyar sEvai*, was established by *sriIman nAthmuni*. Following in that tradition, there are several occasions a year when learned scholars belonging to the *araiyar* family enact verses from the divine outpourings of the AzhvArs.

### How to get there:

Srirangam is located near Trichy (Thiru-chi-ra-palli) - about 10 kilometers from there. There is a railway station at Srirangam, and most of the express trains stop there. It is about 300 kilometers from Chennai. It takes about 6 hours by road from Chennai.



PROCESSION DEITY OF LORD RANGANATHA



## Q & A: NEED FOR SPIRITUALITY AND ACHARYAS

Mukundan Pattangi

Q&A with students at University Of Illinois at Chicago – Summer 2000

**Question 1: What is Spiritual Knowledge, and what is the need for it? Who is a bonafide Acharya (spiritual teacher)? (With so many available)**

Any developed, civilized society seeks to find out the purpose of life, Why am I here, Who am I, Who created this universe, these questions will lead us to seek out the Truth.

There has to be a greater purpose than eating, sleeping and reproducing. This leads us to think further and more questions come, am I more than this flesh and blood, am I "jeevatma"? (Spiritual Being)

The very important question of "who am I and what is my purpose", makes us seek "True Knowledge" (Spiritual Knowledge). This spiritual knowledge is gained through the study of spiritual science.

This deals with

1. Chit - Jivathmas (Soul) :- has Knowledge
2. Achit - Time, Matter etc.
3. Ishwara - Paramathma (Supreme soul) :- God, Sriman Narayana

In order to gain a proper understanding of this knowledge such that it can be to our benefit, as well as of benefit to the world, we need to seek an *Acharya* who has this type of knowledge, and is willing to share it readily with those who sincerely desire to learn it.

**Question 2: How do we know the Acharya is true? How do we find THE Acharya?**

God out of his *Kripa* (mercy), reveals the true knowledge to us, via a *Acharya parampara* (lineage of Spiritual Teachers).

Lord, *Sriman Narayana* (a.k.a, Vishnu, Sri Hari) is the first *Acharya*. He revealed this true knowledge to: "Sri" (*Maha Lakshmi*, the Divine Mother). The Divine Mother revealed the true knowledge to *Vishvaksena* (Commander in Chief in *Vaikhunta*), who in turn taught it to *Satakopa Muni* (Nammazhwar).

The lineage of teachers continued on through Nathamuni, Pundarikaksha, Ramamisra, Yamunacharya, Goshti Purna, to Sri

**Ramanuja**, the foremost and most magnanimous of all of the Spiritual Teachers (Time on Earth: 1017 to 1137 AD).

Due to his unparalleled wisdom and compassion, Sri Ramanuja is regarded to be the foremost example of what it means to be a Spiritual Teacher. Thus all other teachers after him, have had their teachings validated because of their connection to Sri Ramanuja.

Consequently, All Acharyas following in this lineage of Acharyas after his time are named with suffixes/prefixes of Ramanuja, they represent Ramanuja and his teachings as they are.

All these Acharyas passed down the knowledge as it is, without any adulteration to the original as given by Lord Narayana to MahaLakshmi.

You may approach any of the Acharyas in this lineage.

**Question 3: Is this Acharya Lineage based on Birth. Are there any caste restrictions on who can be in this lineage?**

No this lineage is **not** based on birth. We have Acharyas from all walks of life and all castes. *Swami Satagopan* (Nammazhwar) the first Acharya in Earth was born in 4<sup>th</sup> Caste. He is the most important acharya who brought the teachings to all the Sri Vaishnavas. There is a lot of misconceptions regarding Caste System, let us discuss that in another session.

**Question 4: Is the Spiritual knowledge we get today is same as was given by LORD?**

In Sri Vaishnavite Sampradaya, this knowledge is being handed down from Teacher to Student (who then takes over the role of teacher for the next generation)

Such a lineage can be regarded to be like" a clean pipe", with all the Acharyas being regarded as smaller clean pipes connecting through a main "junction box", Bhagavad Sri Ramanuja.

Since the water coming in is pure, and all the pipes are clean and untainted by false ego or false knowledge, the water coming at the end of the pipe is exactly the same as it was at its source (Sriman Naryana). Spiritual Knowledge revealed by the Lord, is given to us by our Acharya, as taught through the Lineage of Acharyas. This knowledge is thus flawless and true spiritual Knowledge.

So any one interested in learning the True knowledge will approach an Acharya of this lineage (*RamanujaAcharyas*, some call them as *Sadacharyas*) as they are all representing Acharya Ramanuja (and will pass the message AS IS to their devotees)

**Question 5: How to approach Acharya?**

Due to, Lord SrimanNarayana's grace and benevolence we get accepted by our Acharya, the Acharya accepts us (it is never the other way). One should be extremely grateful and fortunate to be accepted by a qualified RamanujaAcharya of this lineage.

**Question 6: What do we need to get accepted by such an Acharya?**

Genuine Interest is all that you need to have. If you are a true devotee seeking the Truth and are willing to understand and follow it respectfully, Ramanujacharyas will never turn you down.

It is our great fortune that Acharyas accept us and impart the True knowledge to us in appropriate doses based on our individual capacity. In *Sastras*, Acharya is Described as Equivalent to GOD, If needed we can explain reasons later.

So all the true devotees treat their Acharya as GOD himself.

**Question 7: Like GOD, is that not stroking some Ego? Is this needed?**

True devotees treat their Acharya as GOD himself, But the **True Acharya NEVER says "I am God" never behaves with EGO or Anger,** Never entertains any caste, community, regional or language barriers.

**Question 8: How to know the True Acharyas from Fake Sadhus?**

There are so many others claiming to be the Perfect Acharya and that they are GOD. If you see such people go ask them if they are the *SUPREME GOD* (The Creator of this universe). Nobody is greater than or equal to the *SUPREME GOD*.

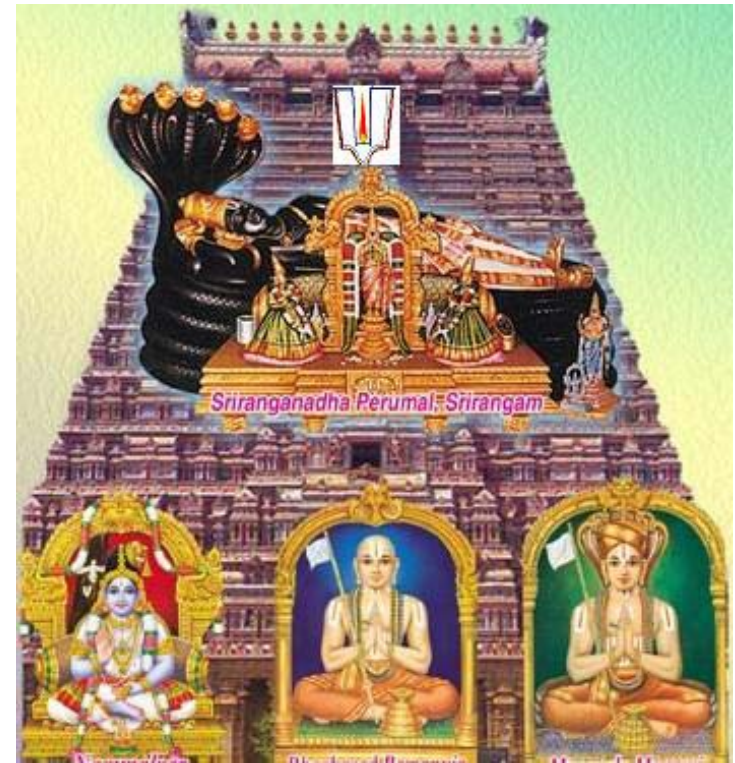
Ask such people if they can even create a grain of rice without the help of Lord, Sriman Narayana. Ask if anyone can create or bring life to an otherwise life-less object. No-one can create anything, only GOD can. Still we find fake ones claiming to be GOD etc.

**True Acharya NEVER says "I am God"**

You can be assured that an Acharya representing Bhagavad Ramanuja and his message is passing on the message as revealed by LORD and is a Bonafide True Acharya, capable of delivering us to GOD.

In some sense it depends on what you are seeking, if you are seeking true spiritual knowledge, GOD will allow you to come under the guidance of an Acharya of the Lineage Started by HIM, with the LORD as the First Acharya.

HIS grace is always upon you; let us pray for all of us, to fall in love with HIM more and more and not to resist/block his Grace with our false ego.



Gopuram at Srirangam. Lord Ranganatha (main deity), The three great teachers - NammAzhvAr, Ramanuja and MaNavAla mAmuni

## MUMUKSHUPADI

### An Introduction

TCA Venkatesan

**Sri Pillai Lokacharya, who is the son of Sri Vadakku Thiruveethi Pillai and the elder brother of Sri Azhagiya Manavala Perumal Nayanar, has written eighteen important rahasya granthas which are together known as the Ashtadasa Rahasyas. These contain such phenomenal works as Mumukshupadi, Srivacana Bhushanam, etc., which are of great importance to Sri Vaishnavas.**

Mumukshupadi is an important work to *Mumukshus* - those who wish to attain *Moksha* (liberation), the lotus feet of Lord Sriman Narayana. It explains in three parts (*prakaraNams*) the sweet and immeasurable meanings of the three mantras together known as the *Rahasyatraya*. The *Rahasyatraya* are the *Thirumantra*, *Dwaya* mantra and *Carama shloka*. To every soul that seeks liberation from this *samasaric* and *karmic* (suffering due to ego and the complex effects of karma) existence, understanding of these three mantras is essential.

The three mantras contain in them the five great meanings known as *Arthapanchakam*. These five meanings are: 1. Knowledge of the Supreme, 2. Knowledge of the Jiva, 3. Knowledge of the means, 4. Knowledge of the goal, and 5. Knowledge of the obstacles to that goal. All three great mantras were revealed by none other than Sriman Narayana Himself. *Thirumantra* which is known as *Mantra Rajam*, was revealed in *Badri* and was advised to *Nara* by *Narayana* (both were forms of the Lord). *Dwayam* which is known as *Mantra Ratnam*, was revealed to *Sri Mahalakshmi* by the Lord in *Sri Vishnu Loka*. *Carama shloka* was revealed to *Arjuna* by Lord *Sri Krishna* in the battlefield of *Kurukshetra*. As all three mantras were given by Him, He stands as the first amongst *acharyas*. It is therefore that *Sri Kuratthazhvan* started his *guru parampara thaniyan* with "*Lakshminatha*" - *Sriman Narayana*.

Our *acharyas* have delighted in the great and deep meanings of these mantras for a long time. Prior to *Sri Ramanuja*, these *rahasyas* and their meanings were told only to a selective few by our *acharyas*. As foreseen by *Sri Nathamuni*, *Sri Ramanuja* was born in this world to break such rules and show the path of salvation to everyone. And so, *Sri Ramanuja* made these *rahasyas* available to everyone. *Sri Pillai Lokacharya* then brought these meanings to us in written form through the work *Mumukshupadi*. *Swami Manavala Mamunigal*, out of his great

compassion to us, decided to make these meanings understandable even to us and wrote an extensive *vyakhyanam* for *Mumukshupadi*.

It is therefore very important for all those who seek salvation to try to gain a greater understanding of these three mantras by learning the *Mumukshupadi*. Even after gaining *Mamunigal's vyakhyanam*, the explicit and hidden meanings of this work are hard to grasp. It is therefore essential to seek learned *acharyas* and learn this work from them. As a preliminary, however, I believe it is acceptable to gather some knowledge by reading a synopsis, even a poor one, of this work - as long as it is written following what our elders and *acharyas* have said. Therefore, *adiyEn* will attempt to write three small articles, one on each *prakaraNam* of *Mumukshupadi*. These will be published in the next three issues of the *Vedics Journal, Ramanuja Darshanam*.

The synopses will be based on *adiyEn's* small attempt at translating *Mumukshupadi* based on *Sri P.B. Annagaracharya Swami's Mumukshupadi Sarartha Deepikai*. The translations are being posted since the last few months on *Ramanuja* and other yahoo e-groups. I seek the blessings of *Sri Vaishnava* elders in this endeavor and beg everyone's forgiveness for taking on this herculean task. If any errors creep into these articles, the fault is no one's but mine, and I request *bhAgavatas* to correct such errors.

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## LIFE HISTORY OF OUR TEACHERS

*Sumithra Varadarajan*

By the Divine Grace of the Supreme Lord *Sriman Narayana*, and the blessings of our revered teacher, *HH Sri VanamAmalai Kaliyan Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami*, we are blessed to begin this series of articles of the Greatness of the Lineage of Teachers of *Ramanuja Sampradayam*. These articles are largely based on a work that was written in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the noted Teacher, *HH Sri Pinpazhigiya Perumal Jeeyar*. The work is called *Arayirapadi guru paramparA prabhAvam*, or the 6000 Verses on the Greatness of the Lineage of Gurus, which for the rest of this series will be referred to as *GPP*.

While many *Acharyas* (Spiritual Teachers) have composed doctrines on the history of our revered lineage of teachers, the *GPP* is regarded to be the most complete and accurate. The question of why and how *HH Sri Pinpazhigiya Perumal Jeeyar* (who will be referred to throughout the



rest of this series as PPJ) came to write the work is also covered in the work and will be addressed in the next part of this series.

Please note that this article is really only a brief synopsis of the detailed information that is covered in the GPP, and is not an attempt to replace the knowledge that can be gained through proper study under an AchArya. However, it is our hope that this series will encourage those of you who are interested in learning more to approach a qualified Teacher to gain a more thorough understanding of the inspiring and profound teachings that these great souls have brought to this world over the centuries.

#### INTRODUCTION

The first step towards appreciating the GPP is to understand the role that the Acharya plays in the Ramanuja Sampradayam.

According to the Vedas, the Lord has created this entire universe for the benefit of all of us, the souls who are continuously suffering in the cycle of reincarnation that is the direct result of our false egos. Life then is a learning experience, an opportunity to seek out and follow the right path that will not only encourage us to seek out ways to benefit the world, but will also eventually lead to our emancipation such that we can be with the Supreme Lord Eternally.

The Lord, being one of Unconditional Love and Compassion, is not one to just leave us here to learn our own lessons. Rather, He has been constantly trying from time immemorial to show us this way that will lead us to True Happiness.

He began at the time of creation when He revealed the Vedas, or sAstras, the sacred scriptures. But, all but a few could really understand the deep mystical meanings within them, so for they remained virtually ignored.

The Lord then decided to descend to earth as AvatArAs (incarnations), as Rama, Krishna, and a host of other forms, such that we could directly interact with His devotees and reveal to all of us, both by example and teaching, the way to Happiness. But, since the AvatAras were limited to a specific time and place, only those who lived near Him at that time benefited from His Descent.

All the more anxious to get us back to Himself, the Lord revealed profound mystical wisdom to us in the form of the poetic hymns of the AzhvArs, the Tamil Saints. But, since the AzhvArs were so much lost in

Him through this poetry, they failed to share the message with the masses.

So, as the ultimate expression of His Compassionate Desire to redeem us, the Lord gifted all of us with the great AchAryas, the Spiritual Teachers, who could share the ancient wisdom of the Vedas, the philosophy of the AzhvAr's hymns, and the Greatness of the Lord Himself with anyone and everyone who had the inclination to learn. Through their selfless dedication, Way to Happiness that we had been ignoring for so long was now available to everyone.

Since the AchArya is the very embodiment of the Lord's Compassion, he is regarded to be regarded by his student to be equal to, if not greater, than the Lord Himself. Indeed, the only way to cross the vast ocean of suffering that prevents us from knowing True Happiness, the Lord Himself, is only through the association with an AchArya. He is like a lighthouse to a lost ship in choppy seas. He is the mediator between the souls and the Lord, acting like a one link in chain (the lineage of Teachers) back to the Lord's Lotus Feet.

Consequently, the first and foremost thing that any Srivaishnava should know and meditate on is the purvAcharya lineage, the lineage of teachers, since it is like a gem-studded chain that begins and ends with Sriman Narayana Himself. With each gem being the wonderful qualities of the each AchArya in the lineage. Our AchAryas say that a Sri Vaishnava should recite at all times the *dvayam* (the twin-fold mantram) and guru paramparai (the Sacred Names of the lineage of Teachers).

It is for this reason that the GPP is held in such esteem by the followers of Ramanuja Sampradayam.

#### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

The personal relationship between the Lord and the individual is the same for everyone, but how much one understands this varies from person to person. The great saints, called AzhvArs, were the most blessed people as they felt the Lord every moment. One of them Sri periyAzhvAr goes to the extent of treating Lord Krishna as a child, and singing about the everyday activities for the child - bathing, getting dressed up, adorning flowers, playing with children etc. One other AzhvAr, thirumangai AzhvAr goes to the extent of fighting with the Lord when He hesitates to show Himself to the AzhvAr. Where are these saints? Where are we? Why don't we feel the same way they did? Think about it. We will provide more information on this in the next issue.

This section provides information about contemporary events/people/leaders of interest. In this issue, this article is about His Holiness Sri. Tridandi Srimannarayana Ramanuja Chinna Jeeyar Swami, who many revere as the present day Ramanuja.

#### Background:

In the Ramanuja Sampradaya, ascetics (monks/*sannyasis*) have traditionally played leadership roles over the ages. Ramanuja was one, and so were many of his successors. Ramanuja, in fact established several ascetic orders (*mathas*). Over the years, many a learned person, aspiring to lead a life of service to the Lord and His devotees, have chosen asceticism over a married life and have become *sannyasis*. Of all the ascetics of the current day, teaching and practicing religion as taught by Ramanuja, Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swami perhaps embodies and lives the life of what Ramanuja probably led in his times.

#### Sri Jeeyar Swami:

Sri Jeeyar Swami took the ascetic order at the age of 23, in the year 1979. For the past 23 years, He has been the torchbearer of the Ramanuja Sampradaya, bringing it to people that did not have access to it traditionally, and bringing in masses of people into the fold. He has preached the message of universal love, devotion to God, service to fellow human beings as a service to God, consistently, and with a great measure of usefulness to the society. It will not be an exaggeration to say that He has perhaps been the leader in the past hundred years who exemplifies the teachings of Ramanuja and strives to bring it to \*whoever has a desire\* to learn.

He is a scholar in the Vedas, Upanishads, the diving outpourings of the Azhvar saints and Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Though an accomplished scholar, one has to listen to his discourses to understand the concern he has for spreading the knowledge to everyone. He explains the concepts in a simple, easy to understand manner, without compromising on the depth of thought, such that even a lay person can understand and see the relevance of the message to his/her daily life. His commentary on Sri Isavasya Upanishad is a prime example of bringing the message to everyone.

#### Some of His activities:

Sri Chinna Jeeyar swami has established many programs over the years to serve humanity. Some of the key programs are the following

- (i) Youth Movement: Also known as *Vikasatarangini*, the key goal of this movement is to serve fellow human beings. During periods of natural disaster (like cyclones, earthquakes), volunteers of this movement organize mass relief and provide food/clothing/shelter to those in need. On an ongoing basis, they conduct health camps in hundreds of villages in rural India. They also serve as a conduit for spreading the universal message of kindness and spirituality by organizing mass worship (like the KrishNam vandE Jagadgurus project).
- (ii) Serve the needy: The Jeeyar Educational Trust, a wing of his organization, runs schools for the blind, and for tribal people in rural India. An interesting aspect is the training of some of these students to serve as teachers in their own community when they become qualified. This nurtures a permanent solution in these areas for education and development
- (iii) Save/Propagate ancient religious texts: Several branches of the Vedas have only a handful of experts currently. JET actively supports those scholars, and sponsors students to learn those branches. These students, then teach the Vedas to other classes, and receive a stipend and fixed honorarium for their livelihood. One almost extinct branch of the Yajur Veda has been published so that it can be available for future generations.
- (iv) Vedic/Religious schools: JET runs several schools for children and youth to prepare them to lead and propagate a Vedic/Religious life. Without experts in the different aspects of religion, the society loses the religion itself. JET has carefully chosen several important fields of religion, and runs schools in a traditional manner.

Additional information about Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swami can be found on the web at [www.chinnajeeyar.org](http://www.chinnajeeyar.org). **VEDICS also invites you to attend his wonderful lectures on Srimad Bhagavad Gita, conducted every Wednesday.** The schedule can be seen on the back cover of this magazine

## MORAL STORY

*Mukundan Pattangi*

### Nails in the Fence

Once, there lived a little boy who had a terrible temper. Even the slightest event that did not go his way made him throw a tantrum. Soon, his friends at school stopped talking to him, his teachers sent him home every night with notes about his bad attitude; Even his sisters and brothers refused to speak to him.

One day, the little boy's father took him out to the backyard and gave him a box of nails and a hammer. He told the little boy that rather than throwing a tantrum, every day he should come home and drive a nail for each time that he got angry that day. The little boy did not quite understand why his father wanted him to do this, but remembering how fun it is to play with hammers and nails, he told his father that he would give it a try.

The first day, the little boy came home and drove 37 nails into the fence. It took him lot longer than he thought it would and made him feel very tired.

The next day the number of nails were slightly fewer than the first; the third he drove less nails than the second. Soon, the number of nails became hardly any at all, because the little boy realized that it was a lot easier to just not be angry than to have to come home to drive all those nails into the fence.

One day, he found that he didn't need to drive any nails at all, because he hadn't been angry all day. Overjoyed, the little boy raced to his father to tell him the good news.

"That's fine, Son," his father said, "But your job isn't over, yet. You are now going to have to start pulling those nails out of the fence. Take your time, though, and let me know when you are done." Since he was really hoping that his father would be proud of him, the little boy took only a few days to remove the nails from the fence. Soon, he raced back to his father, again, and told him that the job was done.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, My Son, but just look at all those holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. This is what happened every time you got angry. It left a scar a scar just like the holes in this fence. It doesn't

matter whether you hit someone or yell at someone. Because physically or verbally, anger leaves a wound that can never really heal.

All good people, especially fellow devotees of God, are very rare jewels. They are genuine, make you smile and encourage you to succeed in your goals. They lend an ear, they share words of praise and they always want to open their hearts to you.

The next time that you meet with one, let he/she know that you are glad to be their bandhu (godbrother or godsister). And share this story with them, and seek their forgiveness for any "nails that you may have driven into their fence".

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## THE BEAUTY OF SURRENDER – (*Anjali Vaibhavam*)

*Sri P B Rajahamsam Svami*

Aam Jalayathi ithi Anjalihi

*Aam* refers to The Supreme Lord, Sriman Narayana. Jalayathi means to liquify, to melt. Anjali means folding of hands; Vaibhavam depicts the greatness of folding of hands towards Lotus feet of Lord. The Anjali that we perform towards Emperuman (our Lord) melts him and thus for such a Anjali, He showers his Full Grace on us.

ANJALI VAIBAVAM is a detailed exposition of the 28<sup>th</sup> sloka of the Stotratnam, The Hymn Jewel, of Swami Alavandar. Before moving on to the topic, let me brief about the great Acaryan Sri Alavandar.

### A Brief note on Swami Alavandar

Swami Alavandar's birth place is Kattumannar Koyil, or Veeranarayanapuram, as it is known in Sanskrit. (South Arcot District-Tamilnadu), His original name is Yamunacharyar, and he is the grandson of our foremost Acaryar Sriman Nathamunigal.

Yamunacharyar was spending his childhood days at Veeranarayanapuram. During that period there was a egoistic pundit in the Chola kingdom called Kolahalan, who under the royal patronage of Chola king, collected taxes from all other Scholars in realm as an acknowledgement of his own scholarly superiority. At this time, young Yamanacharya was taking care of the Gurukulam (The School), since his teacher was away attending to some pressing matters. One of the



messengers of the Egoistic Pandit “Kolahalan” came to the school and delivered a tax notice to Yamunacharya to give to his teacher. Yamunacharya tore it into pieces and declared that he himself, a mere student, could easily defeat the egoistic Scholar in Sastric disputation. Although he knew that Yamunacharya was far from ready to do so, Kolahalan accepted the challenge and had him brought to the Chola king's court. With the Lord's Grace, Yamunacharya proved his words to be true by defeating Kolahalan in a difficult scholarly debate. The queen of the Chola Kingdom was so pleased by the arguments of the young prodigy she dubbed him as Alavandaro - which in Tamil means the one who came to conquer. Then on, this title became his name, and he was recognized by everyone as Alavandar.

Works of Swami Alavandar: Swami Alavandar wrote several works in Sanskrit. Some of his works include Siddhitraya, Geethartha Sangraha Agama Pramanya, Mahapurusha Nirnayam. Sriman Alavandar has also composed two hymns in Sanskrit –one in praise of Piratti, Sri, known as Chathusloki, and the other in praise of Emperuman, which is popularly known as Sthothraratnam, the Hymn-Jewel.

The later Acharyas took the works of Alavandar as the base for their literary works on Sri Visishtadvaita philosophy.

#### About Stotra Ratnam

**Swaadyanniha sarveshaam Tryanththartham Sudugraham  
Sthotrayaamasa Yogindrastham vandE Yamunaahvayam**

I bow to the king of yogis - Sri Yamunacharyar who through his Stotraratnam has conveyed fully the meaning of Vedas in a lucid manner, such that there wisdom could be understood easily.

Swami Desikar, who is also called Sri Vedanthacharyar, has made a detailed commentary on some of works of Sri Alavandar. His commentary on Stotraratnam and Chathusloki is called as Rahasya Raksha.

Vedanthacharyar has made a detailed commentary on the 28<sup>th</sup> sloka of Stotraratnam which depicts the greatness of Anjali- Symbol of Prapathi. This Anjali Vaibavam is in continuation to the 27<sup>th</sup> Sloka of Stotraratnam, wherein Sri Alavandar expresses that he who has resorted to the eternal nectar filled lotus feet of Lord, shall never think of anyone else.

It is worth here to quote the verses from Sri Guna Ratna Kosam of Sri Parasara Battar, where in he has also sung the greatness of Anjali.

The sloka reads: (58<sup>th</sup> Slokam)  
Aishwaryam Aksharagathim Paramam Padam Va  
Kasmai chidanjali baram vahathe vitheerya  
Asmai na kinchid uchitam krutumithyathaamba  
Tvam Lajjase kathay koyamudar bavaha

In this sloka Battar conveys that ThAyar, the Divine Mother, feels touched with even a single folding of hands is offered towards Her, so much so that whatever she has to offer us in return in terms of Aishwaryam (Wealth), Kaivalyam (self-realization) and even Paramapadam (the Highest Abode) - all these are not commensurate as befitting the burden of folding of hands from her devotees.

Thus, the Compassion of the Lord and His Consort is clear and Prapathi (Surrender) as expressed as Anjali can alone help us in seeking his grace.

Sri Vedanthacharyar has divided the 28<sup>th</sup> sloka into ten phrases and has quoted Sanskrit verses in authority of his explanation / interpretation.

I would like to briefly bring about the essence of his commentary on the 28<sup>th</sup> Sloka of Stotraratnam-Anjali Vaibavam.

Hitaya Sarvajagatham vyaktham yonjalivaibavam  
Prachikashat tam vandeham vedantha yugadeshikam.

I bow to the Vedantha Desikar, who for the good of everyone has clearly and in concrete manner explained the greatness of Anjali.

Anjali is the symbol of Prapathi and it is the first step to Prapathi.

The 28<sup>th</sup> sloka of Stotraratnam conveys the greatness of Anjali.  
The sloka reads:

Tvadangrim uddishya kadaapi kenachit yataa tathaa vaapi sakruth  
krithonjalih  
Tadaiva mushnaathi ashubaani aseshatah shubaani pushnaathi na  
jaathu hlyathE.

Swami Alavandar by this sloka has conveyed the greatness of Anjali made unto the lotus feet of Lord Narayana. The meaning of this sloka is as follows

“He who has folded his hands towards your pair of feet, whosoever he may be and whatever be the time, whatever in the form that very instant the act of folding hands dispels at once all his misfortunes and fosters him an eternal bliss.

“**Tvad-Angrim uddisya** ” - the greatness of Lotus feet of Lord is emphasized. - which alone shall lead us to salvation, i.e. moksha.

In Bhagavad Gita, Emperuman has conveyed that He alone can grant moksha (salvation), and all the other deities are under His control. It is worth here to quote the verses from the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse of chapter 7 of the Gita, where Lord declares, “the fruits gained by worshiping other deities is perishable and the worshippers of these gods and demigods attain them, while my devotees howsoever they worship me, eventually come to me and me alone.

“**Kadapi kenachit**”

By this word Swami Alavandar conveys that this Anjali towards the pair of feet of Lord can be done at anytime and by any person. It is the simplest way to attain Him and is not dependent on time or place.

Anjali is a symbol of prapaththi (surrender), which is the only way to attain His Lotus Feet. It is so simple and there is no need for any other human initiative. It is the best pathway for the aspirant, as it is not limited to a specific caste or creed.

-**Tad ekopayatha Yancha prapaththi-hi Saranagathi-hi**  
“**Yathaa tathaa vaapi**”

Anjali does not require any subsidiaries, and thus it can be performed in any manner.

This means that Emperuman does not expect anything from us, merely folding of hands pleases him. However, the other deities created and controlled by Emperuman expect more offerings and sacrifices from us. And no matter how much we do, the fruits of our penances are limited. Whereas the Compassionate Lord, out of his Vaatsalya (Parental Love) accepts our prayer, although it may be just folding of hands in whatever manner.

Nammalvar in his Thiruvaimozhi has conveyed that the best offering that will please Emperuman and kindle His grace is Anjali, and he says to Lord that “the words coming out of my heart in praise of you is the sandal paste that I offer to you, my pasurams (songs) are the garland and silk cloth for you, the best ornament that I can offer you is my Anjali.” This Anjali, I perform unto the supreme Lord, who maintains this entire universe, even during the Great Deluge.

“**Sakruth kritah Anjali**”

This folding of palms towards His Holy Feet, even if performed only once, bestows us with auspicious things. Even the ten Ashvametha Yaga (the Ten Great Sacrifices) shall not yield you Moksham, but singing Lord's glory with our hands folded in prayer shall relieve one from the bondage in the endless cycle of reincarnation.

“**Dasha Ashwamedhi Punarethi Janma, Krishna pranami na punar bavaya**”

“**Tad-Eva -Mushnaathi Ashubaani AsEshathaha**”

That very moment, the folding of hands steals away all our misfortunes and miseries without leaving any remainder.

The verb Mushnaathi indicates how the Lord stealthily removes our inauspicious qualities without even allowing us to realize it. “The Anjali made unto His feet, draws us unto Him and removes all the obstacles that prevents us from knowing Him.

“**Shubaani Pushnaathi na jaathu hIyate**”

The folding of hands bestows us with auspicious qualities and provides us with eternal bliss. Swami Desikar in his Varadaraja Pancasath says “If Thou art going to discharge Your powerful arrow of Punishment on us, who have committed innumerable sins from beginningless time, we have got a counter shaft (Viz. Anjali) which shall overcome Thy arrow in spite of Your being omnipotent - “**Prathyastram Anjalirasow tava nigraha-astre**”

Thus, the eternal grace we receive for single effort made by us shows the greatness of Anjali.

Conclusion:

**“Bagavantham samuddisya tad Eka sharanaha naraha kadaachit na cha hIyanthe kamyakarmaartha api”**

The above sloka means “one who seeks Him by way of His Lotus Feet never fails to attain Him.”

Swami Desikar in his commentary on the 28<sup>th</sup> sloka of stotraratnam has dealt in detail as how this Prapatthi- Anjali kindles the grace of The Supreme Lord Narayana. The several aspects that may be pointed out are

1. How a seeker shall not strive for anything else other than seeking the Lord alone.
2. How there is no restriction on time, place, caste or of subsidiaries.
3. Prapatthi, Surrender, is the only easy way to attain the Lord.
4. How that Anjali dispels all inauspicious qualities and pours eternal bliss forever.
5. How it bestows eternal fruit at all times on all devotees devoid of all other attachments and also to a person who is attached to worldly pleasures.

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VEDICS ACTIVITIES

*TCA Venkatesan*

Since early in 2002, Vedics began the service of supporting divyadesams in India that are strapped for money. Identifying that service to the devotees is the highest form of service and that the maintenance of a temple is more than fixing the bricks and mortar, Vedics decided to provide monthly support for the priests and support personnel such as watchmen for the temple. In return the priests were asked to keep the temple open for a fixed number of hours each day, continue to perform nithya aradhana (daily rites) at the temple, and so on. They were also requested to engage the local people in the activities at the temple.

Devotees have come forth from many places to support this noble cause and Vedics is happy to note that more and more devotees are coming forward. Through their generous donations, Vedics has started to provide monthly support to the following temples: *Thirumani-k-koodam*, *Thiru Arimeya Vinnagaram* and *Thiru-k-kavalampadi* in Thirunangur and

Thiru-k-koodalur. Vedics is also in the process of bringing one more temple under our support:

By providing monthly support to these temples, Vedics is hoping to create a grass roots movement in such places so that people there who love their temples can afford to stay there and provide service to the Lord and His devotees and not have to look at greener pastures for survival.

There are two plans that Vedics is focusing on in this service.

Plan A is to create a core fund of \$10000 per divyadesam that is in need. To this end Vedics is planning to start fixed deposit funds for each divyadesam and work toward that goal. Monthly deposits will be made into these funds as well as low interest loans will be examined. This is the primary plan.

Plan B is to send a monthly amount to each divyadesam that we support. This will be done until the time Plan A takes effect at that temple.

As we have two plans for each temple, Vedics will accept either monthly donations or a one time donation toward any of these temples.

**Divyadesams Supported:**

Temple	City	Supported By
thirumaNi-k-koodam	Thirunangur	Sri Sunder Saranathan, Srirangam Srimad Andavan Sishyas
thiru arimEya viNNagaram	Thirunangur	Sri Sunder Saranathan, Srirangam Srimad Andavan Sishyas
thiru-k-kAvalampAdi	Thirunangur	Sri Sunder Saranathan, Srirangam Srimad Andavan Sishyas
thiru-k-koodalur	Near Kumbakonam	Detroit Vedics
Paandava dhoothar	Kanchipuram	Chicago Vedics

If anyone wishes additional information or is interested in donating to this service, please contact the Vedics Board at [emberumanar@yahoogroups.com](mailto:emberumanar@yahoogroups.com) or call TCA Venkatesan at (248) 651-2879.



## WEBSITE IN FOCUS

Harini Raghavan

This section presents a brief review of a Sri Vaishnavite website highlighting its salient features. In our first issue the website in focus is [www.acharya.org](http://www.acharya.org)

The word *acharya* in Sanskrit language means teacher. As the name implies, the website talks about some of the great Vaishnavite teachers with their salutary verses and their works. Life history of two great followers of Sri Ramanuja - *Sri Vedanta Desika* and *Swami Manavala Mamuni* are presented in great detail. The author has dedicated a section to *Sri Anantazhvan* (one of the 74 disciples of Sri Ramanuja) who is known for his service to Lord Srinivasa in Tirupati. The articles section presents a series of small sets of articles which form an interesting read.

The divine outpourings (*Divyaprabhandam*) of the mystic saints (*azhvaars*) are available in the *Divyaprabhandam* section. Thiruppaanazhvar's *Amalanadipiraan* is presented along with an in-depth summary of the commentaries of various acharyas by the author.

The website hosts a multimedia section which is very useful. They help us to enjoy the sight of the Lord while we work on the computer. It has a couple of downloadable screen savers. The Sri Screensaver has images of the Lord from a few *Divyadesams*, holy places (holy places are the temples sung by the azhvaars). The video section carries a small movie of the car festivals of a few temples, enabling us to view the divine journey of the Lord. Beautiful images of the presiding deities of some of the *divyadesams* are shown.

In summary [acharya.org](http://www.acharya.org) is a good site to go through for people with varying knowledge of the Sri Vaishnavite tradition. It carries a whole bunch of images which bring the Lord right to our PC. Please visit [www.acharya.org](http://www.acharya.org) and get a feel for Sri Vaishnavite tradition and literature.

### DO YOU KNOW?

That Ramanuja, while writing the commentary on the Brahma Sutras was assisted to a great deal by Sri KUrattAzhvAn? This great scholar proofread the commentary, and we are taught that he even suggested modifications in some places so that the commentary was complete.

## CALENDAR - FIRST QUARTER 2003

### January 2003

Date	Lunar Calendar	Star	Event
01/01/03	Margazhi 17	Kettai	Thondaradippodi Azhvar, Koora Narayana Jeeyar, Periya Nambi
01/02/03	Margazhi 18	Moolam	Sarva Amavasai, Hanumath Jayanthi at Pomona
01/03/03	Margazhi 19	Pooradam	Adhyayana Utsavam Begins
01/06/03	Margazhi 22	Avittam	Azhagiya Manavala Perumal Nayanar
01/10/03	Margazhi 26	Revathi	Srirangam Thai Thirunaal Begins
01/11/03	Margazhi 27	Ashwini	Koodarai Vellum Utsavam at Pomona
01/13/03	Margazhi 29	Bharani	Srirangam Thai Garuda Sevai
01/14/03	Margazhi 30	Karththikai	Vaikunta Ekadasi (except at Srirangam), Sarva Bheesham Ekadasi, Irappaththu Utsavam Begins
01/15/03	Thai 01	Rohini	UttaraayaNa Punya Kaalam, Sankaranthi
01/18/03	Thai 04	Punarpoosam	Embar
01/21/03	Thai 07	Magam	Thirumazhisai Azhvar
01/23/03	Thai 09	Uthram	Kooraththaazhvan, Thiruvaymozhi Thirunaal Sarrumurai
01/24/03	Thai 10	Hastham	Iyarpa Sarrumurai
01/28/03	Thai 14	Kettai	Sarva Ekadasi
01/31/03	Thai 17	Uthraadam	Bodayana Amavasai

## February 2003

Date	Lunar Calendar	Star	Event
02/01/03	Thai 18	Thiruvonam	Vanamamalai Kootai Ennai Kappu Utsavam
02/03/03	Thai 20	Sadayam	Chottai Nambi Nalooran
02/08/03	Thai 25	Ashwini	Ratha Sapthami
02/12/03	Thai 29	Mrugaseersham	Magara Sukla Ekadasi
02/13/03	Masi 01	Thiruvathirai	Kumbha Sukla Dvadasi
02/17/03	Masi 05	Magam	Masi Magam
02/27/03	Masi 15	Pooradam	Sarva Ekadasi
02/28/03	Masi 16	Uthradam	Manavala Mamunigal Thiruvadhyanam

## March 2003

Date	Lunar Calendar	Star	Event
03/02/03	Masi 18	Avittam	Sarva Amavasai
03/10/03	Masi 26	Rohini	Srirangam Panguni Utsavam Begins
03/11/03	Masi 27	Mrugaseersham	Thirukkacchi Nambi
03/13/03	Masi 29	Thiruvathirai	Srirangam Garuda Sevai
03/14/03	Masi 30	Punarpoosam	Kulasekara Azhvar
03/18/03	Panguni 04	Uthram	Panguni Uthram
03/19/03	Panguni 05	Hashtam	Thiruvarangaththamuthanaar
03/28/03	Panguni 14	Thiruvonam	Sarva Ekadasi

### NOTE

The festivals listed are based on the calendar that is followed in Thiruvallikkeni (Triplicane, Tamil Nadu). Festivals are shown based on the time in India, and as a result, may not necessarily represent the date the festival falls in the US and other countries. Please contact your Acharya or a temple priest to determine the exact date and time of a specific festival.

## VEDICS QUIZ

Mukundan Pattangi

1. Why do we go to the Temple?  
Seek Boons from HIM    Re-Kindle Our Relationship with HIM  
Meet people                      Good Food (Prasadam)
2. Why should we practice Vegetarianism?  
Healthy                      Inexpensive  
Delicious                      Minimal Suffering to other beings
3. How many divyadesams are there in this Bhooloka?  
102                      105                      108                      106
4. Who authored Rig Veda?  
GOD                      VEDA VYASA  
MANU                      NO-One
5. What is the significance of applying Thiruman to our body?  
Indicates Devotion                      To Follow Tradition  
Looks cool                      Indicates Servitude to GOD
6. What is Atma (Chith)?  
Object Having Consciousness                      Heart  
Human                      Living Thing
7. What does not contribute to one's Karma?  
Thought (Mana)                      Speech (Vaak)  
Actions (Kaaya)                      Dedications to Lord (Kainkaryam)
8. What unique message does Ramayana teach us?  
Total Surrender (Sharanagathi)                      Service to Humanity  
Importance of Friends                      Good over Evil
9. Four Vedas could not explain Him. But \_\_\_\_\_ did  
Shastras                      Puranas  
Upanishad                      Azhvars
10. What is the purpose of Life?  
Seek Knowledge                      Eat Drink & Enjoy Life  
Moksha                      Help Others

(Answers next issue)



### Live discourses on the Tele-bridge

Wednesdays 9:30PM CST (8:30pm after 1/15): Bhagavad Gita - English  
HH. Tridandi Srimannarayana Chinna Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami

1st Saturday 9 AM CST: Sri Vachana Bhooshanam - Tamil  
HH Vanamamalai Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami

1st Sunday 10AM CST: Srimad Bhagavatam - Telugu  
Sri U.Ve. Satuluri Gopala Krishnamacharyulu

2nd Saturday 9AM CST: Siria ThiruMadal - Tamil  
Sri U.Ve. Venkatakrishnan Swami

2nd Sunday 9AM CST: Ramayana Tanislokam - Tamil  
Sri U.Ve. Velukkudi Krishnan Swami

3rd Saturday: 9AM CST: Acharya Hrudayam- Tamil  
Sri U.Ve Elayavilli S Bhoovarahan Swami

3rd Sunday 10 AM CST: Srimad Bhagavatam - Telugu  
Sri U.Ve. Satuluri Gopala Krishnamacharyulu

Last Saturday 10AM CST: Purpose of Life- Telugu  
HH. Srimannarayana Chinna Ramanuja Jeeyar

Feb 14 to March 30:

Sri VPS Varadan Swami Upadesa Ratna Malai - Tamil  
Sundays: 7 PM CST & Thursday: 9PM CST

Dhivya Prabhandam and Stotra patam santhai:  
Sun 8AM & Sat 2PM CST.

Vedam Chanting and error correction: Sat 8AM CST: Jan. 25 to March 30  
Pancha Sooktams & Pancha Shanti (Yajur Vedam only)

Latest updates and more information visit: [www.vedics.net](http://www.vedics.net)  
For more details, please e-mail: [ramanuja@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ramanuja@yahoogroups.com)



### *FALL IN LOVE WITH GOD*

Pray with sincerity humility and gratitude for atleast 15 minutes a day.

*RESTRICT FOOD CONSUMPTION*  
Eat anything only after offering it to God.

### *MEDITATION*

Meditate on the beauty of God, atleast thrice a day,  
atleast a minimum of 3 minutes each time. Chant Sri Vishnu  
Sahasranamam (the 1000 Holy Names of Lord Vishnu) once a day.

### *RESPECT FOR ALL THAT IS HIS*

Strive to lead a life in which you will never hurt  
a fellow living being for any reason.

### *MONEY*

Earn to live, educate, support and serve and not for  
the sake of pursuing materialistic desires.

### *CHARITY*

Donate however little it may be to noble causes.  
Feeding the needy is the highest form of charity.

### *CONTENTMENT*

Be happy and content that you are His. Thank your preceptors at least  
once a day for blessing you with this awareness.

### *ABSOLUTE FAITH*

Place complete trust in the supreme LORD. Do not go against His way.

### *SELF - CONTROL*

Strive to live a life free from selfish desire and anger.

**श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः**

Always adorn a peaceful smile; it will work on others and on you too