



RAMANUJA DARSHANAM®

(Philosophy of Ramanuja)

श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः



Thiruk kurugUr dEsikEndrar(Azhvar Thirunagari emperumAnAr)

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About the Cover image

The cover image Ramanuja in this issue is that of Swami Ramanuja's idol at thiru-k-kurugUr, or AzhvAr Thirunagari. AzhvAr Thirunagari is the birthplace of Swami Nammazhvar, the leader of all devotees of the Lord. The image of Ramanuja here is known as "bhavishyad AchArya" vighram, or "the Teacher of the future". It is said that srIman nAdamuni obtained this idol when he was at thiru-k-kurugUr. Our elders also say that in the thiruvAimozhi pAsuram "poliga poliga poliga", the reference is to Swami Ramanuja. AzhvAr in that pAsuram says that the age of Kali will be conquered due to the birth of great devotees of the Lord. Swami maNavAla mAmunigaL explains that AzhvAr foretells the birth of AzhvArs and AchAryAs such as Tirumangai and Ramanuja, whose benign presence purifies the world of all its evil tendencies

EDITORIAL
A SEASON TO CELEBRATE

Swami Azhagiya maNavALapperumAL nAyanAr, one of the most brilliant and insightful Acharyas in the Sri Vaishnava tradition, bequeathed us sAmpradAyic gems that occupy the very pinnacle of the exalted thought underpinning rAmAnuja darshanam. Amongst these compositions, Acharya Hrudayam stands apart as an immensely beautiful, uplifting work that exposes the fundamental essence of Swami Nammazhvar's thiruvAimozhi (considered the 'sAma vEdam' in tamizh vEda) using *chUrNikais* (aphorisms), a veritable garland woven from inimitable words and phrases, fragrant flowers, picked from thiruvAimozhi and divya prabhandam (tamizh vEdAs).

In this magnum opus, Swami Azhagiya maNavALap-perumAL nAyanAr wonders of Swami Nammazhvar thus (churNikai 92):

Atri jamadagni pankthiratha vasu nanda sUnu AnavanuDaiya yuga varNa krama asvatAramO

that is, whether it was our lord Sriman Narayana who took birth progressively in different varNas, corresponding to different guNas dominant in different yugas: dattAtrEya, son of atri, as a brAhmaNa (Krita yuga); parasurAma, son of jamadagni, as a combination of brAhmaNa-kshatriya (Krita yuga); srIrAma, son of dasharatha, as kshatriya (TrEta yuga); krishNa, son of vasudEva and nandagOpa, as vaishya (DwApara yuga) and now, in the age of Kali, Swami SaTakOpa in the varNa of the shUdra, thus demonstrating that manifestation of the ultimate divinity is not the domain of any one varNa.

But Swami Nammazhvar is even more special than the earlier *avatAras* (incarnations), because the three suns in this Universe that we know about could not do what Swami Nammazhvar did; Again, Swami Azhagiya maNavALapperumAL nAyanAr:

Aditya-rAmadvAkara achyutha-bhAnukkaLukkup-pOgAdha uLLiruL neengi sOshiyAda piravikkaDal vaRRi vikasiyAda pOdil kamalamalarndadu vakuLabhooshaNa bhAskara udayaththilE (churNikai 83);

meaning, the sun we see on a daily basis removes external, physical darkness, but the more dreadful inner darkness of *ajnyAna* (ignorance) grows on, unimpeded; that Sun called srI rAma could only dry up the ocean of rAkshasas, not the ocean of samsAra; Sri Krishna, brought light to the womb and blossomed the heart of dEvaki, but he could not shine a

lasting light on the darkness of janma and karma enveloping souls; and only when the Sun bedecked in the vakuLa garland called Swami Nammazhvar rose, the inner darkness of ignorance was permanently removed, the ocean of samsAra, that cycle of perpetual entanglement through which there was no way out, dried up for good, and as a consequence, the lotus-like hearts of true *vaidikas* (followers of shAstra, vEda) blossomed.

It took one such *vaidika*, Swami Ramanuja, the epitome of humanity, compassion and SAstric erudition, to show that Azhvar's thiruvAimozhi was the essence of the Vedas, only simpler to understand - that the supreme God is our eternal, unconditional, relative/friend (*nitya nirupAdhika bandh*), only easier to access - that Swami Nammazhvar was our *kulapathi* (the Original Preceptor), because it was Azhvar that showed the true message of the Sastras lay in his magnificent outpourings of love for the divine, and more importantly, the immense love of the divine for us. Swami MadhuraKavi Azhvar, a contemporary of Swami Nammazhvar who was instrumental in begetting thiruvAimozhi and tamizh vedas for us, appropriately refers to Nammazhvar as '*tEvu maRRariyEn*' (I know of no other Supreme God other than kArimAran SaTakOpa)

Swami Ramanuja's intense love and respect at the lotus feet of Swami Nammazhvar is reflected in the appellation that Swami Ramanuja was given by his exalted disciple Thiru-arangaththu amudhanAr; the name *mAran aDi paNindhu uyndavan* aptly encapsulates the notion that propelled the vision of Swami Ramanuja as one who, immersed in the path lit by the lotus feet of Swami Nammazhvar and his *aruLiccheyal* (divine outpourings), found the message that brought the ultimate divinity to the hearts and minds of one and all. Fittingly, at Azhvar Thirunagari, the birthplace of Swami Nammazhvar, Swami Ramanuja is known as *parAnkusha pAduka* (divine feet of Swami Nammazhvar).

The close connection shared by Swami Ramanuja and Swami Nammazhvar is evident in the laudatory verse for thiruvAimozhi given by Swami parASara bhaTTar, who in words reflective of his unparalleled intellect, says of thiruvAimozhi thus: *EenRa mudalthAi SaTakOpan mOympAl vaLartha idaththAy irAmAnusan*, that while the mother who gave birth to the Tamizh Veda, the very basis for Sri Vaishnava philosophy, was Swami Nammazhvar, it took the milk of love and affection flowing from the foster mother Swami Ramanuja to grow it to its current state of magnificence.

And happily for us, the *thirunakshattirams* (appearance days) of Swami Nammazhvar, Swami Madhurakavi Azhvar, Swami Ramanuja and

Swami parASara bhaTTar occur during the months of chaitra and VaishAkha (April 15 - June 15). And then, we also have the opportunity to celebrate the holy days of birth of Swami Mudaliandan and Swami Thirumalai AnanthAnpiLLai, two of the most celebrated disciples of Swami Ramanuja.

No wonder our bewitching lord Krishna celebrates that He, being the best amongst every class of things, is this season of *vasantha* (ruthoonAm kusumAkaraha, BG 10:35) amongst seasons. And the real reason, one our mAyan Sri Krishna will never reveal openly, one that we will not find anywhere but within the hearts of Sri Vaishnavas everywhere, is that this was the season that gave us Swami Nammazhvar and Swami Ramanuja.

Is this not reason enough to celebrate?

KANNINUN SIRU-TH-TH-AMBU

Sri P.B Rajahamsam Swami

Few words on Swami madhurakavi Azhvar, the author of kaNNiNun siRuthAmbu:

Madhurakavi Azhvar was born at the end of Dvaparayuga in a place called thirukkOLUr near Azhvar Thirunagari. Before the sunrise we can see the early glow (*Arunodayam*) lighting up the horizon, which hints of the rising sun ; likewise Madhurakavi Azhvar is compared to *Arunodayam* (the glow which precedes the sun-rise). Swami Nammazhvar is regarded as the sun for the sri vaishNava philosophy. In Acharya Hrudayam Azhagiya maNavALap-perumAL nAyanaar describes the birth of Nammazhvar as the *suryodayam* (sunrise, Acharya Hrudayam-(churNikai 83) Our purvacharyas felt that Nammazhvar, the sun with the vakula garland rose with luminous rays. The rays were so powerful that they dried the sea of samsara. Madhurakavi Azhvar is regarded as the one who instigated this to occur. The life (*Anushatanam*) of Madhurakavi Azhvar is the best example for a *saraNAgata* (one who seeks surrender). Madhurakavi Azhvar worshipped his Acharya as the Lord.

The Lord Himself has declared three ways to attain Him in the Bhagavad Gita. They are Karma yOga, Gnyana yOga, and Bhakti yOga. Our Azhvars showed us yet another means, easiest of all and that is Prappatti yoga but even this Prappatti yoga was found to be difficult to follow by the samsAris. By the grace of the Acharyas, the samsaris were shown the

final /easiest way and that was “*Acharya Bhakti*” (complete devotion towards one’s AchArya and complete faith in His teachings.). Madhurakavi Azhvar’s life is a shining example for the fifth path.

Madhurakavi Azhvar was on a pilgrimage to Ayodhya. While performing Sandhyavandanam at the banks of river Sarayu, he noticed a glowing light emanating from the southern horizon. This glow led Madhurakavi Azhvar to a small temple town called Thiruk-kurugUr in southern part of India. At Thiruk-kurugUr, he saw a devout young man sitting in deep meditation under the shade of a large tamarind tree found inside a temple. Madhurakavi Azhvar understood that the glowing light had actually come from this Saint. He also learnt that the saint was called “mARan” and that this saint had remained without uttering a word to anyone for 16 years and even as a child, did not cry for food. Madhurakavi Azhvar tried to awaken this great soul from his trance so that he (mARan) could begin to share the secrets of his (mARan’s) mystical experience.

Madhurakavi Azhvar raised a question about the nature of the soul, “*Sethathin vayitiril siriyathu piranthai etthai thindru engE kiDakkum*” (If the samsAri jeevatma, bonded to samsAra akin to the inanimate, begets knowledge, what path does he take (upAya, means) , and what goal (purushArtha, fruit) does he pursue? This question broke the deep penance of Nammazhvar. For the first time, Azhvar opened his eyes and replied “*Athai thindru angE kiDakkum.*” The question was about the nature of soul, its behavior and the goal of this soul. Nammazhvar replied that when the hint of true knowledge is born, it will seek the one to be known as the way, and service at His feet as the goal” The answer was simple yet it conveyed the essence of Vedas, and that very moment Madhurakavi Azhvar chose Nammazhvar as his spiritual guide. Madhurakavi though born as a brahmin accepted NamAzhvar, born in the fourth varNa (SUdra), as his spiritual master. Madhurakavi Azhvar’s deep devotion to Nammazhvar burst out in the form of pasurams called “KaNNiNun siRuthAmbu - these eleven *pAsurams* (stanzas) depict the very essence of what devotion to an Acharya should be.

Here, Madhurakavi regards Azhvar as everything for him and considers his AchArya as the very personification of Lord’s mercy and compassion.

A beautiful question may arise as to “how come this Divya prabandham about Nammazhvar is compiled along with the Azhvar’s *sri sUktIs* (divine work), which are in praise of the Lord?”

It is conveyed by our Purvacharyas that if all the Azhvar's sri sUktis are assumed as a *hAram* (Garland), the central gemstone which beautifies the entire garland is Madhurakavi Azhvar's KaNNinuN SiruthAmbu.

Swami Manavala MAmunigaL's Upadesa Rattinamalai is worth quoting here - "vaayththa thiru-mandhira-th-thin madhdhimamaam padam pOl - seerththa madhurakavi sei-kalaiyai - Arthapukazh Aariyarkal tangaL aruLich-cheyal naDuvE - sErViththAr tArpariyam thErndhu."

kaNNinuN siRuthAmbu is similar to of swAmi nammAzhvar's "nedumaarkkadimai" and payilun chudar oLi padigams (ten pAsurams) where devotion to Lord's devotees is emphasized and is regarded as superior to even devotion to the Lord.

Acharyas Nanjeeyar, Nampillai, Periyavachchan Pillai, azhagiya maNavALapperumAL nAyanAr and Ayee Jananyacharya swAmi have written wonderful commentaries for kaNNinuN siRuthAmbu, the only work in divya prabandham that has five commentaries.

GREATNESS OF MADHURAKAVI AZHVAR

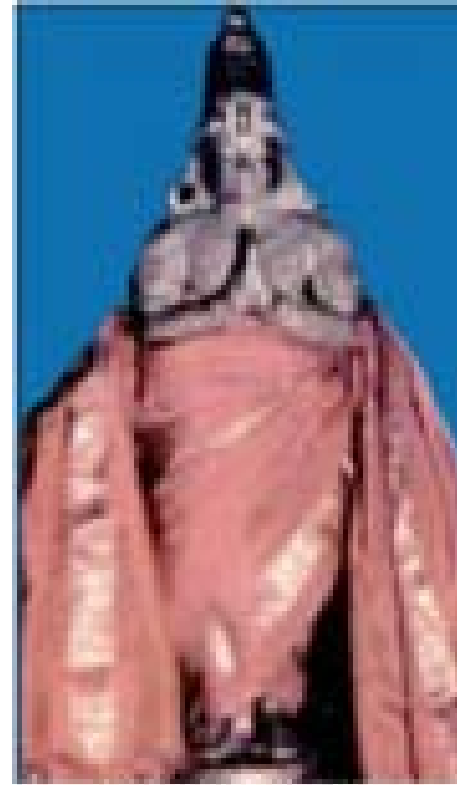
AzhvArs are considered to be superior to the Rishis. This is because Rishis learn about the supreme entity through a spiritual exercise, whereas the Azhvars gained the knowledge by the unconditional grace of the Lord. Pasurams of Azhvars were composed with words mellowed through a process of intense devotion and spiritual experience, which then poured forth as pAsurams. Even Rishis who could discriminate between the good and the bad were not bereft of samsAric temptations. For e.g., sage Vasishta could not bear the separation from his son while the Azhvars, with deep devotion only towards the Lord were unafflicted by material or samsaric bondage. The sages subsisted on roots, fruits leaves, air and water but Lord Krishna was the sole sustenance for the azhvars.

Among these Azhvars, Madhurakavi Azhvar holds a unique place. It is because of his deep devotion to the Lord's favorite devotee, swami nammazhvar. It is a known fact that Emperuman submits himself totally to his true devotee (*Bhakta parAdhInaha*). Our Purvacharyas convey that when devotion to the Lord is overwhelming, it manifests as devotion towards devotees. Thus, our lord is much pleased when his devotees are adored.

For a *mumukshu* (one who longs for liberation) there are four who are to be adored and they are firstly the Lord; second the Lord's consort sri mahAlakshmi ; thirdly the Acharya and finally Sri Vaishnavas.

The Supreme Lord is the one who alone can grant mOksha (salvation). PirAtti is the embodiment of grace and it is she who kindles the Lord to shower his grace on the Mumukshu. Acharya is the one who acts as a mediator between the Lord and the individual. The mumukshu cannot know the Lord directly. It is the Acharya who guides the individual and shows him the path to attain the Lord. Indeed, the Acharya is the very personification of the Lord's mercy and compassion. So service to Acharya is more important than service to the Lord. It is the Acharya who, for the good of his disciple prays to the Lord and pleads with Him to shower His unconditional grace on the mumukshu.

Sri Vaishnavas also play a vital role; they induce spiritual interest on part of the mumukshu and help the mumukshu realize the greatness of the Acharya.



Madhurakavi Acharya
www.madhurakaviacharya.com

We can clearly see that it is the Acharya who plays a predominant role, as it is only by the grace of the Acharya that the mumukshu gets acquainted with Sri Vaishnavas . Acharyas are regarded as the lotus feet of the Lord. (*Thiruvadi nilai*) - SaTari. Thus if we hold onto the Acharya, we are sure to attain salvation. Acharya being the feet of the Lord, if a devotee holds the feet he is sure to attain the grace of the Lord. Our Lord is one who has nirankusha *swAatantrya* (unquestionable independence) and hence nobody can question Him if He ignores the Jiva on account of the sins committed by the jiva. Even in the hypothetical situation, where even piratti may ignore the individual if he has committed any bhAgavata apachAram, the Acharya, who

stands at the feet of Lord, pleads with Him on behalf of the jivAtma and it is only through the AchArya one can attain the Lord's grace.

The Anushtanam of Madhurakavi is the best example for Acharya Abhimanam, and he is similar to that of the srI rAmAyaNa purusha Shatrughna . It is said that Shatrughna is regarded as ever pure, free from sins (anaghaha). This is because of his Bhaagavata Bhakti to Bharata he was called "*shatrugNa: nitya shatrughna: anagha: preeti puraskrutha: (srI rAmAyaNa of vAlmiki)..*" Bhaagavata Bhakti is indeed greater than Bhagavat Bhakthi. In fact Nammazhvar required four prabandams to express his devotion while Madhurakavi Azhvar needed just eleven pAsurams to express his devotion.

Two *thaniyans* (salutations), one in samskrit and the other in tamizh were composed by Sri Nathamuni, who desired to have the same Acharya nishTA (devotion to his preceptor) as Madhurakavi Azhvar. Nammazhvar's devotion was centered around the Lord. He regarded the Lord as everything for him, whereas Madhurakavi Azhvar adored Nammazhvar and considered Nammazhvar as everything for him. He spent his days in enjoying the Azhvar's sri-sUtkis (divine utterances). Madhurakavi Azhvar surrendered to the Lord's devotee. This subservience is the essential nature of the soul. Inherent to this nature he remained ever subservient to Nammazhvar. All the eleven pAsurams convey the devotion of Madhurakavi Azhvar towards his AchArya.

IMPORTANCE OF "KANNINUN SIRUTHAMBU"

Sriman Nathamunikal has compiled this text as the last text of the Mudalayiram (first 1000 in divya prabhandam). It is our tradition to begin and conclude with Kanninun Siruthambu while chanting the ThiruvAimozhi. Since this wonderful composition is recited along with Thiruvaimozhi it also possesses the same sanctity and hence is not chanted during *oldhi purappadu* (ceremonial procession on streets).

All the works of the Azhvars (who lived between 3000 - 2500 BCE) were lost to humanity in due course of time. It is conveyed by our Purvacharyas that it was swAmi Nathamuni who got back the nAlAyira divya prabhandam by reciting KaNNinuN SiruthAmbu twelve thousand times, offered at the lotus feet of swami Nammazhvar . But for swAmi Nathamuni and this sacred text Kanninun Siruthambu, the Sri Vaishnava philosophy would never have seen the light of day. Thus,

kaNNinuN siruthAmbu holds incomparable supremacy, as it was instrumental in getting back all the works of the Azhvars.

KANNINUN SIRUTHAMBU - AN OVERVIEW

Madhurakavi @ Thirupathi (courtesy:Acharya.org)



Madhurakavi Azhvar who knew no god other than Nammazhvar however begins his pasuram describing the auspicious qualities of the lord (Lord's compassion towards his devotees). This is because he wished to win the heart of his Acharya. To please his Acharya he sings the glory of that Lord representing 'everything' to his preceptor. But by the next verse he proceeds to express his adoration towards Nammazhvar.

Nammazhvar was deeply moved by the leela (sport) of Lord Krishna as a child. To fulfill the desire of his mother (yashoda) he allows himself to be tied by a short-knotted string (*kaNNinun siRuthAmbu*).

The short knotted string here is a metaphor for pure love.

The greatness of Lord's supremacy is unimaginable and is beyond thought and speech. Likewise his love towards his devotees is boundless. srImannArAyaNa, out of his love towards the individual soul treats them at par with Himself and manifests as one among the bonded souls. The entire Krishna leela speaks about this quality of the lord, where, in order to please His mother, he pretends to get tied up by a series of small ropes held together with knots. It is the Lord who causes the manifestation, sustenance and involution of the entire universe. In

fact, He is the cause for everything and is the one that binds, holds everything together. Just as how Nammazhvar uses the rope to hold Lord Krishna in his heart, Madhurakavi uses the example of this rope to explain that his short -knotted rope of devotion is centered on his Acharya-Nammazhvar. Madhurakavi Azhvar conveys that the utterance of the very name of Azhvar brings boundless joy to his heart and creates the feeling of drinking the divine nectar (amrita) in his tongue.

In the second pAsuram, he expresses the bliss enjoyed by uttering the name of Azhvar, and seeks refuge at the feet of Nammazhvar. He regards Nammazhvar alone as his Lord and wishes to spend his days reciting the Azhvar's Divya prabhandams. If Madhurakavi Azhvar has declared that he knows no God other than Nammazhvar then one may ask why he wishes to spend his days in singing the Azhvar's pasuram wherein the Lord's glory is conveyed. For this, our poorvAchAryas (preceptors) provide a beautiful justification. In order to please his Lord (his Acharya, Nammazhvar), swami madhurakavi sings the glory of the Lord. It is believed that for a Prappana even the Bhagavat Bhakti is to please the Acharya. A prapanna should surrender unto the Lord only through an Acharya. This AcharyaAbhimana of Madhurakavi is appropriate (SwaroopAnuroopam) This nishta (practice) favors the soul's essential nature.

In the third pAsuram, Madhurakavi Azhvar conveys that even if his thoughts get diverted from the Azhvar it may move only to sing the beauty of the Lord and His consort. (*kariya kOla thiru uru kANpan naan*) Madhurakavi Azhvar expresses that he enjoys the beauty of the Lord not because of his own efforts but due to the grace of Nammazhvar.

Then in the fourth stanza, Madhurakavi Azhvar celebrates having attained Nammazhvar as his Acharya. "*nanmayaal mikka naanmaraialarkal punmayaka karuthuvar Adalil*" It is believed that the greatest amongst the learned are so generous that they ignore mistakes of the individual and look upon only the good deeds. Madhurakavi admits that the mistakes committed by him were so grave that even these great scholars did not accept him. Madhurakavi Azhvar says that he is grateful to Azhvar who has accepted Madhurakavi as his disciple without any hesitation.

Then in the fifth verse he recalls his lifestyle before attaining Nammazhvar as his Acharya. He confesses of having failed to realize the truth. "*nampinEn pirar nanporuL thannaiyum*" where in Madhurakavi admits his failure to realize his essential nature. Here, Madhurakavi talks

about the greatest sin that every individual commits and that is assuming that Atman (soul) belongs to one-self (*Atma apaharam, stealing the soul from the Lord who owns it*).

Then in the sixth verse he talks about the greatest treasure gained by him, that by the unconditional grace of Nammazhvar he got this precious treasure. Madhurakavi Azhvar calls his subservience to Nammazhvar as the greatest treasure.

Then in the 7th verse Madhurakavi expresses his gratitude to Azhvar for having opened his eyes and that he is sure that this grace shall remain in him forever. He wishes to propagate the greatness of Azhvar in all eight directions.

The eighth verse describes the greatness of Nammazhvar and his Sri suktis. The Lord due to His overwhelming grace towards the Jiva, incarnated as Krishna and preached the truth. ("*Bhagavath Gita*"). It was so complex that different schools of philosophy interpreted it in different ways to suit their school of thought. It was Nammazhvar who gave us the exact meaning of the teachings of Lord Krishna.

In the 9th verse, swami madhurakavi asserts that Nammazhvar's Sri suktis are the essence of Vedas. While the Vedas and Shastras are complex and beyond the comprehension of the lay person, swami nammazhvar made it so lucid and crystal clear that the ordinary person could comprehend the true message of the Vedas.

Madhurakavi Azhvar in the tenth and eleventh verses conveys that without expecting anything in return Nammazhvar has showered his grace on Madhurakavi and for which he is ever indebted to him. Madhurakavi Azhvar concludes that the Supreme Lord is the beloved for all; Nammazhvar had great love for the Lord. Being a devotee of the Lord's devotee, he conveys that those who learn this Prabhandam are sure to attain the Lord's Supreme abode. He calls himself Madhurakavi because he himself finds the poems he wrote about Nammazhvar nectarine.

THE ESSENTIAL REQUISITE FOR ARADHANA - DEVOTION, LOVE

Sri U Ve Paramapada vAsi sEshadri Iyengar Swami

(Editorial note: Sri Seshadri Iyengar Swami was one of the foremost scholars of Sri Vaishnava sampradAyam in the early part of the 20th century and the son-in-law of the famous thirukkaNNapuram paTTappa swami, considered by many to be the doyen of the sampradayam who introduced the system of upanyasams on aruLiccheyal to Sri Vaishnavam. Sri Seshadri Iyengar swami wrote extensively in the 1930s and 1940s in the Indian Philosophical and Religious English Press, bringing the sAmpradAyic message to a lay audience, enumerating key ideas of Azhvans and Acharyas through simple, elegant examples picked from Itihasa, purANa and Sastra. We feel extremely fortunate in being able to adapt and bring you these rare gems of insight and wisdom)

Two students of Bhagavad Gita were having a discussion on the Gita. At the same time, it so happened that a venerable old mendicant (sanyAsi) stopped by and asked for anything that they could give as alms. The students, of a mindset that they should help those that may be learned and in need, asked him, whether there was anything he could offer as qualification, to support his request for assistance. He replied that he had studied the commentaries for Bhagavad Gita, including the Shankara Bhashya and the insightful Ramanuja Bhashya.

The two students, given that this was a person of apparent learning, decided to offer him some assistance. But they did not know how much to give - One hundred rupees, fifty or ten. Comprehending their quandary, the old man said that he was prepared to take willingly any amount they could offer and quoted from the Bhagavad Gita in support of his sense of contentment (9:26)

*patram puçpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktyä prayacchati |
tadahaà bhaktyupahrutamaçnämi prayatätmanaù | |*

(Leaf, Flower, Fruit, Water, He who offers me with devotion, that devotion-filled offering of purity, I shall accept)

If he had not quoted the specific sloka, it is likely the old man might have received one hundred rupees. But his quote of this exalted, oft-used shloka reduced the value of the alms to ten rupees. Receiving the paltry amount the sanyAsi went away.

But a discussion started between the two learned friends. One said that for such an old venerable man who had read Gita Bhashya, ten rupees

was too little. The other said “Even that is too much. He did not know Gita at all, much less Gita Bhashya. If he had known, how could he arrogate to himself the position of the Lord? He talked as though we are his *bhaktas* (devotees) and he, like Lord Krishna, is gracious enough to accept whatever we give him with Bhakti. Here is a mere beggar and he has to be content with what we give. He has no choice in the matter.”

The first one said “No. He had the choice to accept the gift or refuse it. If it was sufficiently large by his standards, he could, as he did, simply take it or he could have said no. Even though he had the right to refuse our offering, if it was too paltry for his needs, he was kind enough to accept it unconditionally. The quantity does not matter. He laid emphasis on our willingness to part with the money. Even if it was a big sum, he might have refused, if we had openly evaluated his merits in determining the quantity which we were about to give. The Gita sloka quoted by him also refers to the Bhakti with which the offering is made to God, which alone counts and not the quantity of materials. It is why Bhagavan used - ‘patram, pushpam, phalam, tOyam’ - all in the singular, to indicate the minimum quantity. “

Now, the discussion was getting into fundamental questions the two were not equipped to resolve, so, the two learned students went to a great sAdhu (Saint), one who was residing in a temple nearby, and placed their doubts before him.

The following was the reply of the Sadhu:

“The sloka of the Bhagavad Gita will never be wrong in its construction. If your meaning does not fit in, you should not change the sloka, but only understand that your meaning is wrong and you have to strive hard till you get the correct meaning. Generally, whatever occurs to our minds superficially and seems to fit into some extent satisfies us, but on deeper thought or learning through a qualified Acharya, we can get at the right meaning. Our teachers will never omit the meaning of even an article or a letter, and will never accept repetition in a sloka.”

He continued, “In this particular sloka, please note the following:

- there are no words to denote any specific entity only
- Further, singular number need not represent smallness of quantity. It can and often will represent *samUha* (multitude)
- The ‘ya:’ (which becomes yO because of a sandhi) in the first line indicated “whoever gives” i.e., without making any distinction about the nature of the person giving.
- BhaktyA prayacchati—refers to the way in which the offering is made, with devotion

- Bhakti-upahrutam refers to the Bhakti being the essential requisite to follow the offering. So, bhakti in the first line goes with the act and that in the second line with the object of the offering

Thus the sloka points at *Bhakti* (devotion, love) as the main thing to be offered. It should be visible in the object we offer and also in the way of giving. The material itself does not matter. It points, definitively, unambiguously, at the *mental attitude* of the person making the offering. He should be humble in giving and Bhakti therein must be manifest, visible, and prominent. **Why?**

The Taitireya Upanishad defines how an offering should be made: "ShriyA dEyam, HriyA dEyam, BhiyA dEyam, SamvidA dEyam"

(You should give with a sense of joy, You should give in all humility, in fear of committing wrong in thought or deed while giving, and with true conviction, awareness)

The Upanishad refers to *dAnam* (offering) in general, but in the Bhagavad Gita, it is with reference to our offerings to God.

You know very well the Sabari episode in the Ramayana. Rama did not worry about what class Sabari belonged to. He did not take into consideration whether the fruits were old or new. Neither the quality nor the quantity of the material mattered. All that mattered was the love with which they were offered. He reciprocated the love fully. So much so that our Acharyas effusively sing Rama's praise as 'Mangalam shabarI datta phalamoolABhilAshiNE'."

The Students were immensely pleased with the elucidation of the Sadhu. But still, their doubts remained regarding why the Bhagavad Gita should mention specifically "patram, pushpam, phalam, tOyam" in the offering. They told the Sadhu that this doubt had not been cleared by him. He replied "My dear friends! Don't you know that these four are the essential elements required for *ArAdhana* (Worship) in any temple, *in any worship?* And the Lord is referring to them? What is said of these four applies to everything else that is offered"

Just then, one who looked like a gardener working in the temple where the sAdhu stayed, who was attentively hearing the conversation between the Sadhu and the students, said humbly, "Sir, may I tell you what I feel about their question?"

They were surprised and wondered how an ordinary laborer, working in the gardens could have something to contribute on such a lofty topic. They were curious to hear his ideas and asked the gardener to proceed.

The gardener said, "Sirs, I am a poor ignorant laborer in the garden of the temple. When I heard about your discussion about the leaf, flower, fruit and water to be offered to God, it strikes my mind like this: "I put the seed in the soil. The sprout comes out with leaves and for sometime there are only leaves in the plant. After sometime, flowers begin to appear. The plant is full of flowers at one stage. Later, the flowers develop into fruits and the fruits contain delicious water or *rasam* (essence). So, one is not different from the other. One develops into the other in four successive stages. Hence, all the four are acceptable to God. The Sadhu and the students jumped with joy when they heard this interpretation. It was a revelation for them. The Sadhu developed the gardener's idea further and he told the students thus:

"The seed referred to by the gardener is the seed of true knowledge placed in one's heart by the Acharya. It develops into a plant with leaves (*patram*) only representing the "karma yOga". Gradually, it puts forth flowers (*pushpam*) which correspond to "gnyana yOga". The fruits (*Phalam*) develop out of them and that is "Bhakti Yoga" and the sweet water (*Toyam*) is the "Prapatti Yoga" or "Saranagati". The Upanishad also says "RasOvai saha rasam....aanandI bhavati" — **He is all the essence, one who understands this essence discovers true bliss.**

The sAdhu turned around, with a desire to ask something from the gardener. But the gardener had disappeared.

SWAMI PARASARA BHATTAR

KEY INCIDENTS AND INSIGHTS FROM HIS LIFE

Sri U Ve Badri Narayana Bhattar Swami

SriranganAchar and SriranganAtha, the divine couple whose compassionate grace resulted in the fruitful nAlAyira divya prabhandam (four thousand divinely inspired verses of the Azhvans), saw it fit to pour their graces again on our Acharyas to have the guru paramparai (preceptor lineage) continued till swami Manavala mAmunigaL. They did not wish to stop with that. Hence, they participated in our Guruparamparai, as recited by swami Kurathazhvan "lakshminaatha samaarambhaam .. ." They also sent their beloved servant AdisEshan in the form of our jagadacharya swami Ramanuja to be the "Central Gem" in the veritable necklace of our Guruparamparai. Even with this, they were not satisfied. They wanted to do something more and wished to contribute "one of their most beloved" to our upliftment. Hence came the avatAra of swami parASara bhaTTar, the most beloved, adopted son of the divine couple.

Swami parASara bhaTTar took birth in this world through the divine *aravanai prasadam* (the prasadam that is offered to the Lord just before the nightly closing of the temple) of Namperumal, which was offered to Andal, the wife of swami Kurathazhvan. Not only by birth did swami bhattar, as he is addressed by all, show his greatness, but also by his impeccable intelligence, kind actions and spectacular *anushtanams* (practices) throughout his divine life. Even an enemy would adore bhattar on listening to him. Bhattar's greatness in giving the right kind of interpretation to various pasurams of Azhvars, spread over various *vyakhyanam*s (commentaries) is still fresh, and is attractive to young talented people even today. His skill in answering a person's question even before the questioner has finished asking the question is marvelous, and offers food for our thoughts. Any srivaishnava, who has an opportunity to hear any upanyasam, will surely remember one or more references about Bhattar.

In this article, we are going to enjoy some of the key incidents that happened in swami Bhattar's life and which are very useful for our practice. Any Sri Vaishnava, desirous of living the life per the dictates of swami rAmAnuja and shAstra, should always analyze the incidents in the life of poorvacharyaas; each incident in their lives will have thousands of teachings for our life. Bhattar's greatness will be thrown open through this article and lessons for our practice will also be put forth. Let us walk through this, step-by-step.

KEY INCIDENT 1 :

Once Bhattar went to the temple with his sishyas to worship his beloved namperumAL. Unfortunately, at that time, the shrine was closed to the general public. In those times, the closing of the shrine to the public was usually expressed through a divine servant shouting out the words "netrapaani, netrapaani". While this was happening, swami Bhattar was inside the enclosure created by the screen that separates namperumAL's shrine and the outside. One of the close servants (*antharanga kainkarya para*), without knowing the divine closeness of Bhattar with Namperumal, shouted at Bhattar and uttered inappropriate words at Swami Bhattar. Bhattar simply smiled at him. But, disciples of Bhattar started to shout back at that kainkaryaparar (serving devotee).

Bhattar turned his face towards his disciples and asked them "Why are you taking revenge at me?" The disciples were very much taken aback, and were confused on hearing these words from Bhattar. One of the disciples, with a bit of courage, asked Bhattar "Swami, we are not taking revenge at you, but only at the person who inappropriately, shouted at you". Bhattar explained to them "The person at whom you are shouting

has done a great favor to me; by shouting at him, you are showing ungratefulness and are becoming a nuisance to him by shouting at him". All the disciples were stunned; Bhattar simply continued - "It is the duty of every Sri Vaishnava, while worshipping the Lord, to tell his own *doshaas* (bad qualities) and the Lord's kalyana guNas. Our Namperumal is very busy with so many utsavams and does not find enough time to listen to my doshaas, which are innumerable to be told completely. Given that this is the case, this swami (antaranga kainkaryaparar) helped me and has taken up my task in his shoulder and put forth doshaas of me before the Lord and the Lord is also very pleased to hear. Why are you disturbing him from doing a favor to me?" Then, Swami Parasara bhaTTar, the magnanimous teacher, simply smiled at that antaranga kainkaryaparar, took one of the more valuable necklaces from his neck, and offered it to that swami and told him "Swami - Even though this will not equal the favor done by you for me, it is my humble offering to you".

KEY INSIGHT 1:

One of the most important qualities of a Sri Vaishnava is "not finding fault with others", even if someone has caused some harm. This is clearly explained in swami piLLai IOkAcharya's srivachaana bhooshaNa sutram (365) "kuttram seythavargal pakkal poraiyum, krupaiyum, Sirippum, ukappum, upakAra smruthiyum nadakka vENum". Even if a person has harmed us, it should always be considered as a great favor ; we should feel gratitude; we should express joy at such people. This will enable a long standing relationship and also help in the self-correction of the mistake by the person concerned. Swami parAshara bhaTTar demonstrated this principle in practice.

KEY INCIDENT 2:

To hear Bhattar's sweet and intelligent lectures, thousands of devotees assembled everyday. Among them, there were two persons - one a well learned scholar and the other a person who was a *kainkarya bhagavatha* (person who always does service to others). Bhattar never used to bow his head to the learned scholar, but always gave great respect to the kainkarya bhagavatha. Shocked by this, other devotees posed a question to Bhattar, and requested him to explain why his attitudes towards the two were different. Bhattar, with his usual amazing smile asked them to wait for a day to get the answer. The next day, as usual, the learned scholar came and Bhattar asked him the following - "swami, you seemed to have learnt vedas etc. Kindly answer this question of mine - Who is the Supreme Being?" After some confusion and a little hesitation, the vedic scholar replied - "Swami, the vedas speak about various persons as Supreme being. At one place it adores Vishnu, in another, it adores Brahma and in yet other places, it adores Siva and so on. How can we

decide who the Supreme Being is?" Bhattar thanked him for his reply and let him go. After a few minutes, the kainkarya bhagavata came and Bhattar posed the same question to him. The bhagavata, astonished by Bhattar's question replied - "Swami, I know there is some kind of test behind your question. You have several times told us that only Sriman Narayana is the Supreme Lord. What is there to doubt?" Bhattar honored that Bhagavata and showed a replying smile at the devotees who posed the question about Bhattar's attitude.



Swami Parasara Bhattar (courtesy: srivaishnava.org)

KEY INSIGHT 2:

Any amount of knowledge, bereft of strong faith and clear understanding, is useless, when compared to a hint of knowledge built upon a foundation of strong faith. Anything we learn should be learnt with full clarification and strongest faith (*nischaya gnyanam*). Even if we learn only a little, an in-depth understanding is a must.

KEY INCIDENT 3:

and A king named Veerasundara Brahmaraaya, one of Swami Kurathazhvan's disciples, started to do *madil kainkaryam* (service or repairing the walls surrounding a temple). He wanted to make the surrounding wall very straight, and wanted to demolish whatever came in the way of straightening the wall. Pillai Pillai azhvan, one of the most devoted sishyas of Swami Kurathazhvan, resided in a house which came in the way of making the madil straight. The king ordered the workers to demolish Pillai Pillai Azhvan's *thirumaligai* (house) also. On hearing this, Bhattar asked the king not to demolish a bhagavata's *thirumaligai*, as Namperumal will not be pleased by the kainkaryam to Him that has the effect of disturbing true and devoted Sri Vaishnavas. The foolish king, without obeying Bhattar's words demolished the house and constructed the madil anyway. Bhattar went to Thirukkottiyur to be away from the king. Finally, some disease came to the king, and he passed away. Thereafter Bhattar returned to Sri Rangam from Thirukkottiyur.

KEY INSIGHT 3:

Service to the Lord is the aim of every Sri Vaishnava. But, at the time of doing service, we fail to remember basic Sri Vaishnava practices - the fact that the kainkaryam should be done without ego and feeling of ownership (*ahamkaram* and *mamakaram*). It should also be remembered that kainkaryam to Bhagavatas is greater than kainkaryam to Bhagavan himself. Kainkaryam should always result in the blossoming the Lord's face, and not result in instigating His anger. Namperumal will excuse even the *apacahara* (wrong things) done to Him. But, HE will never forget an *apacharam* done to his bhaktas. HE himself has told this "padmakOTi satEnaapi na kshamAmi vasundarE".

KEY INCIDENT 4:

The whole srivaishnava community knows that Bhattar was very greatly and solely devoted to Namperumal. Bhattar could never move away from Namperumal's presence. Namperumal could also not bear separation from Bhattar. One day, as usual, Bhattar's discourse was going on. One king named Tribuvana-devarAyan was also listening to Bhattar's nectarine words mixed with intelligent thoughts. The king was simply moved, and wanted to listen more from Bhattar. But, since he

was a king and had to look after the welfare of his people, he could not attend kalakshEparam regularly. So, he went with some pride to Bhattar and said “Swami -Come to my Palace one day and give your lectures there. I shall give you a lot of priceless jewels and wealth”. Swami Bhattar simply looked at the King, smiled at him and said - “Have you ever worshipped Namperumal and had a look at his right hand. Do you know what it says?”. The king replied to Bhattar - “Yes, I have heard that it proclaims ‘*abhayam sarvabhoothEebyo dadaami*’ (I shall safeguard you from all beings that may pose danger).” Bhattar interpreted that quote and said “Yes, it is giving protection to all. Hence, it is facing towards us. But, one day, even though this will never happen, if it would turn backwards pretending that it could not protect us - *even on that day I have no refuge other than Namperumal’s lotus feet*”. The king was astonished at Bhattar swami’s strongest faith in Namperumal, and at the same time, ashamed of his attitude and ego. He left, but surely had learned a lesson.

KEY INSIGHT 4:

A true Sri Vaishnava should always have strongest faith towards the lotus feet of Namperumal. He should try to have the mentality of Azhvar who says ‘*kalaivaay tunbam kalayaadozhivaai kalaikan matrilEn*’ - *Whether you remove my worries or do not, I have got no refuge other than your feet*. This kind of strong faith will give more power to our kainkaryams and also enable us to do kainkaryam without any fear or worry about worldly means. If everyone has this strong faith, then there would not be a lack of kainkaryaparas in our beloved divyadesams. Our Namperumal will never leave us as He is always there to safeguard us, as correctly depicted by Bhattar to all of us.

KEY INCIDENT 5:

Bhattar swami’s impeccable intelligence and unsurpassed bhakti caused Namperumal to have the highest joy. On one kaisika ekadasi day, after listening to Bhattar’s kaisika puranam vyakhyanam (which is customary on that day), the Lord uttered “*umakku mel veedu thandhOm*” - we have given you paramapadam (mOksha, liberation). On hearing this, Bhattar felt very joyful and replied to Namperumal - “Swami, we have only heard that you have told mokshaishyaami. But now, I practically hear it from your own sweet mouth. What a great bhagyam? But, the sole reason for this bhagyam is Swami Emperumaanar , Embar and Kurathazhvan’s relationship with me. They are the ones who made you to give me paramapadam”. Bhattar returned to his house, where AnDAL, Bhattar swami’s mother uttered the thiruvAimozhi pasuram “*nalamandamilladOr naadu puguveer*”. Bhattar prostrated at her feet and replied with the same swami Nammazhvar’s thiruvAimozhi

“*amma adiyEn venduvathu eethe*”. All the Srivaishnavas were assembled at his house on that day. Bhattar took SripAdatheertam from each and every Sri Vaishnava Bhagavata present at his Thirumaligai, and requested them to forgive him for any mistake he might have committed. Then, Bhattar attained paramapadam leaving the universe with a void that could not be filled.

KEY INSIGHT 5:

Bhattar’s reply to Namperumal, when Namperumal gave him moksham is to be always remembered. We should always have that unshakeable faith that only our poorvacharya sambandam, connection to swami rAmAnuja, will give us moksham and nothing else. We should always have the faith on the lotus feet of our AchArya, as he is the connecting link to our poorvacharyas and that samAshrayanam at our Acharya’s lotus feet will remove all our worldly worries. Even though Bhattar is the greatest personality representing Kurathazhvan, Emperumanar and Namperumal, he had the bhavam (sensitivity) of bhAgavata-sEshatvam (subservience to Lord’s devotee). He simply followed Azhvar’s “*nedumaarkadimai*” in his life. We should always try to have this kind of bhAgavata sEshatvam in our life.

OUR GOAL:

The aim of this article will be achieved, if every Sri Vaishnava having an opportunity to read this article, would try and implement the qualities depicted by our Swami parasara Bhattar. Though these are a little difficult to put into practice, they are not impossible. Bhattar’s thiruvullam (divine will) will be most pleased, if we implement those anushtanam shown by him in our life. The ultimate goal of every Sri Vaishnava should be that of living life, walking the path trodden by our preceptors, and follow the wonderful qualities shown by our poorvacharyas like Swami Parashara Bhattar.

DID YOU KNOW

Did you know that Swami Anantazhvan is considered to be the father-in-law of Lord Srinivasa in Thirumala? It is said by elders that Lord Srinivasa once considered alarmEl mangai thayar as the daughter of Swami ananthAzhvAn, and asked Swami ananthAzhvAn for her. In his vAzhi thirunAmam, to this day, we recite “alarmEl mangai thiruvukku appanAr vAzhivE” - Long live the father of alarmEl mangai thayar.

GADYA-TRAYAM OF SWAMI RAMANUJA

Sri V V Ramanujam, M. A., M. Sc., Ph. D., Editor, YatirAja pAduka

(With the maNipravALa commentary by parama kAruNika - most merciful, vyAkhyAna chakravathi - the emperor amongst commentators, swAmi periyAachchAn piLLai. Serialized with permission from the original publisher, Sri Parampara Sabha, Bangalore)

(Second part of a multipart serialization)

(Editor's note: *It is the uninstigated grace of our Lord and connection to swami Ramanuja that has given us this wonderful opportunity to adapt and serialize this seminal work in Sri Vaishnavam. Swami emperumAnAr's gadya-trayam is both fundamental to the sampradAyam, and an essential aspect of Ramanuja Darshanam, very necessary for everyone to learn about, understand, comprehend. The incomparable commentary of swami periyA AchchAn piLLai has been very aptly transliterated by Dr. V V Ramanujam, to whom we will remain forever in debt for allowing us this joy, the joy of getting close to the wondrous, inspired, divine, compassionate vision of our jagadAchArya*)

Saranagati Gadyam

The Saranagati gadyam is the first of three compositions of Sri Ramanuja in Sanskrit prose. The three prose pieces (*Gadyas*) are expressions of the inner experiences of the great Acharya and are to be ranked with the mystic poetry of our Azhvans. The Saranagati gadyam is actually a conversation between Sri Ramanuja, Sri RanganAtha and His consort, Sri ranganAyaki, and is a live exposition of the doctrine of prapatti - surrender at the feet of Sri Ranganatha

On a Panguni Uttiram day in Sri Rangam, while Lord RanganAtha sat in court with His consort on His divine throne, Sri Ramanuja stood before them, surrendered himself and all his belongings to the divine and begged that all his earthly sins be pardoned and that he be accepted in the service of the divine couple. He got so accepted, with additional assurance that all his spiritual protégés would be accorded what was assured to him.

Thus, the assurance of acceptance was not in isolation to swami Ramanuja alone, but to all his spiritual progeny. It is on behalf of all humanity that Ramanuja pleaded and we, as his spiritual heirs, can feel assured of the Lord's grace. The SaraNAgati Gadya is a forceful commentary of the *mantra ratna* (the gem amongst mantras), the dvaya mahA mantram. The shorter SriRanga gadyam is an abridged version of

the SaraNAgati gadyam and is directly addressed to swami rAmAnuja's personal god - *mamanAtha!* (my master) *SriRanganAtha!* The vaikunTha gadyam expresses the yearning of our jagadAchArya to reach Sri VaikunTha, the supreme abode of Vishnu and serve the Lord and His Consort. It recalls in spirit the last decades of the ThiruvAimozhi of our kulapathi, swami Nammazhvar.

The language of the Gadyas is nectarine. A recitation of these is bound to please the Lord as much it stirs and satisfies the reciter. The Lord is bound to grant our prayer, however sinful we may be, remembering the assurance He gave to the great Master.

The three Gadyas have been commented upon by several of our Acharyas. Some of these commentaries are lost to us. The ones that are accessible to us are,

- The maNipravAla commentary of swami PeriyAvAchchAn PiLLai,
- The brief Sanskrit commentary of sudarsana bhattar and
- the gadya bhAsya of swami VedAnta DeSika

The SaraNAgati Gadyam or *pEriya gadyam* (big gadyam as is usually called) is presented here following mainly the commentary of periyavAchchAn PiLLai. What follows is the introduction in PeriyavAchchAn PiLLai's commentary:

The *kudrushTis* (misinterpreters of the vEdAs) have it that only a knowledge of the meaning of sentences like '*tat tvam asi*' (That art thou) is the means to salvation (*mOksha*). Some of them opine that a combination of karma yOga and jnAna yOga is the means. In order to vanquish these, Sri Ramanuja established firmly in his SribhAshya that bhakti, which has karma as an adjunct and which in its essence comprises loving meditation of the Lord, is the surest means to salvation. UpAsana, dhyAna, and vEdAnta are alternate terms employed to convey the purport of this *jnAna* (knowledge). The Sastras declare that *jnAna* is the means for *mOksha* and Sri *bhAsyakAra* (swami rAmAnuja) establishes that knowledge in the form of bhakti (which is the heart of upAsana) is the surest path to *mOksha*. (There are places in the SriIbhAshya and gItA bhAshya where prapatti or surrender is suggested as a means but not quite explicitly).

Out of infinite love for his disciples, and lest those disciples of his (who had implicit faith in what he declared as the means think that this bhakti being the sure means) take this as his ultimate view and decide that

bhaktiyOga was the sole means to mOksha, swami rAmAnuja reveals here the view dear to the force that fashioned his exposition on Sastra, the insight passed down by Azhvans and his Acharyas. Here, in the gadyas, we obtain insight into swami rAmAnuja's personal faith, the notion of prapatti (Surrender) as the sole means to the lotus feet of the Divine couple.

This view that *prapatti* (nyAsa) is the surest and unfailing independent means to salvation is but a refined form of *jnAna* (knowledge). The question arises as to why Sri bhAshyakAra did not vanquish the kudrushtis by establishing that prapatti as the means established in the Shrutis (vEdas). Feeling that, just as it would be inappropriate for a brAhmana to initiate a *chanDAla* (an unqualified person) in to the vEdas, it would be equally so to reveal the true spirit of shrutis to those (kudrustis) who stand far removed from it, he vanquishes them using the language quite familiar to them i.e., the sAstrAs, and reveals his cherished conclusion and true purport, closely guarded secret, (*EtatvE mahOpanishadam dEvAnAm guhyam* - This exalted truth is held in secrecy even by the dEvas - Taittiriya Upanishad) to those that are willing to open their mind to the true nature of the jIvatma, through the Gadyas.

What is the greatness of prapatti (as a means) relative to the great means (bhakti) explicitly mentioned in the Vedanta? Bhakti cannot be practiced universally. Only those varNas qualified to learn the vEdAs could practice this vEdic path; the path is difficult (akin to crossing a pit of fire on a bridge of hair!); it does not yield the fruit (salvation) quickly because of the possibility of many lapses; it requires continuous self-effort and hence is inconsistent with the nature of the Atman (as fully subservient to the Lord). Prapatti is the very opposite of all these traits of bhakti, in that it is, universal, easy, quick in yielding result, with no possibility of lapses, consistent with the true nature (swaroopam) of the Atman, is a completed task (siddha) in that it does not need any self-effort, and is an appropriate means to reaching the end.

The next question is; "Is this means a conclusion contained in the vEdAnta or not?" The answer is an emphatic *yes*.

The Taittiriya Upanishad declares the various means in increasing order of effectiveness

- satyam (truth)
- tapas (penance)
- dama (outer sensory control),
- sama (inner sensory control),
- dAnam (generosity)
- dharma (right conduct)

- prajAnana (begetting progeny),
- AgnayAh (tending to sacred fires),
- AgnihOtra (making offerings through sacred fires),
- YajNa (Conducting Sacrificial Rituals),
- MAnasa (meditation),
- nyAsa (surrender)

and finally declares "*tasmAn nyasamEsam tapasaAmatiriktamAhuh*" - this (nyAsa) is the most effective and superior tapas - penance - amongst all these.

The twelve mentioned earlier are in that evolutionary order, the practice of truth leads to the ability to perform tapas- reducing bodily needs, which in turn is required for dama -control of outer senses, followed by sama-control of inner senses, leading to an absence of attachment to material, giving liberally of ones possessions; practice of duties, begetting children (to propagate dharma), tending the sacred fires, making offerings to the dEvas through the fire, sacrifices, meditation of God, and surrender.

Further, since it is said that practice of elders who have properly understood dharma (sAstra) is the superior authority as also the vEdAs, this (prapatti) has the greatness of being dear and most acceptable to our preceptors (Acharyas). What has been accepted by the elders is proper authority to the faithful; to those who need more, it has the sanction of the shrutis too. It may be pointed out that the SvEtAsvatArA Upanishad contains the actual practice of prapatti -

yO bramhAnam vidadhAti pUrvam

tam ha dEvam mumuksuvarai saranAmaham prapadyE.

Thus, because this means is decidedly in keeping with the spirit of the shruti, more consistent with the nature of the Atman, dear to our Acharyas, and most acceptable to Lord Himself, it should be considered to be worthy of practice more (superior to) than bhakti. Feeling that this fact should not be lost to those who had utmost trust in him (sRI Ramanuja), he, out of his abundant mercy, chose to publicize what actually transpired (in private) between himself and the the para Brahman, SrIman Narayana.

This is how the uplifting prose of gadya trayam came into being: On a particular auspicious festival (Panguni Uttiram day), while Lord RanganAtha came out with His consorts (for the festival), and sat in Court, EmperumAnAr (SRI Ramanuja) came and worshipped at the feet of the Lord. On this occasion (due to our good fortune) fear of samsAra

(cycle of birth, ignorance etc.) crossed Swami's mind and he fell at the holy feet and conveyed his total surrender seeking the Lord's protection.

Here a question arises: Did he not seek this refuge when he first sought *AshrayaNa* (initiation) at the feet of his Acharya MahApUrNa (Periya Nambi)? Has not the Lord expressed that this 'seeking' is to be made only once? *Sakrutj Eva prapannaAya* - Sri RamA's pronouncement in the RamAyana. (YudhakAnda-18.33-34). Seeking refuge or surrender is to be performed only once. It should not be repeated formally doubting the efficacy of the Lord.

Here the repetition of surrender is done only out of eagerness, a sense of longing for performance of eternal service (*prApya tvara*). This being so, should not one remain passive till the owner seeks to do what He pleases with his property, in view of authorities (texts) such as "I do not need redress of my grief from any but you (ThiruvAimozhi 5.8-3)"; "Remove my grievances or not - I have no other protector (ThiruvAimozhi 5.8-8)"; " It will befit Him if he comes and delivers me from here" (SitAs words from her prison in lankA-sundarakAnDam 39-30). Why should swami Ramanuja repeat the prapatti ('refuge seeking)?'

The answer is as follows: He cannot remain passive because of his overwhelming anxiety and eagerness in realizing the goal, and so, surrenders his all and seeks the fruit of kinkaryam, service. This is the state of our Azhvars too. The same is the case of our Acharyas who follow in their (Azhvars) footsteps. A fear of samsAra as well as the desire to realize the goal keep on increasing, all that they (Azhvars) could do was to seek the protective refuge of the Lord nine times (many times) in much the same way as they did once.

Thus swami Ramanuja seeks the protective refuge of the great Lord's Divine feet, the sure-fire means for relief from samsAra and acceptance for performing eternal service at His lotus feet.

*vandE vEdAnta karpUra chAmIkara karanDakam
rAmAnujAryamAryANAm chUdAmaNim aharnisham*

(Day and night, I prostrate the venerable Ramanuja, the crest jewel of the noble and the casket containing the camphor called Vedas)

GREAT SAINTS AND TEACHERS

Sri T.A Varadhan

(Editor's note: We are indeed fortunate that we have this opportunity to bring you an uplifting article about an uplifting Acharya. Swami AnanthAzhvAn epitomized and lived as every sri vaishNava should, and was verily the beacon that shows us how we should look upon our Acharyas. Notably, sri TA Varadan is a direct descendant of Swami ananthAzhvan, and appropriately, it would not be superfluous to say that only an Ananthazhvan is qualified to write about Swami AnanthAzhvan, such was the greatness of this Acharya)

In this issue of Great Saints, we will enjoy some incidents in the life history of Swami ananthAzhvAn. Swami ananthAzhvAn is one of the greatest examples of someone who lived as a great follower of their AchArya.

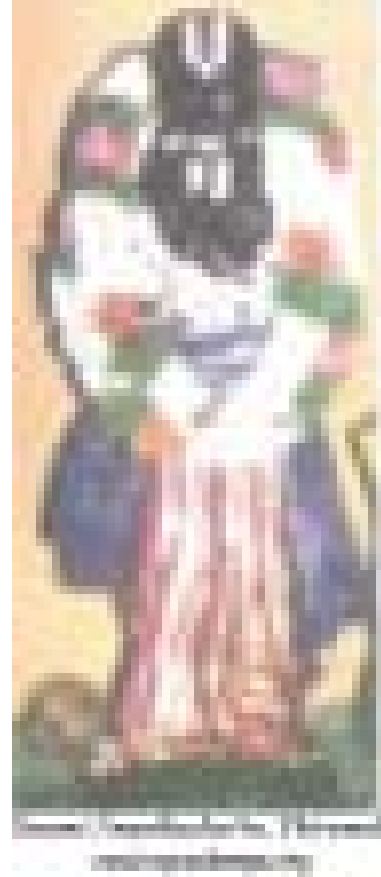
It is said by elders that AdisEsha, the divine servant of Lord Sriman Narayana, on the command of the Lord, took birth as swami Ramanuja. As swami Ramanuja, AdisEsha was able to teach the world about the divine truth revealed in the shAstras and Azhvar pAsurams. He also wanted to show how to practice following the divine truth. As it was not possible for the same form (Ramanuja) to do both, AdisEsha took birth as swami ananthAzhvAn simultaneously. Swami AnanthAzhvAn was born in a village called sirupuththUr, near thiru-Narayana-puram. After his schooling in early years, where he mastered all the requisite Sastras, he went to Sri Rangam along with swami thoNdanUr nimbi, marudUr nambi and swami echchAn to take refuge at the feet of swami Ramanuja. When they reached Sri Rangam, swami Ramanuja instructed sri aruLalap-perumAL emperumAnAr to take them as sishyas. Swami aruLALap-perumAL emberumAnAr did what was asked of him, but was very reluctant to take the position of an AchArya. He said to them "swami Ramanuja, by making me an Acharya, has done something similar to tying up a big, hard, weighty nut of the palm tree to the neck of a small sparrow. I am not capable of shouldering the position of Acharya when swami Ramanuja Himself is here. So, you all should take refuge at His feet!", and requested swami Ramanuja to accept them. Swami Ramanuja, knowing that aruLALa-p-perumAL emperumAnAr did this because of his respect for himself, agreed, and took swami ananthAzhvAn and others as his sishyas. Swami AnanthAzhvAn learned the deep concepts of our religion from swami Ramanuja, and spent his time doing service to the Lord and swami Ramanuja. In due course of time, many people took swami ananthAzhvAn as their

Acharya who would give them a connection to swami Ramanuja.

One day, swami Ramanuja was giving a lecture on thiruvAimozhi to his sishyAs. The decad of the day was the thiruvAimozhi decad starting with "ozhivil kAlam ellAm", about the Lord of thiruvEngadam - srI Srinivasa. One pAsuram contained the line "sindhu poo magizhum thiruvEngadaththu" - describing the abundance of flowers in the holy hills of the Lord. Thirumala also had the name "pushpa maNdapam" - the place whose specialty is fragrant flowers. While commenting on this pAsuram, swami Ramanuja's eyes welled with water, and with tearful eyes, He said "Is anyone among you willing to go to Thirumalai, build a flower garden for the Lord of thirumala, and perform the service of providing garlands and flowers to the Lord there?" All of the sishyas, on hearing that, were silent - they were afraid of the extreme cold at thirumalai and the wild conditions, not to mention an unwillingness to leave the comforting and alluring presence of swami rAmAnuja. Swami ananthAzhvAn could not bear His Acharya's desire being unfulfilled. So, he volunteered to swami Ramanuja saying "swami - Please command me to do the service at thirumala". Ramanuja, with great happiness said "AnanthAzhvAn! Without worrying about the conditions in thirumala, you have volunteered to make my desire happen. You are the "aaN piLLai" (male person) in this gathering, and hugged him before giving him the permission to go to thirumala. In this instance, Swami ananthAzhvAn displayed a very important that every srI vaishNava should have called 'pAratanthryam' (total dependence on AchArya). Other disciples of swami rAmAnuja excelled in sEshatvam (servitude), but swami ananthAzhvAn displayed the exalted trait of 'pAratanthryam'

Swami ananthAzhvAn went with his wife to thirumala, and started the service. He went to the temple of Lord Srinivasa everyday, and also started building a huge tank for storing water. He also built a small pond and a beautiful flower garden for the Lord's service, and named the flower garden "Ramanuja". While he was building the huge tank for water, it was necessary for him and his wife to dig the sand out using a tool known as "gada-p-paarai" in tamizh. After digging the sand, he would fill a basket with the sand, and his wife took the sand to a different place and emptied the basket for the next round. His wife was pregnant at this time. On seeing His devotees struggle with this hard labour, the Lord of thirumala, Sri Srinivasa took the form of a young bachelor boy and approached Swami ananthAzhvAn and offered to help. Swami ananthAzhvAn refused the offer by saying " You look very sophisticated to do this hard work. You already seem tired due to the weight of your jewellery and other nice things on you. If you do this hard work, you will become even more tired, and I will feel very bad and

concerned for you. Further, this is kainkaryam (service) that I want to do to fulfill the command of my AchArya! Why all this unnecessary things? I will continue to do my work along with my wife, and you please do not help; if you insist on meddling with our work in spite of my warning, then I will be forced to hit you with this gada-p-parai". After hearing this bachelor went away, and ananthAzhvAn and his wife continued their work.



Suddenly, swami ananthAzhvAn noticed that his wife was returning faster after emptying the baskets of sand, and asked her whether she was walking faster than normal. She replied saying that a bachelor meets her away from the sight of swami ananthAzhvAn and forced her to give him the basket to be emptied, and he did it faster than she could. He will then give the empty basket to her so that she can go back and fetch more sand without swami ananthAzhvAn knowing about it. On hearing this, swami ananthAzhvAn became angry that this bachelor was doing something by which swami ananthAzhvAn and his wife are not able to do the service as ordered by Ramanuja (After all, Ramanuja asked ananthAzhvAn and his wife to do the work), and went with his wife this time. On seeing swami ananthAzhvAn, the bachelor started running away and climbed up a tree. Swami AnanthAzhvAn stood under the tree, beseeching the bachelor to come down. The bachelor said "I will give you all my beautiful and richly adorned clothes and jewels if you will not beat me up with the gada-p-parai". Swami ananthAzhvAn wanted the bachelor to come down, and slowly backed away from the tree. The bachelor came down and started running away. Swami ananthAzhvAn followed the bachelor, and threw the gada-p-parai at the bachelor to make him stop. The bachelor was looking back at that time, and the gada-p-parai hit the bachelor on his chin, but he continued running towards the temple. He entered the temple, and closed the door.



Ananthazhvar at Thirumala (courtesy: Acharya.org)

This was the time of sun set, and the temple priests came to do the evening rituals in the temple. Swami AnanthAzhvAn said that there is a boy inside the temple and that he closed the door. Everyone requested the boy to open the door as it was getting late for the evening rituals for the Lord. The door opened, but the boy was not to be found anywhere inside the temple. They all went to the sanctum sanctorum for the evening rituals, and saw the Lord, smiling happily in His divine grandeur, but with some blood oozing out of His chin. Swami AnanthAzhvAn asked the Lord - "swami! What is this blood coming out of your chin? Did anything happen?" The Lord smiled and replied "AnanthAzhvAn! Have you forgotten that you just recently hit me with the gada-p-parai?" On understanding what had happened, swami ananthAzhvAn, with great sorrow, begged for forgiveness from the Lord. The Lord replied "I am extremely happy at the sincerity you have

displayed in performing service to Me, and to fulfilling the order of Ramanuja. So, the blood that comes out is not blood, but tears of happiness from Me". The priests then applied some camphor (*pachhcai karpooram*) to the chin of the Lord. The Lord, as promised in the form of the bachelor, gave swami ananthAzhvAn some of His clothes that He had adorned before, and sent him home. Even today, we can see Lord Srinivasa, adorned with white camphor in the chin. While entering the main gOpuram of the temple, one can see the gada-p-parai hung on the right hand side of the gOpuram wall.

Swami ananthAzhvAn lived a long time in thirupathi, and over time installed, on the command of Ramanuja, a jeeyar mutt at thirupathi. The first jeeyar of this mutt was swami ananthAzhvAn's sishya, and the responsibility of this jeeyar was to ensure the smooth functioning of the temple at Thirumalai. To this day, this mutt exists - it is called the periya jeeyar mutt, and the jeeyar of this mutt is supposed to be administrator of the temple.

Another incident in swami ananthAzhvAn's life illustrates how dear he was to Lord Srinivasa. A group of Sri Vaishnavas were coming to thirumala to worship the Lord. The group was led by srI. nadAdUr ammAL, a great leader who was very dear to the Lord of Kanchipuram. On the hills, they ran out of food, and were very tired. A boy appeared with food and requested them to eat it. The Sri Vaishnavas first wanted to find out whether the food was offered to the Lord first, and asked "Who are you? Who is your Acharya, and can you please recite his salutation"? The boy replied that swami ananthAzhvAn was his Acharya, and recited a sIOka that he said was swami ananthAzhvAn's salutation -

"akilAthma guNAvAsam ajnyAna thimiraapaham
Aasrithaanaam suSaraNam vandhE anantArya dEsikam.

"I pay my obeisances to AnanthAzhvAn, who is the repository of all auspicious qualities, good following and kindness, and who also removes the darkness of ignorance and is the supreme refuge for those who surrender onto him". The Sri Vaishnavas said "There is no mention of your Acharyas connection to Ramanuja in this thaniyan. Did you just compose this on the spot?" For that the boy replied - "We have two salutations to our Acharya. One talks about his great qualities which I just recited. The other celebrates his great connection with Ramanuja, and it is

"srImad rAmAnujArya srI pada ambOruha dvayam
Sat uththamaanga santhAryam ananthAryam aham bhajE"

"I worship srI ananthAzhvAn, who is the two feet of swami Ramanuja,

and because of that is celebrated by learned people". After hearing this the Sri Vaishnavas took the food, and reached thirumalai later in the day. They then told swami ananthAzhvAn about this incident and thanked him for sending the boy. Swami ananthAzhvAn was puzzled and replied "I have no sishya like that, and we did not even know you were coming. How could this have happened?". After thorough analysis, the elders in thirumalai concluded that it must have been the Lord of thirumalai Himself that did this, and marvelled at the extent of the lord's affection for swami ananthAzhvAn.

Swami AnanthAzhvAn installed the divine idol of swami Ramanuja in the temple. He also is considered to be the father-in-law of Lord Srinivasa due to another incident in his life. We will enjoy that in another issue of Ramanuja DarSaNam.

Swami anantAzhvAn's birth anniversary is in the month of chittirai, in the star of chittirai - the same as another perfect disciple - swami Madhurakavi Azhvar. Akin to Swami madhurakavi with swami Nammazhvar, ananthAzhvan made service to his Acharya, swami rAmAnuja, the cornerstone of his existence.

[Note: Certain instances described in the previous issue (Jan-Apr 04) under Great Saints and Teachers, by sri T A Varadhan, were obtained from hagiological sources that are odds with guruparampara prabhAvam or divya sUri charitam, two commonly utilized sources of information. Readers desirous of knowing more about the reference for that article are requested to contact the author directly.]

DIVINE PLACES - AZHVAR THIRUNAGARI

Smt. Chitra Madhavan

Presiding Deity:

Moolavar: AdinAthan / AdipirAn / polindu ninRa pirAn. The Lord here is in a standing posture and faces east. Moolavar is svayambhu thirumEni (self-manifested Divine Form).

ThAyAr: AdhinAthavalli and kurugUrvalli. Both have separate sannidhis.

Temple Legend:

This divya kshEtram is mentioned in many sacred works including brahmANda purANam, guruparampara prabhAvam, kurugAmAnmiyam, thiruppanimalai, vagana kavi mAlai, stone carvings and stories handed down from generation to generation.



Adinatha piraan (Azhvar thirunagari) Courtesy: Acharya.org

There are many legends associated with this temple. The most common narrative goes as follows: Once upon a time, Brahma (the creator / manifestor) requested Sriman Narayana to direct him to an appropriate place on earth (bhU manDala), where he could meditate upon the infinite glory of Sriman Narayana. The Lord of the universe told him, "Even before you were created, I chose to reside on the banks of the thAmiraparaNi river, a most beautiful place called Adipuri, where my manifest form is celebrated by the name 'AdipirAn'. This *divyakshEtram* (holy place) is surrounded by enchanting gardens and falls, and there is not a more ideal location for you to pursue your penance"

Pleased with Brahma's intense penance, the Lord Himself came as a teacher and gave Brahma true knowledge of Sastras. In order to commemorate this divine series of events, Adipuri was named kurugUr. Legends also mention that one of the forefathers of Nammazhvar called Kurugan, a local chieftain, named this city as his capital and hence the name Kurugapuri.

Nammazhvar, who is referred to as *the "Azhvar"* of Sri Vaishnava tradition, and considered to be the foremost among the Azhvars, was born here. And hence this place came to be called "Azhvar Thirunagari" and the temple 'Azhvar AdinAthana kOvil'.

Other than these legends, this divya kshEtram is also called 1) ThanDa KshEtram, 2) VarAha KshEtram, 3) sEsha kshEtram, and 4)Theertha KshEtram.

Salient Aspects:

vimAnam (name of the tower above the presiding sanctum): *gOvinda vimAnam*

thIrtham (the name of the holy tank whose water is used for various purposes in the temple): *thAmiraparaNi thIrtham, brahma thIrtham*

Sages to whom the Lord revealed Himself here: Brahma, Nammazhvar, Sankan, Thandhan, rishis and Madhurakavi Azhvar

The *vigraha* (Icon) of Nammazhvar here is said to have been made from the water of thAmiraparaNi river, imbued with the divinity-induced grace of Nammazhvar. Here Azhvar and Adipiran Sannidhis are separate, separated by a distance of 60 feet. However, to this day, it is debatable whether it is Nammazhvar the "*prapanna jana kooThastha*" (the leader amongst prapannas), who brought fame to Azhvar Thirunagari or Azhvar Thirunagari that brought recognition to Nammazhvar (because he manifested there).

Other important shrines at Azhvar Thirunagari are:

- (i) Thiruvengadamudaiyan
- (ii) Thiruvaranganathan
- (iii) Swami Pillai Lokacharyar
- (iv) AnDAL

The thirumanjana mantapam and mirror mantapam present here are a rare treat with intricate carvings. A beautiful, delicate, stone nadaswaram, which is called Mohana Veenai, adds to the refulgent beauty. As in Sri Rangan, Arayar Sevai is a specialty at Azhvar Thirunagari during Thirumanjanam.

Divine Outpourings on the Lord:

" OdiOdip palapiRappum piRandhu maRROr deivam
 pAdiyAdip paNindhu palpadigAl vazhiyERik kaNdlr
 kUdi vAnavarEththa ninRa thirukkurugUradhanuL
 Aduputkodi Adhi mUrthikku adimai puguvaadhuvE "
 (3112) ThiruvAimozhi 4-10-7

This was the mangalASanam of Nammazhvar for this temple and it is unparalleled for its fame and antiquity. Nammazhvar's famous *padigam* (unit of 11 pAsurams) 4-10, called '*onRum thEvum*' clearly establishes the supremacy of Sriman Narayana as the parabrahman.

Great Teachers and Saints:

Swami Manavala MAmunigaL visited this place and established the Garuda Mantapam in front of AdiPiran Sannidhi. Swami Ramanuja calls this kshEtram as the boundary between this world of samsAra and the abode of eternal joy, Sri vaikunTham. ThirukkOLUr the birth place of Madhurakavi Azhvar is close to Azhvar Thirunagari. Sri Nathamuni, the Acharya responsible for getting us the tamizh Veda of Nammazhvar, received all the 4000 pAsurams (that had been lost) directly from Nammazhvar at Thirukkurugoor, after chanting Kanninun siRuthAmbu 12000 times

Other Important Facts:

- (i) In earlier times, the temple was in very close contact with the thAmiraparaNi river banks. To make the temple and the town bigger, the north banks of the river were moved.
- (ii) It is known that AdisEsha took the avatar of the Tamarind tree under which swami Nammazhvar meditated for 16 years, akin to Thirumangai Azhvar's association with urangapuLi at ThirukkannanguDi.
- (iii) When the word Azhvar is mentioned it means Nammazhvar, because he is the kulapati for Ramanuja darshanam, the quintessential source of divine inspiration and insight, available to us as the equivalent of four vEdas (thiruviruttam, thiruvAsiriyam, periya thiruvandAdi, thiruvAimozhi)
- (iv) The narrative that details how Madhurakavi Azhvar found Nammazhvar is well known. Kanninun Siruthambu, composed in praise of Nammazhvar as the ultimate source of wisdom and kainkaryam, delineates a very important aspect of Sri Vaishnava sampradAyam called charama parva nishTa, that bhAgavata kainkaryam is the sole means and reward for a prapanna.

- (v) When the great Tamil poet Kamban sang his songs in front of Periya Perumal for the first time, he was asked by Perumal "Why did you not sing about our SaTakOpan?" (The message being, singing praise of Azhvar takes precedence over even singing about periya perumAL)
- (vi) When Swami Ramanuja visited this place for the first time and he saw the river and town, he was enchanted and burst out in joy "Is this Thirunagari? Is this the outskirts of parama padam (srI vaikunTham)? Is this the place where SaTakOpan revealed the secrets of the Vedas for the benefit of all of mankind?."

Location: Azhvar Thirunagari is in southern Tamilnadu, in Thirunelveli district. Buses from Thirunelveli stop right in front of the temple. One can reach this kshEtram from Thiruchchendur too.

VEDICS QUIZ ON SWAMI RAMANUJA

Mukundan Pattangi

Editor's note: It is our good fortune that we can bring you this quiz focused on our jagadAcharya swami rAmAnuja, to commemorate his tiru-nakshatram on chitra tiruAdhirai - birthday - on April 25, 2004. Some questions have multiple answers.

- Who is the First Acharya (PrathamAcharya) for us?

(A) Lord Sriman Narayana	(B) Nammazhvar
(C) Ramanuja	(D) Vendanta Desika
- Who is the first Acharya on this Earth (Bhu-lOka)

(A) Lord Sriman Narayana	(B) Nammazhvar
(C) Ramanuja	(D) Vendanta Desikan
- Who is the First Acharya, who made these teachings available to all those interested.

(A) Lord Sriman Narayana	(B) Nammazhvar
(C) Ramanuja	(D) Vendanta Desikan
- Lord became a Sishya to Ramanuja at this place (Hence, here Lord obtained the name Vaishnava Nambi)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| (A) Thirukkurungudi | (B) Srirangam |
| (C) Kancheepuram | (D) Thirunarayanapuram |
- Who is the only Acharya with Seperate Sannidhi honors at Thirumala Thirupati devasthanam

(A) Alavandar	(B) Manavala MAmunigaL
(C) Ramanuja	(D) Vendanta Desikan
 - Lord Sri Ranganatha submitted both his worlds (vibhUthis: nitya and leelA) and gave the authority of granting moksha to this Acharya

(A) Ramanuja	(B) Nampillai
(C) Parasara Bhattar	(D) Manavala MAmunigaL
 - Who are considered to be daNdam, and Pavithram of Ramanuja

(A) Koorathazhvan	(B) Mudali-Andan
(C) Nanjeeyar	(D) Ananthanpillai
 - This work by Swami Ramanuja details the mode of worship of the Lord.

(A) Nithya Grantha	(B) GadyaThraya
(C) NityaPadi	(D) 6000Padi
 - Who is the author of Ramanuja NooRRandAdi?

(A) Koorathazhvan	(B) Yamunacharya
(C) Nammazhvar	(D) Thiruvarangaththu-AmuthanAr
 - Who blessed Sri Ramanuja with the title "Emperumanar".

(A) Alavandar	(B) Thirukoshtiyur Nambi
(C) Uyyakondar	(D) Nammazhvar
 - Who gave the name "Emperumanar Darsanam" to SrivaishNava SampradAya?

(A) Lord Sri Ranganatha	(B) Nammazhvar
(C) Alavandar	(D) Manavala Mamuni
 - Who was known as 'shadow of Ramanuja'?

- (A) Embar (B) Bhattar
(C) KoorathAzhvan (D) VaraVaramuni

13. What are the previous incarnations of Ramanuja?

- (A) Adishesha (B) Lakshmana
(C) Balarama (D) Nammazhvar

14. What are the other names of Ramanuja?

- (A) IlayazhvAr (B) Koil aNNan.
(C) Yathiraja (D) Vara Vara muni

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Mukundan Pattangi

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thiru-maNi-k-koodam Thirunangur	Srimad Srirangam Andavan Sishyas
thiru arimEya viNNagaram Thirunangur	Srimad Srirangam Andavan Sishyas
thiru-k-kAvaLampAdi Thirunangur	Sri Kovil Kandhadai Sirupuliyur Sishyas
thiru-siRu-puliyUr Thirusirupuliyur	Sri Kovil Kandhadai Sirupuliyur Sishya
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ThiruvAliThirunagari ThirumangaiAzhvar & Emperumanar	Chicago Vedics
BhavishyadAchArya Azhvarthirunagari	Chicago Vedics

A GEM FROM SWAMI NAMPILLAI

Swami Nampillai, the great teacher who gave us the grand commentary on thiruvAimozhi said to his devotees - “The quality of a VaishNava is to (i) feel sorrow for wasting all of the time before s/he got to know about the Lord and started serving Him, and (ii) not waste the future (i.e. spend all the current time and future serving the Lord thereby using the time productively).

WEBSITE IN FOCUS

Harini Raghavan

The website reviewed in this issue is dedicated to Swami Mudaliandan, also known as *Yathiraja Paduka* (the lotus feet of Swami Ramanuja). AnDAn, as he's affectionately addressed, was compared to the "tridandam" (holy staff) of swami Ramanuja. The url of this website is <http://www15.brinkster.com/mudaliandan>. The website has been created by the disciples of Mudaliandan Swami thirumaligai to convey the greatness of their Acharya.

The site hosts a section about the history of Swami Mudaliandan. It covers the salient points of Swamis life and is a good read for one to get a taste for this Acharyas greatness. Those who are fortunate to be born in Swamis lineage can find all the details on Swami Mudaliandan's thirumaligai here. It lists the different places where the thirumaligais are located. Salutary verses (*thaniyans*) of Mudaliandan Acharya lineage are also present here.

The highlight of this site is the discourse by Sri Prativadi Bhayankaram Annangarchariar Swami on Sri Mudaliandan Swami. The discourse has been translated to English for everyone to relish.

The site boasts an extensive photo gallery. The gallery contains pictures of the Lord and the different Acharyas present in the thirumaligai. It also hosts pictures of all the Azhvars and some Acharyas.

The other notable sections here are on Swami Ramanuja, Swami Manavala Mamuni, Kurathazhvan and all the Azhvars. All these sections contain salient aspects from the Acharyas life along with their photo.

In summary we recommend this site for anyone who wants to get a taste of Swami Mudaliandan's greatness. For all the sishyas of Swami Mudaliandan this holds valuable information about Swamis thirumaligai.

CALENDAR - SECOND QUARTER 2004

Apr 2004

Date	Lunar Calendar	Star	Event
04/03/04	Panguni 19	Ayilyam	Sarva Ekadasi
04/03/04	Panguni 21	Pooram	Thirunagari Vedupari
04/04/04	Panguni 22	Utthiram	Panguni Uttharam
04/08/04	Panguni 26	VishAkam	
04/13/04	Chitthirai 1	ThiruvONam	
04/15/04	Chitthirai 3	Sathayam	Sarva Ekadasi
04/22/04	Chitthirai 10	Krutthikai	Akshaya Truteeyai
04/25/04	Chitthirai 13	ThiruAdhirai	Ramanujar Thirunakshatram
04/26/04	Chitthirai 14	Punarvasu	Muthaliyandan Thirunakshatram
04/29/04	Chitthirai 17	Makham	Srirangam Srirama Navami

May 2004

Date	Lunar Calendar	Star	Event
05/01/04	Chitthirai 19	Utthiram	Srivaishnava Ekadasi
05/03/04	Chitthirai 21	Chitthirai	Madhurakavi Azhvar, Anandazhvan Thirunakshatram
05/04/04	Chitthirai 22	SwAthi	Chitra Purnami
05/05/04	Chitthirai 23	VishAkham	
05/14/04	Vaikasi 1	PoorATTAdhi	
05/15/04	Vaikasi 2	UttharaTTAdhi	Srivaishnava Ekadasi
05/22/04	Vaikasi 9	ThiruAdhirai	
05/30/04	Vaikasi 17	Hastham	Ekadasi

Jun 2004

Date	Lunar Calendar	Star	Event
06/01/04	Vaikasi 19	VishAkam	Kanchi GaruDa SEvai,

			Nammazhvar Thirunakshatram
06/02/04	Vaikasi 20	Anusham	Bhattar Thirunakshatram
06/13/04	Vaikasi 31	Ashvini	Ekadasi
06/15/04	Ani 1	Krutthikai	
06/19/04	Ani 5	ThiruAdhirai	
06/28/04	Ani 14	SwAthi	PeriyAzhvar Thirunakshatram
06/30/04	Ani 16	Anusham	NAthamunigal Thirunakshatram

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.

CHILDRENS SECTION

Editorial Note: We believe that swami rAmAnuja's vision for humanity offers a complete lifestyle, one that is consistent in terms of the joy of living a philosophy unparalleled in concept and practice. As part of introducing this vision, we are embarking on a section for children which introduces our Azhvars and Acharyas to those young, impressionable minds in a framework easily assimilated by young children. What could be more rewarding than have our children color and beautify the thirumEni of our most beloved of Acharyas? Here, Sri Anand Srinivasan has shown swami rAmAnuja with his most favorite selvappiLLai at thirunArAyaNapuram (mElkOTE).

COLORING PAGE

Anand Srinivasan



AN INCIDENT FROM THE LIFE OF SWAMI PARASARA BHATTAR

Illustrations by Sri Anand Srinivasan

The sri vaishNava lineage of AchAryas (preceptors) is a veritable garland of invaluable gems, one seemingly greater than the other in erudition, scholarship, knowledge, compassion and a willingness to share their treasure. One of the AchAryAs in this lineage, Swami parASara bhaTTar, is attributed a particularly high level of intellect and brilliance. Sri parAsara bhaTTar, whose intelligence, insight and shastric wisdom was unparalleled, held a special place in the hearts of our jagadAchArya swami rAmAnuja, and not to be denied in this context is also the fact that Swami parAsara bhaTTar, was exultingly referred to as the 'abhimAna putra (a son by desire, association) of that inimitable couple, the emperor of all archAvatArams, sri ranga raja and ranga nAyaki!!

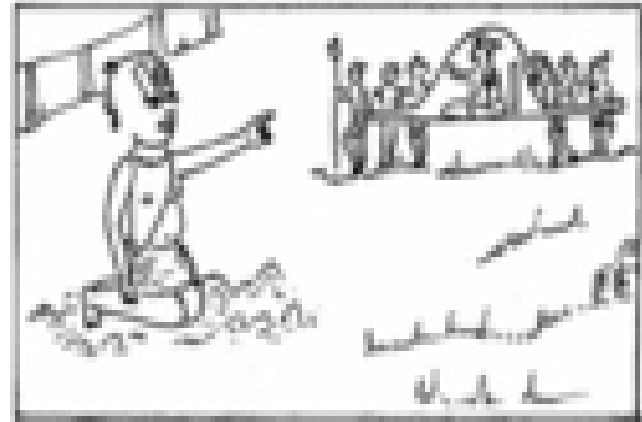
The pictorial below describes an incidence in the life of swami parAsara bhaTTar, wherein his prodigious talents were brought to fore.



This was the time when swami Ramanuja's fame and glory held sway. Life in Sri Rangam represented the ideal blend of joyous service at the feet of swami Ramanuja and the divine couple.

Parasara Bhattar, the five year old child prodigy of Kurathazhvan and Andal, was playing on the sands along the banks of river Cauvery alongside other children.

At the same time, a great scholar called sarvajnya bhaTTa (sarvajnya means one who knows everything, omniscient), having vanquished many a knowledgeable scholar in many debates, was being ushered into Sri Rangam on a palanquin.



He had come to Sri Rangam with a desire to engage swami Ramanuja in a debate on the Sastras, to prove his intellectual prowess and supremacy. The little child Parasara saw this spectacle and enquired as to who he was. He was told of sarvajnya bhaTTa's claims to supreme knowledge, and his desire to vanquish swami Ramanuja in a debate. Not just that, whosoever were vanquished by sarvajnya bhaTTa were required to carry him on the palanquin!!!

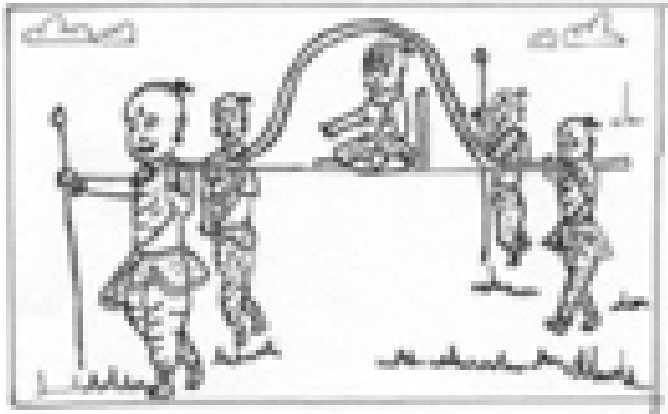
The child Parasara, raised amidst environs populated by the likes of swami Ramanuja, swami Mudaliandan and swami Kurathazhvan, was irked by this scholars arrogance, and challenged him to a verbal duel.



Sarvajnya bhaTTa, with a condescending attitude, agreed to the duel, and was consequently asked by the child Parasara to step down for the duel. Parasara picked up some sand in his hand from the banks of river Cauvery, and asked sarvajnya bhaTTa “can you tell me how much sand is there in my hand?”

Sarvangya bhaTTa was floored. Here was something, he thought, no one could figure out on the spur of the moment. What was he to say, a thousand particles of sand or a million particles of sand or ten million? He stood there, speechless, not knowing what to say.

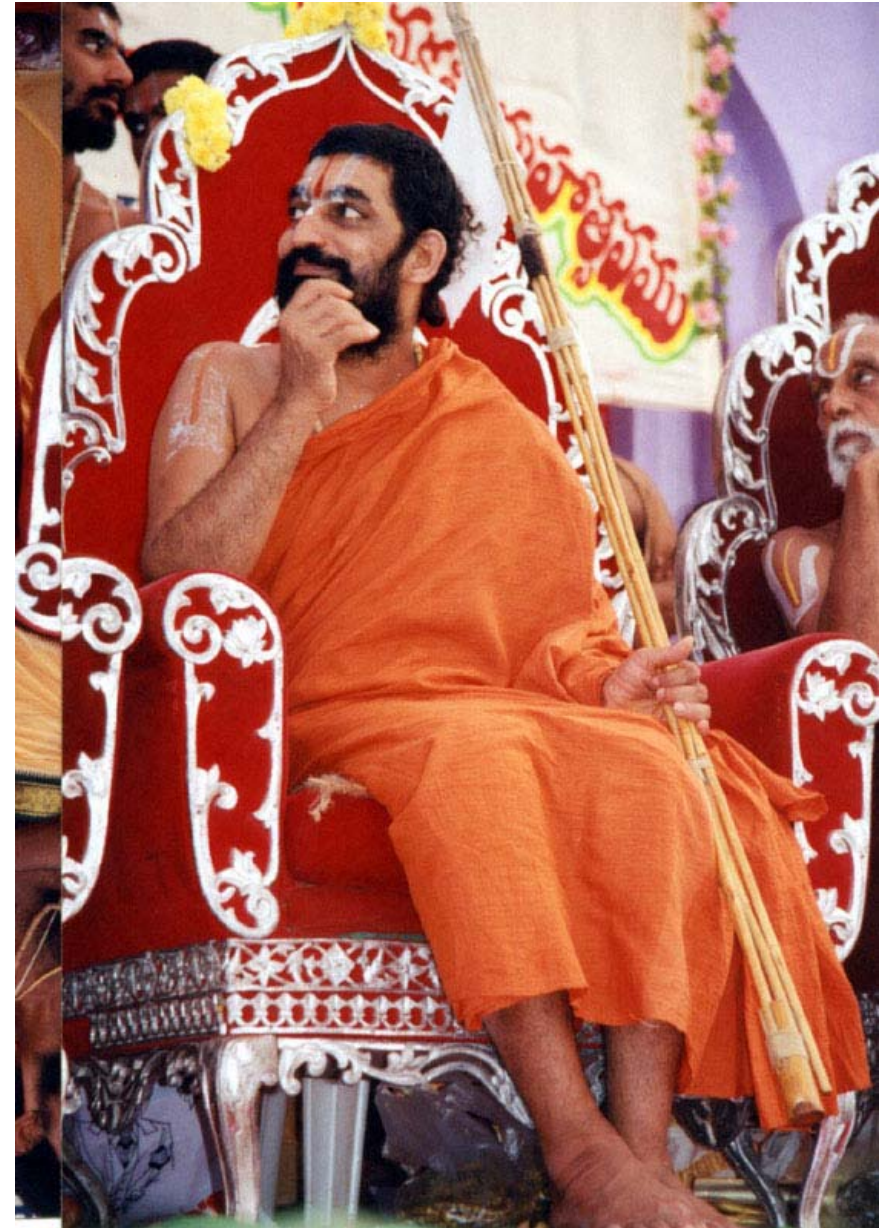
The child parAsara admonished him, ‘For someone who cannot even figure out that this is a fistful of sand, how can you claim to know everything or be qualified to debate swami Ramanuja?’



Sarvajnya bhaTTa was not only humbled, but was awestruck by the refulgent five-year-old’s intelligence. He asked the child ‘Who is your father?’ and Parasara said ‘Kurathazhvan’.

His arrogance decimated, sarvajnya bhaTTa realized that if a five year old child, playing on the banks of Cauvery, displayed this kind of intelligence, what would be the situation with intellectual giants such as Kurathazhvan or Mudaliandan or swami Ramanuja himself!!

He immediately picked up Parasara, placed him on the palanquin and himself carried the palanquin to the residence of swami Kurathazhvan.



*HH Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna Srimannarayana
Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji
www.chinnajeeyar.org*



Annan Koyil Emperumanar



Sri Vijayaraghavap perumAL, Thirupputkuzhi
eera Adai sEvai (darshan in wet clothes)



Live discourses on the Tele-bridge

Wednesdays 9:30pm CST: Bhagavad Gita - English
HH. Tridandi Srimannarayana Chinna Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami

1st Sunday and 3rd Sunday 7:45pm CST:
Sri Vachana Bhooshanam - Tamil
HH Vanamamalai Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami

1st & 3rd Sunday 11AM CST: Srimad Bhagavatham - Telugu
Sri U.Ve. Satuluri Gopala Krishnamacharyulu

2nd Saturday 10AM CST: Siria ThiruMadal - Tamil
Sri U.Ve. M.A Venkatakrisnan Swami

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

Tuesdays: 10 PM CST:
Sri Krishnamachari Swami Thiruvaimozhi Santhai

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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