The cover of this issue presents the image of Sri Ramanuja, as he is present in thiru-Narayana-puram, also known as mElukOte (the western fort). This place is in present day Karnataka, near Mysore. It was here that Sri Ramanuja fled to escape harassment from the Chola kings of his time. He lived here for 20 years. He discovered an ancient image of the Lord, and built a temple for Him. The most beautiful Lord present in that temple is called “Thiru Narayanan”, and the procession deity of the Lord is called “chella-p-iLLai” (The most loved son). Our elders teach us that this procession deity of the Lord came to Sri Ramanuja when he called out “vArAy chella-p-iLLai” (Please come! My dear son!). It is in mElukOte that we can find an unbroken administrative and religious system exactly as set up by Sri Ramanuja. The idol of Sri Ramanuja is called “thamar ugandha thirumEni” – “The holy idol that is most dear to devotees”. Indeed, the beauty of Sri Ramanuja here is incomparable.
EDITORIAL

Mohan Sagar

Our thanks to all of you who provided feedback regarding the first issue of Ramanuja Darshanam. Your positive words and helpful suggestions are providing all of us with the incentive to improve on this magazine with every issue that we release.

We are intending to include some improvements beginning with this quarter's issue. You will notice that while every effort is being made to use simple English in our presentations, words that are not in English will be italicized from this issue forward. And, rather than translating a commonly used Tamizh or Sanskrit word the first time it is used in every article, the word will be located in a growing glossary of terms that will be located at the end of each issue. We hope that these changes will make the articles in Ramanuja Darshanam easier in terms or readability and content.

We are blessed to announce that this second issue of the magazine is going to be precedent-setting, as it is focused on the renowned Acharya who inspires each and every issue, Bhagavad Sri Ramanuja, whose thirunakshattiram falls on May 6, 2003. In and along with our regular features, this issue will provide you with more details on Sri Ramanuja’s remarkable life, his visionary social contributions, and the sacred temple at Thiru Narayanapuram that he held especially dear to his heart. It also includes articles on some of the Acharyas and Azhvars who had deep influence on his life and teachings, including the noted Alavandar and Sri Nammazhvar, the only one among the 10 Tamizh mystics who is included in the Acharya Paramparai.

Once again, we hope that you find this magazine to be a useful and practical resource for learning about the wisdom of Ramanuja SampradAyam. We continue to welcome your comments, questions, and feedback at our e-mail address: Vedics@yahoogroups.com. Also, to learn more about Sri Ramanuja and his Vision please visit our web site at www.vedics.net.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

During the annual festival for Sri Ramanuja’s birth anniversary at Sriperumbudur, on one of days, Sri Ramanuja adorns a white robe, instead of the usual saffron robe for ascetics. Why is it so? Please think about this. We will provide an explanation in the next issue.

RAMANUJA’S DOCTRINE OF SERVICE

Mohan Sagar

Among thinkers and scholars, particularly those here in West, Sri Ramanuja has been recognized for his monumental philosophical ideals, which completely and accurately summarize the essence of the Vedas and Upanishads into an integrated message on the nature of God, the nature of the souls, and the nature of this world. To his followers, the Sri Vaishnavas, Sri Ramanuja is seen as a beacon light in a long lineage of teachers, who irrefutably proved how the Eternal Truths of these mystical revelations are the very same truths that were revealed to us in the lucid and heartfelt devotional renderings of the Azhvars. But, there is one other great message that would be beneficial for all of us to learn, and this can be drawn from Sri Ramanuja’s remarkable life of service and humanitarianism, which can lead us only further into understanding what this Great Soul had in mind for all his disciples and devotees.

What I am about to share is the message that I was inspired to try and learn from my mentors and teachers. As always, I am indebted to HH Sri Tridandi Sriman Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Svami for his inspiration, and seek his forgiveness, as well as the forgiveness of all other devotees, for any errors or misinterpretations in this article.

Each one of us is born at a certain place, at a certain time; to certain people that we call our parents, and share life with those we call our siblings, our friends, our spouses, and or co-workers. For those of us who hail from Vedic heritage, we are born into a particular family belonging to a particular caste, and each one of us has obligations and limitations associated with this. Each one of us has followed a specific path leading to a specific career, and is earning suitable salaries based on this path. Each one of us has hopes and dreams, interests, hobbies, and talents. And all of these things, which can only be gifts from God, make us unique as individuals. But, if we are concerned only with these, the things that make us unique also keep us separated from one another.

Going one step deeper though, we find that as human beings, we all share similar emotions. We all need to love and receive love in return. We all need friendship and support. We all have times when we need to cry, to sing, to rejoice, to be in our own thoughts. We all need to know that we make a difference in this world and in each other’s lives. These human values are universal in nature and take us to a place where we can begin to connect with each other.
But, for those of us who have been blessed to have connection to Sri Ramanuja through an Acharya, this level of human connection goes one step deeper into an awareness of our connection to Sriman Narayana. For we come to learn that each and every soul, from the one that occupies the body of the smallest ant to the one that is now known as Chathurmukha Brahma (The four-headed god who is responsible for creating the Universe) is in its essential nature, its svartikpam as it is known in Sanskrit, a simple receptacle to the Lord's Grace, and a humble instrument to His Good. This nature of sEshatvam, servitude, is not only limited to the soul, but is indeed the nature of matter, as well. Consequently, the Lord is likened to the Soul of the Universe, with all the myriad of souls, the bodies in which they reside, and the matter that are their material possessions, being likened to His Body, dependent wholly upon Him and serving as Instruments to His Good. It only stands to reason then that when we seek to love and serve God, we must be willing and able to serve what is His, namely His Body, this Universe.

When we go beyond the things that separate us, when we know that each and every one of us exists solely because of the Grace of Sriman Narayana, and when we know that all living beings are in their True Nature ThirumAl adimai, servants to Sriman Narayana, we can begin to operate from this mood of serving the world as a means of expressing love and servitude to Him, nurturing and caring for each other such that we can serve Him better. This ideal of individual beings working together in a mood of serving a Higher Good, is expressed in Sanskrit as samAnAdhikAranya (the concept of dynamic dependents), and is revealed in sAstra to be the mechanism behind how this Universe works.

If one can operate from such a place, from a spirit of appreciation for our interdependence centered on Sriman Narayana’s Love and Grace, our life, indeed, our very existence, begins to take on a more refined purpose, as it becomes centered on improving ourselves and providing others with the opportunity to improve themselves, such that we can serve Him together. Our relationships with the people in our lives, the obligations of our job, our dreams, ambitions, and talents when seen outside of their usual mundane significance, become gifts to be appreciated and nurtured, as they have been provided to us by Him solely out of His Unconditional Love. And each and every gift, each and every moment in our life, is provided such that it serves as an opportunity to serve Him and All That is His.

For those of us seeking to live a Vedic life, this dedication to service will make us see caste as not being a state of high or low, but rather a post in life that Sriman Narayana has placed us such that we can best serve His Good.

In time, service itself become its own reward, as it becomes a means of ever-constant way of expressing gratitude to Sriman Narayana for all that He has blessed us with.

While all of this seems to be an ideal that is yet to be achieved by all of us, we should be aware of the fact that Bhagavad Sri Ramanuja, being one who understood the truths of the Vedas, was the very embodiment of these principles. Recognizing that he was to be the greatest example of what he wished to share, Ramanuja broke free of the traditional bonds of sanyAsa Ashram, which up until that time had required aloofness and detachment, to a life of being the "Supreme Servant". Long before the conditions of society allowed, and centuries before even such great souls like Mahatma Gandhi had even envisioned the idea, Ramanuja brought people from all castes and backgrounds, even those from the lowest strata of society, under the message that has been so well-summed up by HH Sri Chinna Jeeyar Svami as, "Serve All Living Beings as Service to God". Sri Ramanuja ensured that each person and each community that sought to live the Sri Vaishnava way was provided with the opportunity to serve the Lord in His Temples, in their homes, and in the festivals and rituals that were geared towards expressing our love for Him. Despite his erudition and the austerities required of him by his caste and position as leader of a faith, Sri Ramanuja freely moved about with all of his people, caring for their welfare, making sure that each was treated fairly and was provided with the opportunity to utilize his/her talents for the good of the Sri Vaishnava community.

Sri Ramanuja made certain that all of the 74 disciples that he had selected to promote His Vision, the sinhAsanadhipathis or Acharya purushas, had this message of universal servitude and fellowship imbibed in their hearts. And, it is because of this that we are blessed to know it to this day. All that it requires for us to begin on this path is to aspire to live in way that revere that Very Great Soul, Bhagavad Sri Ramanuja, who brought this message to all of us.

DO YOU KNOW?

That Thiru Narayanapuram (Melkote) has a renowned Sanskrit Research Institute? This institute (called Academy of Sanskrit Research) has in its possession numerous priceless palm leaf manuscripts in Sanskrit pertaining to every field of philosophy.
We Can Pray; We Should Pray; Will We Pray?

Sri U.Ve. Velukkudi Krishnan

Sri nidhim nidhim apAram arthinAm arthithArtha paridAna dIkshitam sarva bhUta suhrdam dayAnidhim dEvarAjam adhirAjam AsrayE

(Let my salutations be to Lord DevarAja - King of the gods, Sriman Narayana - whose unparalleled wealth is PerundEvi thayar - the Supreme Goddess and Mother, who Himself is the wealth of all the wanting souls, who has resolved to grant all the needs of His bhaktas, who is the well wisher of one and all and who is a Treasure of Mercy).

Svami KurattazhvAn’s invocatory verse of Sri Varadaraja stavam (the Hymn to the Lord Who is the Bestower of Boons) has a lot to convey to us. It is all the more important in these days of unrest. We need to pray together and individually for the safety and well being of all our fellow citizens on Mother Earth.

Sri Vaishnavism and all the vedas accept that the whole universe is the divine body of Sriman Narayana. All the residents of this earth, cutting across countries, language, sex, community, caste, religion and above all whether they are humans or flora or fauna, belong to one group - Servants to the Supreme Lord. One attribute that is common to all of us is sEshatva - absolute unconditional servitude to our Lord. This jIvatma’s (soul) first and foremost identification is this sEshatva (quality of servitude). Svami Ramanuja defines sEshatvam as paragata atisaya AdAna iccha (a servant who always wants to add glory to his Master. So let us try to add glory to the Lord).

But, alas! Adding glory to Him would be impossible; how can we bring Glory to the One Who is the Ultimate Glory? He is proclaimed as "avikArAya sUddhAya nityAya paRamatmanE, sadaika rUpa rUpaya vishnvE sarva jishnavE" (one whose inherent nature, attributes and divine body is unchanged). Consequently, we fail in our attempt to add any glory to Him as He is already full with it.

This leads to a paradoxical problem. While He is Perfect, no service can ever add to His Glory. However, if we do not seek to serve him and glorify Him, it would be against our True Nature to be His sEsha.

Our preceptors have showed us the way to wriggle out of this problem and retain our sEshatvam. Because, He is the very soul of all the sentient and non-sentient beings in this Universe. Since these beings are not perfect in their nature, we can add to their glory by selflessly serving them. Therefore, Service to our fellow beings becomes a means to serving and glorifying God, and would be in accordance with our True Nature as His sEsha.

There is a popularly held misconception that service should be limited to other devotees, other Sri Vaishnavas. But, as the Lord is the Inner Spirit and Master of all living beings, we cannot and should not limit ourselves only to them. Let us pack up these ideas and focus on serving everyone who is in need. Let us seek to serve the world as a whole.

Now, this leads to the question of the best way to serve. We can monetarily or physically help those in times of need. However, we can often encounter so many road blocks while implementing this. Each of us has access to only a few people that we whom we can help in times of need. Go ahead and do your might. But how do we serve all living beings at large? Seek the help of someone who is close to all of them. That unique personality is none other than Sriman Narayana. Whether others agree to His Lordship or not, we agree to their servanthood. So let us look upon Sriman Narayana to help everyone. He is the one who can and who should give a helping hand.

This is why Svami Koorathazhvan calls upon us to collectively pray to Him as He is the "sarva bhUta suhrt" (common well wisher). Prayer is nothing but a call, a representation, and a plea - not only for me but for Him, for His well being. His well being would mean the well being of this Universe. So bhaktas, let us resolve from today to pray together for the well being of our Lord and humanity. This fetches many fruits in one throw. I retain my sEshatva; I have prayed for Him, I have prayed for everyone. And this prayer itself becomes a form of "dyAna" (concentration and meditation).

Svami Ramanuja says that the first step to salvation is jIvAtma paRamatma jnAna (knowledge about self and the Lord). But mere knowledge would make one grope in the darkness of samsAra, drowning one in often times painful and seemingly unanswerable questions. We need to focus this jnAna on PaRamatma which transforms to dyAna - meditation.

Meditation is often seen to be only in the form of mantra japa (repetitive chanting of mantras), vigraha pUja (offering prayer to the Deity) etc. However, this kind of codified approach to meditation often makes one rigid and egotistical. One needs to refine mediation with love and affection (snEham). Sri Ramanuja says "dyAna arcana pranAmadibhi:
atyartha priya: tat prApti phala:” (the Lord is pleased with meditation, pUja and surrender; His pleasure is the means to salvation). He also defines bhakti as "snEha pUrvaM anu dyAnam bhakti:" (meditation with love is known as bhakti).

Svami Nammazhwar says "eNNilum varum." (first centum tenth decade of ThiruvAymozhi). The Lord is waiting in the aisle to come to our rescue, expecting us to simply to think about Him. A humble thought has the power to invoke Him.

I am sure you would all now appreciate the importance of dyAnam. Is it not just closing our eyes and thinking about our Lord. We need to do more. We must enjoy His Qualities, recollect His Divine actions during incarnations for our well being, plead for His Well Being (mangalasanam / pallandu pallandu un sevadi sevvi tirukkappu - May good tidings come to you, Oh, Lord/Forever and ever may your Sacred Feet be Blessed) and in turn ensure the well being of everyone. PeriyAzhvar pleaded for the safety of His lotus feet, which serves as the very soul of all devotees.

So make it a daily practice to establish an undisturbed stream of focused thoughts on Sriman Narayana. Pray to Him. Do not plead for any mean fruit. Request for the well being of everyone. All the other wealth would automatically be granted. Once in a while, make this jointly in a satsang, then the energy gets multiplied and you start feeling the synergy.

We can pray. We should pray. Will we pray?

SarvE janA: sukhinO bhavantu. Samasta san mangalAni santu. (May good come to all living beings. May good tidings come to the whole Universe)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

In the last issue, we raised the question “Why do we not feel about the Lord the same way as the Azhvars did?” The reason for that is their total love for the Lord, which came about as a result of the Lord’s uninitiated grace towards them. The Lord blessed them with blemish less knowledge. That is why they are who they are, and are known as “mayaaru aRa madhinalam aruLa-p-perRRavargal” (those who were blessed with blemishless, unforgettable knowledge). Svami Nammazhvar starts the thiruvaymozhi with the statement “Oh mind! Go worship and surrender to the One who granted the blemishless knowledge”.

IN FOCUS – THIRUNARAYANAPURAM

Svami Ramanuja’s favorite Place

Anand Srinivasan

Presiding Deity:

Sri Yoga Narasimha (hill top), Sri ThiruNarayana (Moolavar), Sri Yadugiri Naachiyaar (Divine Consort), Chelva Pillai (Sampath KumAran) (Processional Deity) and Yatiraja (Sri Ramanujacharya –Tamar uganda Tirumeni (The image that is dear to the devotees).

Salient Aspects of the Place and Temple:

ThiruNarayanapuram is also called Yadawadi, Yadushaila, and Melukote. It is located in the present Mysore/Karnataka district. This small town’s hub of activity is its temple. This Sri Vaishnava abhimAna sthalam was the place where Ramanuja resided after he and his disciples were exiled from Srirangam by the local fanatical chieftains. Of all of the places where he resided, ThiruNarayanapuram was particularly dear to his heart; so much so, that he stated that he would place his very spirit in the processional image that bears an exact likeness to him, and instructed all of his disciples to make an effort to reside here.

ThiruNarayanapuram is a place where people glorify Sri Ramanuja as the King of Ascetics, the King of Philosophers, the King the Vedas awaited, and the Father of the divine child Sampath KumAran (Chelva Pillai-the dear darling child). Despite its appearance as a sleepy little town, the temple and town is home for many learned Acharya Purushas and Vedic Pandits.

Sri Vaishnava tradition with Sri Ramanuja as its central focus and most important acharya, explains the important relationship of this Great Soul with his beloved child, Sri Chelva Pillai. It is understood that Sriman Narayana is the Only Being in this Universe that is Truly Independent, i.e., His Actions and His Will is not limited by the bounds of karma, as it is with every other soul. But, since His Very Nature is Love and Compassion, He is under the sway of those who love him, and to Great Souls like Sri Ramanuja, He becomes like their own child, much in the same way in which He allowed Himself to become Nandagopa's and Yashoda's Beloved Son, Krishna. Sri Ramanuja is the father to Chelva Pillai, caring for Him, nurturing Him, as well as instructing Him on the merciful attitude He should maintain when He is approached by all souls.
Establishment of the Temple:

The auspicious *Thai Punarvasu* (the Makara month) when Sri Ramanuja found His TiruNarayana from the Hills in Yadavadri is celebrated with much enthusiasm. All the temple festivities to this date are carried out by the local Mahans in the same manner as Sri Ramanuja established more than 900 years ago. In 1098-99 Sri Ramanuja reached this town at the age of 82 and uncovered TiruNarayana who was hidden, buried in the Yadavadri Hills. A temple was built and the Lord worshipped by the *pAncharAtra* tradition. As Sri Ramanuja was in search for a processional deity for the temple festivities, He was instructed by the Lord to go north (Delhi) and bring Him back from the Delhi Sultan’s daughter Bibi. Sri Ramanuja resided in Melkote for 12 years, establishing and administering temple worship method according to the Sri Vaishnava tradition.

People:

Many scholars and people from different faiths surrendered to Sri Ramanuja under the Hoysala reign of King Vishnuvardhana. The *Mandyam*, *HebbAr*, *Hemmige*, and *MelnAttar* communities are some of the many Sri Vaishnava groups that have originated from here.

Although their spoken language is the Sanskrit based *Kannada*, more importance is given to the *Dravida Vedas*, the 4000 Divine outpourings of the *Azhvars*, than to the Sanskrit Vedas.

Tradition and Festivals:

In accordance with the Sri Vaishnava tradition where the Acharya is given equal or more importance than the Lord, the bhagavathas of this special divine place give extraordinary importance to Sri Ramanuja and His Darling Child. The daily worship is done first at the shrine of Sri Ramanuja and subsequently to the main presiding deities.

Although there are no azhvar pasurams sung in direct reference to *Thirunarayanapuram*, Sri Ramanuja dedicated the 4.1.1 verse of Sri Nammazhvar’s *Thiruvaimozhi* to ThiruNarayana.

The two main festivals held at this sacred place are the famous *Vairamudi* festival (The Festival of the Diamond Crown) and Sri Ramanuja Tirunakshattiram (Sri Ramanuja’s Appearance Day) festival. The former is held in the Tamil/Solar month *Panguni* on the star *Pushyam* where Chelva Pillai also called Yatiraja Sampath KuMAran majestically adorns the sparkling, resplendent diamond-studded crown. The latter is held during the month of *Chittirai*, during the *TiruvAdirai* star. Both these are 10-day-long festivals where the town sees tens of thousands of devotees to enjoy the Divine Form of the Lord ThiruNarayana and His Father, Yatiraja Sri Ramanuja.
GREAT SAINTS AND TEACHERS

TA Varadhan

To tell us about the great concern that the Lord has for all of us, our elders liken his uninitiated grace to water (just as water is essential for all life, and just as water brings comfort and coolness to the body, the Lord’s grace is essential for everything, and brings comfort and coolness to the soul). They compare Sri Nammazhvar, the leader of all devotees, to the rain bearing clouds that absorb the water, waiting to pour it on the lands where people need water. The mountains gather all the rains produced by the clouds and accumulate it into streams so that the water can reach people wherever they are. Svami Nathamuni is that mountain. The streams of water are the two teachers who followed Svami Nathamuni – uyya-k-koNdAr and maNakkAl nambi. The small streams join together and form a boundless river abundant with the source of life – water. Such a big river is Svami Alavandar. The river flows, and the water may not be useful if all the water flows to the ocean. So, we make channels from the river and divert the water to a lake where we can have the water whenever we need it. Such channels are the five teachers who succeeded Svami AlavandhAr. They channeled the teachings and blessings arising from the grace of the Lord, given to them by the clouds that are Svami Nammazhvar, accumulated into streams that are Svami Uyyakondar and Manakkal Nambi by the mountain that is Svami Nathamuni, joined together into an abundant flowing river that is Svami Alavandar, channelized by the five teachers following Svami Alavandar that are

(i) Svami periya nambi
(ii) Svami periya thirumalai nambi
(iii) Svami thiru-k-kOshtiyUr nambi
(iv) Svami thiru-aranga-p-perumAL arayar and
(v) Svami thirumAlai ANdAn.

The lake that holds all this water for us is our dear Ramanuja. And the gates that allow the water to reach everyone in the area are the 74 great leaders that Svami Ramanuja appointed for that purpose.

The next three months are very auspicious for us. The next few pages provide a very brief summary about Svami Nammazhvar and Svami Nathamuni, whose appearance days fall in the april-june timeframe. Svami Ramanuja’s appearance day also falls in this timeframe, and we have this jumbo issue to provide more material about Him.

Svami Nammazhvar:

It will not be an exaggeration if one said that if Svami Nammazhvar were not there, there would be no way for salvation for us. This Azhvar is called “prapanna jana kUtasthAr” – the emperor of all the devotees of the Lord. He is the one who makes us understand the Lord’s grace. He is the one who, out of his concern for our welfare, provided the revealed scriptures that are the Nalayira divya prabhandham to Sriman Nathamuni. And, He is the one who shows us the essence of our faith – sing about the great qualities of the Lord, and serve ALL of his devotees.

This Azhvar was born in a place called thiru-k-kurugUr. This is presently called Azhvar thirunagari, and is about 20 kilometers from the town of ThirunelvEli in deep South of the state of TamizhnAdu, in South India. He was born to a family of devout devotees of the Lord. It is said that he was born under the blessings of the beautiful Lord at the temple of thiru-k-kuRungudi, whose name is Sri Vaishnava Nambi! The parents named their child as “parAnkuSan” and “SaTakOpan”. The child mARan was very unique. He did not drink milk, cry or do the things that a child does. So, on the 12th day after his birth, his parents took him to the temple at Azhvar thirunagari (where one can worship the beautiful, wonderful Lord – AdinAthan – literally meaning the “source of everything” in tamizh), where the child received the Lord’s blessings. The parents also started calling the child as ‘mARan” (one who is opposite to others, tamizh word). They also placed the child on a thottil (pram) under the sacred tamarind tree in the temple (the tree was none other than the Great Holy snake – anantAzhvAn, which is the bed for the Lord when He sleeps, the throne for the Lord when He sits, the umbrella for the Lord when He walks, the footwear for the Lord, and everything that the Lord needs), and dedicated the child as the property of all, and as the cherished belonging of the whole society. It is said that, at this time, the Lord sent His chief of staff – sEnai mudhanmaiyAr (Sri VisvaksEna), and performed initiation of the child – by providing the most supreme knowledge necessary for a soul. This is a prime example of the Lord’s uninitiated grace. This is why the Azhvars are known as “mayarvu aRa madhi nalam aruLa-p-peRRavargaL” – the ones who were blessed with unblemished knowledge that they can never tire of, or forget.

The child mARan did not speak anything, eat anything, or even move from the place under the holy tree. On his 16th birthday, another great Azhvar – madhura-kavi-Azhvar (the Azhvar who sings sweet songs!), came to mARan, and in their ensuing conversation, it became apparent
to everyone that the child mARan was a blessed soul, blessed for the purpose of giving all the world the revealed scriptures that the Lord’s chief of staff revealed to him. At this time, the Lord, who has out of His own concern for His people made many places on this earth (the holy cities – the divya desams, of which there are 106 on this earth) as His abode in different forms, revealed Himself in all the glory and splendour and beauty in *Each* one of those forms to mARan under the holy tree. The Lord of Srirangam ordained him as “OUR” Azhvar – “nam Azhvar” (The Lord’s special “OUR” is visible in the name of the Lord of Srirangam – “nam perumAL” – our perumAL. Then He gave the name “OUR” Azhvar to Nammazhvar. He also gave the “OUR” honour to two other teachers – nam jIyar and nampiLLai, who adorn the great lineage of teachers described in the Jan 2003 issue). Nammazhvar is the ONLY person to whom the Lord came in ALL his forms from the holy places.

Nammazhvar then took the revealed knowledge that He had been blessed with, and provided it to us in the form of four great prabhandhaas (poem forms in tamil) – Thiruvaimozhi, thiru-viruththam, thiru-Asiriyam and periya thiruvandhAdhi. These four scriptures given to us by the Azhvar are commonly understood to be the essence of the Sanskrit form of the revelations – the four Vedas – namely sAma vEda, rg vEda, yajur vEda and atharva vEda. The Azhvar spent all his living days on earth in the thought of the Lord and His qualities. Many devotees gathered around him, and together they celebrated the great qualities of the Lord. To the devotees, Nammazhvar revealed in a verse in Thiruvaymozhi, the fact that the whole world will be saved, and the sins of the world will be demolished, by the birth of a great teacher. This teacher is none other than our dear Ramanuja.

When we go to a Vaishnava temple today, after worship, the priest normally places a conical object on the devotee’s head. People generally accept this blessing with great veneration. That is for due reason. This object – called “SatAri” or “Sri SaTakOpan” – represents Nammazhvar. Just as Nammazhvar spent every moment of his existence under the feet of the Lord, thinking about His qualities and serving Him, the SatAri also spends every moment of its time under the feet of the Lord of the temple. The SatAri is the representation of none other than Svami Nammazhvar. When our head comes into contact with the SatAri, it is believed that we get blessed by this greatest of devotees of the Lord, and the blessing he gives us is basically the good sense of mind so that we can become pure devotees of the Lord.

Svami Nammazhvar was born in the tamizh month of vaikAsi, in the star of visAgam. It falls on June 12th this year.

Svami Nathamuni:

Svami Nathamuni was born to a family of devout devotees in a place known as “veera Narayana puram” (present day kAttu-mannAr-kOvil, in tamizhNAdu in South India). There is a great temple at this place, and his father did service at the temple. His father’s name was Isvara bhattAzhvar. His parents named him as Sri Ranganatha. In due course of time, Sri Nathamuni became accomplished in yOga, and became to be known as Sri Ranganathar, or Nathamuni.

When he became a middle aged man, he, along with his father (Isvara bhattAzhvar) and son (Isvaramuni) went to a pilgrimage to North India, and visited Ayodhya, Mathura, sALagRama (muktinAth, in present day Nepal), and started to live on the banks of yamuna in a place called Sri gOvardhanapuram (present day gOvardhana, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, in North India). There, they performed service to the Lord of the temple (yamunai-th-thuraivan, the Lord of the banks of yamuna). One night, the Lord of their hometown, kAttumannAr, appeared in Nathamuni’s dream, and called them back to veera Narayanapuram. After taking leave from yamunai-th-thuraivan, they went back to veera Narayanapuram, and resumed their services at the temple.

One day, while Sri Nathamuni was performing service at the temple, a group of devotees came to the temple. They were singing the sweetest songs that he had ever heard. The songs started with the word “ArAvamudhE” (tamizh – Oh! the one who is the limitless sweet nectar!), and the songs contained the most delectable meanings. Nathamuni asked the people what they were singing. He listened to the last song which contained the words “Or AyiraththuL ip-p-paththum” (tamizh – these 10 among the 1000), and enquired them about the remaining 990 songs. The devotees replied that they knew these 10 songs that were taught to them by their forefathers, and that is all they knew. In the last song, there were also the words “kurukUr saTakOpan” (tamizh – saTakOpan from kurukUr). So, he went to thiru-k-kurukUr and enquired. (This is the same town that we saw in the previous pages – Azhvar thirunagari, or thiru-k-kurukUr, where Nammazhvar was born). A devotee who was the descendant of Svami madhura-kavi-Azhvar, named Sri parAnkusa dAsa, told Sri Nathamuni that these 1o divine poems were from something called the thiruVaimozhi. That, and other divine poems were lost many years ago. All that he could give Sri Nathamuni was 11 poems that formed a collection known as
“kaNNi-nun-siRu-th-thAmbu”. Sri parAnkusa dAsa also had heard that if one repeated it 12,000 times in front of the image of Nammazhvar, with devotion to Nammazhvar, that person would be blessed by Nammazhvar.

Sri Nathamuni duly did so, and Nammazhvar appeared before him, and enquired what it was that he wanted? Sri Nathamuni expressed his desire to know about thiruvAymozhi and other divine poems. Svami Nammazhvar blessed Sri Nathamuni not only with the thiruvAymozhi, but also with the other divine poems that make up the divine 4000, the three great secret teachings (rahasya traya), the meanings of the revelations that form the divine 4000 and the ashtAnga yOga teachings. Sri Nathamuni spent a few years at Azhvar thirunagari, doing service at the temple of Lord AdinAtha, and practicing the teachings that Svami Nammazhvar had taught him.

Again, the Lord of veera Narayanapuram (kAttu mannAr) appeared in his dreams and commanded him to get back to his hometown! [The Lord, it seems, cannot bear to be separated from His devotees!]. After reaching veera Narayanapuram, Sriman Nathamuni took two great disciples – mElai agaththu Azhvar (the devotee who lives on the west street house!), and keezhai agaththu Azhvar (the devotee who lives on the east street house!), and taught them to method of preaching the divine 4000 with the use of song, music and dance. To this day, this practice continues in many great temples in TamizhnAdu. Sri Nathamuni also taught the ashtAnga yOga rahasya to a devotee called thiru-k-kurugaikAvalappan, and the divine 4000 and its meanings to a teacher called Uyyakondar. He further commanded them to teach these to his grandson – Sri yAmunAchArya, another great teacher that adorns our lineage of teachers. Sri Nathamuni lived till the age of 93 on this earth, and went on the abode of the Lord.

His appearance day is the tamizh month of Ani, in the star of anushAm. It falls on July 10, 2003.

Kulasekara Azhvar:

This Azhvar was born to the king of the chEra country (the present day state of Kerala, adjacent to tamizhnAdu in South India), in a place called “kolli nagar”. On seeing the immense beauty and radiance of the child, his father named him “kulasEkara” (the one who will be the gem of the lineage). In due time, the young prince learned all methods of war, the duties of being a king and other good deeds. He won other kingdoms in
war, and became a great prince. His father, coronated him as the emperor and went to the forests to pursue spirituality.

King Kulasekara ruled his kingdom in the most appropriate manner. It is said that his rule was so god and just, that people compared it to the rule of Lord Rama in Ayodhya. In due course, the king Kulasekara brought learned people from all over, and enquired about the real truth. Slowly, he learned that the Lord Sriman Narayana is the root cause of everything, and the highest purpose in life is to perform service to Him and His devotees. The Lord also blessed Kulasekara with the knowledge and mindset of being a true devotee. The king Kulasekara visited many holy places, and spent his time listening to the great qualities of the Lord as told by the great epics Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Srimad bhAgavatham. He took special liking to Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, and the Lord of thiru-viththuva-k-kOdu (in present day Kerala).

One day, when he was listening to a lecture on Ramayana by a great pandit, the king became very very involved (as usual; PeriyAzhvar had done). The pandit was narrating the part where the army of demons, on the command of the demoness Surpanakha (whose nose Lakshmana had cut as she was trying to harm Rama and Sita) assembled to fight Rama. There were 14000 demons of the biggest variety, and on this side, there was just Rama and Lakshmana. On hearing this, king Kulasekara immediately got up, and commanded his commander in chiefs to get his army. He was going to go with his army to help Rama fight these 14000 demons! On seeing this, the smart pandit, immediately said “the great Rama, single-handedly defeated the 14000 strong demon army and retired safely to the cottage where sIta was present”. Only then did king Kulasekara become calm.

From that day onwards, all pandits who were narrating the story of Ramayana to king Kulasekara made it a habit to narrate some things very fast so that king Kulasekara would start with his army to help Rama!

As he was learning and listening to these holy scriptures and concepts, king Kulasekara came to understand the special place that the holy town of SriRangam holds for devotees. He yearned to go there, live there, and perform service the Lord of Srirangam – Lord Ranganatha. It is said that every morning, Kulasekara will start for SriRangam, abandoning his duties as the king. On seeing this, his ministers, and prominent people in his kingdom will bring some devotees to the path in which the king was starting to go. On seeing this, the king would invite the devotees to his palace, and serve them all day (as he had learnt that the greatest duty of a devotee is to serve other devotees of the Lord, and naturally he had affection for other devotees). This practice continued for years and years.

At his palace, all the devotees had free reign. They could go from any room, and could be present everywhere. On seeing such free reign for the devotees, some of his ministers became jealous, and hatched a plot to make the king hate the devotees. On the appearance day of Rama (Sri Rama Navami), the ministers stole a very valuable necklace on the idol of Lord Rama. When the king looked at the idol, and saw the necklace missing, he asked his ministers where it was. The feigned ignorance, and suggested that it is only the devotees who have free access all over the palace, and that it should be one of them who had stolen the necklace. On hearing this, king Kulasekara asserted that there was no way that the devotees would do such a thing. To prove that, he had his ministers bring him a pot containing a poisonous serpent. The king declared that he will put his hand into the pot, and that if the devotees had stolen the necklace, the serpent would bit him. Miraculously, the serpent did not bite the king, and everyone was convinced that the devotees had not stolen the necklace. On seeing this, the ministers confessed to the king, and apologized for their mistake, and brought the necklace to the king.

The king became disgusted with this incident, and generally felt that his duties of being a king were coming in the way of his desire to serve the Lord and His devotees. So, he coronated his son as the emperor, and left on a pilgrimage of holy places, with his final destination being Srirangam. At every holy place he went, he became overcome by the beauty of the Lord at that holy place, and he composed a divine poem compilation called “perumAL thirumozhi”.

At Srirangam, he performed service at the temple. He built the corridor around the temple that to this day is called “kulasEkaran thiru-suRRu” (the Kulasekara passage). The first step just outside the sanctum sanctorum in the temple of Lord SrinivAsa in thirumalai is called “Kulasekara-p-padi” (the step of Kulasekara). The beautiful stOtra in Sanskrit – mukunda mAla (pearl of poems on Lord Mukunda) is also attributed to this Azhvar.

His appearance day is in the tamizh month of mAsi, the star of punarpUsam. It fell on March 13, 2003.
MADHURAKAVI AZHVAR
The Saint Who worshipped only His Teacher and not the Lord
Rama Priya Ramanuja Dasyai

The ascent of the star Chittirai in the month that is also known as Chitirai (which falls between mid-April and mid-May) is the thirunakshatram of Sri Madhurakavi Azhvvar, who is included among the “10+2” Tamizh mystics whose works are contained in the Nalayira divya prabhandam. However, unlike the others, who composed dozens of mystical hymns on Sri Raman Narayana and His wondrous qualities, Madhurakavi Azhvvar composed just 10 pAsurams, and all of them were directed not towards God, but to his AchArya, Nammazhvar, the most enigmatic but perhaps greatest among all of the 10 Azhvars.

Although hailing from the South, Madhurakavi spent a good deal of his life touring the divya dEsams in the Northern parts of India. On one occasion, while he was worshipping Sri Rama at Ayodhya, he saw a brilliant light just above the southern horizon that seemed to be beckoning back to the Southern India. Madhurakavi followed the light to the small temple town of ThirukkurugUr. There Madhurakavi saw a saintly young man sitting in deep meditation under the shade of a large tree that was contained within the courtyard of the temple. This young man was called by the local townspeople as MARan, but he would soon be later known as SatakOpan or Nammazhvar.

From conversations with local residents, Madhurakavi came to understand that this young man had been under the shade of this tree all his life, in deep mystical contemplation of the Divine. He never ate, walked, or slept, or even spoke. It would appear as if he were waiting for someone who would have the right qualifications, aptitude and attitude to awaken him from his trance such that he could begin to share the secrets of his mystical experience.

Madhurakavi approached Nammazhvar respectfully with a complex question that he hoped would be just the right one to awaken the great soul from his trance. He asked, "sethathin vayaril siriAdhu pirandhAl, yethai thinru, yenge valurum (if a living being is born into a dead body, what does it eat, and where does it live)?" Hearing this deeply estoteric question, Nammazhvar opened his eyes and replied, "athai thinru, angE valarum (it lives there, and eats that)".

This simple yet perplexing conversation refers to the nature of the soul, which at birth finds itself in a lifeless thing, the body, which is made of the same five basic elements (earth, air, water, fire, and ether) that make up the world that it lives in. For the duration of its life, the soul lives within the body, and partakes of the materials of this world of which its body is made. Consequently, "it lives there and eats that".

Overwhelmed by this simple, succinct response to what had a many-layered question, Madhurakavi knew at that moment that he had found his AchArya, his True Spiritual Teacher, and a true devotee of Sri Raman Narayana. As what would serve as a paradigm for the egalitarian nature that Sri Ramanuja would later propagate, Madhurakavi set aside the fact that he was born into a Brahmin community while Nammazhvar belonged to the Sudra community, and simply and wholeheartedly dedicated himself to learning from and serving him. So much was Madhurakavi's devotion to Nammazhvar, that he composed a set of 10 pAsurams, which came to be included among the Sacred Collection of 4000, to describe his feelings.

This set of 10 verses is called "kaminin siruthAmbu", "the Short-Knotted String, in reference to the short string (which is seen as a metaphor for Pure Divine Love) which Yashoda used to capture her playful son, Sri Krishna. Madhurakavi uses the example of this thread to describe that while it is used by Nammazhvar in much the same way to hold Sri Krishna in his heart, Madhurakavi's short-knotted thread of devotion will be used only towards holding Sri Nammazhvar. So, while all of the other Azhvars' mystical experiences have the Supreme Lord as the center of devotion, Madhurakavi's divine experience places his Teacher alone as the center of everything. Nammazhvar is seen by Madhurakavi to be the mother, father, friend, teacher, and even God. In one verse, Madhurakavi says, "nAvinAl naviRRu inbam yElthinEn, mEvimEn, avam ponnadi meympmniyE, decumaRRAtiEn kurugUr nambi, pAvin innisai padith thirivanE" (My mouth is filled with the nectar of reciting the holy name of my kurugUr nambi (the leader of ThirukkurugUr). I know refuge only at His Divine Feet; I know of no other God. I will spend my days singing the sweet songs that he sings (Nammazhvar's ThiruAymozhi).

Madhurakavi's experience of seeing a devotee of God as being his everything, even being over and above God Himself has been likened to the relationship that Sri Rama’s youngest brother, Sathrugna, the twin brother of Lakshmana, shared with Bharata. For while Lakshmana became a virtual shadow and servant to God incarnate Sri Rama, Sathrugna found his purpose in serving the Sri Rama’s brother and regent, Sri Bharata.

This experience also serves as the precedent for the concept of "AchArya abhimAnAnum", reverence and service to the AchArya. It is this relationship...
that is of utmost importance in Sri Vaishnava practice, as it is only through our teacher alone that we share the connection to Ramanuja and to Sriman Narayana. So, while it may be difficult to experience God directly as we are unable to fully know Him, the AchArya is in and of himself the very personification of the Lord's Mercy and Compassion, always available to provide us with his care, solace, and guidance. So service to the AchArya becomes more important than serving the Lord Himself, and in a sense, becomes our only means to God-realization.

THE NATURE OF SOUL
As taught by Nammazhvar, Alavandar and Ramanuja

Dr M Rangachari

There are systems of philosophy which center on the notion that an individual treat his/her body, all the things that he/she experiences, including material things like mountains, seas, rivers, trees, strucures, etc., which is known as prakriti in Sanskrit; as well as the people in his/her life - friends, relatives, co-workers - indeed all of the myriad of people that he/she interacts with, as being false, a mere mirage. Such a view is intended to show the lack of permanency of these entities. These systems go one step further in suggesting that the emotions, joy, sorrow, fear, hope, that are created for the individual during his/her interaction with all of these through his/her senses, are to be taken as illusory, as well. Needless to say, such an approach gives great discomfort to all of us, as it requires great psychological and emotional effort to be able to disregard all that we have come to know and cherish.

This discomfort is further compounded by the notion in these philosophies that the individual strive to see that his/her soul (Atma), which he/she can neither see nor experience, as the only true entity, and that this same Atma should be seen as being the same one that encompasses all other living beings as the Paramatma (Supreme Soul or Reality) All this is forced on the system with a requirement to literally interpret only two vedic aphorisms: 'aham brahmaAsmi' (I am the Supreme Soul), and 'tat tvam asi' (That thou art).

Needless to say, this position and the personal discipline that is required to maintain it would be contradistinctive to our very nature, and indeed, in practical application, would prove to be futile.

Contrary to this approach, however, the philosophy advocated by the Azhvars, whose revelations have been verified by our Acharyas to be a pure and complete reflection of what is contained in Vedic thought, do not at all convey the idea of an illusory prakriti. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the Tamizh word for body is "mei", which is also a synonym for the word truth. Because of this, Thirumoolar, a Tamizh Saivite philosopher, had to borrow a Sanskrit word: "kAyam", for body, when he said "kAyamE idhu poyyada" (This body is impermanent), since "meyyidu poyyada" (Truth is impermanent) would be an oxymoron.

The Azhvars considered prakriti, of which the body is made, as real. They also adhered to the theory that the soul, called "uyir" in Tamizh, and "Atma" in Sankrit, is just as real. What differentiated AtmA from prakriti is that while the body is wears with time, the Atma, the soul, does not perish, as BhagavAn Sri Krishna says in Sri mad Bhagavad Gita (2-24):

"achchEdhyOyam adAhyOyam aklEdhyO ashOshya Eva cha |
 nithya: sarvagatha: sthANu: achalOyam sanAthana: ||
{It cannot be cleft; It cannot be burnt; It cannot be wetted and it cannot be dried. It is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable and primeval.}

Swami Nammazhvar expands upon this in thiruvAymozhi 5.1.6:

"puRam aRa katti-k-koNdu  iruvalvinayAr kumaikkum muRai muRai Akkai pugal"
{The soul enters again and again and decays in the material body which is the place in which the two things, puNya and pApa embrace completely}

From this, we learn that the soul is provided with a new body in each birth, based on the complex array of puNya (good deeds) and pApa (sins) that it has accrued in previous lives. The Azhvars go one step further in suggesting that the Lord will cut this cycle of births thorugh His own efforts, as Swami Nammazhvar says in ThiruvAymozhi 9.3.8:

"inRi-p-pOga iruvinayum keduththu, onRi Akkai pugAmai uyya-k-kolVAN"
(The Lord, who destroys the two types of karmAs - puNya and pApa such that the soul does not enter a body again).

Thus, the Azhvars consider both the body and the soul of an individual to be maintained by the Lord. This point is taken one step further in the Azhvars' hymns to show that in actuality, God is intimately connected to both of these, just as the soul is to the body. An example of where this concept is brought out is Nammazhvar's ThiruvAymozhi 10.7.8:
work, stOtraratna, the Hymn Jewel, which is regarded as the primary work of study and recitation for followers of Ramanuja. While he elaborated upon the nature of the soul as being separate from the body and mind in the SiddhitrArya, his stOtraratna seems to be reserved for an almost direct translation of the concepts of sEshatvam from the AzhvAr prabhandham, for the benefit of those not exposed to these beautiful and practical ideas found in the Tamizh works, because of their notion that Sanskrit was the language that could be used to validate scriptural text. For example, in the sOka:

"na dEham na praNAN na cha sukham  asEshAbhilashitam, na cha AtmAnam
Anyat kimapi tava sEshatvam vibhavAt| bahirbUtham nAtha kshaNam api
sahE ya tu satadhA, vinAsam tat satyam madhu madhana vignyApanam
idam | |
" yAmunAchArya asserts tat satyam! (This is the truth!), his body
joined with the prakriti that is so difficult to cross), nor my mind, nor my
speech, nor any one of my actions)

What sets apart the Azhvars hymns from other philosophies is the understanding that both the soul and the body belong to the Lord, and hence their reality as independent entities, as well as their connection to each other cannot be regarded as being temporal or illusory.

As to the nature of the soul itself, most philosophical systems begin with the recognition of its immortality, and its qualities of having true knowledge (jnAnam) and bliss (Anandam). But the other schools fail to clearly describe what jnAnam is, and why there is anAndam associated with the soul in its true nature. The Azhvars provide an added explanation that in addition to these capabilities, the soul has as its inherent nature sEshatvam or adimai as it is known in Tamizh, servitude towards the Lord. Since He never leaves the soul, the soul’s knowledge and bliss rest in its eternal relationship as sEshatvam to the Lord. This is made clear through such words as “adiyEn uLLAn udal uLLAn” (thiruvAymozhi 8-8-2, He is present inside adiyEn (the soul that serves); He is present inside the body). The presence of the second word udal uLLAn in the above phrase shows that adiyEn uLLAn applies to the soul and indicates its quality of being capable of sEshatvam. Consequently, the essential nature of the soul, for which it applies its knowledge and from which it derives bliss, and for which the body is provided as an instrument for its use, is in being a humble servant to the Lord, ready and willing to do His bidding for His Pleasure.

The lineage of teachers of the Ramanuja tradition, having immersed themselves in the Azhvars’ mystical experience, drew from and elaborated upon this lucid view on the nature of the soul and body, and as a result, created a synthesized and non-contradictory understanding of these profound concepts.

One of these AchAryas, Sri YAmunAchArya, known as Alavandar in Tamizh, revealed the his connection to the Azhvars in his great Sanskrit
seshatva of the soul to the Lord is indicated as an extension to knowledge and enjoyment as part of the soul’s essential nature. The use of "adiyEn uLLAn" (He is inside this one who serves Him) instead of "en-uLLAn" (He is inside me) further clarified the aspect.

This confirmation allowed Sri Ramanuja, or emperumAnar as he is reveredly called in view of his concern for the common man, to bring out this aspect of the soul in his gIta bhAshya. In his commentary on the slOka:

"chaturvidha Bhajanthe mAm janA: sukruthinOrjunA | ArthO jignAsu: arthArthiJnAtni bharatharShabha | |

(Four types of men of good deeds worship Me, O, Arjuna. These are the distressed, the seekers after knowledge, the wealth-seekers and the men of knowledge).

In his explanation of each of the above categories, for the category of men of knowledge(jnAtni), Ramanuja uses the following states, “bhagavat sEshataikarasa AtmA svArupa vit” (one who has realized that only the taste of servitude (sEshataikarasa) to the Lord is his nature) This aspect was elaborated further by Sri Ramanuja’s immediate successor, Sri parAsara bhattar in his paradigmatic ashtaslOki, which was the first work in Sanskrit to expose the ideas of the Azhvars in interpreting the three sacred mantraS. AcharyAs later to him such as Sri NanjIyar, Sri NampiLLai and Sri PiLLai have brought out this aspect of seshatva of the soul more explicitly and forcefully.

Knowledge is required to realize the need for deliverance. Enjoyment is realized by the state which the soul attains when it achieves after moksha is granted by the Lord out of His Boundless and Unconditional Grace. Complete servitude, or seshatva is relevant for the soul all the time. An individual should strive to be bereft of even traces of ahamkAra (ego) and the mamakAra (possessiveness), which the Azhvars insist impede the soul from truly experience the Lord. Thirumangai Azhvar states this beautifully in periya thirumozhi 2.1-2 “ugandavai tammai maNmisai mEvi AdkoNdu pOi visumbEra vaikkum endhai”- My Master Who goes to earth, gets servitude of those whom He desires and goes along with them raising them to His abode.

Through the years of the development of Sri Vaishnava, the nature of the soul as being a humble receptacle to the Lord’s Grace and instrument to His Good, has remained a constant thread, from the earliest expressions of the Azhvars, to the ten pasurams discovered by Nathamunigal, to Alavandar’s stOtraratnam, to Sri Ramanuja in his Bhagavad Gita BhAshya, and to the present day. It behooves us as devotees of Ramanuja to pray that we will be blessed to be freed from the bondage of our own false egos, such that we too can revel in the bliss of our true nature as ThirumAl adimai, loving servants to the Supreme Lord.

__DIVINE PLACES – TIRUMALA__

Napinnai NC

**Presiding Deity:**

Srinivasa, also known by names Venkateshwara, Balaji, Lord of Seven Hills (seven hills represent the body of the AdiEsha and the seven peaks being his seven hoods) - is in the standing posture facing East. The lower right hand of the idol is in abhaya hasta pose, pointing to His lotus feet as the only refuge to the devotees, and the lower left hand is in kaTi hasta (resting on His thigh), and showing that the ocean of birth and death (samsarasAgara) is only knee deep for those who have sought His feet. The procession deity is called kalyAna Venkateshwara and MalAyappar. The Lord bears Sri Mahalakshmi on His right chest and Sri PadmaNacati on left chest. There is no separate shrine for the Divine Consort on the hills.

**Temple Legend:**

According to the legend, Lord Vishnu (The Pervader of the Universe, Sriman Narayana) came down to earth in search of His Eternal Consort, Sri Mahalakshmi. Tirumala was originally the place of Adi Varaha Svami (the fourth of the ten major incarnations of the Lord) and the Lord settled here by entering an ant hill under the tamarind tree, situated on the southern bank of Svami puShkariNi (The Temple Tank), on the auspicious day under the star Shravana (tiruvONam) with the permission of Varaha Svami. References to Venakatachalam, as it is also known, are found in several PurAnas. To mark this occasion, Brahma celebrated a nine-day festival every year and hence the festival later came to be known as brahmOtsavam.

**Salient Aspects:**

**vimAnam** (the name of the tower above the presiding deity’s sanctum): Ananda vimAna nilayam

**tIrtham** (the name of the holy tank whose water is used for various purposes in the temple): AkASA ganga. There are several tIrthams and the
Other Important Facts:

(i) Nam Perumal (Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam) sojourned here when Malik Kafur attacked Srirangam temple.
(ii) Sri Ramanuja was the back bone to retain Tirumala as Sri Vaishnavaya temple. Tondaiman was a great devotee of the Lord and it is recorded in inscriptions that he built the temple, mandapams, gopurams and many others. Also Kings of Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagar made rich offerings (gold, diamond, gems) to the temple.
(iii) Thirumalai AnantAzhvAn, a disciple of Sri Ramanuja, was ordained by the Acharya to do flower service to the Lord. As a part of garden maintenance, Sri AnantAzhvAn (assisted by his pregnant wife) was digging a field. The Lord observed that his wife was getting very tired, so He came in the form of a young man, offering to help her. Sri AnantAzhvAn did not like any intrusion and so he hit the Lord on His chin with his spade. The lad disappeared. Later, when Sri AnantAzhvAn went into the temple, he found that His chin was bleeding. He asked for Lord’s forgiveness and applied camphor balmings (paccai kaRplUram) and the Lord ever sports it in remembrance of Sri AnantAzhvAn.
(iv) Sri Adivan Satakopa Yatindra MahadEsika Jeeyar (first pontiff of Ahobila mutt) constructed the first steps to Tirumala in the 13th century.
(v) The brahmOtsavam is celebrated on a grand scale for nine days in September, attracting pilgrims from all over the world. The most significant festivals are garudOtsavam and rathOtsavam. The daily worship starts at 3.am with Suprabhata seva (awakening the Lord) and closes at 1.am with EkAnta seva (putting the Lord to sleep).
(vi) This is the world’s richest temple with annual income crossing over 300 crores. On ordinary days, the Lord wears gold crown and on special occasions diamond crown. The golden dhoti (plAmbararam) is the heaviest of all His costumes, weighing about 40kg.

How to get there:
Tirumala hills (roughly 2800 ft above the sea level, 100 sq miles in area) are 18 kilometers northwest of Tirupati, situated in Chittoor district of Andra Pradesh. Bus services from Tirupati to Tirumala are very frequent (every two minutes) and affordable. Tirupati is well connected by railways, road and air. Tirupati is 10 kilometers from Renigunta Railway station and about 150 kilometres (via Kalahasti) from Chennai.
The truth about Varna (Occupation) and JAti (Caste)

**Question:** What is VEDICS view on Caste system? Is it true that the Vedic religion divides people based on birth?

**Answer:** Popular misconceptions say that the Vedic religion encourages division of human beings based on one's birth. As a result, some people have been kept backward and uneducated while others have abused this misconceptions and misinformation for personal gains. Much of this misconception can be attributed to the use of the words 'Varna' and 'JAti' interchangeably. A closer analysis will reveal just how wrong these misconceptions are.

**Question:** What is Varna?

**Answer:** The root word for Varna is 'Vri' which means one's occupation. The Varna system was hence originally based on division of labor. Those whose duties were to protect the men, animals and properties were called as 'Kshatriyas', the warriors. Those who had skills in teaching and scholarly thought were 'Brahmins' and so on.

The Varna system was solely based on the attitude of an individual and his/her propensity for performing certain duties. The source of these identified in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita as being the gunas, or inner qualities, that were the result of the karmas of each individual from previous lives. Those who had more of Sattva guna were Brahmins, those who had Rajasic Guna were Kshatriyas and so on.

**Question:** Is that just your opinion or there is any proof for this?

**Answer:** To quote from Lord Krishna’s words in Chapter 4, Verse 13 of Sri mad Bhagavad Gita:

\[
\text{catur-varnyam maya srstam \ guna-karma-vibhagasah}
\text{tasya kartaram api mam \ viddhy akartaram avyayam}
\]

The Lord says that according to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, He created the four divisions of human society.

**Question:** Are there any examples of great scholars who were not born in Brahmin families?

**Answer:** We have instances from purAnas of many who were not born from Brahmin parents actually teaching Brahmins and Kshatriyas. For example, Sri Vedavyasa was the one who actually compiled 4 Vedas. But he was not born to Brahmin parents.

At first, the people had more or less a right to choose over their Varna based on their karmas and their interests. However, over time, fathers began to expect their sons to take over the duties of their specific calling. Due to the continual aspect of the son taking over father's duties in the society, the 'work associated' became a matter of birth and in later days, became identified as a birth right.

**Question:** And what is jAti?

**Answer:** The root for jAti is 'jan', which means birth. It might have happened that due to a continual devolution of one's father's duty to his son over many years, Varna became confused with jAti and we know where we are now.

Instead of having four divisions of labors, we now have several dozen jAtis, each competing with one another for special rights, and each blaming the other for the problems of society. So, even though two jAtis may actually belong to one varna, they may see each other as being two different castes. It is this which has led to the degradation of the varna system and a general disrespect for the Vedas.

While it may not be possible to move completely away from the equating of varna and jAti, we must recognize that when our pUrvacharyas referred to Varna, they literally meant two things:

1. One's attitude (Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasa Gunas)
2. The duties the individual held in the society.

What is important to recognize that, in line with Vedic teachings, our pUrvacharyas refused to acknowledge one Varna as being greater than another, or one being lower than another. All people, irrespective of their Varna are equal in their ability to do Good for this world, and in their ability to obtain salvation through surrender to the Lotus Feet of Sriman Narayana.
In many of the Sri Vaishnava works such as Sri Vachana Bhushanam, it is clearly emphasized that a Sri Vaishnava, irrespective of race, caste, or gender should be revered and respected as 'ThirumAl adiyAr' (a servant of the Lord of Lakshmi).

Consequently, while we must respect and perform the duties and obligations of our specific varna, we must not divide ourselves by jAti. We are all one family bound together by Sriman Narayana and His Unconditional Love for each and every one of us.

**Question:** In recent years are there examples of Non-Brahmin born Scholars who in turn had Brahmin born students? (Your previous example of Veda Vyasa is very old, thousands of years ago)

**Answer:** 4000 Years ago: Swami Satagopan (Nammazhvar) was born into a family belonging to 4th Varna, Sudra. Despite this, he is the regarded to be the greatest among the 10 Azhvars and is also the most important Acharya of our lineage of teachers, who revealed the essence of the Vedas and Upanishads to all of us.

Most of the Azhvars (Approx dates: 10000 BC to 600 AD) are not born in Brahmin families, but we keep their idols in the temple and homes and worship them. This clearly shows that in Sri Vaishnava tradition, caste is irrelevant; being a devotee of the Lord is what matters. (Any living being is equally qualified to be His devotee)

**Question:** Are there any examples in the last few hundred years?

**Answer:** Yes, there are many examples in Sri Vaishnava Acharyas. The noted scholar Sri Pillai Lokacharya lived in Srirangan throughout his life and was a strong believer, preacher & propagator in equality of various varnas in the eyes of God. One of his foremost disciples was a Harijan, called vilAncolaippiLLai, who became very learned and, in his turn, had many Brahmins as his disciples. In the eyes of the Lord all are same and everyone has been given this blessed birth. This is an opportunity to fall in love with God, and realize our true purpose of life, irrespective of race, caste, or gender.

A rich merchant lived his entire life with four wives. The merchant was a good man, and although he did his best to take care of all four of his wives, his level of affection for each wife was different. For the first wife, who was his favorite, the merchant expressed his love by adorning her with fine clothing and treating her to exquisite delicacies. He took great care of her and gave her nothing but the best.

While his first wife remained his favorite, the merchant was also very much in love with his second wife. So much so, in fact that the merchant lived in constant fear that someone was going to steal her away. So, he made sure to guard her. But, since he was so proud of the fact that she was his, he would take every opportunity to show her off to his friends. The merchant felt a great deal of trust and confidence in his third wife, as she was very considerate and patient. So, the merchant chose her to be his confidante. Whenever there was a problem, the merchant would turn to her. And in return, this wife would always be there to help him and support him, even in the most difficult of times.

Now, as to the fourth wife, the merchant hardly took any notice at all. While she was loyal and loved him dearly, she was silent and humble when compared to the other three.

At the end of a long and successful life, the merchant, knowing that his death was fast approaching, contemplated on his life. He thought to himself, "I have lived virtually my entire life under the care of four wives. How can I go into the Great Beyond on my own? I will be so lonely. I know, perhaps I can take my wives with me. I will ask them."

So, the merchant called all of his wives to his bedside. He said to his first wife, "I loved you most, took great care of you, and showered you with jewels, clothing, and rich foods. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?" "No way!" the first wife replied. The words hit the merchant like a sharp knife.

The merchant then spoke to his second wife, "I have loved you so much all my life. You have been my pride and joy, and I have felt pained just at the very thought of ever losing you. Won't you stay with me in this journey into the afterlife?" "No!" the second wife replied without even a hint of compassion in her voice, "My life is far too good to give up now."
In fact, I was even thinking about re-marrying when you die." At this, the merchant's heart sank.

But, not willing to give up, the merchant turned to his third wife and said, "I always turned to you for help and you've always been there for me. Now I need your help again. When I die, will you follow me and keep me company?" The third wife had a little more compassion than the other two, but she too did not wish to join. "I am sorry, My Dear", she said, "the best I can do to help you is to arrange for a proper burial." The pain that the merchant now felt was far too much to bear, and merchant cried in disillusionment.

But, then, the merchant heard a soft, affectionate, voice calling out, "Do not fear, My Love. I am here with you now, and will be with you wherever you are, forever." The man turned in the direction of the voice and saw his fourth wife, the one whom he had hardly noticed, and the one whom he hardly cared for or about, the one who now appeared before him, pale and exhausted after years of being completely ignored. Realizing his great mistake, the man embraced the fourth wife and said, "My Wife, you are with me? After all these years of caring for you the least, after all these years of wasting away all my love on the others, you are here? Dear God, why was I not wiser in the past, why did I not take care of this woman the way I should have? And why should I only know now, when it is far too late, how precious she truly is?"

The Moral of the Story

The merchant represents each and every one of us.

The first wife is our body, which we pamper and shower with whatever it desires. But, despite our utmost love for it, we cannot take it with us when we leave this world. The second wife is our wealth and material possessions, which go to someone else when we die. The third wife represents all our family and friends. While they can provide us with all the support and help that we need while we are in this life, they can do nothing for us when we leave this world. The fourth wife is our soul, the only thing that is with us eternally, in this life, the next life, or the Great Beyond.

Let us not end our lives like the merchant, realizing only too late that he had been ignoring his soul while wasting his life away on things that are only temporary. Caring for and nurturing the spirit should begin now, at this moment, not at the end of our lives. For this is Life's True Purpose.
It is little wonder, then, how upon seeing this beautiful scene, the Handsome Lord in this very mood of Mercy and Grace, surrounded by his devotees took Sri Bhattar Svami to states of spiritual joy such the would sing out with the poetic Sanskrit praises (known as kavi in Sanskrit). Indeed, this occurred on several occasions, and led to the creation of 27 thirumanjana kattiyams. Over time, the kattiyams were incorporated into the thirumanjanam ceremonies, with specific kattiyams assigned to specific holy days when appropriate.

Each kattiyam begins with a Sanskrit sLOka, then a brief introduction (avathAriki) about the kattiyam is presented; after that Bhattar describes the Lord in his kattiyam by quoting verses from the Sruthis, the divya prabhandham and the stOtrAs of great teachers. What is most amazing to observe is that despite their having been composed extemporaneously, Sri Parasara Bhattar was easily able to validate each and every kattiyam with the appropriate praamaNam (scriptural evidence).

While virtually a lifetime of study could be devoted to the subtleties of the kattiyams and their descriptions of Sriman Narayana, this article is intended to offer just a taste of the full range of wisdom and poetry that is contained in what followers of Sri Ramanuja consider to be one of the most significant kattiyams, "Tvam mE, ahum mE" (You belong to me, I belong to myself). The full kattiyam is as follows:

Tvam mE ahum mE kuthasthath, thadApi kutaha idam vEdamUla pRamaNAth. yEthatcha anAdi sidhdhAth anubhava vibhavath sOpi sAkrOsha Eva, kvAkrosha kayaa gItAdishu mama viditha kOtra sAkshi sUdhi syAth hantha tvad pakshapAdi cha iti nrukalahE mrgyamadhyasthavat tvam.

The origin of this kattiyam takes us to Sri Parasara Bhattar's feeling on one occasion that Namperumal was like a person seeking a judge, a referee, who would validate His Position that all Souls, indeed, this entire Universe were His Alone. According to ancient code, when there was no clear-cut indication of ownership, a person could declare that he was the rightful owner of a property by bathing in sacred waters, wearing a garland of thulasi (sacred basil), and proclaiming in a public assembly that what he said was truth. This exact style of dress is what Sri Ranganatha wore on that day, and this is how he continues to appear when receiving the kattiyam today.

Sri Bhattar Svami thus describes Namperumal as one who was in such a state, wearing wet clothes, searching for a judge or referee to appear to concur to this attempt to validate His Word. Our Lord (emperumAnt) is satya sankalpa (one whose vows always become the truth); yet His Garb...
and the thulasi garland that adorned Him, made him appear in Bhattar's mystical enjoyment of Him as though He needed to defend His ownership of all souls.

So, Bhattar, as any good judge or lawyer would, begins to question the Lord, in an effort to obtain "testimony" from Him that the sEsa-sEsi relationship (owner-owned) that he proclaims exists between Himself and the Universe, and which is the hallmark of Sri Ramanuja's philosophical position, is valid.

In a delightfully lucid manner, Sri Parasara Bhattar engages in a brilliant conversation that perhaps each and every soul should share with God:

**GOD**

\[ tvam mE \] – "you are mine" – our Lord (emperumAn) calls the jIva and conveys to him that “you belong to Me”.

**JIVA**

\[ aham mE \] – "I belong to myself" – The soul, which regards itself as an independent being (svatantran) disagrees with emperumAn, and asserts its independence by saying “I belong to myself”

**GOD**

\[ kutha: tat \] – "How is that" - On hearing the statement of the jIva, emperumAn questions him as to how he regards himself as independent.

**JIVA**

\[ tad api kutah \] – "How is what YOU say" - The soul now returns the question by questioning the Lord's claim. It now wants to know how the Lord's claim is valid!

**GOD**

\[ idam vEda mUla pRamaNAth \] – “It is so because the vEdAs, which is the evidence, says so” – The Lord conveys to the soul that, on the basis of the Vedas which is regarded as mUla pRamaNam (primary evidence), He declares that the soul belongs to Him. Those having some familiarity with Sanskrit may enjoy reading some of the passages from the Vedas are appropriate to be quoted here – "patim visvasyAthmEsvaram" – from the purusha sUktha, a part of the Rg vEda; “EkO ha vai Narayana eVa AsIth” – from the Upanishads.

**JIVA**

“Etat cha anAdi sidhdhAth anubhava vibhavAth” – That is because of the timeless philosophy, but this is based on experience – The soul argues with the Lord that the evidence presented by the Lord is only unwritten text whose source is unknown, but that his evidence (i.e. the soul’s) is based on his own experience.

**GOD**

“sOpi sAkrOsha Eva” – But that is repudiated – The Lord denies the words of soul and says “though you have enjoyed independence for a long time, you cannot claim it as your right, and the fact is that you actually belong to Me”. Even though a tenant may enjoy a house for a long time, he cannot claim ownership to the house; similarly though the soul has enjoyed the independence, he cannot claim it as his right.

**JIVA**

“kvAkrOsha kasya” – Where and by whom is it repudiated? - The soul now questions the Lord as to how He objects to the soul’s ownership of itself, and asks “Where and by whom is it repudiated”.

**GOD**

“gItAdishu mama viditha:” - It is said by Me in the bhagavad gIta. The Lord replies to the question of the soul that He Himself says that in the bhagavad gIta. He quotes bhagavad gIta as evidence as it is a renowned text; moreover it was a teaching to Arjuna. Arjuna is a representative of all the souls, and hence the Lord apparently thought it might help to quote from the bhagavad gIta to this questioning soul.

**JIVA**

“hantha tvath pakshapAthi sa” - well, they are biased and partial to You – The stubborn soul disapproves of all the statements of the Lord, and is unwilling to accept the learned people of wisdom as the witness, and says “Well, then he (man of wisdom) is partial to You”. The soul has in his mind the verses from the bhagavad gIta, where the Lord declares that the people of wisdom (jnAni) are dear to Him. jnAni tu
Atmaiva mE matham", "priyO hi jnAni... aham sa ca mana priya" – by quoting the relationship between the Lord and the people of wisdom (as asserted by the Lord Himself), the soul argues that the referees/witnesses quoted by the Lord (i.e. the people of wisdom) are close to the Lord Himself, and hence partial to the Lord.

JIVA

"kO atra sAkshi?" – Who is the witness to that? – the soul is not ready to accept the statement of the Lord, and he now questions the veracity of the evidence that the Lord quotes! He is not convinced by the answers given by the Lord, and now asks for a witness to prove the ownership - “Who is the witness”.

GOD

"sudhI syAth"- People of wisdom are the witnesses - the Lord tells the soul that His ownership of the soul is accepted by the people of wisdom, and that they are the witness.

GOD

"iti nrukalahE mrgyamadhyastha" – finally, the Lord becomes fed up with this debate of the jIva, finds no other option other than to swear to His ownership, and takes an oath by wearing wet clothes and the thulasi garland.

The essential message to be gained by this Divine Conversation is that the individual soul's True Nature lies in realizing its utmost subservience and dependence upon the Supreme Lord, Sriman Narayana. While our false ego prevents us from knowing this, the Lord in His Infinite Mercy and Grace is making all efforts to prove this to us. The Supreme Lord is devoid of all blemishes. He is one whose very Nature is of countless auspicious qualities. He is our Ultimate Benefactor. Therefore, by simply placing our trust in knowing that we are His, we can find our protection and redemption assured by Him, and with Him.

WEBSITE IN FOCUS

In this issue the website reviewed is www.Ramanuja.org. This web page, dedicated to Sri Vaishnavism, is first of its kind to have come up on the internet. The site is named after Sri Ramanuja, one of the most important teachers and propagators of Sri Vaishnavism. Quoting from the website “These pages attempt to present a glimpse into a few sides of this religion -- its vibrant temple culture, the philosophical love poetry of the Azhvar saints, the Vedanta discourses of the Upanishadic sages, the penetrating insight of the acharyas -- all culminating in the grand philosophy of Visishtadvaita.”

The poetry section of the website presents a wonderful and varied collection. It contains the diving outpourings (all the 4000 hymns) of the mystic saints in downloadable format. They are present in English with transliteration. Apart from this it also carries many stotras composed by Sri Vedanta Desika, the Vishnu Sahasranama Stotra (1008 names of Lord Vishnu) and the Purusha Suktam (hymn of creation).

The azhvar and the temple sections of the web site carry beautiful pictures of the Azhvars and the presiding deities of the temples respectively. They are a feast to the eyes. Some of the temples have brief write-ups talking about the salient features of the temple.

Summary of a couple of works of Sri Ramanuja are presented. They are the Vedarthasangraha (summary of the meaning of Vedas) by Svami Adidevananda and the Sri Bhashya (Ramanuja's Commentary on the Brahma-Sutras establishing the philosophy of Vedanta) by S.S Raghavachar. They form a good read as an introduction to these two great works.

The highlight of this website is the Bhakti list archives. Bhakti list is an email list which focuses on discussion of the philosophy, religion and history of Sri Vaishnavism. The archives host a vast repository of information discussing the various aspects of the Sri Vaishnavite philosophy. It presents views of different subscribers who answer the multitude of questions posed. It forms a good forum for discussion through the electronic medium in this modern age.

In summary it can be said that Ramanuja.org serves as a good introduction to Visishtadvaita Vedanta (philosophy of Sri Vaishnavism). Please do go through this website to get a flavor for the philosophy.
# Calendar - Second Quarter 2003

**April 2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lunar Calendar</th>
<th>Star</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/01/03</td>
<td>Panguni 18</td>
<td>Utthattathi</td>
<td>Sarva Amavasai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/02/03</td>
<td>Panguni 19</td>
<td>Revathi</td>
<td>Ugadhi, Telugu New Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/03/03</td>
<td>Panguni 27</td>
<td>Punarvasu</td>
<td>Sri Rama Navami (except at Sri rangam)</td>
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<td>Panguni 30</td>
<td>Magam</td>
<td>Sarva Ekadasi</td>
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<td>04/13/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 1</td>
<td>Pooram</td>
<td>Tamil New Year</td>
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<td>04/16/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 3</td>
<td>Chithra</td>
<td>Chithra Paurnami, Thiruvallikkeni Parthasarathy Utsavam Starts</td>
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<td>Vishakam</td>
<td>Thiruvallikkeni Parthasarathy Garuda Sevai</td>
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<td>Chithirai 9</td>
<td>Pooradam</td>
<td>Thiruvallikkeni Parthasarathy Thiruther</td>
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<td>Chithirai 14</td>
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**May 2003**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>05/04/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 21</td>
<td>Rohini</td>
<td>BalaRama Jayanthi</td>
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<td>05/06/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 23</td>
<td>Thiruvadirai</td>
<td>Sri Ramanujar Thirunakshatram</td>
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<td>Punarvasu</td>
<td>Mudaliyandan Thirunakshatram</td>
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<td>05/10/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 27</td>
<td>Magam</td>
<td>Sri rangam Sri Rama Navami</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/11/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 28</td>
<td>Pooram</td>
<td>Vasavi Jayanthi</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/13/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 31</td>
<td>Hastham</td>
<td>Kanchi Varadar Utsavam Starts</td>
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<td>05/14/03</td>
<td>Chithirai 31</td>
<td>Chithirai</td>
<td>Madhurakavi Azhvar, Thirumalai AnandAzhvar</td>
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**June 2003**

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<tr>
<td>05/15/03</td>
<td>Vaikasi 1</td>
<td>Svathi</td>
<td>Narasimha Jayanthi, Kanchi Varadar Garuda Sevai</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/19/03</td>
<td>Vaikasi 5</td>
<td>Pooradam</td>
<td>Kanchi Varadar Thiruther</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/26/03</td>
<td>Vaikasi 12</td>
<td>Utthirattadhi</td>
<td>Sarva Ekadasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/30/03</td>
<td>Vaikasi 16</td>
<td>Karthikai</td>
<td>Sarva Amavasai</td>
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**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.

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**VEDICS QUIZ**  
*Mukundan Pattangi*

1. Which of the following is not a name for Sri Ramanuja?  
   (a) Ilayazwar  
   (b) Yathiraja  
   (c) Emperumanar  
   (d) Periya Jeeyar

2. As per Visistadvaita (Sri Ramanuja Philosophy) Moksha (salvation) is open to:  
   (a) Vedic Scholars  
   (b) Men only  
   (c) Sanyasis  
   (d) All beings
3. Sri Ramanuja is considered an incarnation of?
   (a) Lord Sriman Narayana    (b) AdiSesha
   (c) Garuda              (d) VisvaksEna

4. Who is the reincarnation (punar avathara) of Sri Ramanuja??
   (a) Mudaliyandan   (b) Embar
   (c) Varavaramuni   (d) Parasara Bhattar

5. Who is NOT the Acharya of Sri Ramanuja?
   (a) Periya Nambi (b) Thiru-k-kOshtiUr Nambi
   (c) Periya Thirumala Nambi (d) Embar

6. Who taught Sri Ramanuja the special meanings of Sri Ramayana?
   (a) Periya Thirumalai Nambi (b) Thiruvan Arayat Perumal
   (c) Alavandar                  (d) Thiru-k-kOshtiUr Nambi

7. Who gave Sri Ramanuja the name Emperumanar?
   (a) Thiru-k-kOshtiUr Nambi  (b) Yadavapaksha
   (c) Koorattazhvan            (d) Alavandar

8. Through whom Lord Varadaraja clarified the six doubts of Sri Ramanuja?
   (a) Thirukkachi Nambi (b) Koorathazhvan
   (c) Mudaliyandan       (d) Embar

9. Which one of the following is not one of the six doubts?
   (a) Is anthima smarana needed (is remembrance of Lord at the last breath essential for Moksha)?
   (b) Who is para-thatva (Supreme God)?
   (c) Are Azhvars Nithya Suris (celestial body living in Sri Vaikuntam)?
   (d) What is the appropriate mean to be adopted for Moksha?

10. Whose relationship will “ensure” Moksha (liberation from samsara)?
    (a) Sriman Narayana  (b) Acharya
    (c) BhAgavatha       (d) Sri Ramanuja

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ANSWERS TO LAST ISSUE’S QUIZ
Mukandan 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 divya desams 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
## GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>acharyas</td>
<td>aachaaryaas</td>
<td>Spiritual teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adiyars</td>
<td>adiyaars</td>
<td>Devotees</td>
</tr>
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<td>adiyen</td>
<td>adiyEn</td>
<td>Your servant</td>
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<td>Wealth</td>
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<td>dasi/dasan</td>
<td>daasi / daasan</td>
<td>Servant in feminine and masculine gender</td>
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<td>divya desham</td>
<td>divya dEsham</td>
<td>One of 108 Sacred Temples that the Sri Vaishnavas revere</td>
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<td>divya-prabhandham</td>
<td>divya-prabhandham</td>
<td>Divine verses</td>
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<td>emperuman</td>
<td>emperumaan</td>
<td>The Lord</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td>Daily rites</td>
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<td>nithya vishuti</td>
<td>nithya vishUti</td>
<td>The Supreme Abode</td>
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<tr>
<td>nithyasuris</td>
<td>nithyasUrIs</td>
<td>The eternally-free souls who reside with the Lord</td>
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<td>paramapadam</td>
<td>paramapadam</td>
<td>Highest abode</td>
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<td>Supreme soul</td>
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<td>perumaal</td>
<td>The Lord</td>
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<td>poorvacharyas</td>
<td>poorvachaaryaas</td>
<td>Spiritual Teachers of the past and present</td>
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<td>prakaranams</td>
<td>prakaraNams</td>
<td>Parts</td>
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<td>Surrender</td>
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<td>rahasyatrayam</td>
<td>The three Great Secret Mantras</td>
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<td>sastraaas</td>
<td>Code of conduct</td>
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<td>seshatva</td>
<td>sEshatva</td>
<td>The quality of being in Servitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>sloka</td>
<td>sLOkaaa</td>
<td>Verse</td>
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<tr>
<td>sri vaikutam</td>
<td>Sri VaikuNTam</td>
<td>The abode of the Supreme Lord, where all souls are in a state of permanent bliss serving the Lord</td>
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<tr>
<td>sriman narayana</td>
<td>Sriman nArAyaNaa</td>
<td>The supreme lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stotra</td>
<td>stOtra</td>
<td>Poem in praise of &lt;x&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>svami</td>
<td>svami</td>
<td>Literally, one who is the owner. Generally used as a mark of respect as in Svami Ramanuja</td>
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<td>svarupam</td>
<td>svarUpam</td>
<td>Nature</td>
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<td>Holy water</td>
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<td>thiru malai</td>
<td>thiru-maalai</td>
<td>Divine garland</td>
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<td>thiru thuzhai, thulasi</td>
<td>thiru-th-thuzhaai, thuLasi</td>
<td>Basil leaves</td>
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<td>thirunakshatiram</td>
<td>thirunakshattiram</td>
<td>Birth anniversaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thiruvaimozhi</td>
<td>thiruvaimozhi</td>
<td>The collection of songs given by Svami Nammazhvar</td>
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<td>utsava</td>
<td>utsava</td>
<td>procession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vatsalya</td>
<td>vaatsalya</td>
<td>Parental love</td>
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<td>vigraham</td>
<td>vigraham</td>
<td>Idol</td>
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<tr>
<td>visistadvaita</td>
<td>visistadvaita</td>
<td>Qualified monism</td>
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<tr>
<td>vyakhyanam</td>
<td>vyaakhyaanam</td>
<td>Commentary</td>
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</table>
Swami Ramanuja @ Sri perumbudUr during the grand festival

Swami Ramanuja @ Melkote during the grand festival
Live discourses on the Tele-bridge

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

1st Sunday 11AM CST: Srimad Bhagavad - Telugu
Sri U.Ve. Satuluri Gopala Krishnamacharyulu

1st Sunday and 4th Sunday 7:45pm CST:
Sri Vachana Bhooshanam - Tamil
HH Vanamalai Ramanuja Jeeyar Svami

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

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

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

3rd Sunday 11 AM CST: Srimad Bhagavatam - Telugu
Sri U.Ve. Satuluri Gopala Krishnamacharyulu

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

Sundays: 6 PM CST:
Sri VPS Varadan Svami Thiruppavai Acharya Param- Tamil

Sat 2PM CST:
Dhivyra Prabhandam and Stotra patam santhai:

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.

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