**About the Cover image**

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

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**Ramanuja Darshanam**

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Vedics Foundation ([http://www.vedics.net](http://www.vedics.net))
BLESSINGS FROM SCHOLARS AND ELDERS
T Parthasarathy

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

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

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

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

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

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

EDITORIAL
Mohan Sagar

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHO IS RAMANUJA? Mohan Sagar

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

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

Visistadvaita suggests the idea of a Personal Supreme Being, known in Sanskrit as Sriman Narayana (the refuge for all souls), Who is at once the Great Lord and Master of the Universe, and also the Divinely Merciful and Loving Protector, Who is ever striving to redeem souls from the bondage resulting from ignorance and false ego. The unifying factor between the Supreme Being and the individual souls is Divine Love, which is expressed by the Lord in His constant desire to protect and save, and is expressed by the devotee through adoration, surrender, and selfless service. The goal of human life in the Sri Vaishnava path is to awaken this Love for God in our hearts to a level that brings peace, strength, and higher purpose to this life, and eventually, salvation through a natural and heartfelt submission to the Lord’s Boundless Grace.

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

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

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

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

- Sri Manavala Mamunigal
- Sri ThiruviyumozhiPillai
- Sri PillaiLokacharya
- Sri VadakkuthiruvidhiPillai
- Sri Nampillai
- Sri NanJeeyar
The chain is garlanding the rahasya rAyam, the three Great Secret Mantras, that every Sri Vaishnava meditates upon daily to understand his/her true nature, the nature of God, and the relationship of Divine Love that binds us to Him Eternally.

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

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

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

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

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

Given our human foibles, however, even if such a being were to stand before us at this moment, telling us that He is the One that we are seeking, our nature would be to doubt Him. So, In addition to all the Divine Qualities, He must be one whose supremacy has been proven by what others have taught, and is time-honored and proven. Over the ages, great people should have consistently worshipped Him, and that worship should be consistent with the books/revelations that tell us of such a Person.

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

GREAT SAINTS AND TEACHERS

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

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

thonDar-adi-p-podi-AzhvAr (see vedics.net for pronunciation):
Literally translated, the meaning of this Azhvaar’s name is the Azhvaar who is “the dust of the feet of the devotees of the Lord”. This is a tamil name. The equivalent in Sanskrit is “BhaktAngrirEnu”. His original name was vipra-nArAyaNa. Vipranarayana was born near Sri Rangam, and was brought up by his parents to be a devotee of the Lord. After his childhood, he moved to Sri Rangam, and started performing service laced with deep devotion to the Lord of Sri Rangam – Lord Ranganatha. His primary means of service was collecting flowers and basil leaves (thiru-th-thuzhaay, thuLasi), making garlands out of them and offering it for adoring the Lord everyday. While living such a devout life, a dancer (dAsi – a group of people in ancient times who performed dances in temples for the enjoyment of the Lord), with some deceit and
considerable effort, attracted him and made him fall in love with her. After Vipranarayana fell in love with her, she moved to a village near Sri Rangam. Vipranarayana, in his illusion and demented state, forgot all about the Lord, and went to her house. She refused to let him in, and he stayed outside the house day and night praying for her to let him in. Seeing his state, the Lord and Lakshmi decided to change him. They enacted a few incidents, and Vipranarayana realized his wandering away from the truth and his true state of serving the Lord. He came back to Srirangam, and to atone for all his sins, he took the name of thoNdar-adi-p-podi, and started performing service to ALL devotees, irrespective of where they came from. The Lord blessed him with diving knowledge; he gave us two works – thiru-p-paLLi-ezhuchchi and thiru-mAlai.

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

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

**thoNdar-adi-p-podi AzhvAr:**
- thiru-p-paLLi-ezhuchchi (in the first thousand of the 4000)
- thirumAlai (in the first thousand of the 4000)

**thirumazhisai AzhvAr:** (1/21/03)
- thiru-ch-chanda-viruttam (in the first thousand of the 4000)
- nAnmugan thiruvandhAdhi (in the third thousand of the 4000)

**Presiding Deity:**

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

**Divine Consort:**

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

**Temple Legend:**

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

**Salient Aspects of the temple:**

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

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

This temple has a unique arrangement. It is believed to be designed by satya varma (the divine architect) himself. There are seven gOpurAs
(towers), named after the seven worlds, present in each of seven prAkArAs (passages around the temple). There are several sanctums for various incarnations/forms of Lord VishNu in these seven prAkArAs. There are also numerous sanctums for great teachers and saints of the religion in these prAkArAs.

**Diving Outpourings on the Lord:**

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

**Great Teachers and Saints:**

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

(i) All the AzhvArs (12)
(ii) srlman nAthamuni
(iii) srl yAmunAchArya (ALavandAr)
(iv) srl rAmAnuja
(v) srl kUrattAzhvAn
(vi) srl parAsar bhattar
(vii) srl nampiLLai
(viii) srl piLLai IokAchAriAr
(ix) srl vEdAnta dEsika
(x) srl maNavALa mAmunigaL

**Other important facts:**

(i) Ramanuja established Srirangam as the seat of learning (following the footsteps of yAmunAchArya and srlman nAthamuni), established all the temple procedures and services and established families to render specific services to the Lord. He was followed by great teachers like srl parAsara bhattar, srl nampiLLai and srl piLLai IokAchAriAr. During the life of srl piLLai IokAchAriAr, srlrangam was invaded by the North Indian rulers, and the temple procedures were lost. Two generations later, svAmi maNavALa mAmunigaL reestablished the temple procedures, rejuvenated the rAmAnuja sampadAya, and made Srirangam the seat of learning again.

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

**How to get there:**

Srirangam is located near Trichy (Thiru-chi-ra-palli) – about 10 kilometers from there. There is a railway station at Srirangam, and most of the express trains stop there. It is about 300 kilometers from Chennai. It takes about 6 hours by road from Chennai.
Q & A: NEED FOR SPIRITUALITY AND ACHARYAS
Mukandan Pattangi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The lineage of teachers continued on through Nathamuni, Pundarikaksha, Ramamisra, Yamunucharya, Goshti Purna, to Sri Ramanuja, the foremost and most magnanimous of all of the Spiritual Teachers (Time on Earth: 1017 to 1137 AD).

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

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

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

You may approach any of the Acharyas in this lineage.

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

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

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

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

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

Since the water coming in is pure, and all the pipes are clean and untainted by false ego or false knowledge, the water coming at the end of the pipe is exactly the same as it at was at its source (Sriman Naryana). Spiritual Knowledge revealed by the Lord, is given to us by our Acharya, as taught through the Lineage of Acharyas. This knowledge is thus flawless and true spiritual Knowledge.
So any one interested in learning the True knowledge will approach an Acharya of this lineage (RamanujaAcharyas, some call them as Sadacharyas) as they are all representing Acharya Ramanuja (and will pass the message AS IS to their devotees)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

True Acharya NEVER says "I am God"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIFE HISTORY OF OUR TEACHERS
Sumithra Varadarajan

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

While many Acharyas (Spiritual Teachers) have composed doctrines on the history of our revered lineage of teachers, the GPP is regarded to be the most complete and accurate. The question of why and how HH Sri Pinpazhigiya Perumal Jeeyar (who will be referred to throughout the
rest of this series as PPJ) came to write the work is also covered in the work and will be addressed in the next part of this series.

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

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

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

The Lord, being one of Unconditional Love and Compassion, is not one to just leave us here to learn our own lessons. Rather, He has been constantly trying from time immemorial to show us this way that will lead us to True Happiness. He began at the time of creation when He revealed the Vedas, or sAstras, the sacred scriptures. But, except for a few who were so much lost in Him through this poetry, they failed to share the message with the masses.

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

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

Consequently, the first and foremost thing that any Srivaishnava should know and meditate on is the purvAcharya lineage, the lineage of teachers, since it is like a gem-studded chain that begins and ends with Sriman Narayana Himself. With each gem being the wonderful qualities of each AchArya in the lineage. Our AchAryas say that a Sri Vaishnava should recite at all times the dovayam (the twin-fold mantra) and guru paramparai (the Sacred Names of the lineage of Teachers). It is for this reason that the GPP is held in such esteem by the followers of Ramanuja Sampradayam.

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

TA Varadhan

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

Background:

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

Sri Jeeyar Swami:

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

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

Some of His activities:

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

(i) Youth Movement: Also known as Vikasatarangini, the key goal of this movement is to serve fellow human beings. During periods of natural disaster (like cyclones, earthquakes), volunteers of this movement organize mass relief and provide food/clothing/shelter to those in need. On an ongoing basis, they conduct health camps in hundreds of villages in rural India. They also serve as a conduit for spreading the universal message of kindness and spirituality by organizing mass worship (like the KrishNam vandE Jagadgurum project).

(ii) Serve the needy: The Jeeyar Educational Trust, a wing of his organization, runs schools for the blind, and for tribal people in rural India. An interesting aspect is the training of these students to serve as teachers in their own community when they become qualified. This nurtures a permanent solution in these areas for education and development.

(iii) Save/Propagate ancient religious texts: Several branches of the Vedas have only a handful of experts currently. JET actively supports those scholars, and sponsors students to learn those branches. These students, then teach the Vedas to other classes, and receive a stipend and fixed honorarium for their livelihood. One almost extinct branch of the Yajur Veda has been published so that it can be available for future generations.

(iv) Vedic/Religious schools: JET runs several schools for children and youth to prepare them to lead and propagate a Vedic/Religious life. Without experts in the different aspects of religion, the society loses the religion itself. JET has carefully chosen several important fields of religion, and runs schools in a traditional manner.

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

Nails in the Fence

Mukundan Pattangi

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

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

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

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

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

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

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, My Son, but just look at all those holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. This is what happened every time you got angry. It left a scar a scar just like the holes in this fence. It doesn’t matter whether you hit someone or yell at someone. Because physically or verbally, anger leaves a wound that can never really heal.

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

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

THE BEAUTY OF SURRENDER – (Anjali Vaibhavam)

Aam Jalayathi ithi Anjalihi

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

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

A Brief note on Swami Alavandar

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

Yamunachayar was spending his childhood days at Veeranarayanapuram. During that period there was an egoistic pundit in the Chola kingdom called Kolahalan, who under the royal patronage of Chola king, collected taxes from all other Scholars in realm as an acknowledgement of his own scholarly superiority. At this time, young Yamunacharya was taking care of the Gurukulam (The School), since his teacher was away attending to some pressing matters. One of the
messengers of the Egoistic Pandit “Kolahalan” came to the school and delivered a tax notice to Yamunacharya to give to his teacher. Yamunacharya tore it into pieces and declared that he himself, a mere student, could easily defeat the egoistic Scholar in Sastric disputation. Although he knew that Yamunacharya was far from ready to do so, Kolahalan accepted the challenge and had him brought to the Chola king’s court. With the Lord’s Grace, Yamunacharya proved his words to be true by defeating Kolahalan in a difficult scholarly debate. The queen of the Chola Kingdom was so pleased by the arguments of the young prodigy she dubbed him as Alavandaro – which in Tamil means the one who came to conquer. Then on, this title became his name, and he was recognized by everyone as Alavandar.

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

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

About Stotra Ratnam

Swaadyanniha sarveshaam Tryanththaaratham Sudugraham Sthotrayaamasa Yogindrastham vandE Yamunaahvayam

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

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

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

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

The sloka reads: (58th Slokam)
Aishwaryam Aksharaagatham Paramam Padam Va
Kasmai chidanjali baram vahathe vithheerya
Asmaai na kinchid uchitam krutumithyathaaamba
Tvam Lajjase kathay koyamudar bavaha

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

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

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

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

Hitaya Sarvajagatham vyaktham yonjalivaibavam Prachikashat tam vandeham vedantha yugadeshikam.

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

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

The 28th sloka of Stotraratnam conveys the greatness of Anjali. The sloka reads:

Tvadangrim uddishya kadaapi kenachit yataa tathaa vaapi sakruth krithonjalalhi
Tadaiva mushnaathi ashubaani aseshatah shubaani pushnaathi na jaathu hlyathE.
Swami Alavandar by this sloka has conveyed the greatness of Anjali made unto the lotus feet of Lord Narayana. The meaning of this sloka is as follows:

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

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

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

“Kadapi kenachit”

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

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

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-Shubaani Pushnaathi na jaathu hiyate"

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

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

“Sakruth kritah Anjali”

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

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

“Tad-Eva –Mushnaathi Ashubaani AsEshathaha”

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

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

“Shubaani Pushnaathi na jaathu hlyate”

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

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

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

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

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

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

VEDICS ACTIVITIES

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

Devotees have come forth from many places to support this noble cause and Vedics is happy to note that more and more devotees are coming forward. Through their generous donations, Vedics has started to provide monthly support to the following temples: Thirumani-k-kooodam, Thiru Arimeya Vinnagaram and Thiru-k-kavalampadi in Thirunangur and Thiru-k-koodalur. Vedics is also in the process of bringing one more temple under our support:

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

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

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

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

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

Divyadesams Supported:

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<td>thirumaNi-k-kooodam</td>
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<td>Thirunangur</td>
<td>Sri Sunder Saranathan, Srirangam Srimad Andavan Sishyas</td>
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<tr>
<td>thiru-k-kAvaLampAdi</td>
<td>Thirunangur</td>
<td>Sri Sunder Saranathan, Srirangam Srimad Andavan Sishyas</td>
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<td>thiru-k-koodalur</td>
<td>Near Kumbakonam</td>
<td>Detroit Vedics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paandava dhoothar</td>
<td>Kanchipuram</td>
<td>Chicago Vedics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Harini Raghavan

This section presents a brief review of a Sri Vaishnavite website highlighting its salient features. In our first issue the website in focus is www.acharya.org.

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

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

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

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

DO YOU KNOW?

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

CALENDAR - FIRST QUARTER 2003

January 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lunar Calendar</th>
<th>Star</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/01/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 17</td>
<td>Kettai</td>
<td>Thondaradippodi Azhvar, Koora Narayana Jeeyar, Periya Nambi</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/02/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 18</td>
<td>Moolam</td>
<td>Sarva Amavasai, Hanumath Jayanthi at Pomona</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/03/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 19</td>
<td>Pooradam</td>
<td>Adhyayana Utsavam Begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/06/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 22</td>
<td>Avittam</td>
<td>Azhagiya Manavala Perumal Nayanar</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/10/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 26</td>
<td>Revathi</td>
<td>Srirangam Thai Thirunaal Begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/11/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 27</td>
<td>Ashwini</td>
<td>Koodarai Vellum Utsavam at Pomona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/13/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 29</td>
<td>Bharani</td>
<td>Srirangam Thai Garuda Sevai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/14/03</td>
<td>Margazhi 30</td>
<td>Karththikai</td>
<td>Vaikunta Ekadasi (except at Srirangam), Sarva Bheesham Ekadasi, Irappaththu Utsavam Begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/15/03</td>
<td>Thai 01</td>
<td>Rohini</td>
<td>UttaraayaNa Punya Kaalam, Sankaranthi</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/18/03</td>
<td>Thai 04</td>
<td>Punarpoosam</td>
<td>Embar</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/21/03</td>
<td>Thai 07</td>
<td>Magam</td>
<td>Thirumazhisai Azhvar</td>
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<td>01/23/03</td>
<td>Thai 09</td>
<td>Uthram</td>
<td>Kooraththaazhvan, Thiruvaymouzhi Thirunaaal Sarrumurai</td>
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<td>01/24/03</td>
<td>Thai 10</td>
<td>Hastham</td>
<td>Iyarpa Sarrumurai</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/28/03</td>
<td>Thai 14</td>
<td>Kettai</td>
<td>Sarva Ekadasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/31/03</td>
<td>Thai 17</td>
<td>Uthraadam</td>
<td>Bodayana Amavasai</td>
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### February 2003

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/01/03</td>
<td>Thai 18</td>
<td>Thiruvonam</td>
<td>Vanamalai Koota Ennai Kappu Utsavam</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/03/03</td>
<td>Thai 20</td>
<td>Sadayam</td>
<td>Chottai Nambi Nalooran</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/08/03</td>
<td>Thai 25</td>
<td>Ashwini</td>
<td>Ratha Sapthami</td>
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<td>02/12/03</td>
<td>Thai 29</td>
<td>Mrugaseersham</td>
<td>Magarukula Ekadasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/13/03</td>
<td>Masi 01</td>
<td>Thiruvathirai</td>
<td>Kumbukula Dvadasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/17/03</td>
<td>Masi 05</td>
<td>Magam</td>
<td>Masi Magam</td>
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<td>02/27/03</td>
<td>Masi 15</td>
<td>Pooradam</td>
<td>Sarva Ekadasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/28/03</td>
<td>Masi 16</td>
<td>Uthradam</td>
<td>Manavala Mamunigal Thiruvadhyanam</td>
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### March 2003

<table>
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<td>03/02/03</td>
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<td>Avittam</td>
<td>Sarva Amavasai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/10/03</td>
<td>Masi 26</td>
<td>Rohini</td>
<td>Srirangam Panguni Utsavam Begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/11/03</td>
<td>Masi 27</td>
<td>Mrugaseersham</td>
<td>Thirukkacchi Nambi</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Masi 29</td>
<td>Thiruvathirai</td>
<td>Srirangam Garuda Sevai</td>
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<td>03/14/03</td>
<td>Masi 30</td>
<td>Punarpoosam</td>
<td>Kulasekara Azhvar</td>
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<td>03/18/03</td>
<td>Panguni 04</td>
<td>Uthram</td>
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<td>03/19/03</td>
<td>Panguni 05</td>
<td>Hastham</td>
<td>Thiruvangaththamuthanaar</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/28/03</td>
<td>Panguni 14</td>
<td>Thiruvonam</td>
<td>Sarva Ekadasi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE**

The festivals listed are based on the calendar that is followed in Thiruvallukkeni (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. **Why do we go to the Temple?**
   - Seek Boons from HIM
   - Re-Kindle Our Relationship with HIM
   - Meet people
   - Good Food (Prasadam)

2. **Why should we practice Vegetarianism?**
   - Healthy
   - Inexpensive
   - Delicious
   - Minimal Suffering to other beings

3. **How many divyadesams are there in this Bhooloka?**
   - 102
   - 105
   - 108
   - 106

4. **Who authored Rig Veda?**
   - GOD
   - VEDA VYASA
   - MANU
   - NO-One

5. **What is the significance of applying Thiruman to our body?**
   - Indicates Devotion
   - To Follow Tradition
   - Looks cool
   - Indicates Servitude to GOD

6. **What is Atma (Chith)?**
   - Object Having Consciousness
   - Heart
   - Human
   - Living Thing

7. **What does not contribute to one’s Karma?**
   - Thought (Mana)
   - Speech (Vaak)
   - Actions (Kaaya)
   - Dedications to Lord (Kainkaryam)

8. **What unique message does Ramayana teach us?**
   - Total Surrender (Sharanagathi)
   - Service to Humanity
   - Importance of Friends
   - Good over Evil

9. **Four Vedas could not explain Him. But ________ did**
   - Shastras
   - Puranas
   - Upanishad
   - Azhvars

10. **What is the purpose of Life?**
    - Seek Knowledge
    - Eat Drink & Enjoy Life
    - Moksha
    - Help Others

(Answers next issue)
**Live discourses on the Tele-bridge**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Feb 14 to March 30:
Sri VPS Varadan Swami Upadesa Ratna Malai - Tamil
Sundays: 7 PM CST & Thursday: 9PM CST

Dhivya Prabhandam and Stotra patam santhai:
Sun 8AM & Sat 2PM CST.
Vedam Chanting and error correction: Sat 8AM CST: Jan. 25 to March 30
Pancha Sooktams & Pancha Shanti (Yajur Vedam only)

Latest updates and more information visit:  **www.vedics.net**
For more details, please e-mail:  **ramanuja@yahoogroups.com**

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**FALL IN LOVE WITH GOD**
Pray with sincerity humility and gratitude for atleast 15 minutes a day.

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

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

**RESPECT FOR ALL THAT IS HIS**
Strive to lead a life in which you will never hurt a fellow living being for any reason.

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

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

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

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

**SELF – CONTROL**
Strive to live a life free from selfish desire and anger.

**शीतले रश्मायुक्त नमः**
Always adorn a peaceful smile; it will work on others and on you too