

FESTIVITIES OF THE MONTH

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In the month of June, 2004, we will be celebrating the birth anniversaries of great saints Sri: Sattako:pa muni and Sri: Vishnuchittha, and the great a:cha:rya:s, Sri Para:sara Bhattar and Sri Na:tthamuni.

Sri Sattako:pa Muni - June 1st, 2004

Sri Sattako:pa Muni was born in the very beginning of this Kali yuga in the month of Vrishabha (Vaisa:kham) under the star visa:kha. He was born only after his parents, Ka:ri and Na:thana:yika prayed to the Lord in the temple at Kuruka:puri a child, also called Thirukuruku:r. While the Lord certainly fulfilled their wishes, the son that was born to them did not cry, move his limbs, open his eyes, or make even an attempt to respond to their desire to feed him. Although he was very much alive, he behaved like a still-born baby. With nowhere to turn, His parents took the boy back to the temple of the same Lord who gave them the child. They prayed with sadness and regret that they could no longer take care of him, and left their only child to the care of the Lord Himself, placing him in a nearby tamarind tree in the temple premises. There the child remained for 16 long years, in time... assuming the padma:sanam, like a yo:gi, continuing to survive without food,



water, clothing, or even giving the slightest hint that he could walk or speak. The villagers around the temple realized that he must have been some great sage, having made some attempts to rouse him, simply left him undisturbed in his deep meditation.

As we learnt last month, Sri Madhura Kavi came all the way from Ayo:dhya pursuing the luminescence that appeared to him every night. After dropping a big stone from a significant height making a loud noise to make the sage finally open his eyes, Sri Madhura kavi was able to make him speak, and became a disciple to his remarkable message.

Sri Sattako:pa Muni revealed this message to the world in the form of four poems that contained a total of 1,296 verses in Tamil, each verse filled with the nectar of pure devotion to God. Our a:cha:ryas teach us that these four poems are the essence of the four ve:das. The most profound and revered of these is the equivalent of the Sa:ma Ve:da, Thiruva:yamo:zhi, which includes a vivid description of how a soul is freed from the bondages of this world and achieves the Lord's Eternal Abode, Sri: Vai:kunttam.

Because the Lord chose him to share the essence of the Ve:das with the world, Sri Sattako:pa Muni lived life on this earth for 32 years free of all the



mundane worldly activities, including even the basic necessities of food, water, shelter, and clothing. All that he need was the Lord Alone for his sustenance. Attracted by Sri Sattako:pa Muni's sweet verses and not able to bear separation from Him, deities from all the temple towns used to come along with their entourage and give darshan to Sri Sattako:pa Muni one after another. Lord Sri:manna:ra:yana Himself gave this great soul the title, Namma:lwa:r, meaning Our A:lwa:r, and this is the name that we use when we traditionally refer to him.

Let us pray to the lotus feet of Sri: Namma:lwa:r with the following slokams :

*vrishabhe: thu visa:kha:ya:m
kuruka: puri ka:rijam |
pa:ndya de:se kale:ra:dau
satta:rim sainyapam bhaje: ||*

*ma:tha: pitha: yuvathayas
thanaya: vibhu:thihi
sarvam yade:va niyame:na
madanvaya:na:m |
a:dyasya nah kulapathe:r
vakula:bhira:mam
sri:math thadanghri yugalam
pranama:mi mu:rdhna: ||*

**Sri: Para:sara Bhattar -
Thirunakshathram, June 2nd 2004**

Sri: Para:sara Bhattar was one of the twin sons of Sri: Ku:raththa:lwa:n, whom we learnt about in the February issue. He and



his brother, Vya:sa Bhattar, were born due to the divine blessings of Lord Sri: Rangana:tha. In fact, Lord and His Consort, Sri: Rangana:yaki were so fond of the two boys, They regarded them as their adopted sons. Hence, both the twin brothers were brought up in the temple at Sri:rangam, having full reign in and around the premises.

Sri: Para:sara Bhattar was a child prodigy who from a young age demonstrated signs of an amazing intellect and utmost devotion. Lord Rangana:tha and Sri: Ra:ma:nuja:a:cha:rya along with his disciples took personal interest in educating the boy and making him a great scholar.

Because of his virtues he was named by Sri: Ra:ma:nuja:a:cha:rya as his successor to sustain to propagate the Sri: Vai:shnava philosophy after him. Sri: Para:sara Bhattar assumed this position at a very young age, but easily defeated rival scholars and established the supremacy of Sri: Ra:ma:nuja's philosophy.

Sri: Para:sara Bhattar also had tremendous compassion for all living beings, so much so that he blessed all the souls, even those occupying the bodies of plants and animals during his time, that they would achieve the Lord's Eternal Abode after leaving their mortal bodies.

Let us pray for his benevolence on his birth anniversary with the following slo:kams -

sri: para:sara bhatta:ryaha

*sri: range:sa purohithaha |
sri:vathsa:nka sutha ssri:ma:n
sre:yase: me::sthu bhuyase ||*

**Sri: Periya:lwa:r Thirunakshathram
-- June 28th**

Sri: Vishnuchittha was also known as Sri: Periya:lwa:r, "the Great A:lwa:r" was born under the swa:thi star at the holy temple town of Sri:villiputthu:r, where he lived a life of dedicated service to the Lord, tending to His gardens and creating beautiful garlands of flowers and thulasi (holy basil) with which He could be decorated. His devotion was such that people started referring him as true "Vishnuchiththa" - meaning the one who seated Lord Vishnu in his heart permanently. His caring and loving for Lord was like a mother towards a child, and it was in this mood that Sri: Vishnuchiththa sang sweet verses in Tamil that became part of the Divya Prabandha. In the mood of the Little Baby Krishna's mother, Yaso:da, Vishnuchittha described the wonder of being able to nurse, bathe, feed, play, and sing lullabies to the Divine. It is a wonderful experience to read and enjoy those poems which are full of affection and devotion.

Vishnuchittha's Divine Love could not prepare him for what the Lord had once directed to do through a dream, participate in a great debate with leading scholars such that the supremacy of Srimanna:ra:yana could be proven without a doubt. With only utmost faith in the Lord as his strength,



Sri: vishnuchiththa went to the palace where the debate was taking place, and to the amazement of all who attended, provided all the necessary quotations and commentaries like an incessant flood of a mighty river and won the debate easily.

Out of reverence for this great devotee, the king ordered that Vishnuchittha be seated on an elephant and be taken on a grand procession around the city such that all could know his greatness. Out of passion towards His devotee, Lord Sri:manna:ra:yana Himself appeared on Garuda along with mother Lakshmi to see the procession. Sri: Vishnuchiththa, although elated to see the Lord with his earthly eyes, still could not bear the thought that the One whom he worshipped as his own child could possibly receive the "evil eye" from so many people looking at Him. Immediately, he sang a beautiful verse "Palla:ndu Palla:ndu..." to remove the evil eye for Lord's dazzling beauty and magnificence. This is the verse which is chanted even now at the beginning of a:ra:dhana and also when giving ha:rathi to Lord Sri:manna:ra:yana.

Interestingly, despite his mood of motherly love towards the Lord, it would be Mother Earth who would eventually incarnate as Vishnuchiththa's child. This young girl was none other but "A:nda:l" or "Go:da", whose melodious "Thiruppa:vai" songs we all enjoy throughout the year, and celebrate during the months of December and January. As sri: Vishnuchiththa married her to the Lord, Sri Rangana:tha Himself, He became

his Son-in-Law.

Let us learn about those in the coming months. Let us pray that our hearts will, even for a few moments, feel the presence of the Lord in our hearts the way he did, by meditating upon him with this slo:kam

*gurumukham anadhi:thya
pra:ha veda:n ase:sha:n
narapathi parikluptham sulka
ma:da:thu ka:maha
svasuram amara vandyam
rangana:tthasya sa:ksha:th
dvijakula thilakam tham
vishnuchiththam nama:mi*

Sri: Na:tthamuni - June 30th

If we are enjoying the works of all our a:lwa:rs today, it is because of of the first among our a:cha:ryas, Sri: Na:thamuni. Over the years after the A:lwa:rs lived on this earth, all of their mystical verses became lost or forgotten over time. Only a handful of the 4000+ verses were remaining with a few pandits. When some of these scholars sang those 10 songs in front of Sri: Na:thamuni, he became very much interested in knowing rest of the songs also.

Guided by the Lord himself, he went to Kuruka:puri, the birth place of Sri: Sattako:pa Muni and enquired about the remaining songs. One of the descendents of Sri Madhurakavi kavi instructed him that by reciting the verses of "Kanninun Siruttha:mbu", it

would be possible to obtain the rest of the 4000.

Sri: Na:ttha muni obtained the 10 songs of "kanninun Siruttha:mbu" in praise of Sri: Sattako:pa Muni and chanted those songs like a "manthram" thousands of times. Sri: Namma:lwa:r appeared before him and granted all the lost Tamil poetry back to sri: Na:tthamuni. He also trained him what music and ra:ga:s were required to recite these verses. Na:thamuni also received instruction in the intricacies of "ashta:nga yo:gam", another but far more difficult path to God.

He passed on this divine knowledge to Sri Pundari:ka:ksha, one of his disciples. Sri Pundari:ka:ksha passed it on to Sri: Ra:mamisra who in turn gave it to Sri: Yamuna:cha:rya the grandson of Sri: Na:thamuni, who in turn enlightened Sri: Para:nkusa Da:sa, who finally passed it on to Sri: Ra:ma:nuja:cha:rya. Thus Sri: Na:thamuni is counted first in the lineage of our a:cha:ryas and immediately after Sri: Namma:lwa:r. Let us pray to our foremost a:cha:rya on his birthday thus..

*namo::chinthya:dbhutha:klishta
jna:na vaira:gya ra:saye: |
na:ttha:ya munaye::ga:dha
bhagavath bhakthi sindhave: ||*

Jai Srimannarayana !

