

Name: _____

Date: _____

Ramanujacharya





Ramanuja was born in India during the year 1017 A.D. when, according to astrological calculations, the sun was in the zodiacal sign of Cancer. His parents were Asuri Keshava and Kantimati, both from aristocratic families. Rumanja passed his childhood days in Sriperumbudur, the village of his birth. At the age of 16 he was married to Rakshakambal.

Only four months after his wedding, Ramanuja's father was struck with a severe illness and died. Upon the death of his father, Ramanuja became head of the

household and decided to move to Kanchi, a holy city famed for its scholars and magnificent Temples.

In Kanchi, he presented the living entities' relationship with Godhead as being one of eternal service. The fame of Ramanuja continued to spread far and wide. One day as Ramanuja sat in the solitude of his study, a venerable saint named Yamunacharya came to his door for alms. Extending his full courtesy, Ramanuja welcomed the saint into his home. Ramanuja learned that Yamuna was from Sri Rangam, the famous Temple of Vishnu. In the course of their discussion, Ramanuja soon realized that Yamunacharya was a qualified spiritual master of the science of devotion. Overwhelmed with ecstasy and jubilation, Ramanuja fell at his feet and asked to be accepted as his disciple. Yamunacharya was extremely pleased by seeing his devotion and accepted Ramanuja as his disciple.





Then one day, a messenger came from Sri Rangam and informed Ramanuja that his guru was ill and on the verge of death. Ramanuja immediately departed for Sri Rangam, but was not able to reach there in time. Shortly before Ramanuja arrived, Yamuna left his body and entered the blissful realm of Vaikuntha. Crossing the river Kaveri, Ramanuja reached the island on which the Temple of Sri Rangam was located, and went directly to the place where his guru was lying. Surrounded by a group of his disciples, Yamuna laid on a bed with his eyes closed.

Tears of love filled his eyes and he wept, his heart feeling great separation from his master. The left hand of Yamuna was poised in the yoga posture for peace, with three fingers extended and the thumb and forefinger joined together at the tips. His right hand, however, was at his side but clenched into a fist. All the disciples were struck with wonder about the position of their guru's right hand. And none of them could understand the meaning. As everyone looked on in wonder, Ramanuja broke the silence by declaring, "Our guru-the revered Yamunacharya has three desires that he wishes to be fulfilled. I will protect the people in general who are deluded by impersonalism by bestowing upon them the nectar of surrender at the lotus feet of Narayana."

As Ramanuja spoke, one of the fingers on Yamuna's right hand extended outward. Then Ramanuja said, "For the well-being of the people of the world, I will prepare a commentary on the Vedanta-sutra that will establish the Supreme Person as the ultimate reality." At this, a second finger extended, and Ramanuja continued speaking. "And in order to honor Parashara Muni, who in ancient times established the relation between jivas, living entities, and ishwara-the Supreme Person, I shall name one of my disciples who is greatly learned and devoted after him." Ramanuja then became silent and the third finger on the right hand of Yamuna extended. Everyone present was amazed to see this miracle, and from that day on they all accepted Ramanuja as their leader and guide. Ramanuja continued to live at Sri Rangam for the remainder of his life and in due course all three vows were fulfilled by him.

Ramanuja continued living at Sri Rangam, serving the Deity of Narayana and imparting enlightenment to whoever came to him until he was 120 years



old. One day while worshipping the Deity, he prayed, "Dear God, whatever I could do to preserve the essence of the Vedas, to uplift the fallen souls, and to establish the shelter of Your lotus feet as the supreme goal in life, I have done. Now my body has grown tired after many years in this world. Kindly allow me to depart from this mortal world and enter Your supreme abode."

With this prayer Ramanuja returned to the assembly of his disciples and announced his desire to depart from this world. Thrown into an ocean of grief, the disciples clasped the feet of their guru and requested him to remain with them.

Ramanuja remained on Earth for three more days. To appease their afflicted hearts, Ramanuja spoke his last instructions to those who were most near and dear to him: "Always remain in the company of and serve those souls devoted to Godhead just as you would serve your own spiritual preceptor. Have faith in the teachings of the Vedas and in the words of the great saints. Worship Narayana and take pleasure in uttering the Holy Names of God as your only refuge." With these departing words, Ramanuja, keeping his head on the lap of Govinda and his mind fixed in spiritual trance, gave up his mortal body and entered the realm of Vaikuntha.

Some of Ramanuja's Literary Contributions:

1. Sri Bhasya – A detailed commentary on the Vedanta Sutras.
2. Gita-Bhasya – A detailed commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita.
3. Vedanta-Dipa – A brief commentary on the Vedanta Sutras.
4. Vedanta-Sara – Another brief commentary on the Vedanta Sutras and meant for beginners.
5. Saranagati-Gadya and Sri Ranga-Gadya – Manuals of self surrender to Lord Vishnu.
6. Sri Vaikuntha-Gadya – Describes Sri Vaikuntha-loka and the position of the liberated souls.
7. Nitya-Grantha – A short manual intended to guide the Sri Vaishnava Devotees.