

S.V. Temple Newsletter



Inside this issue:

- ♦ Great Saint Poets of India (Part 1)
- ♦ Religious/Cultural Events since January 2021
- ♦ Upcoming Events and Festivals
- ♦ Charity or Justice?
- ♦ S.V. Temple Kitchen Project Updates
- ♦ Kids Column - Virata Parva
- ♦ Comments and Articles

Great Saint Poets of India (Part 1)

Written and Compiled by Mrs. Gayathri Vempati

Early Hinduism and Bhakti Movement:

There is a strong nexus between Bhakti (devotion) and Bhajan (devotional singing). In India, poetry and literature are mostly intertwined with and influenced by devotion and philosophy, and no wonder most Indian poets were saints and most Indian saints were poets. An important landmark in the cultural history of medieval India was the silent revolution in society brought about by a galaxy of socio-religious reformers, a revolution known as the Bhakti Movement.



Bhakti, as a popular spiritual movement emphasizing stories, songs, poetry, and emotional expressiveness in relation to the Divine emerged in South India in the sixth century in a cultural context which was enormously rich and complex. It slowly spread throughout the Indian subcontinent over the following centuries.

The rapid rise of devotional theism in the first several centuries of the common era helped lay the groundwork for the bhakti movement.

The Bhakti (devotional love) movement gained momentum during Medieval India, highlighting an alternative path for Moksha/Liberation in Hinduism. This movement was responsible for many rites and rituals associated with the worship of God by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs of Indian subcontinent. For example, Kirtan at a Hindu Temple, Qawwali at a Dargah (by Muslims), and singing of Gurbani at a Gurdwara are all derived from the Bhakti movement of medieval India (800-1700).

The wave of Bhakti movement actually started from south India by Alvars, the devotees of Lord Vishnu and Nayanars, the devotees of Shiva. They travelled to various places singing hymns in Tamil in praise of their gods. Later, many temples were built by the great emperors who ruled India which became the sacred places for pilgrimage. The compositions by the poets - saints became part of temple



rituals in these shrines. The great Hindu saints were primarily responsible for propagating Bhakti in the form of devotional singing of praises of lord through their own compositions. This Bhakti movement of medieval India gained more and more momentum as it is really the defining movement for Hinduism today.

Later, this reform movement was propounded by several saint poets who belonged to various castes, communities, and dialects from various languages and different professions. Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Kabirdas a Muslim weaver, Namdev a tailor, Madhvacharya, Basavanna's Virashaivism, Tukaram, Surdas, Meera Bai. While Gyandev & Ekanath brahmins from Maharashtra, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu from Bengal, Akka Mahadevi of Veerashaiva, Sri Pothuluri Veerabrahmendra Swamy from Andhra, Guru Nanak, Saint Tyagaraja Swamy, Purandara Dasa, Annamacharya, Ramadasu and many more. Here we will have a brief information on few famous saint poets of India from different times, who highly influenced the people with their compositions/writings.

1. Adi Shankaracharya known for Advaita:

(Adi = the first 'Shankara' in his lineage) Shankaracharya was the most famous Indian saint, who had a profound influence on the growth of Hinduism through his distinguished philosophy of Advaita vedanta. He was born to a Hindu Brahmin couple Shivaguru and Aryamba in Kerala in the eighth century. Advaita is the doctrine of oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme God which is the Ultimate Reality.



Shankaracharya preached renunciation of the world and adoption of the path of knowledge to understand the true nature of Brahman (the ultimate reality) and attain salvation. He wrote several hymns/ stotras like Bhaja Govindam, Soundarya Lahari, Kanakadhara Stotram, Dakshinamurthy Stotram, and many more. He travelled extensively while writing commentaries on the Upanishads, the Hindu scriptures, Vishnu Sahasranama, and the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The "Crest-Jewel of Discrimination" or Viveka Chudamani, one of his most famous works, which summarizes his ideas of Advaita Vedanta. Adi Shankaracharya died at a very young age of 32 in Kedarnath.

2. Ramanujacharya known for Visista Advaita:

Ramanuja was another earliest exponent of Bhakti movement, who was appointed as the successor of his teacher Yamunamuni. He belongs to eleventh century.

He was born in a Brahmin family to Asuri Kesava Somayaji Dikshitar and Kanthimathi Ammal at Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, India. He was deeply influenced by the Alvars. He established Vaishnavism and passionately believed that intense devotion to Vishnu was the best means to attain salvation. He propounded the doctrine of Vishishtadvaita. ('vishisht' meaning qualified and 'advaita' meaning oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme God). In other words, it means qualified oneness wherein the soul, even when united with the Supreme God, remained distinct. According to him, the way to salvation lies through Karma, Gyan and Bhakti. He established a system to perform the daily rituals and procedures necessary at Vaishnavite temples (at SriRangam and at Tirumala) and which are being followed even today.



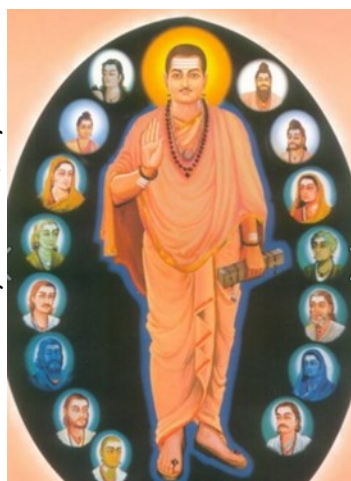
Ramanujacharya travelled all over India to promote Vaishnava Sampradaya and ultimately settled in SriRangam. He wrote various books called Vedanta Sara (the essence of a Hindu philosophy), Vedantha Sangraha, Sri Bhashyam and Gita Bhashyam based on the doctrine of the Upanishads, especially in its monistic form at age 33. Later, He also composed Sharanagathi Gadyam, SriRanga Gadyam, and Sri Vaikuntha Gadyam etc., to promote Vaishnava Sampradaya.

We have covered a detailed article on Ramanuja Acharya in January 2015 issue of the temple newsletter. Please visit the link below.

https://svtemplemn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SV-Temple-New-Letter-January_2015.pdf

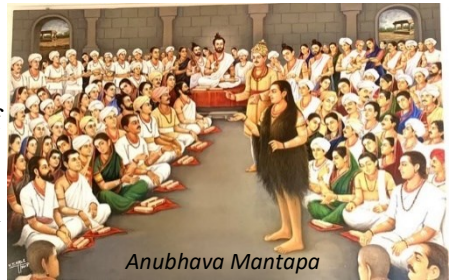
3. The Veerashaiva saints of 12th century:

As part of Bhakti Movement, during 12th Century, a Hindu religious sect in India called Lingayatism also known as Veerashaivism emerged. The adherents of this faith are known as "Lingayats" or "Veerashaivas". Sometimes also referred as Vachanakaras (authors of vachanas) or Shivasharanas. The Veerashaivas are devotees of Shiva who emerged in regions of today's Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The Veerashaiva path of devotion or Bhakti was one that sought to remind its society, the mechanical performance of ritual would not help achieve moksha (Arivu – which leads to



the cessation of the cycle of birth and death). For the Veerashaivas, Shiva is composed of Guru (teacher), Linga (abstract form of Shiva) and Jangama (guru with no attachments). The Veerashaivas believe in qualified monism or qualified nondualism.

Veerashaivites also reminded the people around them that for moksha and for sadhana (striving towards it), all were equal irrespective of class, caste, and gender. Quite spontaneously, several people from different castes and communities followed this path of devotion and charted their self-transformation through a spontaneous verbalization of experience known as vachanas or simple speech. Prominent figures of this mode of bhakti are Allama Prabhu, Basavanna (believed to be the incarnation of Nandi, shiva's greatest devotee), Akka Mahadevi (one of the earliest feminists in the patriarchal society of India who was a seer-poet, mystic, and a social reformer), Soole Sankavva, Ayadakki Maramma, Kinnari Bommayya, Siddharama, Devara Dasimayya and others. Together, the Veerashaiva saints of the 12th century founded the Anubhava Mantapa (open to all genders), a forum for the discussion of experience, in the city of Kalyana, northern Karnataka.

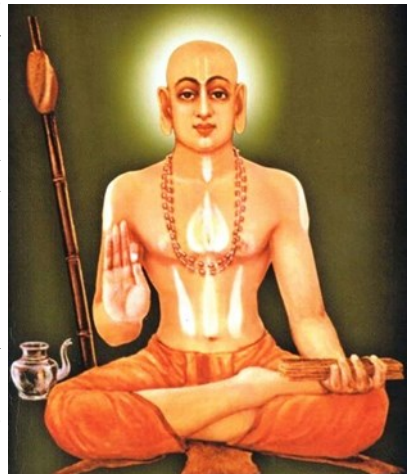


4. Madhvacharya for Dvaita:

Sri Madhvacharya is the third philosopher who introduced a balance between two extreme positions in Indian philosophy viz. (Advaita and Vishishtadvaita). He was a critic of Adi Shankara's Advaita Vedanta and Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita Vedanta teachings. He propounded Dvaita or dualism in which the final aim of man is the direct perception of Hari which leads to Moksha or eternal bliss.

Madhvacharya, sometimes also known as Pūrṇa Prajña and Ānanda Tīrtha, was a Hindu philosopher and the chief proponent of the Dvaita (dualism) school of Vedanta. He was considered an incarnation of Vayu (wind god). He had superhuman powers and he performed many miracles. The various miracles attributed to him in the traditional biography (the Madhwa vijaya) prove that the Acharya was a giant both physically and intellectually as also in yogic powers.

Madhvacharya (named as Vasudeva) was born on the west coast of Karnataka state



in South India to a Vaishnavite Brahmin Couple Naddantillaya and Vedavathi. He belongs to 13th century. As a teenager, he became a Sanyasi (monk) joining Brahma-sampradaya guru. Madhvacharya studied the classics of Hindu philosophy, particularly the Principal Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahma Sutras (Prasthanatrayi). He commented on these and is credited with thirty-seven works in Sanskrit. His writing style was of extreme brevity and condensed expression. In some of his works, he proclaimed himself to be an avatar of Vayu, the son of God Vishnu. Madhva called his philosophy Tatvavāda meaning "arguments from a realist viewpoint".



He toured India several times, visiting places such as Bengal, Varanasi, Dwarka, Goa and Kanyakumari, engaging in philosophical debates and visiting Hindu centers of learning. Madhva established the Krishna Mutt and several temples at Udupi with a Murti (statue) secured from Dwarka, Gujarat in CE 1285.

Having intuitively felt that he had finished his work, Madhvacharya is said to have mysteriously disappeared from his seat, while teaching the Attareya Upanishad to his disciples, leaving a big heap of flowers on it.

This section of the article will be continued in the next issues of our newsletter which will cover few other saints - Meera Bai , Surdas, Tulsidas and saints of Maharashtra of 15th and 16th centuries.

Religious/Cultural Events since January 2021

Below is the recap of the cultural/religious events that took place since January 2019. We thank all the volunteers and organizers who made all these events a great success. We are looking forward to similar support for the upcoming events.

Due to COVID-19 situation, S.V. Temple has suspended this year's cultural events like Nadotsavam and Natyamanjari for the safety of devotees and our community. However, all the other religious activities like Abhishekams, Archanas, Daily Aradhana services and monthly/annual published religious events took place in the temple with safety measures (wearing cloth masks and maintaining social distance of 6ft. mandatory). The maximum capacity of the devotees allowed inside temple at a time is 100. Our Temple continues to offer online pooja services also. Devotees can log into the S.V Temple website (www.svtemplemn.org) for more details on online puja services.

New Year Celebrations — January 1st, 2021. The temple was open all day long and people have been visiting in groups to get Swamy's blessings. Sri Venkateswara Swamy (Moolavar) was beautifully decorated with varieties of flower garlands. Archana with Swarna pushpams (gold flowers) for Sri Venkateswara Swamy was performed this year during the day. S.V. Temple released their New 2021 calendars (digitally) on that day to all devotees on this special occasion.

Makara Sankranthi – January 13-14th, 2021. Two-day events (Bhogi and Sankranthi) were celebrated on two successive days at the temple. Bhogi Pallu ceremony for kids was celebrated on the evening of Bhogi day. Children participated with parents in this event by following all the safety precautions. Priests offered special prayers and blessings to kids and devotees.

Sri Goda Ranganatha Swamy Kalyana Mahotsavam – January 13th, 2021. Dhanurmasam ends with the celebration of Andal Kalyanam. So, as a crown to marghazi mahotsavam celebrations, we have our Andal Thirukkalyanam (Andal/Goda Devi and Venkateswara swamy's kalyanam) was performed by temple priests on Bhogi day in a festive way. Swamy Nammazhwar Thiruvaadi thozal Utsavam (Celebrating the ascent of Swamy Nammazvar to Srivaikuntham and his return to Bhulokam) on the same day of Bhogi. A delicious wedding feast was provided with all the traditional dishes to temple devotees by Andal Goshti volunteer group as part of celebrations of this special occasion.

Rathasaptami – February 18th, 2021.

Bhishma Ekadasi – February 22nd, 2021. Samuhika Vishnu Sahasranama Parayanam was chanted by devotees.

Mahasivarathri – March 11th, 2021. On this day, it was celebrated with Abhishekam of Lord. Devotees brought milk, yogurt, honey, ghee, fruit juice, coconut water, fruits, and flowers for Abhishekam. Bhajans and Rudram recitations were performed during and after abhishekam by devotees and priests. Cultural program was organized by local artists and due to Covid situation, these programs were limited to audiences.

Hindu New Year (Yugadi) Celebrations – April 12th, 2021. Ugadi, Gudipadwa, Chetichand Hindu new year celebrations have taken place in the temple welcoming Sri Plava nama Samvatsara Yugadi this year. Priests read the new year Panchangam in the temple after special archanas to all our Gods. Devotees received the blessings from priests and Ugadi pachadi was distributed.

Puthandu (Tamil New Year) - April 13th, 2021. On Tamil New year, Malayappa Swamy abhishekam was performed with the help of Goshti group.

Bhagawad Ramanujacharya Jayanthi — April 18th, 2021. On this day, Sri Ramanuja Moolavar abhishekam was performed by the priests, with the help of our temple Goshti group. Divya prabhandam was chanted by our temple Goshti group and procession of Ramanuja utsava vigraham was done around the temple. Cultural programs were performed on temple floor by Tarangani school of dance students.



Sri Rama Navami Celebrations — April 21st, 2021. Devotees attended Sri Rama Parivar Abhishekam and Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam that took part in the temple. Vadapappu (soaked Moongdal) and panakam (a special drink made with brown sugar, black pepper, and other spices) prasadam was distributed to all devotees.

Akshaya Tritiya - May 14th, 2021. Mahalakshmi abhishekam and Sahasranama Kumkum archana were done. Most of the devotees brought their new gold jewelry and got the blessings by having puja done for them before they start wearing them.

Sri NarasimhaSwamy Jayanthi – May 24th, 2021. Abhishekam to Narasimha swamy was done in a grand way.

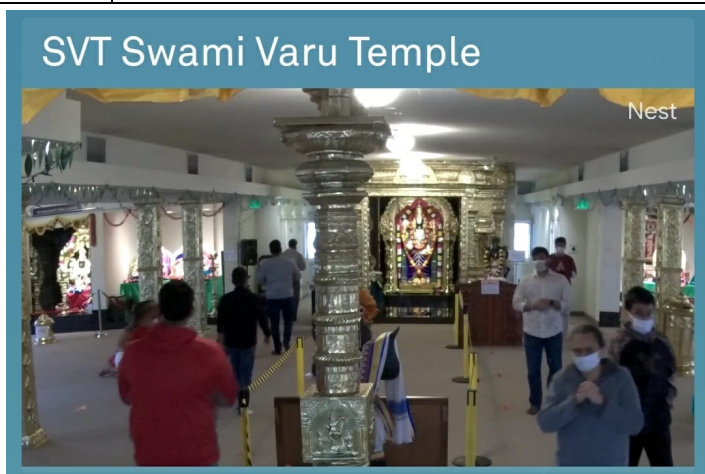
Sri Nammalwar Thriunakshtram & Annamacharya Jayanthi – May 25th, 2021. Nammazhwar and Ramanuja utsav vigraha Abhishekam was performed. Divyaprabandam was chanted by Goshti group and a nice lunch and prasadam was provided by Andal Goshti. Abhishekam and Archana to Annamayya utsava vigraham were performed.

Sri Hanuman Jayanthi – June 12th, 2021. Hanuman Abhishekam was done and swamy was decorated with Betel leaves and Sindhuram. Vadamala and Betel leaves mala were offered by devotees .



Upcoming Events and Festivals

Date	Event
July 23	Guru Purnima
August 11-15	AshtaLakshmiSametha Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple Bhaktotsavam (Temple 5th Anniversary Celebrations)
August 12	Naga Panchami / Garuda Panchami
August 20	Sri Vara Lakshmi Vratam
August 29	Sri Krishna Janmashtami
September 9	Ganesh Chaturthi
September 11/12	Ganesh Nimarjan
October 6	Sharad Navaratri Begins
October 11	Saraswathi Puja
October 13-15	Durga Asthami, Maharnavami, and Vijaya Dashami
November 4	Diwali
November 5	Karthika Masam Begins
November 7	Nagula Chavithi
November 18	Karthika Deepostavam / Karthika Pournami
December 14	Geetha Jayanthi
December 15	Dhanurmasam Begins



Charity or Justice?

by Dr. Gautham Reddy

The Hindu tradition has many different words for justice. *Lokasangraha*, *dharma*, *nyaya*, and *niti* can all be used as loose references. These ancient concepts imply a commitment to fairness, equality, and goodness. It is our duty today to reflect on how these teachings can help us promote social justice.

Many people equate social justice with charity. People donate money to a worthy cause such as a free clinic or a fundraiser for a school. Or they may volunteer at a food shelter to support the homeless. They see these activities as their contribution to social justice.

Charity is an important way of offering relief to victims of injustice. It also helps people practice compassion. This is critical to develop a more spiritual outlook. However, charity is not justice. Charity asks, “how can we help victims?” Justice asks, “why are there so many victims?” Justice seeks to remove the root causes of suffering in our society.

In Saint Tulsidas’s *Ramacaritamanas*, a disciple asks his teacher, “What is the greatest human suffering?” The teacher replies without any hesitation, “There is no suffering in this world as great as poverty.” It is from poverty that struggles around food, housing, health, education, and all other basic needs are born.

Social justice advocates understand issues through a systemic lens. Hence, they do not see poverty as the result of individual failure. Poverty is not due to poor work ethic or bad luck. They see it as the result of social failure. The absence of quality healthcare, good schools, fair wages, and affordable housing in communities creates a cycle of debt and poverty that most people will never escape. This is the result of our current social policies.

Our compassion must lead us to help those who are oppressed by poverty. But it must also lead us to ask why there are so many people who experience this preventable condition. Charity and justice are complementary. Charity brings relief and builds the motivation to support justice. Justice pushes for changes to our society that make it fairer and more inclusive.

Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a spiritual and dignified life. This cannot be possible if people are denied their basic material needs. We must work together as a Hindu community to end poverty in all its forms. This begins by educating ourselves on local and state efforts to address income inequality and improve social welfare for our communities.

S.V. Temple Kitchen Project Updates

by SVT Management

Good News to all. We have completed the state of the art and very modern spacious kitchen on the first floor of our S.V. Temple.

Final inspection was done in June and temple was given permission to start by the City of Edina.

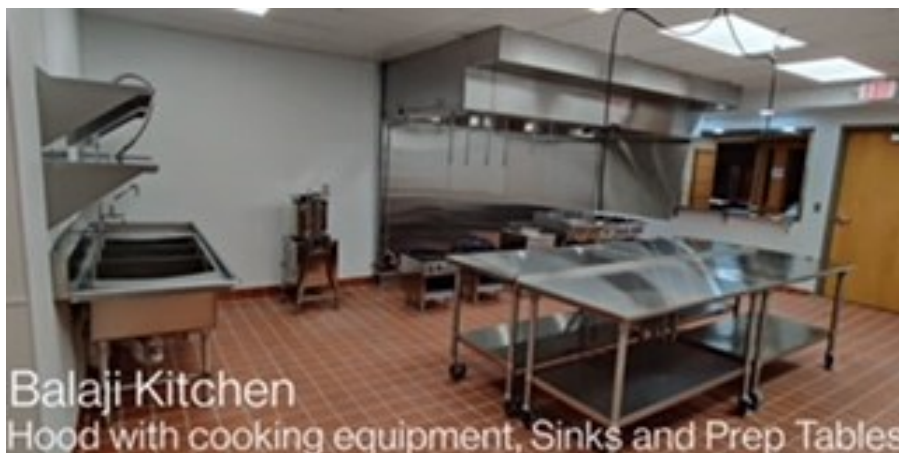
We are still looking for a trained full-time priest cook who will be cooking all varieties of Indian vegetarian dishes and *prasadam*s in a traditional way. Due to COVID situation, the process was delayed and hopefully we should complete this soon and will open the kitchen to our devotees. Once it becomes fully operable, we will start providing catering in addition to making the sweets and snacks available in the temple.

We are planning to restart the preparation of *pulihora prasadam* in August during our *Brahmostavam* time (August 11-15). It has been a very popular item in the temple on the weekends for the last few years. Due to the COVID situation, it was suspended but many of our devotees have been requesting it again, so we have chosen this auspicious time to restart it.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our kitchen project sponsors and management who spent so much of their personal time to complete this project.

Our temple kitchen 's name is — ‘BALAJI KITCHEN’

Please come and visit our kitchen in August during *Brahmostavam* event.



Kids Column

Virata Parva by Pradyumn Jagannath

This section of Mahabharata is the 'Virata Parva' where the Pandavas went to Virata's kingdom during their last year of exile.

During this period, Pandavas decided to disguise themselves in the kingdom. Yudhishtira becomes a courtier, Bheema becomes a cook, Arjuna becomes a woman (Brihannala) teaching dance to the princess, Draupadi becomes the attendant of the queen, Nakula takes care of horses and Sahadeva takes care of the cattle. Though they disguised themselves their natural charm was not taken away.

Kichaka, the brother of queen Sudhesna came to visit his sister and saw Draupadi. Kichaka was giving trouble to Draupadi and asked her to marry him. Draupadi said that she was married but he did not listen to her.

She talks to Bheema, complained about Kichika and asked him to get rid of this wretch. Then, Bheema killed Kichaka in the dancing hall. Words spread that the heroic Kichaka had been killed by a woman.

Duryodhana said he could only be killed by two people, either Jarasandha or Bheema. So, he suspected that Pandavas could be staying at Virata's kingdom. Since Susarma does not like Virata, Duryodhana and the Kauravas decided to support Susarma to wage a war against Virata.

At Virata's palace, Yudhishtira helps Virata to prepare for the war against Kauravas and Susarma.

Virata won the war and was extremely pleased how Yudhishtira helped him.

Meanwhile Duryodhana invaded Virata's kingdom and soldiers ran to UttaraKumara, the prince. While UttaraKumara was worried, Brihannala said that she is good at Archery and would help him to handle the war by running the Chariot also. On a nearby tree, Brihannala stopped the chariot and went to the tree to take the secret weapons in a bag. The bag was dazzling brightly, and it shone on him which made UttaraKumara felt like he got a new strength.

Brihannala revealed herself as Arjuna and explained why he and his brothers have disguised themselves in Virata's kingdom.

Duryodhana and his troops identified Brihannala as Arjuna and said, 'Your exile should be continued as you revealed your identity'. Arjuna said that exile period was already over. Arjuna won the war against the Kauravas and went back to Virata kingdom.

Pandavas revealed their identity to Virata who was happy to have them stay in his kingdom. He requested Pandavas to stay in the kingdom more, but Pandavas said 'We have to go back to our kingdom, Hastinapur'.

My views:

In hard times, if we stay together like Pandavas we can accomplish great things. Though Pandavas were great kings, they were humble to take lesser roles. We should learn to be humble as Pandavas.

Pandavas were not afraid to come forward and fight with the Kauravas though their identity might get revealed because they felt it's their duty to stay with Virata and save the kingdom. We should learn to always do the right thing at any time without worrying about the consequences.



Comments and Articles

We are inviting all readers, devotees, followers, students, teachers, and writers, etc. to submit devotional stories, essays, and experiences to S.V. Temple Newsletter editor. After newsletter committee's review, selected articles will be published in the upcoming issues of the newsletter. Editor of the newsletter will have all the rights to modify the articles to address language, grammar, and space-constraint issues. Since the audience of this newsletter comes from various age groups, we request you to send articles that everybody can understand. Make sure that your articles are helpful in educating the readers in devotional field and encourage them to follow dharma. Also, you can send comments on the published articles and ideas for new articles that you want to see. You can email your articles to news@svtemplemn.org.



Aadau raama tapovanaadi gamanam, hathva mrugam kaanchanam
vaidehi haraNam Jatayu maraNam sugreeva sambhaashaNam,
vaali nirgrahaNam, samudra taraNam lanka puri daahanam
pashchad raavaNa kumbakarNa hananam yetahi raamayaNam

This sloka is called Eka SlokiRamayanam (Ramayana in one sloka). Once when Rama was sent to the forest [AyodhyaKandam], He chased a deer, meanwhile, Sita was kidnapped, Jatayu was killed[AranyaKandam]. Then, there were discussions and planning with Sugreeva [for the war], Vali was killed[KishkintaKandam], the ocean was crossed, and Lanka was burnt [SundaraKandam]. Then, Lord Rama slayed Kumbakarna and Ravana and rescued Goddess Sita [YuddhaKandam]. This is the gist of Ramayanam.

Thanks from S.V. Temple:

S.V. Temple earnestly thank all the generous donors, wonderful devotees, learned priests and dedicated volunteers that help to make our Temple a marvelous place of worship.

Temple Hours:

The temple is open weekdays from 9:30 AM to Noon & 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM
Saturday and Sunday from 9:30 AM to 8:00 PM

Please visit www.svtemplemn.org for COVID related Temple Hours.