

**Asmath Gurubhyo Namaha
Srimathe Ramanujaya Namaha**

HH Chinna Jeeyar's Thirumala Pada Yathra

Wednesday Nov 23rd 2005 a day to be remembered in history, which was the day the largest group of people gathered at the foot hills of Thirupathi with the sole purpose of accompanying their Acharya HH SriSriSri Tridandi Srimannarayana Chinna Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami on a Pada Yathra to Thirumala (after a two year absence). There had been millions gathered in the past to get dharshan of the Lord of the seven Hills, but never as a large group. Most of the readers would know the reason for HH's absence from Thirumala Hills. To remind others, the Thousand pillar Mundapam (a large hall supported by 1000 pillars) which was built over 500 year's ago was demolished and turned to pieces for improvements near the Temple. HH along with the support of His devotees tried to rectify the happenings and return Thirumala Hills to its old glory. After a lot of enquiries, and committees which conducted interviews, unanimous decision was made by the wise members of TTD Board to rebuild the Thousand Pillar Mundapam, and not to add an extra prakaram. This is a hard won battle, for both histories and HH who was supported by hundreds of thousands of devotees who wrote **"OM NAMO VENKATESAYA"** daily, and out of 1100 plus crores already 900 plus crores had been reached.

HH and His Acharya Seva Yathra group started from Guntoor on that morning after finishing their daily rituals (which included Ramayana Parayanam, Homam and Purnahathi), around 10:00 am by road towards Thirupathi. The other devotees were already starting to gather at the foot hills by different modes of transportation which included trains, planes, buses, cars, walking etc. Heavy rains, damaged roads, broken bridges by floods didn't deter the devotees from joining their dearly loved Acharya on this holy mission i.e.: accompany HH on His Pada Yathra to Thirumala from Alampiri. People from all walks of life joined HH, both young and old, male and female, able and disabled, locals and foreigners; there was no differentiation of caste or creed. All were there for the sole purpose of serving their Acharya, who had shared the pain of the happenings at Thirumala and this was a way of celebration and thank the Lord in person for His grace.

The initial view of Thirumala Hills was breath taking; nature was putting on a majestic show to welcome HH and His devotees. The peak of the Hills was covered with clouds, and underneath it, the forests were lush green, with a number of cascading falls jumping from top to bottom, it almost looked like milk was flowing, (the contrast of green and heavy falls which made water look like milk), thus painting a stunning portrait. Once we reached the foot hills it was a sight to behold! The place was filled with ocean of faces, and the atmosphere was charged with energy. Everyone was craning their neck to see the arrival of their beloved Acharya and turning with disappointment when the vehicles were arriving without HH. This crowd could be compared to "SriVaikunta Ekadasi in SriRangam, Brahmothsavam in Thirumala, Garuda Seva at Kanchi or Vairamudi Seva at

Melkote, with the great difference being that people are gathered here for their venerated Acharya HH Chinna Jeeyar Swami.

After getting the grace of divine mother Padmavathi Thayar HH and His group arrived at the foot Hills and crowd's joy was unparalleled, the noise was deafening with chantings of "Jai Srimannarayana" and "Govinda". It was felt Lord Srimannarayana from above could hear and feel the enthusiasm of the crowd. HH was welcomed by EO and few other members of the TTD board, and after answering questions by the media HH briefly addressed the gathered devotees and started the PADA YATHRA. The emotion felt by everyone at that time was one of profound joy, commitment and devotion. With people crying, laughing and singing it was a sight that only could be witnessed and not expressed in words. When HH started the climb, The Lord of the Seven Hills welcomed His favorite son by sending Varuna Deva with intermittent showers (to cool the steps) and it felt like Perumal Himself was shedding joyous tears in the form of rain to receive His long lost child and at times even He got too emotional by shedding heavy happy tears of rain.

Accompanied by thousands of devotees the Pada Yathra with HH is unforgettable. During the climb HH was tireless, chanting Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam continuously. When people got tired and sat out His kind smile and encouraging words were enough to recharge their sagging body and boost their system. The climbers on the way up, saw deer's roaming, peacocks dancing and monkeys jumping and it felt like, that by keeping the devotees entertained they were also participating in the Pada Yathra. They also passed a number of falls and throughout the journey the steps were constantly kept cool by flowing water. HH and a handful of devotees stopped at all the Temples on the way to pay their respects. Ambulances and first aid services were available along the climb and though a handful needed some attention, nobody needed hospitalization.

The Pada Yathra took about 3 hours and 30 minutes to complete for HH and most of the devotees, though some took a little bit longer. At the end of their Yathra everyone was totally drenched, but they all had a blissful smile on their face, (it was a great feat to accomplish). After paying respects to Sri Rama Sthupam and Veda Vedy Sthupm, HH along with His devotees proceeded to Sri Lakshmi Varaha Sannidhi (who was the presiding deity of Thirumala Hills until Lord Srinivasa came down). By now all the devotees have arrived at Thirumala (either by walk or vehicles) and along with HH everyone entered Vaikuntum Q complex, where including HH all gathered purchased Rs.100 ticket and all the devotees of Lord Srinivasa was allowed to walk the lines without wait. TTD board and committees were kind enough to stop the other visitors for a little bit of time, so that HH and His devotees can get dharshan of the Lord.

Eventually HH was escorted to the inner sanctum of Lord Venkateshwara where HH waited for all His devotees to get dharshan of the Lord. It was really a blessing to see the Lord and Acharya at the same time. Afterwards HH went around the sannidhi and paid obeisance to Swami Ramanuja who holds the esteemed post of Acharya to the Lord Himself. By now it is 9:00pm and HH and the devotees are still in their wet soggy clothes, but they all have radiance around their faces, and HH's happiness had no bounds.

By now most of the devotees are starting to depart. HH went to the mutt to give Mangalasanams to the mutt employees and the other devotees gathered there and left for Tondawada (near Chandragiri) to finish second half of Ramayana Parayanam and Homam which He completed around 2:30 am. Words are inadequate to explain the ecstasy and profound joy felt by all gathered to do the Yathra with HH.

HH was also accompanied by few other Jeeyars namely, HH Vrathadhara Ramanuja Jeeyar of Hyderabad and HH Ahobhila Ramanuja Jeeyar. No words can express the gratitude the devotees feel for some of the organizers of the Yathra, namely Sri Rameshwara Rao, Smt Ananda Kumari, Sri Ramachandra Reddy, Sri Rama Rao, Sri Thirukoshtiyur Madhavan and other members of JET and VikasaTharangini, employees of the mutt who worked tirelessly to feed the hungry, and give shelter, and last but not least employees of TTD to make this Pada Yathra event an unforgettable one.

To conclude one can't definitely conclude who was the happiest.....

- 1) Is it Lord Srinivasa to see HH after a two year absence?
- 2) Is it HH to see Lord of the Seven Hills accompanied by His devotees?
- 3) Is it the devotees to see HH return to Thirumala and have dharshan of the Lord and Acharya at the same time/

Adiyen would definitely vote for the third and am sure that all the devotees would agree whole heartedly.

After the Yathra was over Adiyen had an opportunity to interview HH about this Yathra. HH said that because of His heavy schedules He couldn't visit Thirumala Hills and during Acharya Seva Yathra, He happened to pass through Thirupathi, He added Thirumala to His agenda.

When asked about the unusual sight of the Seven Hills and the falls, HH got misty and quoted few songs from Azhvar Divya Prabhandam "Vinneela MelAppu" (cloud covered Hills), "Kulir Aruvi", "aruvi chor Venkatam", and "Thennirai chunai neer ThiruVenkatathu". He went on to explain that never in His previous visits had He seen such a sight with all the tanks filled, and many falls flowing. Having been contaminated by a lot of sins The Lord of the Seven Hills is washing them away with water. HH also said that on the way up, all the steps were filled with gushing water that was more than ankle high and during the month of Karthi where all the Devas visit Thiruparkadal, He said, that was how it felt, wading through foamy waters that took on a look of milk. HH also wanted to let all the devotees know that though only a few could join Him on this Yathra He carried all of us in His heart and He sends Mangalasanams to one all.

Azhvar Emperumanaar Jeeyar Thiruvadigale Saranam.
Chinna Jeeyar Thiruvadigale Saranam.

Adiyen Chitra Ramanuja Dasi