

## **SRI.RAGHAVENDRA SWAMIJI's POORVASHRAMA**

Sri.Raghavendra Swamiji (Sri.Gururajaru) was born in 1595 in Kaveripattana, Tamil Nadu to Thimmanna Bhatta and Gopikamba. His ancestors were of the Gautama Gotra. He was named **Venkatanatha** as he was born by the grace of Lord Sri.Venkateshwara. When his father was performing Aksharabhyasa, Venkatanatha asked how a small letter like Om can explain the great God. The father was overjoyed that his son understood that the God cannot be fully explained by one small letter. Venkatanatha's Upanayanam was performed in Chaitra Masa, when he was 8 years, Although his father passed away by then, Venkatanatha did not consider himself an orphan, as he considered Sri. Narayana as his father and Gayathri Devi who reveals Him, as every twice-born's real mother.

Venkatanatha studied Yajurveda, Manimanjari and Anumadhva Vijaya at Madurai. His powers of meditation were shown when his water from doing Sandhyavandana happened to fall on a dry seed, which sprouted. He also developed an expertise in playing the Veena, so he became known as **Veena Venkata Bhatta**. This is not surprising, since Venkatanatha came from a family skilled in music. His great-grandfather, Krishnabhata, tutored the King of the Vijayanagar kingdom, Krishnadevaraya, in Veena, and his father was skilled in music as well. Upon returning from Madurai, he was married to Saraswati, who was from a noble family. His marriage, just like his Upanayanam and schooling, was arranged by his brother Gururajacharya.

The Shastras say that for one who has control of his senses, wedded life does not hamper learning. For Venkatanatha, most of his learning occurred after marrying Saraswati, through the blessings of Goddess Saraswati. So Venkatanatha went to Kumbhakonam, the seat of learning during those days. At Kumbhakonam, he studied under Sri Sudheendra Teertha. He used to stay awake past midnight to write his own comments and notes on the lessons that had been done. Once, he engaged in a debate and defeated a Mayavadi at Rajamannar temple. Though his victory was not unexpected Sri Sudheendra Teertha was surprised at his scholarship in grammar, profound knowledge and rare debating skill, and called him "**Mahabhashya Venkatanathacharya**". Similarly he explained the significance of Taptamudra dharana quoting several Smrutis that the opponents had to accept his arguments were irrefutable. He had a son, Lakshminarayana. Although he and his family were in stark poverty, he was unaffected by it, being immersed in the sweet nectar of the Madhva philosophy. Not even once did he give up his teachings and learning; he was steadfast in his determination to live by whatever came to him unsought and unasked. Still, when his master asked him to take Sanyasa, he found himself in a grave dilemma. For one thing, he knew that if he took Sanyasa, he would eventually have to take control of the Matha (Mutt). While trying to find a solution to this problem, Vidya Lakshmi herself appeared before him. She told him that if such great people like himself did not spread the right philosophy, that of Sri Madhvacharya, the Mathas (Mutts) would fall into ruin. The light of Tattvavada would be extinguished by the darkness of Mayavada. Understanding where his true duty lay, Mahabhashya Venkatanathacharya obeyed Vidya Lakshmi and took Sanyasa. Sri Sudhindra Teertha initiated Sri.Venkatanathacharya on the second day of the bright half

of Phalguna Masa in the year Durmati corresponding to the year 1621. He was given the holy name "**Sri.Raghavendra Teertha**".

**Sri Raghavendra Swami was one of the great proponents of the Madhva philosophy. For nearly 50 years, he was the head of one of the great Peethas. His predecessors include such scholars like Vijayeendra Teertha & Sudheendra Teertha. He excelled in many fields such as Logic, Meemamsa, Music, Yoga, Dharmasastra & all 64 arts. As an Avatara of Sri.Prahlada, he chose as his Brindavan at Manchaale (Mantralaya) on the banks of the sacred river Tungabadhra, where Prahlada had performed his Yajna in Krita Yuga. It is said that the stone used for the Brindavan was sanctified by the touch of Sri Rama and Sita in the Treta Yuga. His nephew, Sri.Narayanacharya, wrote Sri.Raghavendra Vijaya, which gives a full account of the life of this great saint.**

