

Write-up on Ramanuja Topics for Drawing Competitions

1. THE TRIBAL COUPLE ACCOMPANYING RAMANUJA IN VINDHYA FORESTS

Once, on a pilgrimage to holy Ganges, young Ramanuja, to escape the bad intentions of his Guru YadavaPrakasa, ventured into and was caught alone in the dense Vindhya forests. Not knowing what to do and gaining strength by repeating Lord Srimannarayana's name, he walked deeper and deeper into the forest.

Extremely thirsty, hungry, lost and tired, Sri Ramanuja finally met a friendly tribal couple. This couple addressed him in sweet soothing words and told him to shed his worries. They offered to get him out of the forest as they too were travelling South. He followed the tribal couple. When they all reached the nearest water stream, Sri Ramanuja, by now exhausted, rested and fell asleep.

And when he woke up, lo and behold, he found himself in the outskirts of Kancheepuram. In the distance, he could see his favourite Sri Varadarajaswamy temple! What a miracle! It was then that Sri Ramanuja realised that the tribal couple were none other than the divine couple, Lakshmi-Narayana, who had come to comfort him with love and affection and save him from the frightening Vindhya forest!

2. RAMANUJA ACCEPTING PRASADAM FROM CHILDREN ON THE BANKS OF THE CAUVERY

On another occasion, Sri Ramanuja now settled in holy Srirangam, was on his way to sacred Cauvery to bathe there and prepare himself for Sri Ranganatha's worship.

As he majestically walked on the Cauvery River banks with his disciples, he saw a group of adorable children deeply engaged in worship and rituals. Hastening to this worship spot on the sands, Sri Ramanuja was amazed to see a likeness of Sri Ranganatha drawn on the sands, being reverentially worshipped. The children had recreated all the temple vessels, etc in sand and were eagerly offering their sincere prayers to the Lord. They invited Sri Ramanuja to take part in the worship and offered him Prasadam.

Sri Ramanuja in all humility, immediately prostrated at the lotus feet of the children's Lord and sincerely worshipped Him. Sri Ramanuja realized the childrens' pure love for God, seeing and worshipping Him everywhere, setting a glorious example for all to follow.

3. RAMANUJA FINDING CHELLAPILLAI IN DELHI SULTANATE

Having unexpectedly discovered the ancient idol of YadavadripatiCheluvanarayanawamy, and having reinstalled the beautifully majestic idol at Melkote, near Mysore, Sri Ramanuja once had a dream where Perumal bade him to proceed forthwith to Delhi, where His Utsava Idol, Sampathkumara, was in the Emperor of Delhi's possession.

Hastening to Delhi with his disciples the very next day, Sri Ramanuja was warmly received by the Delhi Emperor, who was greatly attracted by the saint's lustrous appearance, keen intelligence and scholarship. When Sri Ramanuja explained the purpose of his visit, and sought the coveted idol, the Emperor immediately agreed. He led the saint to his gallery of many idols, removed from many temples from all over India, through time.

Even after a thorough search, Sri Ramanuja could not find his 'Sampathkumara' there. Finally, when a dejected Sri Ramanuja was shown the favourite idol of his daughter, the princess, to which the princess was very much attached, Sri Ramanuja immediately recognized the idol as that of 'Sampathkumara or Ramapriya', the ancient idol so very dear to Sri Rama.

Beseeking the princess to part with the idol proved futile. The princess was very fond of this idol and refused to give it to Sri Ramanuja.

The perplexed Sri Ramanuja now endearingly and affectionately addressing Sampatkumara as 'Chellapillaye...vaa...' stretched out his arms. And wonder of wonders, the venerable idol was, in no time, resting in his arms. Such is the love our Perumal has for Sri Ramanuja!

4. RAMANUJA'S DEBATE WITH JAINS IN THONDANUR

Thondanur, very close to Melkote, is an ancient pilgrim centre where Sri Ramanuja stayed and worshipped the glorious Sri Nambi Narayana and Lakshmi Narasimha enshrined here. Here the Nambi Narayana Perumal holds the Sankha in his right hand and Chakra in his left hand, symbolising the mudradharana pose, ready and eager to initiate devotees as Sri Vaishnavas.

In this temple, we find a curious, glorious, majestic deity of Sri Ramanuja, in His AdiSeshaAvataara. And this deity has a story behind it.

The local ruler, BittiDevaraya was a staunch Jain and his subjects too mostly followed Jainism. The Ruler's young daughter, afflicted with a serious disease, bordering on possession, could be cured neither by the court physicians nor by the many Jain monks who went to cure her and failed miserably.

When Sri Ramanuja visited the palace atBittiDevaraya's invitation and saw the princess, the latter was immediately cured and recovered fully just by looking at Sri Ramanuja. Such is his grace.

King BittiDevaraya, rejoicing and jubilant, recognized Sri Ramanuja's greatness and immediately embraced Sri Vaishnavism,being bestowed with the new name 'VishnuVandhana'.

But the local Jain monks could not digest this and challenged Sri Ramanuja to a debate on the merits of his religion's tenets and philosophy.

At the packed Assembly Hall, Sri Ramanuja, facing a 1000 of these monks, was triumphant in convincingly answering each and every question put forth by the 1000 monks, having assumed his original 1000-white hooded AdiSesha form. Sri Ramanuja had drawn a curtain between himself and the assembly of a 1000 Jain monks, so that they would not be intimidated by his awesome original form!

And this is the story behind Sri Ramanuja's unique idol at Thondanur.