

Details of Sri Vaishnavism¹

Sri Vaishnavism essentially means followers of Lord Vishnu (one of the triumvirate of Indian Gods, viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva). The central tenet of its teachings is bhakthi and the concept of Saranagati i.e. total surrender to God and His representation on earth, the Guru. The importance of Sri Vaishnavism has waned and waxed through the ages, and it was re-established in this age by Sri Ramanuja (1017-1137 AD). The glorification of devotion to Sriman Narayana and the bhakthi movement of Sri Vaishnavism had 12 pillars in the form of the 12 Alvars (of these, one was Andal, the consort of Sriman Narayana and one was Madurakavi, who wrote verses praising his Guru, rather than Sriman Narayana). The remaining 10 were devotional saints in Tamil Nadu who composed a number of verses in praise of Sriman Narayana. Tradition dates the time of the Alvars to Dwapara Yuga and early Kali Yuga (4200-2700 BC), however, western historians put their time between 100AD-1000AD. The devotional outpourings of the Alvars were collected into the Naalaira (4000) Divya Prabandams which serve as the main religious books of the Vadagalai Sri Vaishnavaites. The Alvars also sang about 108 temples as primary places of worship of Sriman Narayana - these are now called the Divya Desams (the first Divya Desam is Vaikuntam).

The dates (as per tradition and as per western historians) and compositions of the 12 Alvars are given below:

	Tradition al date	Western date	Composition	Incarnation of:
Poigai Alvar	4203 BC	713 AD	Mudal Thiruvandhadhi (100 verses)	Panchajanya (Vishnu's conch)
Bhooth Alvar	4203 BC	713 AD	Irاندam Thiruvandhadhi (100 verses)	Kaumodaki (Vishnu's mace)
Pey Alvar	4203 BC	713 AD	Moondram Thiruvandhadhi (100 verses)	Nandaka (Vishnu's sword)
Thirumalisai Alvar	4203 BC	720 AD	Nanmugan Thiruvandhadhi (96 verses) ThiruChanda Virutham (120 verses)	Sudarshana Chakra (Vishnu's discus)
Nammalwar	3093 BC	798 AD	Thiruvaymozhi (1102 verses) Thiruvasiriyam (7 verses) Thiruvirutham (100 verses)	Vishvaksena (Vishnu's commander)

1 This document was put together using sources of information from Wikipedia and the Andavan Ashram websites, www.andavan.org and www.ramanujamission.org.

			Periya Thiruvandhadhi (87 verses)	
Madhurakavi Alwar	3102 BC	800 AD	Kanninun Siruthambu (11 verses)	Garuda (Vishnu's mount)
King Kulasekhara Alwar	3075 BC	767 AD	Perumal Thirumozhi (105 verses)	Kaustubha (Vishnu's jewel embedded in his necklace)
Periyalwar	3056 BC	785 AD	Periyaaazhwar Thirumozhi (473 verses)	Garuda (Vishnu's mount)
Andal	3005 BC	767 AD	Nachiyar Thirumozhi (143 verses) Thiruppavai (30 verses)	Bhudevi (Vishnu's consort)
Thondaradippoddi Alwar	2814 BC	726 AD	Thirumaalai (45 verses) Thirupalliezhuchi (10 verses)	Vanamalai (Vishnu's garland)
Thiruppaan Alwar	2760 BC	781 AD	Amalan Adi Piraan (10 verses)	Srivatsa (auspicious mark on Vishnu's chest)
Thirumangai Alwar	2706 BC	776 AD	Periya Thirumozhi (1084 verses) Thiru Vezhukootru irukkai (1 verse) Thiru Kurun Thandagam 920 verses) Thiru Nedun Thandagam (30 verses)	Shaaranga (Vishnu's bow)

The Guru parampara of Sri Vaishnavism starts as follows :

1. Sriman Narayana
2. Sri Mahalakshmi
3. Vishvakshenar
4. Nammalwar (3093 BC) (considered to be the greatest among the Alwars; composed 1352 verses in 4000 Divya Prabandham)
5. Natha Munigal (824-924) (compiled the verses of the Alwars and called them the Tamil Veda)
6. Uyyakondar (Pundarikakshar) (826-931)
7. Manakkal Nambi (Sri Rama Misrar) (832-941)
8. Yamunamuni (Alavandar, Periya Mudaliar) (916-1041)

9. Periya Nambi (Mahapurnar)

10. Sri Ramanuja (Emperumanar, Lakshmanamuni, Yathiraja, Sri Bhasyakarar) (1017-1137)

Sri Ramanuja taught that the deity absolute, Parabrahman, manifests in five possible aspects: Para, Vyuha, Vibhava, Antaryamin, and Archa. Living beings can interact with the divine through one or another of these five. He also established a system of worship of Vishnu, based on around 200 texts (collectively called "Pancharatra Agamas"). This system of worship is called "Pancharatra" and forms the basis of Sri Vaishnava tradition.

Sri Ramanuja established 74 Mutts in India to propagate the concept of Sri Vaishnavism and Saranagati. The simhasanathipathis of these mutts were as follows:

1. Thirukurugai Piran Pillan	16. Tirumozhur Alwan	31. Kanthadai Andan	46. Pillai Appan	61. Mudumbai Ammal
2. Koorath Alwan	17. Koil Alwan	32. Asuri Peruman	47. Pillai Tirumalai Nambi	62. Vaithama Nidhiyar
3. Nadadur Alwan	18. Arunapurathu Aalwan	33. Maruthi Andan	48. Vankipurathu Nambi	63. Terku Alwan
4. Parasara Bhattar	19. Kaniyur Siriya Alwan	34. Mathurai Andan	49. Sottai Nambi	64. Sri Rama Pilla Bhattar
5. Engal Alwan	20. Tirumalai Nallan	35. Somasi Andan	50. Mudumbai Nambi	65. Sirupalli Devaraja Bhattar
6. Elai Alwan	21. Kidambi Achan	36. Jeer Andan	51. Parankusa Nambi	66. Pillai Urandhal Udayar
7. Mudaliandan	22. Vankipurathu Achan	37. Esandan	52. Tirukkurungudi Nambi	67. Pillai Tiruvoimozhi Arayur
8. Chettalur Alwan	23. Eachambadi Achan	38. Peria Andan	53. Thondanur Nambi	68. Pillai Tirunaraiyur Arayur
9. Veanti Alwan	24. Kongil Achan	39. Siriya Andan	54. Arunapurathu Nambi	69. Pillai Rajamahendra Perumal Arayar
10. Ananta Alwan	25. Tirukannapurathu Achan	40. Ammangi Andan	55. Marudur Nambi	70. Adhikari Pillai
11. Naduvila Alwan	26. Achan	41. Alavandar Andan	56. Mazhaiyur Nambi	71. Tirunagari Pillai
12. Milagu Alwan	27. Siriya Govinda Perumal	42. Sundaratholudaiyar	57. Vaduga Nambi	72. Kumandur Pillai
13. Neyyunda Alwan	28. Viravalli Perumal	43. Ukkalamma	58. Kuravi Nambi	73. Anantha Somayajiyar
14. Ukkala Alwan	29. Kidambi Perumal	44. Paruthikollai Ammal	59. Pundarikakshar	74. Kanchi Somayajiyar
15. Tirukkoilur Alwan	30. Ammangi Perumal	45. Chottai Ammail	60. Gomaathu Alwan	

The teachings of Sri Ramanuja were interpreted slightly different by his various disciples leading to sub-sects of Sri Vaishnavism. The particular lineage that led to Srimad Andavan Ashramam is given below:

Details of Srimad Andavan Ashramam

Continuing the Guru parampara for Srimad Andavan Ashramam, after Sri Ramanjua, we have

11. Kidambi Achan (Pranatharthiran) (1057-1157)

12. AthrEya RAmAnujar

13. AthrEya Ranga Ramanujar (Athreya Rangaraja Pillan)

14. Kidambi AppullAr (1221-1295)

15. Sri Vedantha Desikar² (1268-1369)

16. Sri Brahmathanthra Swathanthara Swamigal ³(started Parakala Mutt in 1360)

Srinivasachariar (a disciple of Sri Brahmathanthra Swathanthra Swamigal) starts Ahobila Mutt in 1398.

17. Gatika Sathakam Ammal (Vathsya Varadha Guru)

18. Varadha VishnuvAcharya

- 2 Sri Pillai Lokacharyar (1203-1311) was a contemporary of Sri Vedantha Desikar. Sri Ramanuja's teachings were interpreted in slightly different ways by Sri Vedanta Desikan and Sri Pillai Lokacharyar, leading to the Vadagalai and Thengalai sects of Vaishnavites. The main difference between Vadagali and Thengalai is that the Thengalai sect believes that ONLY Sriman Narayana can give Moksha to his devotees, whereas the Vadagalai sect believe that both Sriman Narayana and his consort Sri Mahalakshmi can give Moksha to their devotees. Also, Vadagalai give more importance to 4000 Divya Prabandam and Thengalai give more importance to the Vedas.
- 3 The teachings of Sri Vedanta Desikan were codified into Vadagalai sampradaya by his disciple Bramhathantra Swathanthra Jeer at Parakala Mutt (Karnataka) in 1360. This subsequently evolved into 3 sub-sects, Ahobila Mutt, Andavan Ashramam and Pundarikapuram Ashramam. Basically there are no difference between the subsects. All of them are following Desika Sampradayam. Andavan Ashrama and Pundarikapuram are descendants of Munithreya Sampradayam. Munitreyam simply means Three Munis, and refers to the three Munis Srimad Natha Muni (824-924), Srimad Yamuna Muni (916-1041) and Srimad Ramanuja Muni (1017-1137).

19. MahAdayAdeesar
20. Sirangattur AhobilAchAr
21. Vangipuram Shashta ParAnkusa SwAmy
22. Panchamatha Bhanjanam ThAthAchAriAr
23. Keezh Neerkunnam AnanthAchAriAr
24. RamAnuja swamy
25. Paravasthu VenkatEsachAriar
26. ChithannA VeerarAghavAchAr SwAmy
27. Velamoor Rangapathi Desikar
28. Ranganatha Swamy (KalyAnAvaham SwAmy)
29. sAkshAth SwAmy (starts concept of Munitreya Sampradayam)
30. Srimath Thirukkudanthai Desikan (1700-1782)

Sri Vazhathur Andavan was a disciple of Sri Thirukkudanthai Desikan and established the current Andavan Ashramam. It can hence trace its roots back to nearly 300 years. Since then, there have been 11 Acharya's.

The names and the period are given below:

S.no	Period		Name of the Acharyas
1	1743 to 1795	Srimad Valuthur Andavan	- Sri Vedantha Ramanuja Maha Desikan
2	Dates not available	Srimad Thiruthurai Poondi Andavan	- Sri Srinivasa Ramanuja Maha Desikan
3	1830 to 1884	Srimad Periyandavan	- Sri Srinivasa Maha Desikan
4	1883 to 1894	Srimad Chinnandavan	- Sri Paduka Seveka
5	1905 to 1909	Kadanthethi Andavan	- Sri Srinivasa Ramanuja Maha Desikan
6	1872 to 1932	Therezhunthur Andavan	- Sri Vedantha Ramanuja Maha Desikan
7	1932 to 1947	Sri Aakur Andavan	- Sri Srinivasa Maha Desikan
8	1946 to 1963	Thenpirai Andavan	- Sri Ranganatha Maha Desikan
9	1963 to 1989	Sri Thirukudanthai Andavan	- Srimath Vedantha Ramanuja Maha Desikan
10	1988 to 1989	Sri Mysore Andavan	- Sri Srinivasa Ramanuja Maha Desikan
11	From 1989...	Sri Mushnam Andavan	- Sri Ranga Ramanuja Maha Desikan

The current Ashramam head is Sri Srimushnam Andavan, also known as Sri Ranga Ramanuja Maha Desikan, who is the 11th head of the Ashramam since its establishment.

The Ashramam head quarters are on the banks of river Kollidam (parallel to Cauvery) in Srirangam, Tamilnadu. In addition to the main Ashramam, several other branches have also been established in many places. The Ashramam for all practical purposes functions as a Mutt and conducts daily poojas, rituals and other activities in conformity with the Pancharatra protocol established by Sri Ramanuja Muni. The Ashramam has also contributed to renovation of old temples, building of new temples, establishment of Sanksrit Patasalas where the Vedas/Sastras/Prabandas/Agamas are taught thus ensuring that the knowledge is not lost to future generations.