



Volume 1

Issue - November 2007

Mandayams

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We wish all our readers a
very exciting, enjoyable
Happy Deepavalli 2007 !

Nov 8th – Naraka Chaturdasi

Nov 9th – Deepaavali

Nov 10th – Balipaadyami

Our Immediate Goals are to:

- Develop a website for
Mandayams in NA to
communicate
effectively – **In
progress**
- Nourish the very
successful OMCT
project – **In progress**
- Develop an
organization structure
for the association here
in NA – **In progress**

Getting Organized to Execute Projects

Even as we slowly evolve our organization structure, develop roles and responsibilities and strive to provide a career path for aspiring volunteers to contribute to the community, shoulder responsibilities and later lead the organization, we have leapfrogged to execute some of our key projects in parallel to these activities.

Our organization structure will be based on a view to execute new projects in teams and then once implemented will be maintained and operated by the appropriate functional area committee led by a Chair with

volunteers.

The Online MCT project which has documented the genealogical lineage of over 2700 Mandayams will be the first project to move from full implementation to nourishment and operations.

We are in the process of defining a team to be in place for this activity and will soon be calling for volunteers to help in this effort.

We hope this small step has brought the NA & Global Mandayam community closer and look forward to having many more activities with much more active

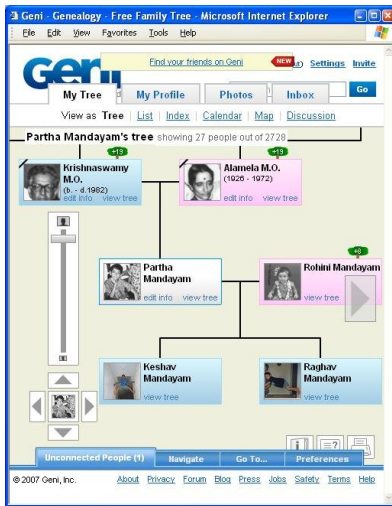
participation.

We are also actively working on the Website project with a team in San Jose and Toronto and will keep you posted about its progress in every issue.

Meanwhile a team from San Diego, LA and Dallas will shoulder the responsibilities of looking into incorporating the organization in NA.

The minutes of the October telecon is posted in a folder called Minutes under the Files section in the Yahoo Group. Members are free to review and share their views with their local coordinators.

Everything you Wanted to Know about Online MCT (Geni) but were Afraid to Ask!



A sample tree

NOTE: Sri RK Sharma has suggested naming the Online MCT as 'MOTHER' which stands for **Mandayam Online Tree to EKindle Relationships**. This will be decided by Jan 1, 2008 by the coordinators, if no one has objections to it.

The author of this article The Origin of the Online MCT - Sri R K Sharma a long term resident of LA has been a visionary and guiding light to this project and has been the driving force to implement the Online MCT using Geni successfully.

Vision without action is a day dream and here is where Sri Partha Mandayam the author of the following articles – What is Geni and What is Online MCT? and the Guidelines has proven that his efforts and actions in implementing Geni have been carefully thought through in order to be widely accepted by the Mandayam community.

The Online MCT (Geni) Project has been very successful in a very short period of time. The articles in this issue explore the history of the Online MCT, provide guidelines on usage and statistics on its membership.

The Origin of the Online MCT

One of the persons who helped create the MCT, Sri R.K. Sharma (RKS) had a vision of an interactive online Mandayam Community Tree (MCT) with a Web interface many years ago, when the first Family Tree software packages for PCs appeared on the market. The other person, Sri Partha Mandayam, made the vision a reality by discovering **Geni**, the software package which implements that vision to a large extent.

RKS has been involved with the MCT for a long time. RKS's mother, Smt. H.R. Ranganayaki, (known popularly as Pudukchery Ranga/amma/I & Sri M.O.A Chari, RKS's cousin Smt. M.O. Alamelu's husband & editor of the Tamil religious magazine "Bhakthan", familiarized RKS with many M's early on & RKS's mother took RKS with her on innumerable visits with M's in Chennai, Bangalore, Mysore & other places.

RKS received, from his brother Sri H.R.T. Chari, a copy of the original **History and Vamsha Parampara Of The Mandayam Sree Vaishnava Samudyam** published in 1981. The 1981 MCT book was & still

is a pioneering effort. RKS & the many Mandayam visitors to his home have annotated RKS's copy of the MCT. In fact, RKS acquired a reputation for bringing out his copy of the MCT whenever he had M visitors at his home & requesting them to supply missing links in it!

Smt. M.A. Thangamma (MAT), the "sambandhi" of RKS's sister, Smt. M.A. Ranganayaki (Thanga) made major contributions to RKS's copy of the 1981 MCT by "burning the midnight oil" and adding a lot of info, missing from the MCT, linking wives to their parents & married daughters to their husbands, which has made it a lot easier for RKS to place people on MCT now.

RKS has been in contact with various activists in the community like Sri M.N. Krishnaswamy (MNK), Sri Ram Singlachar (RS) & others for many years about putting the MCT on the Web. After RS started his website, RS put up a non-interactive version of the 1981 MCT on his website and put in password access control at the suggestion of RKS.

In 2003, RKS attended a Mandayam gathering in N California organized by Sri M.P. Srinivasan, Sri S.N. Rajeev & others & talked about the use of PC software packages for the MCT. RKS pursued his vision of an interactive, online MCT with a Web interface for many years, looking for database experts & software

developers in & outside the community who would be willing to volunteer their time to build such an MCT, with members of the community entering their own family data and thus distributing the work of data entry, querying the tree & having the tree display all the relationships between any two persons on the tree, etc. The obvious advantages of such an MCT are, of course, ease of data entry, correction, updating, & querying.

On Sept 30, 07, at a South Indian Music Academy (SIMA) Chitra Veena concert by Ravi Kiran at Lakewood, CA, RKS had a casual conversation with Sri M.N. Venkatesh (MNV) about finding M's who could help develop an online MCT with a Web interface & MNV suggested that he talk to Partha Mandayam about it. Independently of RKS's efforts, Partha M, instead of worrying about developing software for an online MCT with a Web interface, had been on a different tack, looking into software created by others to achieve the same results, at the request of MNK. After checking out many candidates, Partha M found **Geni**! As the saying goes, "the rest is history"!!!

This, we believe, is an expression of M's' strong innate "urge to merge", no matter where they are on the globe. Let us keep that community spirit "alive & well"! Let us empower every M anywhere on the globe to excel individually in his or her own chosen field and do more for all communities through technology at a local, national and global level !

Contd... Everything you Wanted to Know about Online MCT (Geni) but were Afraid to Ask!

What is Geni and what is Online MCT?

Geni is a tool that helps people create family trees on the world-wide web, without the need to purchase, download and install additional software on their own PCs.

It also eliminates the following problems that are inherent in the PC-based model of developing and maintaining community trees for large communities such as ours, the community of Mandayam Iyengars spread across the world:

- Burdening a small team for collecting information on all the Mandayam families
- Synchronizing and merging their different sets of data into one large database, again on someone's PC.
- Dissemination of this large community tree to all its members is also costly and resource-intensive.
 - Designing the trees to be visually effective – either manually or through computer programs to do this with the collected genealogical data.
 - They have to make this available securely, to only the members of the tree and no one else.
- Continuing to nourish this large community tree with the help of just a handful of volunteers is also a nightmare, considering that births and deaths occur constantly.

With a secure, web-based tool accessible only by all members of the community tree, **Geni** has practically eliminated all the above problems. After researching various web-based tools, Partha Mandayam picked **Geni** as the best available tool today (October 2007) to build and nourish the Online Mandayam Community Tree, a.k.a. Online MCT.

Geni is a relationship-based family tree, meaning you can only add a person to the tree if that person is related to someone else already on the tree. So, it becomes a problem when someone requests to be invited to join the tree and none of his/her close relatives is already on the tree.

To help resolve such issues, the MCT administrators consult to the printed Mandayam tree (now referred to as just the **Community Tree**) created by the Mandayam Sri Vaishnava Sabha (MSVS) and which is also available in scanned form (not searchable) at www.mandayam.com. In a reciprocal manner, MSVS administrators have already started using the fledgling Online MCT to expand the printed Community Tree downwards with newer generations of Mandayams.

How to use Geni like a Genie.....

Now that many of you Mandayams have experienced **Geni** from around the globe, we felt that it is time to share some tips to make your experience with **Geni** much better.

Guidelines for joining the Online MCT

- You **should not** try to add yourself to the Online MCT (**Geni**). If you add your own profile at geni.com instead of following the link in an email invite from a fellow Mandayam, it causes a major problem, since you will have to then request Geni to delete your own tree so you can be part of the Online MCT. Why? Because a person's email address is the unique identifier to login to geni.com as a member of a tree hosted at geni.com.
- If you know a fellow Mandayam who is already on Online MCT, request that person to add a profile for you, linking you to your closest relative(s) on Online MCT and attach your email address to your profile and invite you. When you get the invite in your inbox, follow the link in that message. It will assign a temporary password to you (shown on the screen as well as in a subsequent email from **Geni** to you).
- You will be taken to your "Settings" page. Here, do the following immediately:
 - Change your password to one that you will easily remember. Note that your email address is your user id on geni.com.
 - Select "Me" in the prompt "My profile can only be edited by".
 - Change your email subscriptions, so you are not bombarded by Geni with too many email messages in the future.
 - Set your privacy options wisely, so your profile is visible to as few people as necessary. Typically, there is no need to grant **Geni** users outside Online MCT even read-only access to your profile.
 - Finally, click on "Save Changes" to save your settings.

Contd...

Everything you Wanted to Know about Online MCT (Geni) but were Afraid to Ask!

What next? Most new members get so excited that they typically start adding their close relatives immediately. Please slow down and follow these guidelines:

- First, spend a few minutes to get familiar with **Geni's** many search and navigation features.
- The search box is on the top right. To search for a person's name with initials, make sure you enter a space between the initials and his/her given name, since the initials are entered in the "Last Name" field in most profiles. Also, try searching for a person in different forms.
- E.g. To search for all Mandayams named R.A. Rajagopal, try different variations such as "R.A. Rajagopal", "R A Rajagopal", "Rajagopal", etc., to check if the person you are looking for exists already.
- You may navigate around your sub-tree by clicking and holding your mouse on any part of the sub-tree and dragging it.
- You may also click on the "View Tree" link under any profile or the small green cloud with a + sign above the profile and it will show you that person's sub-tree.
- Finally, there are additional navigation features in the bottom tray that will pop up as you take the mouse to the bottom of the **Geni** screen.

- Anyone you wish to add to the tree must be added as a "relative" of someone else on the tree.
- First, search to make sure that the person isn't already on the tree.
- If missing, go ahead and add that person using one of the yellow "relationship" arrows next to his/her closest relative on the tree.
- If they are already on the tree where you want them, you don't have to add them again. However, if they are there elsewhere on the tree (for e.g. the sister you want to add may already exist elsewhere on the tree as someone's wife), then use the "email address trick" to create the additional relationship for the same user. This is explained, along with other useful information at <http://www.osuri.com/Mandayam/MandayamCommunityTree.pps> - an online tutorial on the Online MCT.
- Please do add non-Mandayam spouses of Mandayams and all their descendants to the Online MCT but not siblings and ancestors.

We need volunteers!

To help nourish the tree with additions, changes and weeding out duplicates, we would really like you to volunteer some of your time to this project that is so useful to the entire community. Here are some guidelines for those interested in volunteering:

- You must be an active user of the Online MCT with a fairly broad knowledge of its many features.
- You must be passionate about nurturing this useful tree for everyone in our community to continue to enjoy it for years to come.
- You must have access to the printed Community Tree produced by MSVS in 1981.

If you feel that you qualify and are interested in volunteering, please send an email to the Online MCT administrators at mctadmin@yahoogroups.com and we will get in touch with you shortly.

Questions? Problems? Other comments:

- Don't hesitate to try new things with **Geni**. For e.g., if you find mistakes, you could correct most profiles using the "Edit Profile" link.
- If no one you know is on the Online MCT and you would like an invite, send an email to mctadmin@yahoogroups.com, giving your full name with expanded initials, your (or your husband's or father's) gothram, family name, sub-family name and your parents' names.
- If you cannot resolve an issue, send an email explaining your problem to help@geni.com, cc mctadmin@yahoogroups.com.
- Monitor the 'Discussion' link to view useful posts on Online MCT and visit the Forum, Blog and Help links at the bottom for more information on Geni.

Mandayam Buzz – Eyewitness Account – The San Diego Fire!

FIRE, FEAR AND FRIENDS - By Vengrai Parthsarathy

When Wind and Fire, two of Nature's elemental forces join hands, insignificant Man has but to bow before it.

I was woken up from my beauty sleep on the fateful Monday morning and told that I had but thirty minutes in which to pack up and leave the place in a hurry. San Diego was on fire and flames were said to be moving less than a few hundred yards from our doors! There was no time even to think. I assembled the things which came readily to mind, like change of clothes, ID, passport, some documents and medications. Nothing more. Fear gripped our hearts as we saw the blue sky turning a fierce red. Fire was stalking everywhere, as far as the eyes could see. We were running for our lives, not knowing where. As evacuees, we were part of a cavalcade of cars loaded with people; and the procession was slowly, very slowly inching forward though there was no criss-crossing autos, cycles, cross-cutting etc., with which we are familiar. There were hardly any pedestrians because every home here has a car and even two or three. It was all a uni-directional flow.

'Spreading like wild fire' was no more than a figure of speech till then. Now I know. Flames spread every where, aided by bone-dry vegetation, crackling bushes and wooden houses. The flames was fanned by the Santa Ana winds at 100mph which kept changing directions. Red hot embers flew from tree top to tree top to house tops. The noble fire brigade was on the job but the sheer magnitude of the task of containing fire spreading over hundreds of acres was mind-

boggling. Choppers too were on the job of dousing the fires but it was largely unavailing because they could not fly low enough to reach their targets. Tanker planes showered fire retardants and here again the winds blew them away.

We did not know where we were going. Some arrangements had been made by the authorities to take the evacuees to the Qualcomm stadium and to vacant school buildings. The prospect of being huddled up with hundreds of others was forbidding. The cell phone which I always held to be an ubiquitous nuisance was to be our savior. A friend who had watched on TV the wild fire spreading to our area invited us to his home. A great sigh of relief. Then another friend opened his doors for us. People helping people is an abiding way of life here. We moved into the home of the one nearest but that proved to be a short lived spell. We, including the host, had to leave the next morning as their area too was now in danger. A Dentist friend allowed the five families to use the clinic for a night's stay. The next day we moved again, bag and baggage, children and pets.

Under the given circumstances nothing can be perfect. But things were as good as they could be--call it chaos but it was orderly chaos. That is saying a lot. The best possible efforts were taken and shifting strategies to meet shifting wind patterns of unrelenting fire and wind were devised. After five days of horror, it was over.

Ash, ember and debris was all that was left behind.

A word about communication - over the TV channels and Radio and Internet and telephones, constant updates, locality-wise, were given out continuously. In such emergencies as fire and earthquake communication is never adequate but here it was superb. A word also about the spirit - the 'we are all in it together' spirit was shown by everyone, the fire fighters, the police, the national guards, the volunteers, neighbors—everyone. Common peril brought to light the fraternity of strangers helping each other.

How is one to look at this unworldly tragedy of great magnitude in which thousands of people were uprooted, thousands of acres of trees burnt and many a home reduced to ashes.. It may have been Nature's 'Grand Plan' as some one put it. But it brought out the best in man, restoring one's faith in the essential goodness of people, particularly in times of adversity.

Rebuilding and rehabilitating work are going on apace..

Well, we were the fortunate ones. No place to go but Home which, thank God, was there, still very much there and beckoning us.. Truly, there is no place like HOME!

The San Diego FireStop

Approximately 16 Mandayam Families live in San Diego and almost all of them were evacuated. The fires started on Oct 21st and raged through the city and the county fanned by strong gusty Santa Ana winds (Hot winds that blow over the desert and come to the city). All the Mandayams with their houses weathered the firestorm well. The only fire damage was to the hedge of Vijay Partha Sarathy's (son of VVP who has written the article) yard – His house was fine. In all, over 500,000 residents were evacuated and a total of 352,600 acres and 1709 structures were burnt in San Diego County alone.

Mandayam Buzz – An Ode to San Diego !

My San Diego

Purees, Chole, Dhal and Pulao
 A Mango Lassi and one samosa
 Aha- this was the life
 The ocean breeze, crisp clean air
 Faint music wafting in the night
 A slow baby burp
 Confirms that life couldn't be better than
 In San Diego

Tucked in bed I muse on life
 The wind whistling louder and louder
 Throat parched-
 Santa Ana winds
 Sipping the cool clear ice water
 I flip on my new TV
 Fiery images of red
 Splash across the screen
 Flames dancing gleefully
 Swallowing entire neighborhoods
 I rush outside
 Floating particles of dust
 Fly into my ears, my eyes sting
 An eerie orange glow
 Taking over the skyline of
 My Beautiful San Diego

Breaking branches, a tree uprooted
 Howling winds, white ash everywhere
 Vayu and Agni
 Playing games at our expense
 A deadly combination
 A deep respect for ancient Mythology
 My mind's eye visualizing
 Hanuman setting fire to Lanka
 Jumping flames from Poway to Delmar
 Streets jammed with cars
 Where could one run to avoid the flame
 That was engulfing San Diego???

Eyes glued to the TV
 Ticker tape rolling listing evacuation areas
 Frantically we grab passports, jewelry
 Photo albums, Gods statues, clothing
 Finally yank the computer off the wall
 Answering phone calls between bites
 Of leftovers with friends
 The dreaded "Reverse 9-1-1" call comes
 "Evacuate" the police bullhorn screams
 Neighbors pounding on our door
 Sirens wailing in the night
 We flee into the night in packed cars
 A caravan in San Diego

A welcoming relative, warm coffee
 Cocooned in Pacific beach
 Images of the fire dancing on TV
 Fearful of the fate of the homes
 We watched helplessly
 Mansions swallowed by the flames
 Sleep engulfs us, sheer exhaustion
 The TV continues through the night
 The media relentlessly reporting
 On evacuation notices
 Families in shelters, families we know
 Families we care about in San Diego

Nervously we return next morning
 Thanking God for our home
 Tired reporters
 Weaving stories for the world to see
 Misty eyed cameramen
 Filming young faces
 Torn from familiar surroundings
 Bewildered at the circumstances
 Bravely searching through the rubble
 Stories of losses and survival
 Selfless heroes
 Fighting fires, clearing debris,
 Spending hours without a break
 Defending, preserving our beautiful San Diego

Prayers, prayers, prayers
 Prayers from every community
 Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Christians
 Standing together, united, helping
 Brother to brother, sister to sister
 War forgotten, prejudices put aside
 Shaken up by Mother Nature
 Thankfully counting our blessings
 Providing relief in shelters
 In lovely San Diego

In one brief twist
 We come together as one
 I wonder
 When the debris is cleaned up
 Could we learn to be united
 In thought, word and deed?
 Help our fellow man daily?
 Love all and serve all?
 And peacefully live together forever and ever
 In Beautiful San Diego

The author Harini Narasimhan is a long time resident of San Diego and experienced the emergency evacuation due to the fire with other Mandayam residents in the area.

Lost and Found Hanumar ! – Authored by A Rap Humorist



Sri Anjaneya

Though I am a scientist and have spent more than half my life in the U.S., like most of my relatives, I still firmly believe in statements like “mudichu kattikko, modharam kadaichidum”, “mudichu kattikko, ellaam sari aayidum”, “kulathu Hanumarai vendikko, avar ellaam paathuppaar”. I am referring to the deity at a [tiny gem of a temple on the tank steps](#) of the Triplicane Sri Parthasarathy Swami Temple. What used to be really tiny in my childhood (we had to bend down to see the Hanumar inside) has now grown bigger and is being managed by the son of the priest who was there during my childhood.

For as long as I can remember, Sri Kulakkarai Anjaneya Swami Thirukkoil near (Late) Sri M.N.Ramanujam’s house on Sunkuwar Street would be the first that comes to our minds whenever someone loses something. By “our minds”, I mean the minds of most Mandayams of Madras origin (MoMo).

Years ago, a cousin lost his diamond ring at Marina Beach and searched for hours to no avail. Imagine his surprise when, goaded by his aunt (with the refrain “mudichu kattikko, modharam kadaichidum”), he ties a knot on some part of his clothing and makes another trek to the Marina Beach the next day, to find the ring in the same spot he had searched for hours, only the previous day – a divine magic?. And then, there was another cousin

who, after marriage, took all her important items including expensive jewellery in a non-descript suitcase in an auto-rickshaw from her parents’ home to her in-laws’ home. It was only after the fare was paid and all the welcoming hugs were finished did she realize that she had forgotten to pick up the suitcase. That entire day and night was spent by all of us contacting every auto-rickshaw company in Madras to no avail. The newly married bride tied that magical knot and prayed intensely. We were all stunned when the honest auto-rickshaw driver pulled up home the next day to return what he found in the back of his vehicle when winding up his previous night’s chukker. A similar auto-rickshaw incident occurred years later to another cousin (I have a few) who lost and found an important real estate deed thanks to a knot and a prayer.

Apart from the “redemption” knot, I remember fondly the mouth-watering “nei vazhaippazham” that we would get as prasadam, after we perform the Hanumar Thirumanjanam at the temple as thanksgiving for fulfillment of our prayers. I am not sure how they give it these days but in my youth, it used to be in a “donnai” which is a crude cup fashioned out of a dried banana leaf stitched together with small sticks. Twenty five years after moving to the U.S., this powerful God, known also

as Chiranjeevi (immortal) Anjaneya still plays a big role in our lives. At a recent U.S. MoMo gathering, when one of us casually mentioned that she had lost priceless jewellery at home a couple of years ago, we all immediately bombarded her with tales of “kulathu Hanumar”. Though one may brush it off as sheer coincidence, she found her lost jewellery the next week when cleaning some guest rooms in her house and clearing some unopened boxes. This, after merely hearing about our childhood miracle God. Sure enough, she called my cousin in Madras (the one who had forgotten her jewellery in the auto-rickshaw more than 40 years ago) to arrange a “thank you” Hanumar Thirumanjanam to which my cousin promptly responded “Oh, you mean our Lost-and-Found Hanumar, sure I will take care of it”!

Like all major Indian cities, Chennai has its share of well-known Anjaneya temples in all sizes, from the diminutive pillar-mounted Hanumar within [Sri Parthasarathy Swami Temple](#) itself to the [Mukhya Praana Anjaneya Swami Temple](#) in Triplicane to the [Luz Anjaneyar Koil](#) in Mylapore (famous for its “vada malais”). When it comes to fulfilling the wishes of most Mandayams of Madras origin however, the “kulathu Hanumar” on the steps of the temple tank in Triplicane will always be on top of the list.

Mandayams

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- Halifax – Tara Sampalli
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- Miami – Revathi Iyengar
- Minneapolis – Ramanujan M
- New Orleans – Anant D
- New York – Sampath M
- Phoenix – Thiru M
- Pittsburgh - Supriya M
- Princeton – N Narayan
- Portland – Sriram MA
- San Diego - MC Venkatesh / Meera
- San Jose – MPSrinivasan
- Sydney (AUS) – Jayasri J
- Toronto – Ram Sriram
- Washington DC – Ram M

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MandayamIyengars/>www.mandvam.com

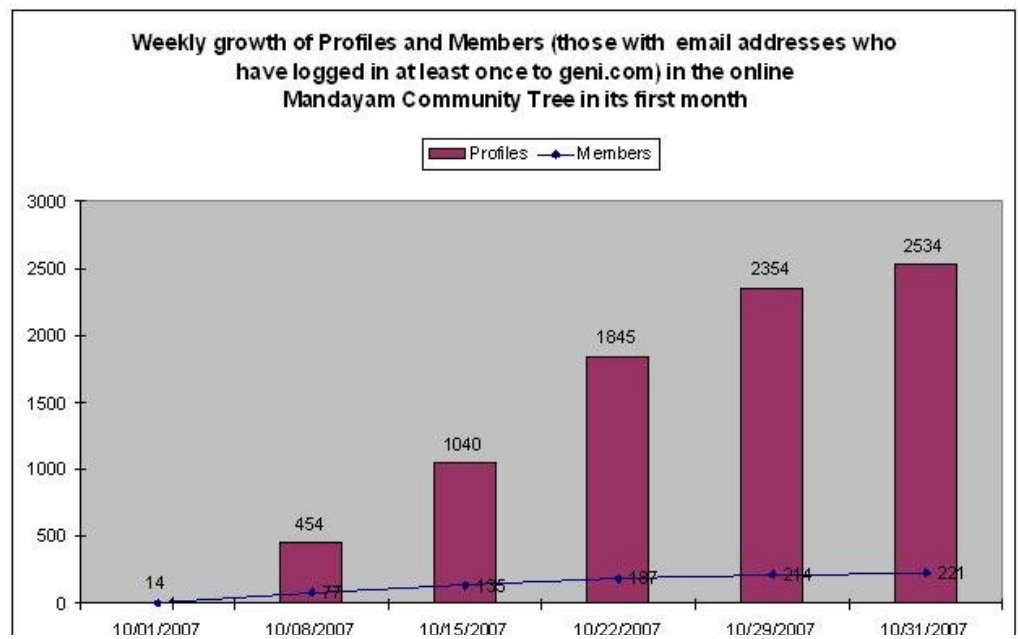
Editor's Muse – The Geni...e is out of the Box!

Sri Vaishnavas have since time immemorial preserved the links to their lineage and have taken great pride to trace their linkages to their ancestors right upto Ramanuja himself. The Mandayam Sri Vaishnava Sabha compiled the first Community Tree i.e. HISTORY AND VAMSHAPARAMPARA OF THE MANDAYAM SREE VAISHNAVA SAMUDAYAM in the form of a book in 1981 and has used a top-down relationship approach from Ramanuja himself. A new edition of this will be made available on a CD, and be captured on the Mandayam website - www.mandayam.com.

The interactive On-line version of the Community Tree which uses the **Geni** software uses a bottom-up relationship approach to portray the family tree. What is now needed is a reconciliation of both approaches so that accurate data is portrayed in both forms.

Outlined below are some startling statistics of the Online MCT (**Geni**) implementation as of Oct 31, 2007:

- Max Levels from the top to bottom – MO Haritha Gothram (Osuri family): 16 levels, from 1 level above Sri Ramanujacharya to the last level.
- Number of branches across - We have a dozen gothrams, so 12 branches across.
- No. of "families" on MCT – 943 where a family unit consists of the 2 parents and their children
- No. of profiles on MCT: 2534
- No. of members (living profiles with email addresses who have logged in to **Geni.com** at least once) on MCT: 221
- Approximate no. of people in the printed Community Tree book: 180 pages x 40 people per page = 7200 people, up to our parent generation for the most part.

*About Our Organization...*

We are a group of Sri Vaishnava Mandayam Iyengars settled all over North America, who wish to keep our culture and tradition alive and collaborate with each other by using this newsletter as a means of communication.