

## Adhyayana Utsavam in Srirangam

**A festival to honour 'Vedham Tamil Seitha Maaran'  
Ariyars recite the last of the Paasurams of the Naalayira Divya  
Prabhandham at the 1000 Pillar Mandapam in Srirangam and in a  
dramatic scene, NammAzhvaar falls at the feet of NamPerumal and  
attains Moksham**

**“AvaA Aara Choozh Ariyai Ayanai Aranai Alatri ....”**



### **NAMPERUMAL AT THIRUMAA MANI MANDAPAM**

Every Ekadesi has a significance. One saw the significance of , In centuries gone by, Vedas used to be recited very early in the morning. Belief was that 3am-430am in Margazhi was the most auspicious time to learn and recite the Vedas and Prabhandham and thus one benefits the most when one reads the Vedas and Prabhandham at this time.

This is the reason one sees a lot of devotional 'Prabhandham' action through the day and night at Vaishnavite temples in Tamil Nadu, the prominent among them being Srirangam, the Koil among Divya Desams. The festival, which runs for just over 20 days, culminates in

NammAzhvaar Moksham, on the last day of Ira Pathu.

During this period, the entire 4000 verses of the Prabhandham are recited.

## **Vaikunda Ekadesi**

Legend has it that, to protect the Devas, Vishnu once fought a long battle with an Asura. Shakti, Vishnu's female energy, emerged out of his body and defeated the Asura. A pleased Vishnu named this maiden as Ekadesi and granted her the power to relieve people from the greatest sins, if they observed a fast on this day, and also to help them reach Vaikundam. Vaikunda Ekadesi is a very holy day and is spent fasting, praying and in meditation. Devotees look upon this austerity as a means to succeed in their spiritual endeavour. It is believed that there is no fasting that is even comparable to the Vaikunda Ekadasi fasting, such is its power.

Lord NamPerumal, in all his glory and resplendence, enters the Parama Padha Vaasal (the Gateway to Salvation) early in the morning on the Vaikunda Ekadesi day. Devotees pass through this symbolic Gateway to Heaven or Vaikundam, the abode of Lord Vishnu, to obtain his blessings and grace and to find their way to heaven.

## **The early days- How it all started**

In the very early days, prior to the time of the Azhvaars, there used to be recital of the Vedas before the Lord for 10 days from Vaikunta Ekadesi and this was how it all started.

## **'Vedham Tamil Seitha Maaran'- The beginning of a 10 day festival**

NammAzhvaar, the greatest among the Azhvaars, was primarily responsible for Naalaayira Divya Prabhandham( it was from NammAzhvaar that Natha Muni picked up the entire content of the Prabhandham- Natha Muni was directed by Aaraavamuthan of Thiru

Kudanthai (<http://prtraveller.blogspot.com/2007/10/108-divya-desam-thiru-kudanthai.html> ) and hence he is also referred to as 'Vedham Tamil Seitha Maaran'. When one says just Azhvaar, it means the reference is to Nammazhvaar, such is the reverence for him.



As a mark of honouring the Azhvaar and his contribution to the Prabhandham, Lord NamPerumal himself comes to meet him every year at the 1000 Pillar Mandapam on each of the 10 days following the Vaikunta Ekadesi and listens to Araiyaars singing and enacting the Azhvaar praise - 100 Paasurams a day from ThiruvaaiMozhi – for 10 days beginning Vaikunda Ekadesi for a total of 1000 Paasurams during the 10 day Ira Pathu period. All the Azhvaars are also present on the occasion as well as Ramanuja and ThiruKachi Nambi. Thus started the 10day Divya Prabhandham festival.

### **Madurakavi Azhvaar's praise of NammAzhvaar**

“Kanninun Sirutha Ambinaal  
Katunappa Panniya Perumaayan  
Ennapanil Nannith Then Kurugur Nambi Yenrakkaal  
Anniku Amuthoorum Enraavukey”

(Madura Kavi's praise of his Lord, NammAzhvaar....The wonder child -My Lord -was held on a leash of rope. And just uttering Kurugur Nambi's (NammAzhvaar) name is like bringing nectar to oneself)

**Pagal Pathu (first 10 days) was added later to recognize Thirumangai Azhvaar's contribution**



Last of the Azhvaars, Thirumangai Azhvaar, also made a significant contribution to the Prabhandham. His biggest contribution to the Srirangam temple was his effort in building the huge fort like walls around the prakaarams. It was also Thirumangai Azhvaar who wanted this to be a Tamil Divya Prabhandham festival(as against just the Vedic recital that existed before his time) and requested the Lord to make this so. And the Lord is said to have agreed.

Nathamuni wanted to create a festival for ThiruMangai Azhvaar for his contribution to the Prabhandham. Thus started the 10 day Pagal Pathu festival (the opening 10 days of the festival) which precedes the Vaikunta Ekadesi. At Srirangam, Lord NamPerumal listens to the 1st 2000 Paasurams at Arjuna Mandapam during the first 10 days.

## **A specialist Araiya**

Beginning the Amaavasai day in December, the 4000 Divya Prabandham is enacted by the Araiya (King of Music), the descendents of Natha Muni, who is believed to have introduced the Araiya Sevai.

Lord Ranganatha himself is said to have given the Araiya the right to perform the unique musical chanting at Divya Desams and presented them with the cone-like cap, two cymbals and the sacred garland (which they wear around their neck when they perform). Araiya have been bestowed the special right to start as well as end the Paasurams in Vaishnavite temples through their special song and dance sequence.

The Araiya first recite the Paasuram, then explain its inner meaning and finally perform the Abhinayam, a unique art/dance performance with their hands and legs explaining the Paasurams with special musical effect.

In centuries gone by, there used to be an Araiya who was an expert in Paasurams relating to a particular Divya Desam. During these 20 days, different Araiya would enact Paasurams according to their expertise on the relevant Divya Desams.

## **NammAzhvaar Moksham**

NammAzhvaar didn't want 'life' anymore. He asked for Moksham on the very first day. NammAzhvaar's desire to attain Moksham is said to have been as big as the sky. Lord, however, wanted to make a positive change to the world through his Paasurams and wanted everyone to absorb the beautiful Paasurams of NammAzhvaar. As the Lord decided that the world should benefit from Nammazhvaar's Paasurams, he delayed the Moksham of NammAzhvaar till the very last day.



Finally after listening to the beautiful Paasurams of ThiruvaaiMozhi, Lord gives in. The Lord was so taken in by the Paasurams that it is said Lord wanted to take NammAzhvaar to Vaikuntam in the same form. "It was this body that rendered the beautiful Prabhandham to the world and hence I want to take you with me with your body itself" was Lord's view.

### **NammAzhvaar being brought to Thirumaa Manni Mandapam**

NammAzhvaar placed in front of NamPerumal, the Araiyaars begin the recital of 90 of the last 100 paasurams of ThiruvaaiMozhi. And then Araiyaars recite the last of Paasurams of Naalaayira Divya Prabhandham, NammAzhvaar falls on the feet of NamPerumal and attains Moksham, quite a dramatic scene. Subsequent to this, NammAzhvaar adorns the garland worn by NamPerumal himself.



### **The Last verse of Prabhandham**

**“AvaA Aara Choozh Ariyai Ayanai Aranai Alatri  
AvaA Atru Veedu Petra Kurugur Sadagopan Sonna  
Avaail Anthaathigalaal Ivai Aayiram Mudintha  
Avaail Anthaathi Ippathu Arinthaar Piranthaar Uyarnthey”**

The 1000 songs on the Lord is by Thiru Kurugur Sadagopan who found his liberation (Moksham). Those who master these verses will attain Moksham too.

Source : <http://prtraveller.blogspot.com>