

Dhanurmasa vratham



Dhanur Maasam of Kerala and Margazhi Month of Tamilnadu starting from 16-12-2012 to 14-01-2013. Dhanur Masa is not an independent month in any Indian calendar except for the Malayalam calendar followed in Kerala. In mid December from the time Sun enters the Rashi Dhanus (Sagittarius) till he exits and enters the next Rashi – Capricorn (Makara). The month with the star Mrigashirsha is the Margasira Month, Margasira month is based on the star presence, where as the Dhanurmasam is based on the movement of Sun. The two month long pilgrimage season to Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple comes to end in this month of December 26. In temples all over India during this month there is special pre-dawn worship. *‘Maathangalil Naan Margazhi’/“Masaanaam margasheersshoham”* which means in all the months, Margasira is the most auspicious”, said by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad-Gita. The important days in this month are “Vaikunta Ekadasi” Thiruvadira (Arudhra darshanam). Another unique feature is the reading of the four Vedas. Therefore Dhanur Masam is a Solar Month, when the Sun is in Dhanus (Sagittarius). This rasi (Zodiac Sign) begins with the Moola Nakshatram. The Moola Nakashatram points to the centre of the Milky Way galaxy. So if you turn to the east and pray at sunrise in

Dhanur Masam you are actually looking at Vaikuntham. This is a very special time of prayer for Vaishnavaites. Especially this pooja will be a boon for the people who born in Sagittarius Rasi.

History of this dhanurmasa vratham:-

There is an importance of doing this ritual in the month of Margasira. Margam means a way and seersham means head and best. The best way for a man is realizing his real self. It is Him that makes us and have us. This is the concept of Upanishads. Margashirsha ritual is the one which emphasizes on the belief that - He is the way and no other way is a real way. In the Upanishads the word Dhanu means Pranava Naadam – which is the Omkara. Hence it means the way and the result is that of the Lord. Hence it is also called the Dhanurmasam Ritual.

The history of Dhanurmasa Vratam which is also known as pavai nonbu/ Margazhi Nonbu is more than 2000 years old and is mentioned in the early scriptures. During dwapara yug, Narada Maharishi tells the Gopikas to perform the “Katyayani Vratam”, to get the blessings of Lord Krishna, hence have been first followed by the Gopikas of Vrindavan and they were blessed with His presence and all the troubles of the people of Vrindavan have been removed. Women and girls observing pavai nonbu woke before sunrise, bathed in the Kalindi river and made an image of Goddess Katyayani with the clay found on the river bank and offered prayers to the Goddess to get good husbands. It is also believed that Andal, one of the twelve Alwars, on the advice of her father, Perialwar, performed pavai nonbu to merge with Sri Ranganatha [Lord Vishnu]. The story of this was sung by Godadevi in the form of Tiruppavai pasuras (meaning Auspicious Songs). She regarded the presiding deity of the temple Sri Vatapatra Sai (Alilla Kanan) as the Lord Krishna, villiputtoor as Vrindavan, the temple as Nanda Gopa’s home, her friends as Gopikas and she herself as one Gopika. As a result she found her Sri Ranganatha swamy Lord Vishnu]. Today women and girls undertaking pavai nonbu during Margazhi take a bath in the

morning, draw big rangolis and keep a pumpkin flower with a little dung as a holder, light oil lamps in front of their houses.

Andal is an incarnation of the Divine Mother Earth, who became the foster daughter of the great *Vishnuchitha* or *Periyalwar* of *Srivillipuththur* in Tamil Nadu. Through Her penance, she became Lord Ranganatha's Bride. Her beautiful 30 verses called *Thiruppavai* are recited by devotees every day, and become especially important during the month long *Dhanurmasam* celebrations that takes place during the months of December and January. Women who wish to get married to the man they love perform this vratam during the Dhanurmasam month.



Godha Devi/Andal:-

The picture here posted above tells the entire life of Aandal. The life history of Andal tells us that a person named Vishnucitta found her, as a little baby girl, under a Tulsi plant in the temple garden of Srivilliputtur. He gave her the name of Goda, meaning 'the gift of Earth'. Vishnucitta brought her up in an atmosphere of love and devotion towards the Lord. The intensity of her love and dedication towards the Lord grew so much that she decides to marry Sri Ranganatha, a form of Lord Vishnu. As she grew, her determination to marry Lord Ranganatha also increased. She also started making a unique offering to the Lord. She used to wear a flower garland first herself and then offer it to God. As an explanation, she said that first wanted to see whether the garland looked good or not by wearing it herself and looking in the mirror. Only after she was convinced that the garland looked nice, did she offer it to God. When it is time for Aandal to get married, Perialwar looks for a groom. But Aandal insists that she would marry Lord Ranganatha Himself. Ordered by Ranganatha, Perialwar takes Aandal to Srirangam. Aandal, at the right auspicious moment, goes into and merges with Sri Ranganatha.

The month of Dhanurmasam is very auspicious to Vishnu devotees. Unlike the other days when the Lord Vishnu starts his day with Suprabhatam, this month he opens his eyes listening to the Tiruppavai – pasuras. Tiruppavai means Shri Vratam – Auspicious Ritual - A giver of all prosperity. This is performed in the month Dhanurmasam. One year is One day for the Gods and Margasira is the Brahma muhurat in this – this is the 96 minutes before sunrise and this is the period which increases the godliness in a person. Hence this is the time to perform Tiruppavai – Shree Vratam. Shree Vratam was performed between the two full moon days of margasira and pushyami. On these two days the moon is full. The between phase has the moon waning and waxing. It symbolizes the life of a man. The godliness in a man wanes away from him till he realizes and gets close to it. Tiruppavai or Shri Vratam is to keep this godliness in one forever. People recite the pasurams from Thiruppavai and visit temples. Some also sing the Tiruvempaavai written by the poet, Saint Manickavasakar to invoke the blessing of the Lord Shiva during these thirty days of Margazhi. The hymns on the Lord Vishnu and Shiva are recited for the prosperity of the universe – the

universe to be perfect bliss devoid of famine or any form of unhappiness. Thus both Thiruppavai and Thiruvempavai are relevant till date.



Godha Devi/Andal:-

Andal was a 10th century Tamil poet who is revered as a saint in the southern parts of India. Godha Devi/ Andal composed two poetic works in her lifetime,

both in Tamil. Aandal has written totally 143 songs. 30 of them are Thiruppavai and the other 113 are Nachiar Thirumozhi. Even though she compiled the poems in her teenage years, they display a high level of literary and religious maturity. In Aandal's verses we see Bakthi in its purest form. It is not the Bakthi as we see today where people trade with God, making God as their instrument to fulfill their desires. The Great Acharyas have written volumes about the meaning of Aandal's Thiruppavai.

That apart Aandal was one of the finest poets I have ever known. She has mastered the technique of using the simplest of words to convey the profoundest of meanings. Aandal's verses are not about religion. They are about love. And her Valentine was the Almighty Himself! Through her poems, she disclosed her passionate yearning for Lord Vishnu.

Goda devi taught to the world:-

- 1) Whatever learned at early age remains forever.
- 2) God accepts those things which are offered with good intention.
- 3) Love and Service.
- 4) Devotion to God.
- 5) God listens to his devotees.
- 6) Always pray for the welfare of the universe.
- 7) Collective Prayer / Mass prayer.

Let us now pray to Aandal to help us understand her great works.

In all vrathams I like dhanurmasa vrata pooja because of its theme and we can learn best values from this vratham. Gonedays will never come back. I along with all my friends did this vratham, enjoyed lot, drawing rangoli, stringing of garlands, decorating the temple premises etc., Early hours going to temple at sharp 4 A.M after completing all rituals and pooja at home, all my friends gathering going to temple. But now all my friends including my sister sheeja are married and settled and spread to different places. From last three years I alone doing this Dhanurmasa vratham, and all other married friends including my

sister stopped doing this vratham.This post I am dedicating to My loving friends Aruna, Vasavi and to my sister sheeja who encouraged me alot and I miss them very much. I sincerely pray lord krishna to give me a boon that to continue this vratham for ever even after my marriage and in my rebirths also.