

Srī:

Srī Dévi, Bhū Dévi and

Nīlā Dévi

Tatvam and Takavu

தத்துவமும் தகவும்

Adiyén rangathan



Āzhwars' Sannidhi
 Richmond Hill Hindu Temple
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Srīmaté Rāmānujāya Namaha

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(by Srī. N.Rajagopalan)	

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Srīmaté Rāmānujāya namaha

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Tatvam and Takavu
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1. Introduction:

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān in his Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi has the following verse.

வீடாக்கும்* பெற்றியறியாது*
மெய்வருத்திக் கூடாக்கி* நின்றுண்டு கொண்டுழல்வீர்*
வீடாக்கும் மெய்ப்பொருள்தான்* வேத முதற்பொருள்தான்*
விண்ணவர்க்கு நற்பொருள்தான்* நாராயணன்
vīdākkum* petrariyāthu*
meyvaruththik kūdākki* ninrundu koṇduzhalvīr*
vīdākkum meyporulthān* véda muthar_porulthān*
viṇṇavarkku narporulthān* nārāyaṇan (Nānmkan Thiruvandhādhi -13)

"Not knowing the way for liberation you run around starving and harming the body by penance. The true means for liberation is the foremost Lord as declared by the Védās, the loving Lord of the eternal stars Srīman Nārāyana".

In this verse, Āzhwār clearly indicates the means (உபாயம் upāyam) and the goal (உபேயம் upéyam).

வீடாக்கும் மெய்ப்பொருள் தான் நாராயணன், (உபாயம், the way). If He is the way, what is to be obtained? He is also the goal (ப்ராயம், உபேயம், the goal)

வேத முதற்பொருள்தான்*

விண்ணவர்க்கு நற்பொருள்தான்* நாராயணன் (உபேயம் the goal). The great āchārya Srī Nanjeer is reported to have said "இரக்கம் உபாயம் இனிமை உபேயம்," meaning "Compassion is the means and Sweetness is the goal". The compassion of the Lord enshrined in the famous *divya désam*, "*Thiruvénkatam*" is the theme of the "*Stōtram* text" (hymn of praise) comprising of one hundred beautiful verses entitled "*dayā śatakam*" by the great āchārya Swāmi Védānta Désikan. In the very first verse of this famous stōtram, achārya describes the Lord's compassion (*dayā*) for His devotees is like an overflowing river of sugar cane juice which has become condensed into a huge heap of sugar crystals in the form of Thiruvénkatam hills. This comparison is indirectly suggestive that the "compassion of the Lord is not only like an overflowing river but it is inherently sweet." இரக்கமே இனிமை". Thirumanjanams of the *archā* forms of the Lord in our temples with the sequence of pouring lots of milk, yogurt, followed by honey and juices by the *bhattar* (the priest in Srī Vaishnava temples) seem to illustrate this visually for all to see. Most temple goers (and of course all Srī Vaishnavās) will know that Srī, Bhū and Nīlā *dévi*s represent the divine mothers.

The words in the title "தத்துவம் *tatvam* and தகவு *takavu*" were borrowed from Srī Āndāl's

Thiruppāvai. It comes in the last line of Thiruppāvai #19 "குத்து விளக்கெரிய ". The two terms refer to *Svarūpam* and *Svabhāvam* ("essential form" and "inherent nature or *guna*") respectively. It is perhaps an ambitious title. It is however acceptable since this article will essentially present relevant valid texts of interest from Védic sūkthams (hymns), Srīmad Rāmāyanam, āzhwārs' and āchāryās' *divya sūkthies* (divine works) with reliable translations based on "*vyākhyānams*" (revered commentaries by āchāryās) and "*vivaranams*" explanatory notes by well known Srī Vaishnava āchāryas and scholars. Sources of reference are listed at the end for those who are interested in further exploration of the subject. ***One cannot demonstrate the sweetness of sugar by writing the word "sugar" on paper although adiyén's attempt will be somewhat like that.*** Nevertheless the process and the materials presented will hopefully stimulate the mind in the right direction for further studies and contemplation of the divine.

2. Supreme Reality as Revealed by the Védās:

யதோ வா இமாநி பூ⁴தாநி ஜாயந்தே । யேந ஜாதாநி ஜீவந்தி
யத்ப்ரயந்த்யபி⁴ஸம்விஸந்தி । தத்³விஜிஜ்ஞாஸஸ்வ । தத்³ப்³ரஹ்மேதி
yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti

yatprayantyaabhisamviśanti | tadvijijñāsasva | tadbrahméti | (Taittirīyopanishad – Bhṛugu Valli 3-2)

"From which verily these beings are born, having been born by which they remain alive and into which on departing they enter, that be desirous of understanding that is Brahman"

ஸதே³வ ஸோம்யே த³மக்³ர ஆஸீத்
ஏகமேவ அத்³விதீயம்

sadéva sōmyé tamagra āsīt
ékaméva atdvithīyam (Chāndōgya Upanishad 6-2-1)

"O' Child, in the beginning, this (Universe with names and forms) was Existence (Being) (Sat) alone, one only without a second"

ப்³ரஹ்ம வா இதம் ஏகமேவ அக்³ர ஆஸீத் (vājasaneyam)
ஆத்மா வா இதம் ஏகமேவ அக்³ர ஆஸீத் (Aitaréyam)
ātmā vā idaméka evāgra āsīt (Aitareya Upanishad)
"In the beginning, this was but the absolute Self alone"

ஏகோஹவை நாராயண ஆஸீத் நப்³ரஹ்மா

நேஸாநோ நேமே த்யாவா ப்ருதிவீ ந நக்ஷத்ராணி (Mahōpanishad)

There was Nārāyana alone. There were not Brahma, Śiva, Waters, Fire and Soma, Heaven and Earth, Stars.

In *Védārtha Sangraha* (VS), Srī Rāmanuja eloquently presents his vision of the true philosophic tenets of the *Védās*. *Emperumānār* is said to have delivered VS as an extemporaneous lecture to his followers in the holy *Thirumalai* hills. In it, he poses an objection as to how to reconcile text in *Sruthi* that attributes *paratvam* (ultimate Reality) to Śiva (*śvetāsvatara upanishad 4-18*) to the other texts which declare that Nārāyana is the Supreme *Brahman* (*Taittirīya- Maha Nārāyanōpanishad*).

Quoting the above Védic statements, Srī Rāmānuja sums up Truth as follows: ***We have to study it only in the sections which deal with the subject-matter of creation and dissolution.*** The text 'Being only, without a second (Chāndōgya Upanishad 6-2-1) declares that the ultimate cause, described therein as '**Being**' is Brahman by virtue of its being the material cause, efficient cause and the inner controller of the world. The same entity is spoken of in another section and is designated 'Brahman', as 'All this was Brahman, Brahman only, in the beginning (Brhadāranyaka upanishad.3-4-10). By this we are made to understand that the principle described as '**sat**' is Brahman. The same truth is conveyed in another branch of the text, 'All this was **ātman** only in the beginning and nothing else was there (Ai. 1)'. This brings out that **ātman** itself was described in the other two sections as '**sat**' and '**Brahman**'. Similarly in another text it is said, "Only **Nārāyana** existed, neither Brahma, nor Isana, nor the sky and earth (Mahopanishad, 1-1)". The culminating inference is that **Nārāyana** himself has been described in the other sections by the terms '**sat**', '**Brahman**' and '**ātman**' all of which are applied to the ultimate cause" (paragraph 134 from the translation of *Védārtha Sangarha* by Srī S.S.Raghavaschar published by Srī Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore, 1978). Then āchārya goes on to indicate ***the connectedness of these passages of śruthi, to the subsequent hymn to Purusha.***

That hymn has as its theme ***the supreme Purusha***. The fact that ***the supreme Purusha*** referred to in this famous védic sūktam (***śruthi*** – revealed text or direct assertion) is **Nārāyana** is the decisive opinion of many sages including Saunaka, Vyāsa and others. References to this are found in Smruthi texts as well as in the Moksha Dharmam section of Mahābhāratham.

This famous hymn has two parts, the first part has eighteen *mantrās* (sacred lines) and the second part has six *mantrās*. The first 15 *mantrās* addressing the supreme Person (*Parama Purusha*) describes several attributes of that *Parama Purusha*, His *Vaibhavam* (glories) and the cosmic creation sacrifice mentally performed as willed by the first *dévās* and the sages of the eternal realm. The *Seer* of these *mantrās* gives concluding statements about the *Parama Purusha* and the significance of this hymn.

3. Purusha Sūktam:

i. The First part of the *Purusha Sūktam* (*Pūrva anuvākam*):

We will summarize here the meanings of the *mantrās* from the ***Pūrva anuvākam***. Adiyén has followed the meanings given by Putthūr Srī U.Vé. Srīnīvasa Aiyangar Swami (father of Srī Putthūr Srī. U.Vé. Krishnaswamy Iyengar and *sthāpakar* of "Srīvaishnava Sudarśanam") in their publication "Purusha Sūktam vyākhyānam" as well as the meanings given by Swami Srī. U.Vé. Oppiliappan Sadagopan Varadachari (Sadagopan.org).

1. "*Parama Purusha* has thousands of heads, thousands of eyes, thousands of feet and pervades this Earth as well as the whole cosmos, with inestimable excellence."

2. "Whatever existed before, whatever exists now and whatever may exist in future all of these are Him alone. He is indeed the Lord of the eternal immortal state."

3. "All of these are the (*vaibhavam*) "glories" of that *Parama Purusha*. This physical realm forms one fourth of His wealth (*Vibhūti*). Three fourths form the changeless eternal realm."
4. "The three fourths shine beyond the physical worlds of names and forms. The one fourth manifests in this physical world again and again outwardly in all sentients that live by eating food (*annam*) and the insentient that do not need *annam* for their sustenance"
5. "From that Supreme person arose the *Brahmāṇḍam* (the cosmic galaxies, the egg shaped cosmos), and the four headed Brahma. Seeking the support and protection of the Supreme *Purusha*, Brahma then created this earth and physical forms for all the sentients."
6. "The *dēvatās* of the eternal realm (*nitya sūris*) performed a *yajñam* (sacrifice) mentally using *Brahma* as the (*havis*- offering) for which the *vasanta rutu* (the spring season) became the *ājyam* (ghee), the summer (*grīshma*) became the *samidh* (sacrificial twigs), the autumn (*sarad*) became additional offering (*havis*)."
7. "For this (*Srishti yajñam*- cosmic creation sacrifice by *Samkalpam* by mere will) seven materials formed *paridhis* and twenty one materials became as *samids* (small firewood sticks). *Dēvās* tied Brahma to the sacrificial pole."
8. "The *nitya Sūris* (who are eternal attendants of *Parama Purusha*), the sages, and the liberated ones sprinkled the first born Brahma with the consecrated waters."
9. "From that mental *yajñam* arose the curd with ghee, That Brahma then created the birds, the animals of the forests and those of the villages."
10. "Then from that Brahma arose the Rik Vēda, Sāma Vēda, Chandas like Gāyathri as well as the Yajur Vēda."
11. "Then from that Brahma arose, the horses, animals with one row of teeth and those with two rows of teeth, cows, goats and sheep."
12. "When Brahma was tied to the sacrificial pole, how did the *dēvās* imagine the creation? What did his face become? His hands formed into what? His thighs and feet gave rise to what?"
13. "*Brāhmins* (spiritual seekers) came from His face. Hands became the (*rājanya*) *kshatriyas* (warriors). Thighs became (*vaiśyās*) the merchants and the feet became (*śūdrās*) the labourers"
14. "Moon arose from the mind. From the eyes emanated the Sun. From the face also rose Indra and Agni. From His vital airs arose the wind."
15. "From the navel, interstellar space appeared. From the head, the heavens of the *dēvās* arose. From the feet, the Earth arose, from the ears the directions came to be. In this manner by mere Will, the material worlds came to be."
16. The 16th mantram of this hymn is of special interest. It gets repeated in the latter part of the *sūktam*.

வேதா³ஹமேதம் புருஷம் மஹாந்தம்" | ஆதி³த்யவர்ணம் தமஸஸ்து பாரே |
 ஸர்வாணி ரூபாணி' விசித்ய தீ⁴ர:' | நாமாநி க்ருத்வாபி⁴வத³ந், யதா³ஸ்தே" ||
 vedāhamétaṁ puru'shaṁ mahāntam" | ādityava'rṇaṁ tama'sastu pāré |
 sarvā'ṇi rūpāṇi' vichitya dhīra'h | nāmā'ni kṛtvā'bhivadan, yadā"sté" || (Purusha Sūktham I-16)

In this 16th *mantram*, the *Seer* affirms, "I know this glorious and great *Parama Purusha* who is resplendent like the Sun, who is beyond the material plane and changeless, creating all forms and providing names". In *Purusha samhitā*, this *mantram* is said to reveal the glories of *Srī Hari*. We will refer here to *Srīmad Rāmāyanam* since it is considered to reveal the substance of the *Védās* as indicated by this *pramāna ślōkam*.

वेद वेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे ।
 वेदःप्रचेतसादासीद् साक्षाद् रामायणात्मना ॥

Véda védyé pare pumsi jāté daśarathātmajé |

Véda: prachéetasādāsīd sākshāt Rāmāyanātmanā ||

"When the Supreme Lord who is known only through the *védās*, took birth as the son of king Daśaratha, the *védās* themselves were rendered as *Srīmad Rāmāyanam* by Prachetasa (Valmīki)"
 The beginning words of this *mantram* are reiterated in *Srīmad Rāmāyanam* text by the words of Sage Viśvāmitra,

"अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् ।

वसिष्ठोऽपि महातेजा ये चेमे तपसि स्थिताः ॥

Aham védmi mahātmānam rāmam satya parākramam |

vasisṭhō'api mahātejā ye ca imé tapasi sthitāḥ || " (Srīmad Rāmāyanam Bālakāṇḍam -19-14)

"I am sensible of that great-soul Rama, whose valor is his truthfulness, and even this great resplendent Vasishta and these saints that are here are aware".

The same *mantram* is also seen with slight modification in *śvetāshvatara upanishad* also.

வேதா³ஹமேதம் புருஷம் மஹாந்த-

மாதி³த்யவர்ணம் தமஸ: பரஸ்தாத் .

தமேவ விதி³த்வாதிம்ரு²த்யுமேதி

நான்ய: பந்தா²வித்³யதே(அ)யனாய

védāhamétaṁ puruṣhaṁ mahānta-

māditavyaṇam tamasaḥ' parastāt .

taméva viditvātimri'tyuméti

nānyah' panthā vidyaté ayanāya .. (*śvetāshvatara upanishad* -3-8)

"Understanding the Reality beyond the material worlds, as the resplendent, great and sublime Person Nārāyana, one gets liberated from the material bonds called "mrutyu". There is no other way for *Mōksham* (liberation)" (as translated by *Srī Rangarāja muni*).

It is concluded by the great āchārya *Srī Periyavācchān pillai* that the words in the *sūktham* (*śruthi* – revealed text or direct assertion) therefore refer to *Srīman Nārāyana* who took the incarnation as *Srī Rāma*.

ii. Word by Word Meaning of the 16th Mantram:

- அஹம் வேத³ - "*aham véda*" - "I know": The védic seer or the impersonal *śruthi* itself is referred to here.

Védanam - like upāsanam (meditation – worship), is a continuous perception (like seeing with one's own eyes) and clear apprehension or knowledge. It may be of interest to note here that Srī Rāmānuja in his Védārtha Sangraha relates true knowledge (clear apprehension of the Supreme) to supreme love of the divine. Āchārya concludes "*parabhakthirūpānnaméva védanam tatvatobhagavat prāpti sādhanam*". The Supreme cannot be seen by mortal eyes. மநஸா து விஸுத்³தே⁴ந (by pure mind).

என்றேனும்

கட்கண்ணால் * காணாத அவ்வுருவை * நெஞ்சென்னும்

உட்கண்ணைல் காணும் உணர்ந்து (Srī Nammāzhwār's Periya Thiruvandhādhi -28)

enrénum

katkannāl * kānādha avvuruvai * nenjchennum

utkannél kānum unarndhu (Srī Nammāzhwār's Periya Thiruvandhādhi -28)

"That day when the inner mental eyes understanding that divine form begin to visualize the same (then the physical outward eyes also will see that divine dark form of the discus carrying Lord)".

- ஏதம் வேத³- "*étam véda*" - I know *this* famous one - the cause of all - who takes births including human forms just for the sake of the humans. This word indicates easy accessible nature (*saualabhyam*) in His incarnations.

- புருஷம் - "*purusham*" – ஸகல கல்யாண குணங்களாலும் பூரணன் - He is full of infinite auspicious gunās. In Srīmad Rāmāyanam, this is indicated by the phrase "*satya parākramam*".

Another derivation for "purusham" புரி ஸேதே (*puri séthé*)– one who resides in the hearts of everyone. Since He is the inner controller of everyone, He is referred to as "ஏதம் புருஷம்", "this person" மஹாந்தம் - "*Mahāntam*" - In Srīmad Rāmāyanam, this word is indicated by the word "*mahātmānam*" – I know him "as the great one" by all measures - infinite auspicious attributes, infinite knowledge – எல்லையில் ஞானத்தன் "*ellaiyil jñānaththan*" (Thiruvāimozhi 3-10-8). Infinite wealth, infinite mercy or compassion, immense valor, of resplendent non-material eternal peerless form, ஒத்தார் மிக்காரை இலையாய மாமாயா "*oththār mikkārai * ilaiyāya māmāyā!*" * (Thiruvāimozhi 2-3-2).

- ஆதி³த்யவர்ணம் - "*ādityava'rṇam*" – resplendent like the Sun. ய ஏஷ அந்தராதித்யே ஹிரண்மய புருஷ: (*ya ésha: antarāditye. hiranmaya: purusha:*). (In the interior of the Sun resplendent like gold shines the Purushaha) (Brhadāranya Upanishad (3.7.9) The same great Purusha is meditated on the "*gāyathri mantram*" as "ஸவிதூர் வரேண்யம்" (*sa vitur varēnyam*). Similar meaning noted "மலர் கதிரின் சுருடம்பாய்" ("*malar kadhiriṉ sudarudambāi*") in Srī Nammāzhwār's Thiruvāimozhi (3-1-5).

-தமஸஸ்து பாரே - "*tama'sastu pārē*"- Beyond "*tamas*". Similar description in Srīmad Rāmāyanam by Mandōdhari (demon king Rāvānā's queen) தமஸ: பரமோ தா³தா ஸங்க²சக்ர

க³தா³த⁴ர: "tamasa: paramō dhātā shankha chakra gadādhara:" – "that Srī Rāma is verily that Mahāviṣṇu, who is beyond the pale of all darkness and despair, armed with the discus, the conch and the mace"தம: "tamah" refers to "the primordial matter" (Mūla Prakṛti) and to "ignorance" Here it therefore means "beyond the material universe".

That abode is clearly explained in Kathōpanishad in the form of the answer given by Yama (Deity of Death) to the question, Which is that abode?

விஜ்ஞானஸாரதி²ர்யஸ்து மன: ப்ரக்³ரஹவான்னர: . I
ஸோ(அ)த்⁴வன: பாரமாப்னோதி தத்³விஷ்ணோ: பரமம்' பத³ம் II

vijñānasārathir yas tu manahpragrahavān narah I
so'dhvanah param āpnōti tad viṣṇōh paramam padam II (Kathōpanishad – I-3-9)

"But that man who has his intellect as charioteer and mind as bridle, he attains the supreme abode of Vishnu, which is the goal of the path".

- ஸர்வாணி ரூபாணி' விசித்ய - "sarvāṇi rūpāṇi' vichitya" - Creating four types of physical forms தேவர் (dévās), மனுஷ்யர், (humans) திர்யக் (moving – like all animals), ஸ்தாவரம் (non-moving like plants and trees) and

- நாமாநி க்ருத்வாபி⁴வத்³ந்- "nāmāni kṛtvā abhivadan "providing them with names and repeating them.

"அனேன ஜீவேனாத்மனானுப்ரவிர்ய நாமரூபே வ்யாகரவாணிதி"

अनेन जीवेनात्मनानुप्रविश्य नामरूपे व्याकरवाणीति

"anena jīvenātmanānupraviśya nāmarūpe vyākaravāṇīti " (Chāndōgya upanishad 6-3-2)

"I will enter into the self of all and give them name and form."

- தீ⁴ர: - "dhīra'h" – "Steadfast and strong" Parama Purusha is not affected by the changes associated with the various physical forms and their names despite being resident in all beings. Therefore He is called "dhīra'h".

iii. Visishtādvaitam in Purusha Sūktham:

This **16th mantram** clearly establishes the Visishtādvaita concepts. (These are listed by Putthūr Srī U.Vé. Srīnīvasa Aiyangar Swami in his *vyākhyānam*). It reveals all of the following: i. That there is a true entity known as *védas* ii. The Supreme is termed "*Purusha*" indicating that He has attributes iii. The word "*mahāntam*" indicates that there are other jīvas (sentients) below Him iv. "*āditya varnam*" indicates that He has nonmaterial divine auspicious resplendent form v. "*tamsastupārē*" indicates that His residence is the glorious non-material realm beyond all physical material plane vi "*sarvani rūpāni*" and "*nāmāni*" indicate that there are variety of sentient beings. vii. In the following 17th *mantram*, the seer indicates further that there are others besides him who have had clear apprehension of that *Paramātmā* and understanding Him clearly as described in this *sūktham* is the only way for liberation from the material life cycles.

17. "That Person recognized first by the four faced Brahma as the Supreme Lord whom he revealed to all, whose glories Indra comprehended fully in all directions, one who understands that *Parama Purusha* in this manner will become liberated in this life itself. "நாந்ய: பந்தா² அயநாய வித்³யதே ("nānyaḥ panthā ayanāya vidyaté) There is no other way for *Mōksham* (liberation)"

கள்வா! எம்மையும் * ஏழலகும் * நின்
உள்ளே தோற்றிய * இறைவ! என்று **
வெள்ளேறன் நான்முகன் * இந்திரன் வானவர் *
புள்ளூர்தி * கழல் பணிந்தேத்துவரே (Thiruvāimozhi 2-2-10)

kalvā! emmaiyum * ézhulagum * nin
ullé thōtriya * iraiva! enru **
velléran nānmukan * indhiraṇ vānavar *
pullūrdhi * kazhal panindhéththuvaré

"Śiva who has the white bull for his mount, the four faced Brahma, Indra and the other dévās worship the divine feet of the Lord Srīman Nārāyana whose mount is Garuda the eagle king and praise Him with the following words, "O' the Stealthy one! O' Lord who brought forth all of us and all the seven worlds from thyself!"

The word கள்வா (kalvā) means "thief" for thieves hide their identity. In the "īdu Vyākhyānam" by the great āchārya Srī Nampillai, reference is made here to the famous incident referred to in Harivamsam as "*kailāsa yātrā*" (pilgrimage to the abode of Śiva) undertaken by the Lord in His avathāram as Srī Krishna to fulfill a boon He had granted to Śiva previously. Śiva had earlier performed a great sacrifice in order to obtain the title of Mahā Déva from the Lord. Pleased by his penance when the Lord granted him that wish, Śiva asked the Lord to request a boon from him now that he had become the Mahādéva. The Supreme Lord promised that he would do so during Srī Krishna *avathāram*. As promised when Srī Krishna arrived in *kailāsam*, he was received with honors by both Śiva and Parvathi. Then Srī Krishna told Śiva that he was there to ask of a boon from him so that He and Rukmini would beget a son. Realizing the Lord's play and his own faults, Śiva began to praise the Lord. Here the Supreme Lord hiding His innate independent state (*svātantrya*) acted like a dependent subordinate (*pāratantrya*). This makes all the dévas address Him as "கள்வா" (kalvā).

18. "The *nitya sūris* (*sādhyā dévās*) worshipped the *yajñā Purushan* with this *mānasa yajñam*. (the mental sacrifice). The *dharmams* (the ethical values) associated with this *yajñam* attained the primal status. Those who comprehend this will reach the eternal realm where the *sādhyā dévās* reside."

iv. The Second (latter) part of the *Purusha Sūktham* (*uttara anuvākam*):

This part has six *mantrās*. Of these four *mantrās* (1, 3, 4, 5 and 6) further elaborate the attributes of the *Parama Purusha*. We will summarize here the meanings of these *mantrāms*.

1. "The worlds originated from water. It grew out of the essence of the Earth. It arose from the *Parama Purusha*. That Supreme Lord pervades all the worlds through His form. I know that all of the worlds are His possessions."

அத² புநரேவ

நாராயண: ஸோஸந்யத்காமோ மநஸாத்⁴யாயீத | தஸ்ய த்⁴யாநாந்த:ஸ்த²ஸ்ய

லலாடாத்ஸவேதோ⁴பதத் | தா இமா: ப்ரததா ஆப: | ததஸ்தேஜோ ஹிரண்மயமண்ட³மப⁴வத்
atha punaréva

nārāyaṇaḥ so'nyatkāmo manasādhyāyīta | tasya dhyānāntaḥsthasya

lalāṭātsvedo'patat | tā imāḥ pratatā āpaḥ | tatastejo hiraṇmayamaṇḍalam (Mahōpanishad)

"Then Nārāyaṇa willed one more time. When He willed, slight sweat appeared on His forehead. That became these waters. In it appeared the golden egg shaped cosmos." (Mahōpanishat). Srī Nammāzhwār refers to the same in Thiruvāimozhi.

தானோர் பெருநீர் தன்னுள்ளே தோற்றி * அதனுள் கண்வளரும் (Thiruvāimozhi 1-5-4)

thānōr perunīr thannullé thōtri * adhanul kanvalarum * (Thiruvāimozhi 1-5-4)

2. The 2nd *mantram* repeats parts of the *mantrās* 16 and 17 from the first part. This is to emphasize the passage. "I comprehend this glorious Person having the lustre of the Sun and who is beyond the material realm (*tamas*) One who understands this *Parama Purusha* in this manner becomes fully liberated (*muktan*) in this very life. For gaining *mōksham*, there is no other way except to comprehend the true form and nature of this Supreme Person".

3. "The *Parama Purusha* resides inside this cosmos as the inner controller. Although birthless, He takes many births. Only steadfast wise ones understand His real nature. They desire to attain the resplendent eternal realm of the *Parama Purusha* and the *nitya sūris*."

Srī Krishna states in Gīta the same "one who comprehends My divine incarnations and forms, after giving up the mortal coils, does not take birth again"

ஜநம் கர்ம ச மே தி³வ்யமேவம் யோ வேத்தி தத்த்வத: |

த்யக்த்வா தே³ஹம் புநர்ஜநம் நைதி மாமேதி ஸோஸர்ஜூந || (Gīta 4-9)

janma karma ca mé divyamévaṃ yo vétti tattvataḥ |

tyaktvā déhaṃ punarjanma naiti māméti so'rjuna || (Gīta 4-9)

4. "The *Parama Purusha* who shines for the *nitya sūris* (*sādhya dévās*), who does good to them from time immemorial, who has been present eternally and ahead of those *sādhya dévās*, Salutations to that *Para Brahman*."

The same meaning is reflected in Srī Nammāzhwār's verses

வானவர் ஆதி என்கோ? * வானவர் தெய்வம் என்கோ? *

வானவர் போகம் என்கோ? * வானவர் முற்றும் என்கோ

vānavar ādhi engō? * vānavar daivam engō?

vānavar bōgam engō? * vānavar mutrum engō?

(Thiruvāimozhi 3- 4 -7)

5. "The *nitya Sūris* in front of the *Supreme Person*, expressed the word "*namaha*" which was pleasing to the *Para Brahman*. To that wise one who comprehends these, the *nitya sūris* and other *dévās* will be propitious".

This means that all the *dévās* will be propitious to those who consider *Bhagavat kaimkaryam* alone (serving the Lord) as the goal. This was indicated by the Deity Yama's instructions to his attendants as narrated in Vishnu Purānam which was echoed by Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān.

"ஸ்வபுருஷமபி⁴வீக்ஷ்ய பாஸஹஸ்தம் வத³தி யம கில தஸ்ய கர்ணமூலே பரிஹர மது⁴ஸுத³நப்ரபந்நாந் ப்ரபு⁴ரஹமநயந்ருணாம் ந வைஷ்ணவாநாம் (Vishnu Purānam 3-7-14)

"Looking at his attendants, *Yama* said the following into their ears, "Leave those who have taken refuge at the feet of *Madhusūdana*. I am the Lord for everyone except *Vaishnavās*"

திறம்பேன்மின் கண்டிர் திருவடிதன் நாமம்

மறந்தும் புறந்தொழாமாந்தர் - இறைஞ்சியும்

சாதுவராய் போதுமின்கள் என்றான் நமனுந்தன்

தூதுவரைக்கூவிச்செவிக்கு (Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān- Nānmkuan Thiruvandhādhi -68)

thirampénmin kandīr * thiruvadi than nāmam *

marandhum puranthozhā māndhar ** - irainjchiyum

sādhavarāip * pōdhumīngal enrān * namanum than

thūdhuvaraik kūvich sevikku (Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān- Nānmkuan Thiruvandhādhi -68)

"Do not ever fail to carry out this command of mine. You must salute and be gentle like *Sādhus* towards all people, who despite forgetting the Lord's name do not worship other *dévās*, thus said *Yama* calling his close attendants and speaking into their ears" .

v. The last mantram in the *uttara anuvākam* of this *sūktham*:

The 6th (the last) mantram in the *uttara anuvākam* provides the most important feature of the *Supreme Purusha* clearly identifying the Reality.

"For You '*The goddess Hrī and the goddess Lakshmī are the two consorts*. The day and night are on your sides. Your form is resplendent like the array of stars. The *Asvini dévās* are your fully blossomed sacred mouth. Please grant us the boon of knowledge that we desire. Please grant us the divine service. Please grant us the bliss here and hereafter."

ஹ்ரீஸ்ச தே லக்ஷ்மீஸ்ச பத்ந்யௌ (hrīścha té lakshmīścha patnyau) (Purusha Sūktham 2-6).

"For Thee, *Bhū Dévi* and *Srī Dévi* are two consorts" The second ஃ ("cha"- conjunction) indicates indirectly *Nīlā Dévi*. Thus revealing that the *Parama Purusha* is *Srīman Nārāyana*.

There are specific Védic hymns (*sūkthams*) for all of the three divine mothers (the consorts of the *Supreme Paramātma Srīman Nārāyanā*). **This mantram also emphasizes that *Bhagavat kaimkaryam* (service to the Lord) needs to be performed to the Divine Couple who are always together.**

Āzhwārs who are revered for their supreme love of the divine and as such had clear apprehension of the Supreme Lord refer to the all three consorts of *Srīman Nārāyana* in their divine verses as

well. In **Thiruvāimozhi** the famous work **Srī Nammāzhwār**, is a decad of verses addressed to the Lord of Srīrangam in the Nāyaki bhāvam (with āzhwār in the emotional state of a lovelorn damsel). The verses describe the state of the āzhwār pining for the Lord as told by his mother. One of the verses from this famous "*pathikam*" (set of ten verses or decad) refers to all three consorts of the Supreme Lord Nārayana.

என்திரு மகள்சேர் மார்வனே! என்னும் என்னுடை யாவியே. என்னும்,
 நின்திரு எயிற்றால் இடந்துநீ கொண்ட நிலமகள் கேள்வனே! என்னும்,
 அன்றுரு வேழும் தழுவநீ கொண்ட ஆய்மகள் அன்பனே! என்னும்
 தென்திரு வரங்கம் கோயில்கொண்டானே! தெளிகிலேன் முடிவிவள் தனக்கே!

(Thiruvāimozhi 7- 2 -9)

en thirumagal sér mārpany! ennum *ennudai āviyé! ennum *
 nin thiru eyitrāl idandhu nī konda *nilamagal kélvané! ennum **
 anruruvézhum thazhuvi nī konda *āimagaL anbané! ennum *
 then thiruvarangam kōyil kondāné! *theligilén mudivu ival thanakké

(Thiruvāimozhi 7- 2 -9)

"O, the Lord of Srīrangam! She says, "My soul!" Lord of Srī Dévi, who resides on your chest. O consort of Mother Earth, whom you lifted with your tusk (during your avathāram as the Divine Boar Varāha!)", "Beloved Lord of the cowherd lady whom you won by subduing seven bulls!". I cannot figure out her end".

"The term "திருமகள் (Thirumagal)" refers to Srī Dévi – The terms "மண்மகள் (Munmagal)" and sometimes – "நிலமகள் (nilamagal)" are used to refer to Bhū Dévi. The term "ஆய்மகள் (Āi magal)" refers to Nīlā Dévi who took incarnation as the cowherdess, Nappinnai during Srī Krishnāvathāram.

Srī Thirumangai Āzhwār in his work "PeriyaThirumozhi" refers to all the three divine consorts in the decad of verses addressed to the Lord enshrined in the *divya désam* of Thiruvallikéni

"இன் துணைப் பதுமத் தலர்மகள் தனக்கும் இன்பன் நற்புவிதனக் கிறைவன்,
 தந்துணை ஆயர் பாவைநப்பின்னை தனக்கிறை மற்றையோர்க் கெல்லாம்
 வன் துணை, பஞ்ச பாண்டவர்க் காகி வாயுரை தூதுசென்றியங்கும்
 என் துணை எந்தை தந்தை தம்மானைத் திருவல்லிக்கேணிக் கண்டேனே "

(Periya Thirumozhi 2-3-5)

inthunaip padhumath alarmagaL thanakkum inban * narpuvi thanakku -iraivan *
 thanthunai āyarpāvai nappinnai thanakku irai * matraiyoṛkku ellām
 vanthunai ** pancha pāndavarkkāgi vāyurai thūdhu senru * iyangkum
 enthunai endhai thandhai thammānaith * thiruvallikkénik kandéné (Periya Thirumozhi 2-3-5)

"Sweet companion to the beloved Srī Dévi seated on the lotus, the Lord of Bhū dévi (mother Earth), the Lord to his companion cowherd lady Nappinnai, and unrelenting companion to all others, who as a messenger to the five Pāndavās spoke on their behalf. He is my companion and master, and the Lord of my forefathers. I saw Him in Thiruvallikéni."

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān (the contemporary of the first three āzhwārs, "Mudhal āzhwārs"), refers to the consorts of Srīman Nārāyana in both of his works namely Nānmukan Thiuvandhādhi (verses 33,40,53,59,62 and 92) and in Thirucchandaviruttam in 16 of 120 verses (Verses 24,29,65,97,103,105 and 118 refer to Srīdēvi alone, Bhūdēvi and Srī are referred together in verses 22, and 72. Nīlā Dēvi alone is referred to in verses 13, 33, 40, 41, 92, 99)

In verse 55 of Thirucchandaviruttam all three consorts (Srī, Bhū and Nīlā) are mentioned. This verse is given below:

மன்னு மா மலர்க் கிழத்தி வைய மங்கை மைந்தனாய்
பின்னும் ஆயர் பின்னை தோள் மணம் புணர்ந்து அது அன்றியும்
உன்ன பாதம் என்ன சிந்தை மன்ன வைத்து நல்கினாய்
பொன்னி தூழ் அரங்கம் மேய புண்டரீகன் அல்லையே?

"mannu māmalar kizhaththi* vaiyamangai maindhanāi,*
pinnum āyar pinnai thōl* manam punarndhathu anriyum,*
unna pātham enna sindhai* manna vaiththu nalhināi,*
ponni sūzh arangamēya* pundarīkan allaiyé?

(Thirucchanda viruttam -55)

"Thou art the consort of Srī Dēvi (Periyapirātti) and Srī Bhū Dēvi. Furthermore, Thou embraced in wedding Srī Nappinnai who was Nīlā Dēvi born as a cowherdess. In addition, Thou graced me so Thy holy feet for ever remain inseparable from my heart. Art not Thou the eternal "Lotus" in Thiruvarangam surrounded by the soothing waters of Cauvery?"

Azhwar in this verse, expresses that the Lord enshrined in the divya désam, Srīrangam, is the consort of Srī Lakshmī, Bhū Dēvi and Nīlā Dēvi and that He has showered His special grace on himself.

மன்னு மா மலர்க் கிழத்தி – the lotus born SrīLakshmī Dēvi who is born with the Lord during all acts of protection of the worlds. She is also the empress or the Queen (கிழத்தி). She is the Divine Mother of all and fondly referred to as "பெரிய பிராட்டியார்" "Periya Pirāttiyār" in our Srī Vaishnava sampradāyam (tradition).

லக்ஷ்மீ: Lakshmī - One who has beautiful and auspicious form as well as many auspicious attributes.

க்ருதாபி⁴ஷேகா மஹிஷீ போ⁴கி³ந்யோ அந்யா ந்ருபஸ்த்ரிய: (AmaraKōsham 2-6-5)

"Mahishee (the empress or the Queen) is one who gets crowned along with the king. The other wives of the king are known as Bhōgini"

வைய மங்கை மைந்தனாய் - the sweet and youthful consort of Srī Bhū Dēvi. The védic Sūktham describes her, அஸ்யேஸாநா ஜகதோ விஷ்ணுபத்ரீ -(Yajur- sam 4-41-1) "She is the ruler of the world and the consort of Srī Vishnu"

பின்னும் ஆயர் பின்னை தோள் மணம் புணர்ந்து அது - (pinnum āyar pinnai thōl* manam punarndhathu) - Thou embraced in wedding Srī Nappinnai who was Nīlā Dēvi, born as a

cowherdess - as the daughter of Kumban, brother-in-law of Srī Nanda Gopa, the chieftain of the cowherds. Srī Krishna is sometimes referred to as பின்னை கேள்வன் - pinnai kēlvān – meaning consort of Nappinai pirātti (divine mother Srī Nappinai).

4. Srī MahāLakshmī (Periya Pirāttiār):

i. Srī Sūktham

Although in the Védic hymn (Purusha Sūktham) quoted above Srī Dévi is mentioned after Bhū Dévi, there is actually a closer connection between the *mantrās* (hymns) in the PurushaSūktham and those in the Srī Sūktham. We reviewed briefly the meaning of the Purusha Sūktha *mantrās* previously.

As mentioned it has 18 *mantrās* in its first part and 6 *mantrās* in its second part. Srī Sūktham has 15 *mantrās* all together. *The first and the last mantrās of the two famous sūkthams are given below to illustrate the closeness of the two.*

ஓம் ஸஹஸ்ரஸீர்ஷா புருஷ: | ஸஹஸ்ராக்ஷ: ஸஹஸ்ரபாத் |
ஸ பூ⁴மிம் விஸ்வதோ வ்ருத்வா | அத்யதிஷ்ட²த்³த³ஸாங்கு³லம் | 1

ōm sahasra śīrṣhā puruṣhaḥ | sahasrāksha sahasrapāt |

sa bhūmim viśvato vṛtvā | atyatiṣṭhaddaśāṅgulam | (PurushaSūktham – First mantram)

ஹ்ரீஸ்ச தே லக்ஷ்மீஸ்ச பத்ந்யௌ | அஹோராத்ரே பார்ஸ்வே |
நக்ஷத்ராணி ரூபம் | அஸ்விநௌ வ்யாத்தம் | இஷ்டம் மநிஷாண |
அமும் மநிஷாண | ஸர்வம் மநிஷாண |

hrīśca te lakṣmīśca patnyau | ahorātré pārśvé |

nakṣhatrāṇi rūpam | aśvinau vyāttam | iṣṭam maṇiṣhāṇa |

amum maṇiṣhāṇa | sarvam maṇiṣhāṇa |

(PurushaSūktham – the last mantram)

ஓம் || ஹிரண்யவர்ணாம் ஹரிணீம் ஸுவர்ணரஜதஸ்ரஜாம் |
சந்த்³ராம் ஹிரண்மயீம் லக்ஷ்மீம் ஜாதவேதோ³ம் ஆவஹ ||

Om || hiraṇyavarṇām hariṇīm suvarṇarajatasrajām |

candrām hiraṇmayīm lakṣhmīm jātavedo ma āvaha ||

(Srī Sūktham – the first mantram)

தாம் ம ஆவஹ ஜாதவேதோ³ லக்ஷ்மீமநபகா³மிநீம் |

யஸ்யாம் ஹிரண்யம் ப்ரபூ⁴தம் கா³வோ தா³ஸ்யோஸ்வாந்விந்தே³யம் புருஷாநஹம் ||

tām ma āvaha jātavedo lakṣmīmanapagāminīm |

yasyām hiraṇyam prabhūtam gāvo dāsyo'śvānvindeyam puruṣānaḥ ||

(Srī Sūktham – the last mantram)

It is of interest to note that the word "லக்ஷ்மீ" (lakṣmī) in the first mantram of Srī Sūktham is present in the last mantram of Puruṣa Sūktham. Similarly the word "Puruṣa" in the first mantram of Puruṣa Sūktham is present in the last mantram of Srī Sūktham. The glories of Srī Sūktham are described in great detail in *Lakṣmītantram* text of *Pāncharātra āgamas*. In *Vishnu Purāna*, the most authoritative among all the *Purānās*, Srī is described as the divine mother who is eternal (நித்ய -nitya), inseparable from the Lord (அநபாயினி- anapāyinī) and all pervasive (ஸர்வக்³த: - sarvagataha).

Translations of the entire Srī Sūktham can be accessed in many Srī Vaishnava web sites including Sadagopan.org. Adiyén will refer here to two *mantrās* (*mantram-5 and 9*).

चन्द्रां प्रभासां यशसा ज्वलन्तीं श्रियं लोके देवजुष्टामुदाराम् ।

तां पद्मिनीमीं शरणमहं प्रपद्येऽलक्ष्मीर्मे नश्यतां त्वां वृणे ॥ ५॥

சந்த³ராம்' ப்ரபா⁴ஸாம்' யஸஸா ஜ்வலந்தீம்' ஸ்ரியம்' லோகே தே³வஜுஷ்டாமுதா³ராம் .
தாம்' பத்³மினிமீம்' ஸரணமஹம்' ப்ரபத்³யே(அ)லக்ஷ்மீர்மே நஸ்யதாம்' த்வாம்' வ்ரு³ணே
candrām prabhāsām yaśasā jvalantīm śriyam lōkē dēvajusṭāmudārām .
tām padminīmīṁ śaraṇamaham prapadyē³lakṣmīrmē naśyatām tvām vṛṇē (mantram-5)

"I surrender to Srī Dévi who shines as the moon, who is effulgent, who is renowned, who is in the form of fire, who is ever present in Nārāyana in all His manifestations, who is served by all deities, who is ever generous, who fulfills all actions of devotees, who blossoms the nature at dawn of creation and who is beyond time and space. Let my physical, material and mental poverty be destroyed.. I seek Thee as my means."

गंधद्वारां दुराधर्षां नित्यपुष्टां करीषिणीम् ।

ईश्वरी¹सर्वभूतानां तामिहोपह्वये श्रियम् ॥ ९॥

க³ந்த⁴த்³வாராம்' து³ராத⁴ர்ஷாம்' நித்யபுஷ்டாம்' கரீஷிணிம் .
ஈஸ்வரகும் ஸர்வபு⁴தானாம்' தாமிஹோபஹ்வயே ஸ்ரியம்
gaṁdhadvārām durādhārṣhām nityapuṣṭām karīṣhīṁ .
īśvarī^m sarvabhūtānām tāmihōpahvayé śriyam (mantram-9)

"I invoke Thee O, Srī Dévi here. Thou art the cause of all the five gross elements and their subtle qualities, Thou art invincible, Thou art ever full of all the glorious attributes, Thou art fond of those who perform acts with purity of mind, speech and body and Thou art the supreme ruler of all the sentient entities".

These two mantrās of Srī Sūktham clearly indicate the co-eternal and co-equal nature of Srī in the causation and control of the cosmos and its beings.

One of the *mantrās* which is part of the ப²லஸ்ருதி (*phalaśruti*) of Srī Sūktham (benefits of recitation of the hymn) is especially recited in all Srī Vaishnavā Temples and services but generally omitted by others. In this *mantram* the Védic Seer prays to Srī to grace the devotee with "Eternal Service to the lotus feet of the Divine". This being the ultimate goal suited to the nature or *swarūpa* of the *jīva* as per the teachings of the āzhwārs and all of the āchāryās in Srī Vaishnava Visishtādvaita tradition, this *mantram* is always recited at the end of Srī Sūktham.

பத்³மப்ரியே பத்³மினி பத்³மஹஸ்தே பத்³மாலயே பத்³மத்³லாயதாக்ஷி .
விஸ்வப்ரியே விஷ்ணு மனோ(அ)னுக்ஷலே த்வத்பாத³பத்³மம் மயி ஸந்நித⁴த்ஸ்வ ..

padmapriyé padmini padmahasté padmālayé padmadalāyatākṣi .
viśvapriyéviṣṇu manō'nukūlé tvatpādapadmaṁ mayi sannidhatsva .. (Srī Sūktham- 16)

"May Srī Dévi, who is fond of lotus flowers, who is the supreme among women, who holds a lotus in Her hand, Who is seated on a lotus, who has the soft and beautiful eyes like a lotus petal, who has affection for all of Her children, who never displeases Her Lord, place Her sacred feet on the top of my head!" (as translated by Srī Swāmi Sadagōpan).

We will end this section of Srī Sūktham with a well known *mantram* (which is also in the ப²லஸ்ருதி (*phalasruti*) verses of Srī Sūktham) usually recited as part of the famous hymn in praise of Srī Lakshmī (called Srī Lakshmī *Ashtōttaram* with 108 *nāmās* (names) of Srī - narrated to Pārvathi dévi at her request by Lord Śiva)

லக்ஷ்மீ க்ஷீரசமுத்ர ராஜதனயா ஸ்ரீரங்காமேஸ்வரிம் ।
தாஸீபூதசமஸ்த தேவ வனிதா லோகைக தீபாங்குராம் ।
ஸ்ரீமன்மந்தகடாக்ஷலப்த விபவ ப்ரஹ்மேந்த்ரகங்காத்ராம் ।
த்வா த்ரையோக்ய குடும்பினிம் ஸரஸிஜாம் வந்தே³ முகுந்த³ப்ரியாம் ..
lakṣmīm kshīrasamudra rājatanayāṁ śrīraṅgadhāméśvarīm .
dāśībhūtasamasta déva vanitām lōkaika dīpāṅkurām .
śrīmanmandakāṭākṣhalabdha vibhava brahméndragāṅgādhārām .
tvām trailōkya kuṭumbinīm sarasijām vandé mukundapriyām

"O'Divine mother Lakshmī, the daughter of the king of the ocean of milk, you are the ruler of Srīrangam (with Lord Ranganatha), you are served by all the divine ladies in the heavens, you are the guiding light for the world with the everlasting grace from dévās like Brahma, Indra and Śiva, and you abide in all of the three worlds – my obeisance to Thee, the beloved of Lord Mukunda (Nārāyana)."

ii. Āchāryās' and Āzhwārs' sūkthies (Divine works):

Srī Yāmuna Muni (the grand preceptor) of Srī Rāmānuja, has sung the glories of Srī in a *Stōtram* (hymn of praise) called *Chatusloki* comprising of four verses. The first verse from this *Stōtram* is the folloing,

காந்தஸ்தே புருஷோத்தம: பணிபதி: ஸைய்யாஸனம் வாஹனம்
வேதா³த்மா விஹகே³ஸ்வரோ யவநிகா மாயா ஜக³ந்மோஹிநீ ।
ப்³ரஹ்மேஸாதி³ ஸுரவ்ரஜ: ஸத³யிதஸ் த்வத்³தா³ஸதா³ஸீக³ண:
ஸ்ரீரீத்யேவா ச நாம தே ப⁴க³வதி ப்³ரும: கத²ம் த்வாம் வயம் ॥

kāntasté purushōttama: panipathi: śaiyyāsanam vāhanam
vedātmā vihagēshvaro yavanikā māyā jaganmohinī |
brahmeshādi suravraja: sadayita: tvaddāsādāsīgana:
srīrityēva cha nāma té bhagavati brūma: katham tvām vayam

"O'Bhagavati! Your dear Lord is the celebrated. Purushōttaman (Nārāyana). The king of serpents, Ādhisēshan is your bed. Garudan having the védās as his body is your seat and transport. The world-mesmerizing *māyā* (*Prakruti*) is your shielding curtain. Brahma, Śiva and all the other dévās and their consorts form the assembly of both male and female attendants..Your sacred name is Srī. With all these glories inherent in You, how can we of limited intellect attempt to describe You?"

The term **Bhagavān** (**Bhagavati** – female gender) implies that the person possesses six divine attributes in full. They are *jñānam* (knowledge) *bala* (strength) *aishwarya* (lordship), *śakti* (potency) *vīrya* (valour) and *téjas* (spendor).

Srī Kūrattāzhvān (1010 CE) (the famous disciple of Srī Rāmānuja) in his work *Srīstavam* seeking the grace of Srī MahāLakshmī states:

"யஸ்யா வீஷ்ய முக²ம் ததி³ங்கி³த பராதி⁴நோ வித⁴த்தே⁴கி²லம்"

yasyā vīkshya mukham tadinggita parādhīnō vidhatté akhilam (Srī Kūrattāzhvān's Srīstavam-1).

"Influenced by whose face and the expressions there off the Supreme Lord does all acts of creation, may Her grace be on us".

Srī Parāsara Bhattar (1062-1174 CE) in his work *Srī Gunaratna Kōsham* sings the glories of Srī MahāLakshmī in the following words,

ஈஷ்டே கஸ்சித் ஜக³த இதி ய: பெளருஷே ஸூக்த உக்த:

தம் ச த்வத்கம் பதிமதி⁴ஜகா³வுத்தரஸ்சாநுவாக: (Srī Gunaratnakōsam -13)

Eeshté kascchit jagatha ithi ya: pourushé sūktha uktha:

tam cha tvathkam pathimadhijagou uttharascchānuvāka:

"In the Purusha Sūktham, one who is described to be the Lord of all the worlds is declared to be your consort by the latter anuvākam of the same sūktham". The derivation of the word (பதந்யௌ) - is from "பதிம் நயதி" one who directs her consort.

The celebrated āchārya Srī Védānta Désikan (1268–1369 CE) composed a *stōtram* (hymn of praise) "Srī Stuti" in which the infinite kalyāna gunās (auspicious attributes) and glories of Srī Mahā Lakshmī are detailed. We will refer to a *ślōkam* from this work here.

கல்யாணாநாமவிகலநிதி⁴: கா(அ)பி காருண்யஸ்மா
 நித்யாமோதா³ நிக³மவசஸாம் மௌலிமந்தா³ரமாலா .
 ஸம்பத்³தி³வ்ய: மது⁴விஜயின: ஸந்நித⁴த்தாம் ஸதா³மே
 ஸைஷா தே³வீ ஸகலபு⁴வன ப்ரார்த²னாகாமதே⁴னு: (Srī Stuti -24)

kalyāṇānāmaṁvikanidhiḥ kāpi kārūṇyasīmā
 nityāmōdā nigamavacasāṁ maulimandāramālā .
 sampaddivyaḥ madhuvijayinaḥ sannidhattām sadā mé
 saiṣhā dévī sakalabhuvana prārthanākāmadhēnuḥ (Srī Stuti -24)

"Lakshmī is the inexhaustible treasure of auspiciousness and the utmost limit of indescribable compassion. She is the Eternal Bliss and adorns like a garland of Mandara flowers, the heads of the Védās (Upanishads). She is the divine wealth of (Vishnu) the conqueror of Madhu, and is the Kāmadhenu (the wish yielding Divine Cow) in granting the wishes of all (the people in) the world. May that Lakshmī dwell for ever in my heart! (Srī Stuti -24)

In the *Bhāshyam (Commentary) of Srī Vishnu Sahasranāmam* by Srī Parāśara Bhattar, the great āchāryā gives detailed descriptions of Srī from various Scriptural texts (śāstrās) while explaining the divine name "**Mādhava**" meaning the consort of "Ma" (Lakshmī). We will refer to them here. "The essential nature of Lakshmī is described in the *śūstrās* dealing with the Supreme Reality, her form is eternal and spotless. Her Supreme rulership is not restricted by any limiting adjunct. Her universal Motherhood, Her natural association with Bhagavān which is eternal and unending, are all delineated in great detail in them. In Védic Literature, Srī Sūkta, Sraddha Sūkta, Médha Sūkta, Uttara Nārāyana, and others deal with this subject. In Vishnu Purānam in the episode of the churning of the Milky Ocean the praise of Lakshmī is elaborately described.

நித்யைவ ஏஷா விஷ்ணோ: ஸ்ரீரநபாயினீ
 யதா² ஸர்வக³தோ விஷ்ணு: ததை²வேயம் த்³விஜோத்தம
 nityaiva eshā vishnoḥ Srīr-anapāyinī |
 yathā sarvagatō vishnuḥ tathaivēyam dvijōttama || (Vishnu Purānam 1.8-17)

"This Lakshmī is eternal, the universal Mother, and is ever in union with Vishnu. Just as Vishnu pervades all things, she also does, O best among Brahmins".

anyēshu chavatarēshu Vishno-rēsha-yanapayinī |
 தே³வத்வே தே³வதே³ஹேயம் மநுஷ்யத்வே ச மாநுஷீ |
 விஷ்ணோர் தே³ஹாநுரூபாம் வை கரோத்யேஷாத்மநஸ்தநும் ||

dévatvé déva-déhéyam, mānushyatvé cha mānushī
Vishnor déhānu-rūpam vai karōth yéshā-yātmani tanum || (Vishnu Purānam 1 .9 -144-145)

"Not just this, even when the Lord takes the form of a Déva or for that matter a human being, Srī Lakshmi also takes a suitable form of a Dévi or a human being. Goddess Lakshmi thus adjusts herself according to the embodiments of Lord Vishnu". In **Brahma Purānam**, this is stated as well. "தஸ்ய கருணாஸ்ரயா. பகவத் வாஸுதேவஸ்ய நித்யைவ ஏஷா அநபாயினி" (tasya karunāsraya. Bhagavat Vāsudévasya nitayiva éshā anapāyini) "Lakshmī is His Supreme Power and She is endowed with the quality of Mercy. She -is eternal and inseparably associated with BhagavānVāsudéva" "ஸ்ரத்த³த⁴யா தே³வம் தே³வத்வம்அஸ்நுதே - śraddhayā dévam dévatvam aśnuté "Lord Vishnu gets His Lordship because of His association with Sraddhā (Lakshmī)" (Translation into English by "Srī Désika Darsana Durrantarar" Prof Srī U.Vé. SrīnivasaRaghavachar Swami – Publication by Srī Visihtadvaita Pracharini Sabha, 1983).

In **Srīmad Rāmāyanam** both Srī Rāma and divine mother Sītā express their mutual inseparable relationship. Mother Sītā's words as addressed to Rāvana:

अनन्या राघवेणाहं भास्करेण प्रभा यथा ॥

அநந்யா ராகவேணாஹம் பாஸ்கரேண ப்ரபா யதா.

ananyā rāghaveṇāhaṁ bhāskareṇa prabhā yathā (Srīmad Rāmāyanam Sundara kādam 21-15)

"I am not separate from Rāghava the same as Sun's effulgence is not from the Sun"

Similar words used by Srī Rāma when deity Agni returns Dévi Sītā to Srī Rāma.

अनन्या हि मया सीता भास्करेण प्रभा यथा ॥

ananyā hi mayā sītā bhāskareṇa prabhā yathā || (Srīmad Rāmāyanam Yuddha kādam 118-19)

"Sītā is not different from me, even as Sun's effulgence is not different from the Sun."

Āzhwārs also indicate these clearly in their verses. The **first** three āzhwārs (**Mudhal** āzhwārs) express this in their verses. In Mudhal Thiruvandhādhi, **Srī Poikai Pirān** refers to *Srīyapatitvam* (Nārāyana being the consort and Lord of Srī) many a time, and declares, that the inner consciousness (*self*) is innately aware of the consort of Lakshmī.

பெயரும் கருங் கடலே நோக்கும் ஆறு ஒண் பூ

உயரும் கதிரவனே நோக்கும் உயிரும்

தருமனையே நோக்கும் ஒண் தாமரையாள் கேள்வன்

ஒருவனையே நோக்கும் உணர்வு

(Mudal Thiruvandhādhi – 67)

peyarum karungadalé nōkkum_āru,* onpū-

uyarum* kathiravané nōkkum,* -uyirum-

tharumanaiyé nōkkum* onthāmaraiyāl kēlvān,*

oruvanaiyé nōkkum **unarvu**.

(Mudal Thiruvandhādhi – 67)

"The river naturally flows towards the ocean with the surging waves. The beautiful lotus blossoms upon facing the rising sun in the sky. The life force looks for the deity of death at the end of life. Similarly the inner consciousness is naturally aware of the consort of Lakshmī residing in the lotus".

Srī Bhūdat āzhwār refers to "Srī" in many verses in *Irāṇām Thiruvandhādhi* and declares that the grace of Srī brings the vision of the golden Form of the Lord even before the Lord's own grace.

காணக் கழிகாதல் கைமிக்குக் காட்டினால்,
நாணப் படுமென்றால் நாணுமே? - பேணிக்
கருமாலைப் பொன்மேனி காட்டாமுன் காட்டும்,
திருமாலை நங்கள் திரு. (Srī Bhūdat āzhwār's Irāṇām Thiruvandhādhi - 56)

kānak kazhikādhāl * kaimikkuk kāttināl *
nānappadum enrāl nānumé? ** - pénik
karumālaip * ponméni kāttā mun kāttum *
thirumālai nangaL thiru (Srī Bhūdat āzhwār's Irāṇām Thiruvandhādhi - 56)

"When intense desire to have vision of the Lord grows into a passion, how can one curb the same and appear not impatient. Even before the Lord chooses to bestow the vision of His golden Form, Srī the divine Mother will reveal that to us".

One of the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa's Thirunāmams (divine names) is "**Mādhava**" meaning, the consort of Mā meaning Lakshmī. This was referred to earlier. **Srī Bhūdat āzhwār** uses this divine name in three of the verses

நமக்கென்றும் மாதவனே என்னும் * மனம் படைத்து *
மற்றவன் பேர் ஓதுவதே நாவினால் ஒத்து
namakkenrum mādhavané ennum * manam padaiththu *
matravan pér ōdhuvathé nāvināl ōththu (Irāṇām Thiruvadhādhi -38)

மாதவனே! என்னும் * மனம் படைத்து *
மற்றவன் பேர் ஓதுவதே நாவினால் உள்ளு
mādhavané! ennum * manam padaiththu *
matravan pér ōdhuvathé nāvināl ullu (Irāṇām Thiruvadhādhi -44)

He directs us specifically to the Thirunāmam (divine name), "Mādhava" (மாதவா) emphasizing that the substantive meaning of all the Védās is contained in this one Thirunāmam.

மாதவன் பேர் சொல்லுவதே ஒத்தின் சுருக்கு
mādhavan pér solluvadhé ōththin surukku (Irāṇām Thiruvadhādhi -39)

It is interesting to note that in Srī Vishnu Sahasranāmam adhyāyam, the Thirunāmam "**Mādhava**" is found three times, the third time it is just preceded by the divine name "**Lōkanatha**:" (meaning "Protector of the world" "Master") and followed immediately by the

Thirunāmam "**Bhakta vatsala:** (meaning "affectionate towards His devotees)"). The attribute *Vātsalyam* indicates the special love that mother has for the child.. The order of the names is suggestive that this attribute may be predicated by the fact that He is Mādhava (the consort of Srī).

Srī Pei Āzhwār (one of the three Mudhal āzhwārs) begins his Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi with a declaration at the very outset, "திருக்கண்டேன் பொன்மேனி கண்டேன்". (Thirukkandén ponméni kandén) He first saw "**Thiru**" which stands for "**Srī**" in Tamil and then only he mentions that he saw the golden Form of the Lord.

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān in his work Thirucchanda Viruttam has the following verse.

பரத்திலும் பரத்தை ஆதி பெளவ நீர் அணைக் கிடந்து
உரத்திலும் ஒருத்திதன்னை வைத்து உகந்து அது அன்றியும்
நரத்திலும் பிறத்தி நாத ஞானமூர்த்தி ஆயினாய்
ஒருத்தரும் நினைது தன்மை இன்னது என்ன வல்லரே? (Thirucchanda Viruttam - 29)

paraththilum paraththai yāthi* pawva nīranai kidandhu,*
uraththilum oruththi thannai* vaiththuhandhu adhu anriyum,*
naraththilum piraththi* nātha ṛjyāna mūrththi āyināi,*
oruththarum nīnāthu thanmai* innathu enna vallaré! (Thirucchanda Viruttam - 29)

"O'Lord, Thou art supreme form transcending all individual souls and beyond the primordial matter. Thou repose on the ocean, united with the divine mother who forever resides in Thy heart. Furthermore, Thou art born in human form as Srī Rāma and Srī Krishna. Thou art the unconditioned Lord and the actual form of Knowledge. Neither the Védās nor the learned Védic scholars could truly measure the nature of Thy grace."

உரத்திலும் ஒருத்தி தன்னை வைத்து உகந்து (uraththilum oruththi thannai*vaiththuhandhu).

The greatness of the Lord is really **His Sriyapatitvam (being the Lord of Srī)**. The conjunction **உம் (and)** indicates that mother Lakshmi is united with the Lord forever and She is co-eternal in His form. The word "**ஒருத்தி**" (**oruththi**) indicates **that there is no one else like Her**.

In his Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi **Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān** emphatically declares,

பொன்பாவை

கேள்வா! * கிளரொளி என் கேசவனே!

ponpāvai

kēlvā! * kilaroli en kēsavané! (Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi - 59)

meaning, "O' the Lord of Srī, whose halo adds lustre to Thee, O' my Lord Késhava".

and further emphasizes that Her association with Nārāyana identifies Him as Brahman.

திரு நின்ற பக்கம் * திறவிதென்று ஓராள் *

கரு நின்ற கல்லார்க்கு உரைப்பர் ** - திருவிருந்த

மார்வன் * சிரீதரன் தன் வண்டுலவு தண் துழாய் *

தார் தன்னைச் சூடித் தரித்து
 thiru nindra pakkam * thiravidhendru ōrār *
 karu nindra kallārkkku uraiappar ** - thiruvirundha
 mārvaṇ* sirīdharan than vandulavu than thuzhāi *
 thār thannaich sūdith thariththu

(Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi- 62)

"Those who do not realize that Nārāyana is the transcendental Reality since Srī resides in Him, teach the ignorant, pointing to others limited by birth. For He is known as Srīdhara who bears "Srī" on His heart and wears lovely, cool garland of Tulasi swarming with humming bees."

ஸ்ரீவத்ஸவக்ஷா: Srīvatsavakshā: ஸ்ரீவாஸ: Srīvaṣa: ஸ்ரீபதி: Srīpathi: ஸ்ரீமதாம் வர: Srīmathām
 vara: ஸ்ரீத³: Srīdha:ஸ்ரீஸ: Srīsa: ஸ்ரீநிவாஸ: Srīnivāsa: ஸ்ரீநிதி⁴: Srīnidhi: ஸ்ரீவிபா⁴வந: Srīvibhāvana:
 ஸ்ரீத⁴ர: Srīdhara: ஸ்ரீகர: Srīkara: ஸ்ரீரேய: Srēya: ஸ்ரீமாந் Srīmān

(608-619-ஸ்ரீவிஷ்ணுஸஹஸ்ரநாமம் - Srī Vishnu Sahasranāmam)

Meaning of these 12 names in order are as follows:

திருமருமார்வன், திருவுக்கிருப்பிடம், திருவின் நாயகன், திருவாளர் தலைவன்,
 திருவைஅளிப்போன், திருவுக்கும்திரு, திருமகள்கொழுனன், திருவின்பெட்டகம், திருப்புகழாளன்,
 திருவைத் தரிப்போன், திருவுடன் பிறப்போன், திருவை உடையோன், என்று விஷ்ணு
 ஸஹஸ்ரநாமத்தில் வியாஸர் திருவின் ஸம்ப³ந்த⁴த்தை அறிவித்தார்.

"One who has Srīvatsa (mole) on His chest; the abode of Srī; the lord of Srī; Foremost among those with the grace of Srī; One who bestows Srī; One who is Srī of Srī; the consort of Srī; the treasure house of Srī; One who owes His greatness to Lakshmī; One who bears Srī; one who is born with Srī; one who has Srī;

In these 12 divine names Sage Vyāsa also describes the intimate connection of the divine mother Lakshmī to Srīman Nārāyana.

In the other work of this āzhwār, Thirucchanda viruttam we find the following verse.

மண்ணை உண்டு உமிழ்ந்து பின் இரந்து கொண்டு அளந்து மண்
 கண்ணுள் அல்லது இல்லை என்று வென்ற காலம் ஆயினாய்
 பண்ணை வென்ற இன்சொல் மங்கை கொங்கை தங்கு பங்கயக்
 கண்ண நின்ன வண்ணம் அல்லது இல்லை எண்ணும் வண்ணமே

(Thirucchanda Viruttam - 105)

mannai undu umizhndhu* pin irandhu kondalanthu,*man-
 kannula allathillaiy enru* venra kālam āyināi,*
 pannai venra insol mangai* kongai thangu pangaya-
 kann,* ninna vannam allathu illai* ennum vannamé.

(Thirucchanda Viruttam - 105)

"Feeling that this earth would not last if it did not become the recipient of Thine grace, Thou swallowed it at the time of dissolution, obtained it (as Vāmana from Mahābali) as alms and then measured the same (as Trivikrama). Time that conquers everyone is Thine manifestation. O' Lotus eyed Lord! Thou art ever resident in the bosom of the youthful divine mother (Periya Pirāttiyār) whose words surpass music in sweetness. The reason for my heart's desire to experience Thine beauty is none other than the overwhelming beauty of Thy form."

பண்ணை வென்ற இன்சொல் மங்கை கொங்கை தங்கு (pannai venra insol mangai* kongai thangu)- **Thou art ever resident in the bosom of the youthful divine mother** (Periya Pirāttiyār) whose words surpass music in sweetness. Āzhwār indicates that the Lord is resident in the heart of Srī Dévi.

Srī Pei āzhwār also indicates this in his work as well.

மனத்துள்ளான் * மாகடல் நீர் உள்ளான் * மலராள்
தனத்துள்ளான் * தன்துழாய் மாற்பன் ** - சினத்துச்
செருநர்உகச் செற்றுகந்த * தேங்கோத வண்ணன் *

வரு நரகம் தீர்க்கும் மருந்து

(Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi. -3)

manaththullān * mākadal nīr ullān * malarāl
thanaththullān * thanthuzhāi mārban ** - sinaththuch
serunarugachetru ugandha * théngkōdha vannan *

varu naragam thīrkkum marundhu

(Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi. -3)

"My Lord who is equally at home resting on the waves of the Milk Ocean and the bosom of Lakshmī wearer of the cool *tulasi* garland and happy destroyer of evil forces, azure-complexioned like the expansive ocean, is the cure-all for the looming hell of *samsāra*, abides in my heart".

The Lord is in the heart of the divine mother in order to reach the "*chétanās*", the sentient beings in the material world. One must not forget the fact that the divine forms of Srīman Nārāyana and Srī Mahā Lakshmī are "**aprākṛutham**" meaning "**non-material**".

5. The Concept of "Srī":

The concept of "Srī" in Visishtādvaitam has been extensively commented upon by eminent Srī Vaishanava āchāryas including Srī Yāmuna, Srī Rāmānuja, Srī Parāsara Bhattar, Srī Nanjiyar and Srī Swāmi Védanta Désikan. We referred to a verse from *Charuślōki* of Srī Yāmuna earlier. The *stōtrās* (hymns) of other āchāryās more or less follow the idea from these. Āchāryās refer also to Srīmad Ramāyanam since Srī Rāmā is an avathāram (incarnation) of Srīman Nārāyana.

The following are the words of Srī Hanumān (who was on a search and find mission on behalf of Srī Rāma) speaking to himself when he sees divine mother Sīta (incarnation of Srī Dévi) for the first time, in Ashōka Vanam in Lanka, confined there after being abducted by the demon king Rāvanā.

துல்ய ஸீல வயோ வ்ருத்தாம் துல்ய அமி⁴ஜந லக்ஷணாம்
 ராக⁴வோ அர்ஹதி வைதே³ஹீம் தம் ச இயம் அஸிதேக்ஷணா
 तुल्य शील वयो वृत्ताम् तुल्य अभिजन लक्षणाम् |
 राघवो अर्हति वैदेहीम् तम् च इयम् असित ईक्षणा || ५-१६-५
 tulya śīla vayo vṛttām tulya abhijana lakṣaṇām |
 rāghavo arhati vaidehīm tam ca iyam asita īkṣaṇā || (Sṛīmad Rāmāyaṇam Sundarakāṇḍam 16-5)

"Sṛī Rama (a scion of Raghu) is suited to Sītā (princess of Vidēha territory) whose character , age and conduct are well matched and whose pedigree and bodily marks are on a par with His and this dark eyed lady too is suited to Him."

Sṛī Parāśara Bhattar (great āchārya) who came after Sṛī Rāmānuja praises Periya Pirāttiār in his work Sṛī Gunaratna kōsham. He states,

அபாங்க பூ⁴யாம்ஸோ யது³பரி பரம்ப³ரஹ்ம தத³பூ⁴த்
 apāṅga bhūyāmsō yadupari param Brahma tadh-abhūth (Sṛī Gunaratna kōsham -30), meaning
 "whichever entity gets most of the grace of the divine Mother Lakshmī that entity becomes the Param Brahma".

In another verse from the same text addressing Sṛī Dévi as Mother Sītā from Sṛī Rāmāvathāram, he states the following:

மாதர்-மைதி²லி! ராக்ஷஸீஸ்-த்வயி ததை³வ-ஆர்த்³ராபராதா⁴ஸ்-த்வயா
 ரக்ஷந்த்யா பவனாத்மஜால்லகு⁴தரா ராமஸ்ய கோ³ஷ்ட²க்ருதா |
 காகம் தஞ்ச விபீ⁴ஷணம் ஸரணமிதி-உக்திக்ஷமௌ ரக்ஷத:
 ஸா நஸ்: ஸாந்த்³ரமஹாக்³ஸஸ் ஸுக²யதுக்ஷாந்திஸ்-தவாகஸ்மிகீ ||

māthar-mythili! rakshasīs-thvayi tadhaiva-ardhraparādhās-thvayā
 rakshantya pavanāthmajaallaghutharā Rāmasya Ghōshtī kruthā |
 kākam tamcha Vibhīshanam śaranamithi-ukthikshamou rakshatha:
 sā na:s sāndhramahāgasas-sukhayathu kshānthiis-tavākasmikī || (Sṛī Gunaratna kōsham -50)

"O'Mother Mythili!, Your act of protection of the many demon attendants of Rāvana who were all cruel to you from being destroyed at the hands of enraged Hanumān, made Sṛī Rāmā's side small since Rāma protected the Kākāsuran as well as Vibhīshana only after they actually sought his refuge by surrendering." Here the āchārya points out that Kārunyam (Compassion) of the divine Mother surpasses even that of the Supreme Lord.

The following are the actual words of Mother Sītā to Hanuman in that context.

पापानां वा शुभानां वा वधाहीणां प्लवङ्गम ||६-११३-४६
 कार्यं कारुण्यमार्येण न कश्चिन्नापराध्यति
 pāpānām vā śubhānām vā vadhārhāṇām plavaṅgama |

kāryaṃ kāruṇyamāryeṇa na kaścinnāparādhyati ||(Sṛīmad Rāmāyaṇam Yuddhakāṇḍam 113-46)

"Kindness is to be shown by a noble person towards a sinner as well as to a virtuous person and even to a person who deserves death, for there is none who never commits a wrong."

In the Dvaya Mantra Adhikāra of *Sṛīmad Rahasya Traya Sāram*, Sṛī Védānta Désikan commenting on the meaning of Sṛīman Nārayana quotes the following ślōka (of Sṛī Arulala Perumāl Emperumānār)

"ஆகாரிணஸ்து விஞ்ஞானம் ஆகார ஞான பூர்வகம்
தேநாகாரம் ஸ்ரியம் ஞாத்வா ஞாதவ்யோ ப⁴க³வான் ஹரி:"

"ākārinastu vijñānam ākāra jñāna pūrvakam

ténākāram sriam jñātvā jñātavyo bhagavān hari:"

"The knowledge of a qualified object is possible only through the attribute. So knowing first Sṛī who is an Ākāra or Viséshana, the Ākāri or Viséshya – the Lord is to be known".

He then gives six derivative meanings of the word "Sṛī" (*Shreeyathé* meaning She is sought, *Srayathé* meaning She seeks the Lord for the protection of the jīvās, *Srunōti* meaning She listens, *Srāvayathi* meaning She makes the Lord listen, *Srunāthi* meaning She destroys the faults of the devotees and *Sreenāthi* meaning She fills the worlds with her *gunās* which further illustrate her *Purushakāratvam* (Compassionate Mediator)

The term "**Lakshmī**" has been given several etymological derivations. Two of these are given here. லக்ஷயதீதி லக்ஷமீ ("lakshayati iti") meaning she thinks of the merits and demerits of all jīvās (not for meting out punishments, but for the purpose of being a compassionate mediator. "லக்ஷயம் ஸர்வமிதேரஹம்"(I am the target of all knowledge) are the words of Sṛī Mahā Lakshmī in Pāncharātra text, "**Lakshmītantram**". Since she is integral part of Parama Purusha and it is through her the Supreme is identified and understood, the knowledge of the Supreme of necessity will have to include the knowledge of Lakshmī also.

The middle letter in the "**pranavam**" (Ōmkāram) is said to refer to Lakshmī. The following often quoted verse gives definition of "**pranavam**"

அகாரேணோச்யதே விஷ்ணு: ஸர்வலோகேஸ்வரோ ஹரி: |

உத்³த்⁴ருதா விஷ்ணுநா லக்ஷமீருகாரேணோச்யதே ஸதா||

மகாரஸ்து தயோர் தா³ஸ: இதி ப்ரணவலக்ஷணம்||

"akāreṇa uchyatē Vishnū: sarvalōkésvarō Hari:

uddhrutā vishnunā lakshmīrukāreṇa uchyatē sadhā

makārastu tayōrdāsa: iti pranava lakshanam"

"The Supreme Lord Hari who is all pervasive is indicated by the first letter "**a**". Sṛī MahaLakshmī who is borne always on the heart of that Hari is described by the middle letter "**u**". The third letter "**ma**" indicates the jīva (the individual self) who is the servant of both. That is the definition of "**pranavam**". The "pūrvāchāryas" (the ancient masters) refer to a verse from Sṛīmad

Rāmāyanam to substantiate this further. The context refers to the scene when Srī Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmana enter the *dandaka* forest.

"अग्रतः प्रययौ रामः सीता मध्ये सुमध्यमा ।

पृष्ठतः तु धनुष्पाणिः लक्ष्मणः अनुजगाम ह ॥"

அக்ரத: ப்ரயயௌ ராம: ஸீதா மத்யே ஸுமத்யமா.

ப்ருஷ்டதஸ்து தநுஷ்பாணிர் லக்ஷ்மண: அநுஜகாம ஹ || 3.11.1

agrataḥ prayayau rāmaḥ sītā madhye su madhyamā, |

prṣṭhataḥ tu dhanuṣpāṇiḥ lakṣmaṇaḥ anujagāma ha || (Srīmad Rāmāyanam Āranya kādam-11-1)

"Rama walked in front, Sita with a beautiful waist, in the middle and Lakshmana holding the bow, behind them"

This verse is referred by our *pūrvāchāryas* as "*pramāna*" (validity) for the interpretation of the "*pranavam*" (*Ōmkāram*). "A picture is said to be better than thousand words". *It is like a pictorial demonstration of the meaning of "pranavam"*. Srī Rāma is the incarnation of the Supreme Lord Hari. Divine Mother Sītā represents Srī Lakshmī and Lakshmana who serves them both indicates the "jīva". Interestingly all the three letters are also in the words of the verse in the right order. The letter "a" is in the word "**agrataḥ**". The letter "u" is in the word "**su madhyamā**". The letter "ma" is in the word "**anujagāma**". When Srī Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmana entered the Dandaka forest, Srī Rāma went first followed by Sītā. Lakshmana went behind them carrying the bow.

Srī or MahāLakshmī is co-eternal with the Lord and ever resident in the chest of the Lord. She not only acts to bring the grace of the Lord to the *jīva* but also actively helps in the redemption of the individual souls. In this role, She is considered as a compassionate mediator (*Purushakāra Bhūthai*). The Āchāryās point not only to the Védās but also to the Āzhwārs' works as evidence (the *Pramāna*) for this.

6. Bhū Dévi (Hrī) (Mother Earth):

We referred to the fact earlier that in the last mantram of Purusha sūktham, Bhū Dévi (Hrī) is referred to first.

ஹ்ரீஸ்ச தே லக்ஷ்மீஸ்ச பத்நயௌ (hrīścha té lakshmīścha patnyau) (Purusha Sūktham 2-6).

"For Thee, Bhū Dévi and Srī Dévi are two consorts" The second ஸ ("cha"- conjunction) indicates indirectly Nīlā Dévi.

Srī Nāmmāzhwār in the famous *pathikam* (decad of verses) "Kannan Kazhalinai (Thiruvāimozhi 10-5), refers to both Bhū Dévi and Srī Dévi in the same order as in the Purusha Sūktham

நாரணன் எம்மான் பார் அணங்காளன்

வாரணம் தொலைத்த காரணன் தானே.
nāranan emmān * pāranangkālan **
vāranam tholaiththa *kāranan thāné

(Thiruvāmozhi -10-5-2)

"Nārāyana is my Lord. He is பார் அணங்காளன் (the consort of the divine mother Earth).
He is the Cause of all. He is the same Krishna who destroyed the mad elephant"

மாதவனென்றென்று ஓதவல்லீரேல்
தீதொன்றும் அடையா ஏதம் சாராவே.
mādhavan enrenru *ōdha vallīrēl **
thīdhonrum adaiyā * ēdham sārāvē

(Thiruvāmozhi-10-5-7)

"If you call Him as Mādhava, the Lord of Lakshmī, then no harm will befall you.
Suffering will not near you "

i. Bhū sūktham

The glories Srī Bhū Dévi are revealed clearly in the **Bhū sūktham** (the numbering of the *mantrās* and meanings given here are as per the *vyākhyānam* –commentary by Srī Putthūr Krishnaswamy Iyengar Swami) which is often recited during Thirumanjanam of the Lord in all Srī Vaishnava temples. Will review here some of the *mantrās* from this famous sūktham as well as pertinent verses from āzhwārs and āchāryas.

1. ஓ பூ⁴மிர்பூ⁴ம்நாத்⁴யெளர்வரிணா(அ)ந்த்ரிகூழம் மஹித்வா .
உபஸ்தே² தே தே³வ்யதி³தே (அ)க்னிமன்னாத்³மந்நாத்³யாயாத்³தே⁴..
ōm bhūmirbhūmnā dyaurvārīṇāntārikṣham mahītvā .
upasthē tē dévyaditēé (a)gnimānnāda-mānnādyāyādādhē..

Ōm! பூ⁴மி O' Bhūmi Dévi ! பூ⁴ம்நா By the extensive area பூ⁴மி You are Earth, வரிணா த்⁴யெள by your greatness You are the heavens, மஹித்வா அந்த்ரிகூழம்.by your fame You are like the cosmic space. அதி³தே Fulness that You are, தே உபஸ்தே² அன்னாத்³ம் You are (always) close to Paramātmā. ஆத்³தே⁴ I surrender அக்னிம் my "self" அன்னாத்³ம் which is fit to experience the bliss of the Lord (to You) அந்நாத்³யாய for the purpose of obtaining that bliss.

7. மேதி³னீ தே³வீ வஸுந்த்⁴ரா ஸ்யாத்³வஸுதா³ தே³வீ வாஸவீ.
ப்³ரஹ்மவர்சஸ: பித்ரு'ணாம் ஸ்ரோத்ரம் சக்ஷர்மன:..
medinī dévī vasundharā syaadvasudā devee vāsavī .
brahmavarchasah' pitri'nām śrotram chakshurmanah:

"(மேதி³னீ தே³வீ) May the divine mother Medinī Dévi (Bhūmi) (வஸுந்த்⁴ரா) who is the repository of all wealth like gold, diamond and other gems, (வஸுதா³) who protects those wealth, (வாஸவீ) who also has wealth of all grains, (தே³வீ) who is ever resplendent, (ஸ்யாத்³ பித்ரு'ணாம்) become propitious to us and our forefathers and (ஸ்ரோத்ரம் சக்ஷர்மன:).bestow senses like eyes, ears and mind as well as (ப்³ரஹ்மவர்சஸ:) splendor of Brahman"

8. தே³வீ ஹிர்ண்யக³ர்மி⁴ணீ தே³வீ ப்ரஸூவர்
ரஸ³னே (ஸத³னே) ஸ்த்யாய³னே ஸீத³ ..
dēvī hirāṇyagarbhiṇī dēvī praśūvarī
rasānē (sadānē) satyāyānē sīda ..

In this *mantram*, the seer addressing Bhūmi (ஸ்த்யாய³னே) as the residence of Parama Purusha, (ஸத³னே) as the residence of all beings, (ஹிர்ண்யக³ர்மி⁴ணீ) as pregnant with gold and other wealth, (ப்ரஸூவர்) who gives rise to priceless substances, (தே³வீ) as the consort of the Lord prays for Her grace.

9. ஸமுத்³ரவதீ ஸாவித்ரீ அனோ தே³வீ மஹ்யங்கீ³
மஹித்⁴ர்ணீ மஹோவ்யதிஷ்டா
samudravatī sāvitrī hanō dēvī mahyāṅgī.
mahīdharāṇī mahōvyathiṣṭā

10. ஸ்ருங்கே³ ஸ்ருங்கே³யஜ்ஞே யஜ்ஞே விபீ⁴ஷணீ.
இந்த³ர்பத்னீ வ்யாபிணீ ஸுரஸரிதி³ஹ
śṛṅgē śṛṅgē yajñē yajñē vibhīṣaṇī
indrāpatnī vyāpinī surasāridīha

By these two *mantrās*, the Védic seer praises, "Bhū Dévi (ஸமுத்³ரவதீ) who has the oceans for the attire, (ஸாவித்ரீ) Sun as the auspicious mark (*tilakam*) on the forehead, (அனோ தே³வீ) has for her consort the Supreme Lord noted by the *akāram* (அகாரம்). (மஹித்⁴ர்ணீ மஹ:) She has great fame and splendor and is celebrated by everyone, bearing all beings. (விபீ⁴ஷணீ.) She induces fear in those who do not seek her, (இந்த³ர்பத்னீ) has great wealth, is the consort of the infinitely rich transcendental Lord, (ஸுரஸரிதி³ஹ வ்யாபிணீ) is sought in refuge by the dévās, is all pervasive, (ஸ்ருங்கே³ ஸ்ருங்கே³யஜ்ஞே யஜ்ஞே வ்யதிஷ்டா) shining in the high hills and in all virtuous sacrificial rites."

Srī Thirumangai azhwār captures the meaning of the 9 th *mantram* in the beginning two verses of his work சிறியதிருமடல் "Siriya Thirumadal".

காரார் வரைக் கொங்கை கண்ணார் கடல் உடுக்கை *

சீரர் சுடர் சுட்டி செங்கலுழிப் பேராற்று * 1

பேரார மார்பின் பெருமா மழைக் கூந்தல் *

நீரார வேலி நில மங்கை 2

kārār varaik kongkai kannār kadal udukkai *

sīrar sudar chutti sengkaluzhip pérātru * 1

pérāra mārbin perumā mazhaik kūndhal *

nīrāra véli nila mangkai * 2 (Srī Thirumangai āzhwār's Siriya Thirumadal)

11. வாயுமதீ ஜலஸய்னீ ஸ்ரிய,ந்தா⁴ ராஜா ஸ்த்யந்தோ⁴பரி மேதி³னீ ..

ஸோபரித⁴த்தங்காய

vāyumatī jalāsayanī śriya,ndhā rājā satyandhō pari mēdinī ..

sō paridhattaṅgāya

"(வாயுமதி) Bhū Dévi has wind for the vital airs, (ஜலஸய்னி) has the waters for bed and (ஸ்ரியந்தா⁴ரா அஜா) has abundance of riches. She is birthless, (ஸா உபரி த⁴த்த அங்காய அந்தோ⁴பரி ஸ்தி) bears all of the beings and favoring the ignorant ones in order to help them reach the Supreme Lord."

12. விஷ்ணுபத்னிம்' மஹிம்' தே³விம்மாத⁴விம்' மாத⁴வப்ரியாம்'
 லக்ஷ்மீ ப்ரியஸ்கீ²ம்' தே³விம் நமாம்யச்யுத வல்லபா⁴ம்'.
 viṣṇupaṭnīm mahīm dēvīm mādḥavīm mādḥavapriyām
 lakṣmī priyasākhīm dēvīm namāmyachyuta vallabhām

"(நமாமி மஹிம்' தே³விம் விஷ்ணுபத்னிம்) I bow to Bhūmi Dévi, the consort of Vishnu, (மாத⁴விம்) known as Mādhavī (மாத⁴வப்ரியாம்) being the consort and sweet heart of the Lord of Lakshmi (Mādhava), (லக்ஷ்மீ ப்ரியஸ்கீ²ம்) who is like a dear friend to Srī Dévi, (தே³விம்) who is splendidous in form and virtues, and (அச்யுத வல்லபா⁴ம்) who is beloved of Lord Achyuta"

13. ஓ த⁴னுர்த⁴ராயை வித்³மஹே ஸர்வஸித்³த⁴யை ச தி⁴மஹி .
 தன்னோ த⁴ரா ப்ரசோத³யாத் ..
 ōm dhanurdhārāyai vidmahé sarvasiddhyai ca dhīmahī .
 tannō dharā prachodayāt

(த⁴னுர்த⁴ராயை வித்³மஹே) we worship (the Lord who wields the bow) - (her whose form is like the bow)

(ஸர்வஸித்³த⁴யை ச தி⁴மஹி) We meditate upon the One who blesses us with all success (ஸர்வஸித்³தி sarva siddhi). May that, (த⁴ரா - Bhūmi Dévi) (ப்ரசோத³யாத்) prompt (தன்னோ - ந: தத்) us for that meditation!

This *mantram* is known as "**Bhūmi gāyatri**". Like the other *gāyatri mantrās*, it aids in meditation of the *Paramātmā*. Through this *gāyatri* the védic seer seeks the grace of Bhūmi Dévi. Bhū Dévi is declared here as "ஸர்வஸித்³தி - sarva siddhi" meaning one who bestows all goals both of this material world (which is evident to all beings) as well as for the attainment of *Mōksham* . Here her *purushakāratvam* is clearly indicated.

15. த்ரேதா⁴ விஷ்ணுருருகா³யோ விசக்ரமே
 மஹிம் தி³வம் ப்ருதி²விம் அந்தரிக்ஷம்
 தச்ச²ரோணைதி ஸ்ரவ இச்ச²மாநா
 புண்யம் ஸ்லோகம் யஜமாநாய க்ருண்வதி
 tredhā vishnurugāyō vicakramé |
 mahīm divam prthivīmantariksham
 tacchrōnaiti śrava icchamānā |
 punyam ślōkam yajamānāya krnvatī

உருகா³ய விஷ்ணு: the greatly famous Lord Vishnu த்ரேதா⁴ விசக்ரமே measured with three strides மஹிம் தி³வம் ப்ருதி²விம் அந்தரிக்ஷம் this great Earth, the heavens above and the vast (stellar) space in between. ஸ்ரோணா Bhūmi dévi who is attached to the asterism of śravaṇa,

ஸ்ரவ: இச்ச²மாநா யஜமாநாய desiring to bring good (to her worshipper), as well as யஜமாநாய புண்யம் ஸ்லோகம் க்ருண்வதீ the highest sacred fame to her worshipper, தத் ஏதி reaches that Vishnu.

This last *mantram* refers to the special affection that Parama Purusha has for Bhūmi Dévi by referring to Trivikrama *avathāram*. (the famous incarnation of Lord Vishnu who as a celebrate dwarf Vāmana went begging for alms and after obtaining the gift of three spaces from the demon king Mahābali - who had previously usurped all of the worlds from the dévās - turned into the gigantic form of Trivikrama measuring the entire cosmos with just three strides of His divine feet). It also refers to the compassionate intercession of Bhūmi Pirātti on behalf of all the sentient beings of the world. The Lord measured Bhūmi Dévi (the Earth) – referred as மஹிம் mahīm - known for her greatness of her attributes. The Lord gently stroked Her with His divine foot - நிலமகள் பிடிக்கும் மெல்லடி - the soft feet massaged by Bhūmi pirātti- (Thiruvāimozhi 9-2-10) -the divine feet which are sought after as the adornment for their heads by the loving devotees. தி³வம் அந்தரிக்ஷம் விசக்ரமே divam antariksham vicakramé – earlier it was mentioned- த்⁴யௌ வ்ரிணா அந்தரிக்ஷம் மஹித்வா, dyau varīṇā antārikṣham mahitvā - that Bhūmi Dévi pervades the heavens and all of the worlds in the cosmic space by her greatness and fame. The Lord in fact lovingly stroked with his divine feet His consort.

கிடந்திருந்து நின்றளந்து * கேழலாய்க் கீழ் புக்கு
இடந்திடும் * தன்னுள் கரக்கும் உமிழும் **
தடம்பெருந்தோள் ஆரத்தழுவும் * பாரென்னும்
மடந்தையை * மால் செய்கின்ற மால் * ஆர் காண்பாரே
kidandhirundhu ninRaLandhu * kézhalāyk kīzh pukku
idandhidum * thannuL karakkum umizhum **
thadamperunthōl āraththazhuvum * pārennum
madandhaiyai * māl seyginra māl * ār kāNbārē?

(Thiruvāimozhi 2-8-7)

Srī Nammāzhwār describes in this verse how the Earth (Bhūmi pirāttiyar) is so fitting to all of the wishes and sportive acts of the Supreme Lord Nārāyana. The Lord lied down on the sea shores requesting a path across the ocean to reach Lanka. He sat with sages on the *chitrakūta* hills. After vanquishing the demon king Rāvana, He stood victorious with bow in His hand. He measured the worlds with three paces. Taking the form of a huge divine boar (Varāha) went under the waters to bring back the Earth which had been submerged under the sea by the demon Hiranyākshan, He kept this Earth inside His belly protecting the same from the deluging waters of *Pralaya* (the dissolution), He brought it out again, hugged Her in love, making His powerful and strong arms swell with pleasure and pride. Who can fully fathom the loving deeds that the Supreme Lord performs in relation to Bhūmi Pirātti.

(தச்ச²ரோணைதி ஸ்ரவ இச்ச²மாநா யஜமாநாய - tacchrōnaiti śrava icchamānā yajamānāya) – In order to bring good to her worshipper, Bhūmi Dévi who is attached to the star "śravana"

reaches out to her consort, Vishnu. (புண்யம் ஸ்லோகம் யஜமாநாய க்ருண்வதீ ஏதி punyam ślōkam yajamānāya krnvatī éthi)- In order to bring the highest sacred fame to her worshipper, Bhūmi Dévi who is attached to the star "śravana" reaches out to her consort, Vishnu. *This indicates clearly the Purushakāratvam of Bhū dévi.*

ii. Bhū Stuti:

We mentioned earlier that Bhūmi Dévi (the Earth) – is referred to as மஹிம் mahīm - known for her greatness of her attributes. The most important attribute of her of course is கூடமா (Kshamā) meaning "Patience and Forgiveness". She Swāmi Srī Védānta Désikan in his Bhū Stuti describes beautifully divine mother's glories and auspicious attributes. We will refer to a couple of verses here.

ஸங்கல்ப கல்ப லதிகா மவதி⁴ம் கூடமாயா:
 ஸ்வேச்சா வராஹ மஹிஷீம் ஸுலபா⁴நுகம்பாம்
 விஸ்வஸ்ய மாதர மகிஞ்சந காமதே⁴நும்
 விஸ்வம்ப⁴ராமஸரண: ஸரணம் ப்ரபத்³யே (Srī Védānta Désikan's Bhū Stuti – 1)
 samkalpa kalpa lathikām mavadhim kshamayā
 svécchā varāha mahishīm sulabhānukampām
 viśwasya māthāramakinchana kāmādhénū
 viśwambharā maśarana: śaranam prapadhyé (Srī Védānta Désikan's Bhū Stuti – 1)

"Adiyén who has no other refuge surrender to Bhūmi Dévi (*viśvambharā*), the Mother of the World, who is like the celestial wish yielding creeper *kalpagam*, who is the ultimate in forgiveness, who graces easily, who is like *kāmādhénu* (wish fulfilling cow) for the meek and who by Her own will became the consort of the Lord in His incarnation as VarāhaPerumān"

காந்தஸ் தவைஷ கருணாஜலதி⁴: ப்ரஜாநாம்
 ஆஜ்ஞாதிலங்க⁴ந வஸாது³பஜாத ரோஷ:
 அஹ்நாய விஸ்வஜநநி கூடமயா ப⁴வத்யா
 ஸர்வாவகா³ஹந ஸஹா முபயாத் யவஸ்த்தா²ம் (Srī Védānta Désikan's Bhū Stuti – 13)
 kāntas tavaisha karunā jaladhih prajānām
 āñjātilanghana vaśātu pajāta rōshah
 ahnāya viśva janani kshamayā bhavatyā
 sarvāvagāhana sahāmupayāt yavasthām (Srī Védānta Désikan's Bhū Stuti – 1)

"O'Viśvajani! (Mother of the Universe!), Your consort the Lord eventhough is deeply compassionate, becomes enraged towards the human beings because of their actions against His divine rules, but because of you who is known as Kshamā being the embodiment of forgiveness, He becomes compassionate also thereby becoming easily approachable to everyone".

iii. Gōdā Stuti:

Āchārya also glorifies *Srī Godā pirātti (Srī Āndāl)* who is an incarnation of *Bhūmi pirātti* for the same attribute.

ஸ்ரீவிஷ்ணுசித்த குலநந்த³ன கல்பவல்லீம்
 ஸ்ரீரங்க³ராஜ ஹரிசந்த³ந யோக³த்³ருஸ்யாம்
 ஸாக்ஷாத் கூமாம் கருணயா கமலாமிவாந்யாம்
 கோதா³மநந்யஸரண: ஸரணம் ப்ரபத்³யே

(Sṛī Védānta Désikan's Gōdā Stuti – 1)

Sṛī Vishnu chitha kula nandana kalpa vallīm,
 Sṛī Rangaraja harichandana yōga druśyām,
 Sākshāth kshamām karunayā kamalāmivānyām,
 Godām ananya śarana: śaranam prapadyé.

(Sṛī Védānta Désikan's Gōdā Stuti – 1)

"Adiyén who has no other refuge surrender to Sṛī Āndāl (Gōdā), who is like the celestial wishfulfilling creeper *kalpakam* in the family flower garden of Sṛī Perīāzhwār, who is more beautiful because of association with the fragrant sandal tree, Sṛī Rangarāja, who is the embodiment of forgiveness and Bhūmi dévi incarnate and who is like another Periya Pirāttiār Sṛī Mahālakshmi because of the attribute of compassion".

The attributes of forgiveness and compassion (Mercy) are emphasized for they make the Supreme Lord more easily approachable by the erring souls. In fact, the attribute "Kshamā" (Patience and forgiveness) of the **Supreme Lord Sṛī Rāmapirān** who is famous for all of the infinite **kalyāna gunās** (auspicious attributes) is compared only to that of Bhūmi dévi. Sage Nārada introducing Sṛī Rāmapirān to Sṛī Valmikī lists the several **kalyāna gunās** of the Lord and says the following.

विष्णुना सदृशो वीर्यं सोमवत्प्रियदर्शनः ।

कालाग्निसदृशः क्रोधे क्षमया पृथिवीसमः ॥ (Sṛīmad Rāmāyanam- Bāla kāndam 1.18)

விஷ்ணுநா ஸத்ருஸோ வீரீயே ஸோமவத்ப்ரியதர்ஸந: .

காலாக்நி ஸத்ருஸ: க்ரோதே கூமயா பரிதிவீஸம:

viṣṇunā sadṛśo vīryé sōmavat priya darśanaḥ |

kāla agni sadṛśaḥ krodhé kṣhamayā pṛthvī samaḥ (Sṛīmad Rāmāyanam- Bāla kāndam 1.18)

"वीर्यं vīryé - In valour, विष्णुना सदृशः viṣṇunā sadṛśaḥ - similar to Vishnu, सोमवत् sōmavat in appearance like full Moon, प्रियदर्शनः priya darśanaḥ - pleasing to the sight, क्रोधे krodhé - in anger, कालाग्निसदृशः kāla agni sadṛśaḥ - like destructive fire at the end of dissolution, क्षमया kṣhamayā - in patience-forgiveness, पृथिवीसमः pṛthvī samaḥ - equal to Earth.

iv. Sṛī Varāha avathāram and Bhūmi Dévi / Sṛī Gōdā (Sṛī Āndāl):

The Varāha avathāram was mentioned above with reference to Sṛī Nammāzhwār's Thiruvāimozhi verse. கேழலாய்க் கீழ் புக்கு இடந்திடும் (Thiruvāimozhi 2-8-7). Taking the form of a divine boar (Varāha) went under the waters to bring back the Earth which had been submerged under the sea

by the demon Hiranyākshan. Sṛī Vishnu Sahasranāma adhyāyam refers to Varāha as **Mahā Varāha**. This incarnation of Sṛīman Nārāyana taken *of His own accord* is glorified by all of the āzhwārs and āchāryas. Sṛī Poikai Pirān in his Mudhal Thiruvadhādhī refers to Varāha avathāram in verses 9, 12, 25, 39, 84 and 91. The verse 84 refers to the huge size of Sṛī Varāha Perumān by comparing it to Trivikrama avathāram indicating also the reason for the same.

பிரான்! உன் பெருமை * பிறர் ஆர் அறிவார்? *
உராய் உலகளந்த நான்கு ** - வராகத்து
எயிற்று அளவு * போதாவாறு என் கொலோ? * எந்தை
அடிக்களவு போந்த படி

pirān! un perumai * pirar ār arivār? *
urāy ulagalandha nānru **
varāgaththu eitru aLavuvu * pōdhāvāren kolō? * enthai
adikkalavu pōndha padi

(Mudhal Thiruvandhādhī -84)

"O' Lord (my benefactor), Who but Thou can comprehend Thy Greatness?
When Thou strode the worlds effortlessly, the Earth that fitted snugly into
Thine (my Master's) foot, how come it appeared to be just a fragment of Thy tooth
as Varāha?"

The discrepancy raised by āzhwār here, is explained by the fact that the Lord's protection is independent of the being that is protected and it is related to the intensity of His desire to protect. **The intensity of desire to protect in Varāha avatāram was very high.** During the Trivikrama avathāram the Lord saw no danger to life, for Mahābali just simply had taken over the worlds from the dévās. Hiranyakshan on the otherhand had taken the Bhūmi and had hidden the same under the ocean. There was imminent danger to life itself, unless intervened and rescued by the Lord.

The sages and seers describe the huge size of Sṛī Varāha Perumān, "கு²ர மத்⁴யக³தோ யஸ்ய மேரு: கணகணாயதே"(the Meru peaks near the ankles of Varāha split into small pieces). In Periya Thirumozhi, Sṛī Thirumangai āzhwār refers to the gigantic form of Sṛī Varaha Perumān almost in a similar vein. Meru Mountain is visualized as reaching up to the gigantic body of Varāha Perumān as He rose out of the water.

சிலம்பினிடை சிறு பரல் போல் பெரிய மேரு *
திருக்குளம்பில் கணகணப்பத் திருவாகாரம்
குலுங்க * நில மடந்தை தனை இடந்து புல்கிக் *
கோட்டிடை வைத்து அருளிய எங்கோமான் கண்டீர் **
இலங்கிய நான்மறை அனைத்தும் அங்கம் ஆறும் *
ஏழிசையும் கேள்விகளும் எண்திக்கு எங்கும் *
சிலம்பிய நற்பெருஞ்செல்வம் திகழும் நாங்கூர்த் *
திருத்தெற்றியம்பலத்து என் செங்கண்மாலே
silampinidai siru paral pōl periyā méru *
thirukkulambil kanakanappath thiruvākāram

(Periya Thirumozhi 4-4-8)

kulungka * nila madandhai thanai idandhu pulgik *
 kōttidai vaiththu aruliya engkōmān kandīr **
 ilangkiya nānmarai anaiththum angkam ārum *
 ézhisaiyum kēlvigalum enthikku engkum *
 silambiya narperunjselvam thigazhum nāngkūrth *
 thiruththetiriyambalaththu en sengkanmālē

(Periya Thirumozhi 4-4-8)

Srī Āndāl who is the only woman among all of the āzhwārs saints, is considered to be incarnation of Srī Bhūmi Dévi. Therefore there is a special connection between her and Srī Varāha Perumān. Srī Āndāl actually says in her Nācchiyār Thirumozhi in reference to the Lord of Srī rangam that she could never forget even if she tries to, the words spoken by the Lord in his vibhava avathāram as Srī Varāha Perumān.

பாசி தூர்த்துக் கிடந்த பார்மகட்கு பண்டொரு நாள்
 மாசுடம்பில் நீர் வாரா மானமிலாப் பன்றியாம் **
 தேசுடைய தேவர் * திருவரங்கச் செல்வனார் *
 பேசி இருப்பனகள் * பேர்க்கவும் பேராவே

(Nācchiyār Thirumozhi 11-8)

pāsi thūrththuk kidandha * pārmagatku * pandoru nāl
 māsudambil nīr vārā mānamilāp pandriyām **
 thésudaiya dhévar * thiruvarangach selvanār *
 pési iruppanagal * pérkkavum pérāvé

(Nācchiyār Thirumozhi 11-8)

"Aeons ago, when Bhūmi Pirātti was lying submerged under the waters covered by moss, the Supreme Lord took the incarnation of a huge divine boar with body covered by dirt with water dripping. Despite that, the Lord of Srīrangam who took that form of a divine boar shined with undiminished brilliance. Whatever the Lord spoke at that time is unforgettable and imprinted in the mind and unerasable (even if I try to do so)."

Varaha Purānam, is in the form of a dialogue between Srī Varāha Perumān and Bhūmi Pirāttiār. Bhū Dévi with great concern of all the beings especially the erring souls, on this Earth asks The Lord for an easy way of reaching Him, crossing the ocean of the material plane with all its attractions and faults.

அஹம் ஸிஷ்யா ச தா³ஸீ ச ப⁴க்த்யா ச த்வயி மாத⁴வ
 ரஹஸ்யம் த⁴ர்மஸம்யுக்தம் தந்மமாசக்ஷவ தத்வத:
 aham śishyā, ca dāsī ca bhaktyā ca tvayi mādharma
 rahasyam dharma samyuktam tanmāmācakshva tatvatah:

(Varāha Purānam 114-64)

"O'Lord! I am your disciple, servant, and devotee. Acceding to my desire, in order for all beings to obtain the right goal, please tell me the easiest means."

The all knowing and most compassionate divine mother Bhūmi Pirāttiār recognizing the inability of most humans to practice ("*guru upāyam*") difficult means such as Bhakti yōgam, which will be like (குருவியின் கழுத்திலே கட்டின பனங்காய் போலேயாம்.- like tying a palmyra fruit

around the neck of a sparrow), requested the Lord to provide an easy effortless way ("laghu upāyam")

The answer given by the Lord Varāha (in the form of two ślōkams) during that avathāram is known as **Varāha Charama ślōkam** similar to the ones uttered by Srī Rāmapirān and Srī Krishna during their respective avathārāms. The topic of **Varāha Charama ślōkam** is covered by the great āchārya Swamī Srī Védānta Désikan in one of his "**chillarai rahasyangal**" texts, called "**rahasya śikhāmani**" (The beautiful explanatory notes (vivaranam in Tamil) by Srī U.Ve Vidvan Oppiliappan sannidhi vankīpuram navaneetam Srī Ramadesikachariyar Swamī, - is in volume 2 on "Chillarai Rahasyangal from Srīmad Andavan Srī Poundarikapuram Swamy Ashramam, Srīrangam, 2001"). (Swami Srī Sadagopan has also published a nice commentary in English, "Varaha Puranam", Sadagopan.org)

ஸ்தி²தே மனஸி ஸுஸ்வஸ்தே² ஸரீரே ஸதி யோ நர:
தா⁴து ஸாமயே ஸ்தி²தே ஸ்மர்தா விஸ்வரூபம் ச மாமஜம்
sthité manasi susvasthé sarīré sati yō nara: |
dhātusāmyé sthité smartā viśvarūpam ca maamajam ||1||

ததஸ்தம் ம்ரியமாணம் து காஷ்டபாஷாண ஸந்நிப⁴ம்
அஹம் ஸ்மராமி மத்³ ப⁴க்தம் நயாமி பரமாம் க³திம்
tatastam mriyamānam tu kāṣṭhā pāṣhāna sannibham |
aham smarāmi mad bhaktam nayāmi paramām gatim ||2||

Meaning: "**Oh Bhumi Devi!**

When my devotees with great faith surrender to me, while they are still in a state of tranquil mind and healthy body and reflect about Me as birthless and eternal, having the entire cosmos as my body, being the root cause of all, the inner controller, (niyanthā), the Supreme Lord of all, all pervasive and easily accessible, then I think of them at their last moments, when they are totally unconscious like a log or a stone and lead them to My eternal abode (parama padham) and grace them with eternal service to Me there".

Srī Varāha avathāram is described in details in texts, Srī Vishnu Purānam, Srīmad Bhāgavatham and Harivamsam. He is described as the Lord of all fire rituals (yajña Mūrthy). Āzhwārs often refer to this Varāha avathāram in many of the verses and especially before the end of their prabhandhams. He is described as our benefactor and true form of all knowledge (ஞானப்பிரான்).

Srī Poikai Pirān (the first of the Mudhal azhwārs) has the following verse in his Mudhal Thiruvandhādhi reminding us that should we not remember Him, Who remembers us in our last moments with the assurance (அஹம் ஸ்மராமி மத்³ ப⁴க்தம் - aham smarāmi mad bhaktam)

ஊனக்குரம்பையின் * உள் புக்கு இருள் நீக்கி *
ஞானச் சுடர்கொளிஇ நாள் தோறும் ** - ஏனத்து
உருவாய் உலகிடந்த * ஊழியான் பாதம் *
மருவாதார்க்கு உண்டாமோ வான் ?

(Mudhal Thiruvandhādhi -91)

ūnakkurambaiyin * uḷ pukku irul nīkki *
 jñānach sudarkolī nāl thōrum ** - énththu
 uruvāi ulagidandha * ūzhiyān pādham *
 maruvādhārkku undāmō vān ?

(Mudhal Thiruvandhādhī -91)

"Will they ever see deliverance that do not everyday remember to bow before the Feet of Him Who, entering this frame of flesh remains inside to dispel the ignorance born out of our sense of identification with the mortal frame, and kindles the light of spiritual awakening, Who as Varaha retrieved this earth and protects it at the time of total dissolution?"

The description of Srī Varāha Perumān in Vishnu Purānam and Srī Nammāzhwār's Thiruvāimozhi in his last decad of verses are as follows:

தத: ஸமுத்சூழிபய த⁴ராம் ஸ்வத³ம்ஷ்டயா மஹாவராஹ: ஸ்பு²ட பத்³மலோசன:
 ரஸதலாது³த்பலபத்ரஸந்நிப⁴: ஸமுத்தி²தோ நீல இவாசலோ மஹாந் (Vishnu Purānam 1-4-26)
 "After, with a huge form of a Boar with color of blue water lilly, with eyes like the freshly blossomed lotus flower, the Lord holding the Earth with His teeth, rose from the nether region like a big dark mountain".

கோல மலர்ப் பாவைக்கன்பாகிய * என் அன்பேயோ ! *
 நீலவரை இரண்டு பிறை கவ்வி * நிமிர்ந்ததொப்ப **
 கோல வராகம் ஒன்றாய் * நிலம் கோட்டிடைக் கொண்ட எந்தாய்! *
 நீலக் கடல் கடைந்தாய் * உன்னைப் பெற்று இனிப் போக்குவனோ ? (Thiruvāimozhi-10-10-7)

* kōla malarp pāvaikkanbāgiya * en anbēyō ! *
 nīla varai irandu pirai kavvi * nimirndhadhoppa **
 kōla varāgam onrāi * nilam kōttidaik konda endhāi ! *
 nīlak kadal kadaindhāi * unnaip petru inip pōkkuvanō ? (Thiruvāimozhi-10-10-7)

"O' my loving Lord!, You are sweet to me being the loving consort of the divine mother seated on the beautiful lotus. My father! Assuming the form of a peerless beautiful Boar, holding the Earth with the teeth, rescuing her out of the submerged waters, you shined like a dark mountain rising with two moons. You churned the blue ocean. Having attained you, will I let you go?"

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān invokes Srī Varāha Perumān in Thirucchanda Viruttam towards the end of this prabhandham.

ஈனமாய எட்டும் நீக்கி* ஏதமின்றி மீதுபோய்,*
 வானமாள வல்லையேல்* வணங்கி வாழ்து என் நெஞ்சமே,*
 ஞானமாகி ஞாயிறாகி* ஞால முற்றும் ஓர் எயிற்று.*
 ஏனமாய் இடந்த மூர்த்தி* எந்தை பாதம் எண்ணியே (Thirucchanda Viruttam -114)

īnamāya ettum neekki* éthaminri meedhupōi,*
 vānamaāla vallaiyé! * vanangi vaazhthu en nenjamé,*
 jñānamāki jñāyirāki* jñāla mutrum ōr eyitru,*
 énamāi idantha mūrththi* endhai pādham enniyé. (Thirucchanda Viruttam -114)

"O' my mind! If you desire to cut the eight-fold chain of human predicament, become free of all sorrows and going beyond the manifest world (through the path of light) attain the final beatitude, then take the holy feet of the Lord, Who took the divine, auspicious form as Srī Varāha, uplifted this whole Earth with His incomparable teeth, Who is the giver of spiritual enlightenment, Who like the Sun is the dispeller of all darkness (the light of all sensory knowledge) - as the means and worship and adore them."

Srī Āndāl being the incarnation of Bhūmi Dévi, brings the message of Srī Varāha Perumān to all beings of this earth, in her Thiruppāvai. The easy method of worship of the loving Lord is expressed in the 5 th verse in Thiruppāvai.

மாயனை, மன்னு வடமதுரை மைந்தனைத் *
 தூய பெரு நீர் யமுனைத் துறைவனை *
 ஆயர் குலத்தினில் தோன்றும் அணிவிளக்கைத் *
 தாயைக் குடல் விளக்கம் செய்த தாமோதரனைத் **
 தூயோமாய் வந்து நாம், தூமலர் தூவித் தொழுது *
 வாயினால் பாடி மனத்தினால் சிந்திக்கப் *
 போய பிழையும் புகுதருவான் நின்றனவும் *
 தீயினில் தூசாகும் செப்பேலோர் எம்பாவாய்
 māyanai, mannu vadamadhurai maindhanai *
 thūya peru nīr yamunai thuraivanai *
 āyar kulaththinil thōnrum anivilakkaith *
 thāyaik kudal vilakkam seydhā dhāmōdharanaith **
 thūyōmāi vandhu nām, thūmalar thūvith thozhudhu *
 vāyināl pādi manaththināl sindhikkap *
 pōya pizhaiyum pugutharuvān nindranavum *
 thīyinil thūsāgum seppēlōr empāvai.

(Thiruppāvai -5)

(Thiruppāvai -5)

"If we with pure unconditional love and absolute surrender, worship offering nice flowers, sing and reflect in our minds, the glories of the Lord with mysterious sportive acts, the king of the holy city of Vadamadurai, one who has played on the banks of the deep Yamuna river with clear water, One who appeared like the auspicious lamp in the cowherd family, One who brought glories to the mother Yashōda, One whose waist got tied to the mortar with a rope (by mother Yashōda), then automatically all the effects of all our past as well as future unrighteous actions will be burnt like cotton thrown into the fire. Therefore sing (His glories)."

தூயோமாய் வந்து (thūyōmāi vandhu) – does not refer to physical purity. It means: அநந்யப்ரியோஜநராய் - It is having no wants in the mind - desires free unconditional love of the Lord.

7. Nīlā Dévi:

We previously referred to the verse # 55 from Thirucchanda viruttam of Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān in which āzhwār mentions all the three consorts of the Lord . We will refer to it again here.

மன்னு மா மலர்க் கிழத்தி வைய மங்கை மைந்தனாய்
பின்னும் ஆயர் பின்னை தோள் மணம் புணர்ந்து அது அன்றியும்
(Thirucchanda viruttam -55)

மன்னு மா மலர்க் கிழத்தி – the lotus born Srī Lakshmi Devi who is born with the Lord during all acts of protection of the worlds. She is also the empress or the Queen (கிழத்தி). She is the Divine Mother of all and fondly referred to as "பெரிய பிராட்டியார்" "Periya Pirāṭṭiyār" in our Srī Vaishnava tradition..

லக்ஷ்மீ: Lakshmī - One who has beautiful and auspicious form as well as many auspicious attributes.

க்ருதாபி⁴ஷேகா மஹிஷி போ⁴கி³ந்யோ அந்யா ந்ருபஸ்த்ரிய: (AmaraKosham 2-6-5)
"Mahishee (the empress or the Queen) is one who gets crowned along with the king. The other wives of the king are known as Bhōgini"

வைய மங்கை மைந்தனாய் - the sweet and youthful consort of Srī Bhū Dévi. The védic Sūktham describes her, அஸ்யேஸாநா ஜகதோ விஷ்ணுபத்நீ -(Yajur- sam 4-41-1) "She is the ruler of the world and the consort of Srī Vishnu"

பின்னும் ஆயர் பின்னை தோள் மணம் புணர்ந்து அது – (pinnum āyar pinnai thōl* manam punarndhathu) - Thou embraced in wedding Srī Nappinnai who was Nīlā Devi, born as a cowherdess - as the daughter of Kumban, brother-in-law of Srī Nanda Gopa, the chieftain of the cowherds. Srī Krishna is sometimes referred to as பின்னை கேள்வன் - pinnai kēlvān – meaning consort of Nappinnai pirāṭṭi (divine mother Srī Nappinnai).

Nīlā Dévi represents the enchanting beauty and enjoyment (anubhava sukham) of the Lord. She is the principal consort when the Lord took the avathāram of Srī Krishna. Srī Krishna actually had to kill seven untamed powerful bulls in order to win over Srī Nappinnai Pirāṭṭi. This test was set up as a prerequisite by her father to ensure that the person marrying her daughter has valour.

மாதரார் திறத்து.முன்*

ஆனையன்று சென்றடர்த்த* மாயம் என்ன மாயமே? (Thirucchanda viruttam -40)

Mātharār tiratthu mun

ānaiyanru sendradarththa* māyam enna māyamé? (Thirucchanda viruttam -40)

"What a wonder that was, once for the sake of Nappinnai Pirāṭṭi with beautiful eyes and eye lashes decorated with collyrium, right in her presence, Thou killed the seven bulls.

Nīlā dévi is also eternal and is resident along with the Lord in the eternal realm. Āchārya Srī Rāmānuja in his "śaranāgati gadyam" addresses the Lord as "ஏவம் பூத பூமிநீளா நாயக".

Previously, in relation to Purusha Sūktham, we had mentioned the following:

ஹ்ரீஸ்ச தே லக்ஷ்மீஸ்ச பத்ந்யௌ(hrīścha té lakshmiścha patnyau) (Purusha Sūktham 2-6).
"For Thee, Bhū Dévi and Srī Dévi are two consorts" The second ஃ ("cha"- conjunction)
indicates indirectly Nīlā Dévi.

Srī Nammāzhwār in his Thiruviruttam verse 3, also refers to this.

குழற் கோவலர் மடப்பாவையும் * மண்மகளும் திருவும் *
நிழற் போல்வனர் கண்டு நிற்குங்கொல்? மீளுங்கொல்? ** தண்ணந்துழாய்
அழற் போல் அடுஞ்சக்கரத்து அண்ணல் விண்ணோர் தொழக் கடவும் *
தழற் போல் சினத்த * அப்புள்ளின் மின் போன தனி நெஞ்சமே (Thiruviruttam -3)

kuzhar kōvalar madappāvaiyum * manmagalum thiruvum *
nizhar pōlvanar kandu nirkungkol? mīlungkōl? ** thananthuzhāi
azhar pōl adunjchakkaraththu annal vinnōr thozhak kadavum *
thazhar pōl sinaththa * appullin pin pōna thani nenjchamé (Thiruviruttam -3)

In this verse, āzhwār in the Nāyāki Bhāvam speaks to her friend describing how her mind went after the Lord's beautiful appearance surrounded by His divine consorts wondering whether it will return. "The Supreme Lord is adorned by beautiful cool Tulasi, carrying the fiery Discus which destroys the demons. When He rides mounted on Srī Garudāzhwan who gets angry at the adversaries, the dévās of the higher worlds are seen to worship the Lord. Srī Nappinai Pirātti born in the family of flute carrying cowherds, Bhūmi Pirātti, and Periya Pirāttiār Srī Mahālakshmī are three divine consorts for my Emperumān who are with Him always like a shadow. My lonely mind seeing all of them, will it stay with them permanently or will it return back to me, I wonder!".

We find another verse by Srī Nammāzwār (Thiruvāimozhi 1-9-4) where all three divine consorts of the Supreme Lord are referred to and in the famous īdu Vyākhyānam of this verse has similar expressions.

உடனமர் காதல் மகளிர் * திருமகள் மண்மகள் ஆயர்
மடமகள் * என்றிவர் மூவர் ஆளும் * உலகமும் மூன்றே **
உடனவை ஒக்க விழுங்கி * ஆலிலைச் சேர்ந்தவன் எம்மான் *
கடல்மலி மாயப்பெருமான் * கண்ணன் என் ஒக்கலையானே (Thiruvāimozhi 1-9-4)

udanamar kādhal magalir * thirumagal manmagal āyar
madamagal * enriver mūvar ālum * ulagamum mūnré **
udanavai okka vizhungki * ālilaich sérndhavan emmān *
kadalmali māyapperumān * kannan en okkalaityāné (Thiruvāimozhi 1-9-4)

"Seated along with Him with great love are three divine ladies, namely Thirumagal, Bhūmi Pirātti and Nappinai Pirātti born in the family of cowherds and they are the three divine consorts of our Supreme Lord (Emperumān). The worlds ruled by Him are three. He is my Lord who after swallowing all of the three worlds all at once during the dissolution, seen lying down on the

banyan leaf. His attributes and actions are wonderous, far wider and deeper than the ocean. That Lord born as Srī Krishna carried out many wonderous deeds. He is close to me also, (like a baby, I can carry him on my waist)". ஒக்கலை – okkalai - waist

உடனமர் காதல் மகளிர் - udanamar kādhal magalir – "akalakillén Iraiym endru"
அகலகில்லேன் இறையுமென்று

Periyapirāttiar is like the Empress or Queen. She says that "no one is free from faults" She is like His ஐஸ்வரியம் (*Aiswsaryam*) wealth Bhūmi Pirātti – அது விளையும் பூமி (where that wealth grows) ஆயர் மடமகள் - அத்தைப் புஜிக்கின்ற போக்தாவானவள் என்று கூறலுமாம். (who enjoys that)

i. Nīlā Sūktham:

1. நீளாம் தே³விம் ஸரணமஹம் ப்ரபத்³யே க்³ருணாஹி ||
க்⁴ருதவதீ ஸவிதராதி⁴ப்தயை: பயஸ்வதீ ரந்திராஸா நோ அஸ்து |
த்⁴ருவா தி³ஸாம் விஷ்ணுபதன்யகோ⁴ராஸ்யேஸாநா ஸஹஸோ யா மநோதா ||
nīlām dévīm saranamaham prapadyé Gruṇāhi ||
ghruthavathī savitharādhipathyaiḥ payasvathī ranthirāsānō asthu |
dhruvā diśām vishnupathnyaghōrāsyesānā sahasō yā manōthā ||

அஹம் நீளாம் தே³விம்ஸரணம் ப்ரபத்³யே - I surrender to Nīlā dévi. (This line is not in the Védic mantram but it is included in traditional recitation.) (O' Divine mother Nīlā Dévi!) க்³ருணாஹி Please intercede with the Lord (on our behalf). ஸவித: - O' Lord , the cause of this cosmos! யா May the one தி³ஸாம் த்⁴ருவா who is steadfast in intercession விஷ்ணுபத்நீ who is the consort of VishNu அகோ⁴ரா who is cool hearted அஸ்ய ஈஸாநா who is the ruler of this world மநோதா who is pleased by mere mental worship ஆஸா - who is pervasive (for the purpose of protecting all beings) க்⁴ருதவதீ who represents abundance of ghee ஆதி⁴ப்தயை - who will unite us with fame (lordship), பயஸ்வதீ - who bestows abundance of milk and cows ந: ரந்தி அஸ்து - bring joy to us.

In this *mantram*, the Védic seer surrenders to Nīlā dévi, with her grace, visualizes the Lord and makes submission to the Lord Himself to make this divine Mother to be our protector for all times because of her inherent special attributes.

2. ப்³ருஹஸ்பதிர் மாதரிஸ்வோத வாயுஸ் ஸந்து³ வாநா வாதா அபி⁴நோ க்³ருணந்து
விஷ்டம்போ⁴ தி³வோ த்⁴ருண ப்ருதிவ்யா: அஸ்யேஸானா ஜக³தோ விஷ்ணுபத்நீ ||
bruhaspathir mātharīsvōtha vāyus sandhu vānā vāthā abhinō grunanthu |
vishtambhō dhivō dharunah pruthivya: asyesānā jagathō vishNupathnī ||

ப்³ருஹஸ்பதி The dévās' priest Bruhaspathi மாதரிஸ்வ the wind in the skies உத and வாயு the vital air *prāna* in the body வாதா as well as all the airs such as *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna* and *samāna* ஸந்து³ வாநா which function in a variety of ways in the body தி³வோ விஷ்டம்போ⁴ who

supports the heavens like a pillar ப்ருதிவ்யா: த⁴ருண (who is the) support of the Earth விஷ்ணுபத்நீ the consort of Vishnu அஸ்ய ஜக³தோ ஈஸானா (because of the same) the ruler of the cosmos அபி⁴ ந: க்³ருணந்து - May that Nīlā Dévi grace us.

In this *mantram*, the seer seeks the grace of Nīlā Dévi who is the consort of VishNu and (on account of that being) the ruler of the World along with the priest of the dévās and the various airs all of whom form part of herself (or her retinue).

By this *sūktham*, Nīlā Dévi is shown to be the consort of the Lord VishNu, who bestows joy (ரந்தி ranthi), things that bring delight and joy (க்⁴ருதவதீ, ghruthavathī பயஸ்வதீ payasvathī) and will bestow great fame (ஆதி⁴பத்யை ādhipathyaiah), as well. In *Srīmad Rāmāyanam*, sage *Srī Valmīkī* compares the three wives of Daśaratha to the three dévies of VishNu, "*tasya Bhāryāsutisrushū hreeSrīkīrthiyupamāsūcha*" (*Srīmad Rāmāyanam* –Balakāndam). The sage uses *Hrī* and *Srī* as in *Purusha sūktham*. He however uses the term *Kīrthi* meaning "great fame" to indicate Nīlā dévi thus indicating and emphasizing the "Great fame" as also the nature of Nīlā Dévi.

ii. Āchāryās' and Āzhwārs' sūkthies (Divine works)

We will refer here to some of the divine works of the āchāryās and āzhwārs. The following single invocatory verse (*Tanian*) in praise of *Srī Āndāl*, was composed by *Srī Parāsara Bhattar* when he was away from *Srīrangam* (divya désam which he loved most) due to a self chosen exile in order to avoid dealing with an unfriendly troublesome local king. In this verse, āchārya surrenders to *Srī Āndāl* stating the substantive message conveyed in her work *Thiruppāvai*. Also āchārya makes reference to Nīlā dévi representing the object of the *anubhava sukham* (experiential joy) of the Lord.

நீளா துங்க³ ஸ்தநகி³ரி தடி ஸுப்தம் உத்³போத்⁴ய க்ருஷ்ணம்
பாரார்த்²யம் ஸ்வம் ப்ருதி ஸத ஸிரஸ் ஸித்³த⁴ம் அத்⁴யாபயந்தீ
ஸ்வோச்சி²ஷ்டாயாம் ஸ்ரஜி நிக்³ளிதம் யா ப்³லாத் க்ருத்ய பு⁴ங்க்தே
கோ³தா³ தஸ்யை நம இத³ம் இத³ம் பூ⁴ய ஏவாஸ்து பூ⁴ய:

nīlā thunga sthanagiri thatī suptham uthpōdhya krishNam
pārārthyam svam sruthi satha siras sidhdham adhyāpayanthī
svōchishtāyām srajinigalitham yābalāth kruthya bhunghé
gōdhā thasyai nama itham itham bhūya évāsthū bhūya:

"I offer my obeisances again and again to *Srī Gōdā dévi* who woke up Krishna who was sleeping (with his head resting) on the chest of Nīlā dévi (resting like a lion under the foot hills of mountains), and was bound by the flower garland previously worn by her, announcing her

pāratanthriyam (total dependence on Him) the substantive principle highlighted in hundreds of védic texts and forcefully experienced Him"

Swāmi Srī Védānta Désikan's famous "*Dayā śatakam*" comprising of one hundred *ślōkams* (verses) glorify the attribute of "Compassion and Mercy" of the Lord enshrined in Thiruvénkatam hills. Although the Lord has infinite auspicious attributes (*kalyāna gunās*), our ability to experience them ultimately and solely depend on this special *guna*. In the very first verse of this *śatakam* āchārya describes the Lord's overflowing *dayā* to be like an over flowing river of cane sugar juice. He further suggests that it had become condensed like a huge mountain of sugar crystals in Thiruvenkatam hills so that it is made easily available for all devotees for all time. In this *Dayā śatakam* Āchārya refers also to Srī Nīlā Dévi in the following verse.

நிஸாமயது மாம் நீளா யத்³போகபடலைர் த்⁴ருவம்

பா⁴விதம் ஸ்ரீநிவாஸஸ்ய ப⁴க்த தோ³ஷேஷ்வ த³ர்ஸநம்

nīśāmayatu mām nīla yadbhōga patalair dhruvam..

bhāvitam Srīnīvāsasya bhakta doshēshva darśanam.. (Daya śatakam -8)

"By whose bewitching glances, the Lord Srīnīvāsa becomes mesmerized and act unattentive to the faults of the devotees, may that Nīlā pirātti grace me".

Srī Thirumangai āzhwār in his Periya Thirumozhi (11-4-6) refers to Nīlā dévi as புலமங்கை. The word புலன் refers to "the sensory organs", implying that Nīlā Dévi is capable of completely distracting even the Lord.

பெருநில மங்கை மன்னர் மலர்மங்கை

நாதர் * புலமங்கை கேள்வர் புகழ் சேர் *

பெருநிலம் உண்டு உமிழ்ந்த பெருவாயராகி

அவர் * நம்மை ஆள்வர் பெரிதே

perunila mangai mannar malar mangai nādhār *

pulamangai kēlvar pugazh sér *

perunilam undu umizhndha peruvāyarāgi

avar * nammai ālvar peridhé

பெருநில மங்கை means Bhūmi Pirātti மலர்மங்கை நாதர் means "the Lord of Srī". புலமங்கை கேள்வர் புகழ் சேர் means the consort Nīlā dévi who brings fame. Srī Periyavācchān Pillai in his commentary refers to the Lord as "yasya sā" "யஸ்ய ஸா" - meaning that "the one who has her" indicating "One who has the great fame of having her as the consort".

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān in his works Thirucchandaviruttam as well as in Nānmukan Thiruvadhādhī refers to Nīlā Dévi several times. We will refer to two of the verses one each from each of the two *prabhandhams*. In the 13 th verse in Thirucchandaviruttam, āzhwār indicates that the transcendental Lord is none other than Srī Krishna ("Pinnai Kēlvan") meaning "the consort of Nappinnai".

இன்னையென்று சொல்லாவது இல்லையாதுமிட்டிடை
 பின்னையேள்வனென்பர் உன் பிணக்குணர்ந்த பெற்றியோர்
 பின்னையாய் கோலமோடு பேருமருமாதியும்
 நின்னையார் நினைக்கவல்லர் நீர்மையால் நினைக்கிலே (Thirucchanda Viruttam -13)

innai yenru sollalāvadhu* illaiyādhum ittitai*
 pinnai kēlvan enbar un* pinakkunarndha petriiyōr*
 pinnaiyāya kōlamōdu* pérum ūrum ādhiyum,*
 ninnai yār ninaikka vallar* nirmaiyāl ninaikkilē!*

"To state that Thou art of such and such nature is not possible. *The enlightened sages* who understand the argument between Thy devotees and the non-devotees *would state that Thou art the beloved of Nappinnai with the slender waist*. When Thou do take birth along with the rest and yet remain different with the most beautiful and divine form, it will be impossible to understand Thee, Thy auspicious names, the glories of Thy birth place and the underlying transcendental form, by any self effort unless revealed by Thy accessible nature. "

In Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhī, āzhwār indicates in verse #32, "to spend even a moment in other things without dwelling on the lord's kalyāna gunās is only harmful"

கதைப்பொருள்தான் கண்ணன் திருவயிற்றி னுள்ள
 உதைப்பளவு போதுபோக் கின்றி, - வதைப்
 பொருள்தான் வாய்ந்த குணத்துப் படாத தடைமினோ
 ஆய்ந்த குணத்தான் அடி.

kathaipporulthān* kannan thiruvayitrin ulla*
 uthaippalavu pōthupōkku inri*
 vathaip porulthān vāintha kunaththup* padātha thadaiminō*
 ayntha kunaththān adi

"Itihasapuranas and Smrithis describe Lord Krishna's will. To spend even a moment in other things without dwelling on the Lord's auspicious qualities is only harmful. Fall at the holy feet of the ever glorious Lord."

In the very next verse Āzhwār describes the various sportive deeds that the Lord performed many of them for the sake of protection of His devotees during His avatāra as Srī Krishna and he includes his vanquishing the seven types of bulls for the sake of Nappinai.

அடிச்சகடம் சாடி யரவாட்டி, ஆனை
 பிடித்தொசித்துப் பேய்முலை நஞ்சுண்டு - வடிப்பவள
 வாய்ப்பின்னை தோளுக்கா வல்லேற் றெருத்திறுத்து.
 கோப்பின்னு மானான் குறிப்பு.
 adichchagadam chaadi* aravātti* yānai

pidiththosiththup* peymulai nanjundu*
vadippavala vāippinnai thlLukkā* vallétra eruththiruththu*
kōppinnu mānān kurippu.

"He kicked Sakata with His holy feet, made the serpent dance, broke the tusk of the elephant, drank the poison off the breasts of the ogress and for the sake of Nappinnai with coral like lips and beautiful shoulders broke the horns of the wild bulls and by His will became the Lord."

Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān in his work Thirucchandaviruttam does śaranāgati to Srī Krishna invoking the grace and intercession of Nappinnai Pirātti.

விடைகுலங்கள் ஏழுடர்த்து *வென்றிவேற்கண்மாதாரார்,*
கடிக்கலந்ததோள்புணர்ந்த* காலியூய!வேலைநீர்,*
படைத்து அடைத்து அதிற்கிடந்து* முன் கடைந்து நின் தனக்கு,*
அடைக்கலம் புகுந்த என்னை* அஞ்சல் என்ன வேண்டுமே
vidaikulangalézhadarththu*venrivérkanmātharār,*
kadikkalandha thōlpunarndha*kāliāya!vélai nīr
padaiththu adaiththu athilkidandhu*munkadaindha unthanakku,*
adaikkalam puhundha ennai* anjal enna véndumé

(Thirucchanda Viruttam- 92)

"O' Lord, Who came as a cowherd! In ancient times, Thou created the wavy oceans of waters, reposed on one of them and churned the same (for the sake of the dévas) and (as Srī Rāma) built a bridge across another. For the sake of embracing the beautiful and fragrant arms of Nappinnai Pirātti with eyes sharp as the victorious spear, Thou vanquished the seven types of bulls. Please pray tell me who had taken refuge in Thee, "Do not fear".

In Thiruppāvai, Srī Āndāl before surrendering to the Lord, she invokes the grace of Srī Nappinnai Pirātti for beneficial intercession on her behalf. This was expressed in three verses (18, 19 and 20)

உந்து மதகளிற்றன், ஓடாத தோள் வலியன் *
நந்தகோபாலன் மருமகனே! நப்பின்னாய்! *
கந்தம் கமழும் குழலீ! கடை திறவாய் *
வந்தெங்கும் கோழி அழைத்தன காண் ** மாதவிப்
பந்தல் மேல், பல்கால் குயிலினங்கள் கூவின காண் *
பந்தார் விரலி! உன் மைத்துனன் பேர் பாடச் *
செந்தாமரைக் கையால் சீரார் வளை ஒலிப்ப *
வந்து திறவாய் மகிழ்ந்தேலோர் எம்பாவாய்

(திருப்பாவை -18)

undhu madhakalitrān, ōdādhā thōl valiyan *

nandhagōpālan marumagalé! nappinnāi! *
 gandham kamazhum kuzhalī! kadai thiravāi *
 vandhengkum kōzhi azhaiththana kān ** mādHAVip
 pandhal mé!l, palkāl kuyilinangkal kūvina kān *
 pandhār virali! un maiththunan pér pādach *
 senthāmaraiK kaiyāl sīrār valai olippa *
 vandhu thiravāi magizhndhélōr empāvāi

(Thiruppāvai -18)

"O' Nappinai Dévi, with fragrant hair locks, daughter-in-law of Nandagopan with strong arms like an elephant unflinching in battle, please open the doors. The cock has cried out indicating day break from all sides. The groups of cuckoo birds resting on the *mādhavi* flower creepers have cawed several times. O' lady with curvy long fingers (suited to defeat Krishna in ball play). Please happily come and join us in singing the glorious names of your Lord and open the doors with your soft lotus red hands with the jingling noise of the beautiful wrist bands."

This particular Thiruppāvai was especially liked by Srī Emperumānār (Srī Rāmānuja) as we learn from the recorded history of his divine life. A disciple of āchārya Srī Nampillai (by name பின்பழகிய பெருமாள் ஜீயர் - Pinpazhakiya Perumāl jeer) recorded the following episode in his Vārthāmālai 206. Emperumānār reciting this Thiruppāvai went and knocked on the door of Srī Thirukkōttiur. Nambi. He was at the time reciting the lines "sīrār valai olippa" and when Srī nambi's daughter came and opened the door, Emperumānār thought Srī Nappinai Pirātti herself had come and opened the door. So he immediately fell flat and prostrated in front of her. When she reported this to her father, Srī Thirukkōttiur nambi, came out and enquired Emperumānār whether he was reciting "Undhumadgalitran Thiruppāvai." .

தத்துவம் அன்று தகவேலோர் எம்பாவாய்

thaththuvam anru thagavélōr empāvāi

(Thiruppāvai-19)

தத்துவம் அன்று தகவு அன்று "இது உன் ஸ்வரூபத்துக்கும் பொருந்தாது; இது உன் ஸ்வ பாவத்துக்கும் பொருந்தாது " " (If you do not accede to our request and wake up Krishna) it will not suit your real form (*svarūpam*) or essential nature (*svabhāva*)".

(Srī Periyavācchān Pillai in his vyākhyānam, adds "இது உன்னுடைய புருஷகாரபா⁴வத்துக்கும் போராது க்ருபைக்கும் போராது - it is not compatible with your *purushakāra bhāvam*. It will also not suit your compassionate nature.")

நப்பின்னை நங்காய்! திருவே! துயிலெழாய் *

உக்கமும் தட்டொளியும் தந்து உன் மணாளனை *

இப்போதே எம்மை நீராட்டேலோர் எம்பாவாய்

nappinnai nangāi! thiruvé! thuyilezhāi *

ukkamum thattoliyum thandhu un manālanai *

ippōdhé emmai nīrāttélōr empāvāi

(Thiruppāvai-20)

"O' Wholesome Nappinai pirātti, O' Srī ! Please wake up. Bless us with materials needed to complete this observance of ours and also intercede on our behalf with the Lord and request Him to overlook all our faults and immerse us in joy". In this vere, Nappinai is addressed as "Srī". The word "Srī "is etymologically defined as" ஸ்ரீ.யதே சாகிலைர் நித்யம் ஸ்ரயதே ச பரம் பதம்" "One who is sought as refuge always by everyone. She inturn has taken refuge at the Supreme Lord who is the most covetous and precious goal."

8. Purushakāratvam of Srī: Bhū and Nīlā:

All of the āzhwārs and the āchāryās consider that Srī representing the mercy and compassion of the Lord is actually the compassionate mediator for the individual *self* and the *paramātmā*. This is termed as the **Purushakāratvam of Srī**. The very first expression of **Sriyapatitvam** (Supreme being the Lord of Srī and *Purushakāratvam* (Srī as the compassionate mediator) is revealed in the incident when the first three āzhwārs meet taking shelter in the inner corridor of a home termed "இடைக்கழி" (idai kazhi) on a stormy night in the divya désam of Thirukkōvalūr.

Srī Poikai āzhwār himself records this event in his Mudal Thiruvandhādhi.

நீயும்திருமகனும் நின்றாயால் காமர் பூங்கோவல்
இடைக்கழியே பற்றியினி

(Mudhal Thiruvandhādhi-86).

The Lord resident in this holy shrine is known as Trivikrama (Ulagamalandha Perumāl). This refers to the incarnation of the Lord when He came in the form of a celibate dwarf "Vāmana" in order to repossess the worlds taken over from Indra, the chief of the celestials by the demon king Mahā Bali. Vamana asked for three spaces as measured by his feet and when it was granted He changed His form to cosmic proportions (Trivikrama) and took the three giant strides to measure the worlds. This legend is well known ("தீர்ணிபதா³விசக்ரமே – trīneepadā vichakramé") "Trivikrama by three steps covered all the worlds" – Yajur Veda – Ashta 2-8-16). The Lord is believed to have taken His abode in this holy *kshétra* (the holy place) acceding to the prayers of the sage Mrigandu in a bygone age.

On that stormy night when these three great devotees met, Lord Trivikrama from the local shrine along with His consort Srī (desiring to mingle with them) took His abode in their midst remaining invisible. All the three however felt a strange pressure in the small space and wondered who the intruder could be. Then the first among the three sages, Srī Poikai *muni* began singing the glory of the Lord as manifested in the cosmos lighting a lamp with the shining Sun as the flame, the Earth as the vessel and the surrounding oceans as the oil and offered it as a garland of one hundred verses in the *andhādhi* style.

வையம் தகளியா வார் கடலே நெய் ஆக
வெய்ய கதிரோன் விளக்கு ஆக செய்ய

சுடர்-ஆழியான் அடிக்கே துட்டினென் சொல்-மாலை-
இடர்-ஆழி நீங்குகவே

(Mudhal Thiruvandhādhi -1)

This helped to dispel the outer darkness. Then the second of the three sages, Srī Bhudat āzhwār lighted a lamp of knowledge with devotion as the base, love as the oil, the sweet mind as the wick and the knowing self as the shining flame offering all of them in the form of a garland of verses to the Lord again in a similar *andhādhi* style.

அன்பே தகளியா ஆர்வமே நெய்யாக
இன்புருகு சிந்தை இடுதிறியா - நன்புருகி
ஞானச்சுடர் விளக்கேற்றினேன் நாரணற்கு
ஞானத்தமிழ் புரிந்த நான்

(Irاندām Thiruvandhādhi -1)

This dispelled the inner darkness as well and the Lord could no longer remain invisible. The third in this group of the pioneer sages, Srī Pei āzhwār described the resulting Divine vision with another garland of one hundred verses beginning with the statement

திருக்கண்டேன் பொன்மேனி கண்டேன் திகழும்
அருக்கன் அணிநிறமுங்கண்டேன் - செருக்கிளரும்
பொன்னாழி கண்டேன் புரிசங்கங் கைகண்டேன்
என்னாழி வண்ணன் பாலின்று

(Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi -1)

"I saw Srī, the divine Mother first with my ocean like Lord. Then I saw His beautiful resplendent Form effulgent like the sun, with the dazzling discus fierce in battle in one hand and the curved conch in the other"

Srī Pei āzhwār ends his Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi indicating the easy accessibility of Srī Lakshmī's grace for us,

சார்வு நமக்கென்றும் சக்கரத்தான் தண்டுழாய்த்
தார் வாழ் வரைமார்பன் தான்முயங்கும்- காரார்ந்த
வானமரு மின்னிமைக்கும் வண் தாமரை நெடுங்கண்
தேனமரும் பூமேல் திரு

(Mūndrām Thiruvandhādhi ---100)

sārvu namakkenRum sakkaratthān,* thaNdhuzāyth
thārvāzh* varaimārbhan thānmuyangum,* - kārārnta
vānamaru minnimaikkum* vaNthāmarai nedungaN,*
thēnamarum pūmél thiru.

"The glorious mother Lakshmī is held close in His heart by the discus wielding Lord Who has the chest wide as the mountain adorned by the cool Tulasi garland. She is like the permanent lightning streak in the dense dark clouds in the skies. She has long beautiful lotus eyes and is seated on the honey laden lotus flower. She is our refuge now and forever".

Srī Nammāzhwār terms "Nārāyanā" as திருமகளார் தனிக்கேள்வன்f (thirumagalār thanikkélvān) *Thiruvāimozhi* (1-6-9).

தரும அரும் பயனாய * திருமகளார் தனிக்கேள்வன் **

பெருமை உடைய பிரானார் * இருமை வினை கடிவாரே
tharuma arum payanAya * thirumagaLAr thanikkELvan **

perumai udaiya pirAnAr * irumai vinai kadivArE (Thiruvāimozhi 1-6-9)

The words திருமகளார் (Srī Mahālakshmī) தனிக்கேள்வன் (the consort of Mahālakshmī and therefore peerless) and பெருமை உடைய பிரானார் (the benefactor who alone has the glories of being the consort of Lakshmī)

தரும அரும் பயனாய (பயன் ஆய) – the ultimate object attained through all ethical conduct. (mōksham)

"The Lord who is the consort of Mahalakshmī who is the ultimate object attained through all ethical conduct, will remove the effects of both righteous and unrighteous actions (karmas of both punya and pāpa)."

This is because Mahalakshmī is Kārunya Rūpini (personification of compassion or Mercy) as supported by often quoted statement from valid texts.

லக்ஷ்மியா ஸஹ ஹ்ருஷீகேஸோ தே³வ்யா காரூண்ய ரூபயா |

ரக்ஷகஸ் ஸர்வ ஸித்³தா⁴ந்தே வேதா³ந்தேஸி ச கீ³யதே ||

lakshmyā saha hreeshīkéśo dévyā kārunya rūpayā |

rakshakas sarva siddhāntē vedānte'pi ca gīyatē ||

(Lakshmī tantram 28-14)

"In all siddhāntās like mantra, and others and in Védānta, the Lord with Srī MahāLakshmī who is the personification of compassion, is declared as the protector".

He points to the fact that her grace could remove the effects of the binding *karma*. வேரி மாறாத பூமேலிருப்பாள் வினைதீர்க்குமே (véry mārātha pūméliṟuppāl vinai Thīrkkumé) (*Thiruvāimozhi* 4-5-11). The famous verse expressing his *Śaranāgati* (absolute self surrender) to the Lord of Thiruvēṅkatam, by Srī Nammāzhwār அகலகில்லேன் இறையுமென்று அலர்மேல் மங்கை உறை மாற்பா (akala killén iraiyumendru alarmél mangai urai mārbbhā) (*Thiruvāimozhi* 6-10-10), is considered by the Srī Vaishnava āchāryās as the most appropriate example to follow for spiritual aspirants since it is made to the Lord of Srī invoking first the grace of Srī who is eternally resident in the chest of the Lord.

Srī Rāmānuja follows this example. In the *Śaranāgati Gadyam* Srī Rāmānuja first humbly approaches the divine Mother Srī and after gaining her grace only, makes his surrender to the Lord.

ப⁴க³வந்நாராயணாபி⁴மதானுரூபஸ்வரூபருபகு³ணவிப⁴வ

ஐஸ்வர்யஸீலாத்³யனவதி⁴காதிஸய அஸங்க்²யேயகல்யாணகு³ணக³ணாம்' பத்³மவனாலயாம்'

ப⁴க³வதீம்' ஸ்ரியம்' தே³வீம்' நித்யானபாயினீம்' நிரவத்³யாம்' தே³வதே³வதி³வ்யமஹிஷீம்'

அகி²லஜக³ன்மாதரமஸ்மன்மாதரமஸரண்யஸரண்யாமனன்யஸரண்:

ஸரணமஹம்' ப்ரபத்³யே

(Srī Rāmānuja - śaranāgathi gadyam – Cūṛnikai -1)

bhagavannārāyaṇābhimatānurūpasvarūparūpaguṇavibhava
aiśvaryaśīlādyanavadhikāṭisaya asaṅkhyēyakalyāṇaguṇagaṇāṁ padmavanālayāṁ
bhagavatīm śriyaṁ dēvīm nityānapāyinīm niravadyāṁ dēvadēvadivya mahiṣīm
akhilajaganmātaramasmanmātaramaśaranyāsaranyāmananyaśaraṇaḥ
śaraṇamaham prapadyé (Śrī Rāmānuja - śaraṇāgathi gadyam – Cūṇikai -1)

"With no other help to resort to, I seek Thee, Śrī Dévi, full of all benevolent qualities, seated in a forest of lotus flowers: (Thou art) the refuge for all the helpless; (Thou art) my Mother, indeed the Mother of the whole world. The crowned Divine Queen of the Lord of the dēvās, the pure and the unsullied, never separated from the Lord; Thyself, Thine form, its qualities, and the most wonderful, limitless innumerable collections of auspicious qualities of Thine such as, greatness, rulership and high virtues, all to His liking and worthy of the natural form and qualities of Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa."

The **purushakāratvam** of Lakshmī is substantiated in the Pāncharātra text as follows: ஸக்ஷ்மீ: பருஷகாரத்வே நிர்தி³ஷ்டா பரமர்ஷிபி⁴: (Lakshmī purushakāratvé nirdhishtā paramarishibhih) ("It has been determined by sages that Lakshmī acts as compassionate mediator"). The benefit of its presence and the drawbacks of its absence are substantiated in Śrīmad Rāmāyanam and other valid texts as quoted by our *pūrvāchāryās* (past masters).

We list here a few instances of these from **Śrīmad Rāmāyanam**:

1. When Lakshmana's initial request to accompany Śrī Rāma to go the forest (which he wanted most since it would enable him to serve Śrī Rāma), his wish gets fulfilled only after he addresses divine mother Sītā as well as Śrī Rāma as follows.

स भ्रातृश्चरणौ गाढम् निपीड्य रघुनन्दनः ।

सीतामुवाचातियशाम् राघवम् च महाव्रतम् ॥ २-३१-२

sa bhrātuścaraṇau gāḍham nipīḍya raghunandanah |

sītāmuvacātiyaśām rāghavam ca mahāvratam || (Śrīmad Rāmāyanam-AyōdhyāKāṇḍam -31-2)

Lakshmana (who came there earlier, with tearful eyes) "tightly holding the feet of his bother and spoke (as follows) to Rama who took a great vow and to Seetha who had great fame".

2. Sugrīva hiding in fear from his older brother Vāli gets to receive first the jewels thrown by mother Sītā while being abducted in the aerial chariot by the demon king Rāvana and subsequent to that he gets the friendship of Śrī Rāma.

3. Kākāsuran (who came in the form of crow and actually caused bodily assault on mother Sītā escaped death by the missile of Śrī Rāma since he surrendered to Śrī Rāma in the presence of mother Sītā.

4. Rāvana who only abducted mother Sītā albeit with force, met with death at the hands of Śrī Rāma.

5. Sūrpanakhā, (sister of Rāvanā) who wanted to destroy Sītā and enjoy only Rāma ended up losing her nose and ears.

This *purushakāratvam* (being the compassionate mediator) is equally applicable to all three consorts of Srīman Nārāyaṇa for all of them have "*kshama*" (forgiveness and patience as their glorifying attribute arising out of motherly compassion to all beings and in particular to all erring souls).

We referred earlier to Srī Nammāzhwār's Thiruviruttam verse 3, *Āchāryā's commentary of this verse is worth referring to (see below)*.

குழற் கோவலர் மடப்பாவையும் * மண்மகளும் திருவும் *
 நிழற் போல்வனர் கண்டு நிற்குங்கொல்? மீளுங்கொல்? ** தண்ணந்துழாய்
 அழற் போல் அடுஞ்சக்கரத்து அண்ணல் விண்ணோர் தொழக் கடவும் *
 தழற் போல் சினத்த * அப்புள்ளின் பின் போன தனி நெஞ்சமே (Thiruviruttam -3)

kuzhar kōvalar madappāvaiyum * manmagalum thiruvum *
 nizhar pōlvanar kandu nirkungkol? mīlungkol? ** thananthuzhāi
 azhar pōl adunjchakkaraththu annal vinnōr thozhak kadavum *
 thazhar pōl sinaththa * appullin pin pōna thani nenjchamé (Thiruviruttam -3)

In this verse, āzhwār in the Nāyāki Bhāvam speaks to her friend describing how her mind went after the Lord's beautiful appearance surrounded by His divine consorts wondering whether it will return. "The Supreme Lord is adorned by beautiful cool Tulasi, carrying the fiery Discus which destroys the demons. When He rides mounted on Srī Garudāzhwan who gets angry at the adversaries, the dévās of the higher worlds are seen to worship the Lord. Srī Nappinai Pirātti born in the family of flute carrying cowherds, Bhūmi Pirātti, and Periya Pirāttiār Srī Mahālakshmī are three divine consorts for my Emperumān who are with Him always like a shadow. My lonely mind seeing all of them, will it stay with them permanently or will it return back to me, I wonder!".

Swāmi Srī Periyavācchān pillai in his vyākhyānam of this interesting verse, refers to the three divine consorts in the following words. "(குழற் கோவலர் மடப்பாவை) - குழலை உடைய கோவலர், குழலை உடையவளுமாய் அவர்களுக்கு பவ்யையுமா யிருந்துள்ள நப்பின்னைப் பிராட்டி, (மண்மகள்) - ஸ்ரீ பூமிப் பிராட்டி, (திரு) - பெரியபிராட்டியார். ஆஸ்ரிதர் குற்றத்தைப் பொறுப்பிக்கும் பிராட்டி..

"குற்றம் காண்பானேன் பொறுப்பானேன்" - என்றிருக்கும் ஸ்ரீ பூமிப் பிராட்டி, நப்பின்னைப் பிராட்டி, கூடிமை தான் ஒருவடிவாயிருக்கும்.

பெரியபிராட்டியார் - இவனுக்கு ஸம்பத்தாயிருக்கும், அது விளையும் தரை, அதனை அனுபவிக்கும் போக்தாவாயிருக்கும் நப்பின்னை.

(நிழற் போல்வனர்) - இவர்கள் மூவரும் அவனுக்கு நிழற் போலேயிருப்பார்கள். ஒருவக்கொருவர் நிழற் போலேயிருப்பார்கள் என்றுமாம். ஆஸ்ரயித்தார்க்கு நிழலாயிருப்பார்கள்."

"(kuzhar kōvalar madappāvai) – Flute carrying cowherds, righteous and gracious Nappinai with beautiful flowing hairs and (manmagal) – Srī Bhūmi pirātti. (thiru) – Periyā Pirāttiār, who

forgives the faults of the devotees. Srī Bhūmi Dévi who views, "Why look for flaws in the first place". Nappinai who is the sole embodiment of forgiveness.

Periya Pirāttiār is like wealth for the Supreme Lord. . Bhūmi pirātti is the ground where that wealth grows. Nappinai pirātti is like the enjoyer of that wealth, the ground where it grows as well as the owner of all that wealth, the Lord. All three of them are like the cooling shade for Him. They are like shade for each other. They also provide their shade of shelter to the devotees."

Nīlā Dévi having born and brought up in the cowherd family (கறவைகள் பின்சென்று கானம் சேர்ந்துண்டு அறிவொன்றுமிலா ஆய்க்குலம் *karaivaigal pinchendru kānam sérndhundu arivondrumillā āikulam*) and therefore with the inherent nature of innocence considering even faults as right and good. Thus she is the incarnate of forgiveness (*kshamā swarūpam*).

It is of interest here to refer also to the words of **Srī Pokai Pirān**, the first of the Mudhal āzhwārs, in his Mudhal Thiruvandhādhi.

குன்றனைய குற்றஞ் செயினும் குணங்கொள்ளும்
இன்று முதலாக என்னெஞ்சே, - என்றும்
புறனுரையே யாயினும் பொன்னாழிக் கையான்
திறனுரையே சிந்தித் திரு. (Srī Poikai āzhwār's Mudhal Thiruvadhādhī - 41)

kundranaiya kutram seyinum * gunam kollum *
inru mudhalāga en nenjché! ** - endrum
puran uraiyé āyinum * ponnāzhik kaiyān *
thiran uraiyé sindhiththiru (Srī Poikai āzhwār's Mudhal Thiruvadhādhī - 41)

"O' my heart, from this moment on, even if only for outward expression, and forever, dwell your thoughts on the greatness of the Lord of the golden Sudarsana in His Hand. The Lord then will overlook even your mountain of follies, and graciously acknowledge your dedication."

திருமகளும் மண்மகளும் ஆய்மகளும் சேர்ந்தால்
திருமகட்கே தீர்ந்தவாறென்கொல், - திருமகள்மேல்
பாலோதம் சிந்தப் படநாகணைக்கிடந்த,
மாலோத வண்ணர் மனம் (Srī Poikai āzhwār's Mudhal Thiruvadhādhī - 42)

thirumagalum manmagalum * āymagalum sérndhāl *
thirumagatké thīrndhavāru en kol? ** - thirumagal mé!l
pālōdham sindhap * padanāganaik kidandha *
mālōdha vannar manam (Srī Poikai āzhwār's Mudhal Thiruvadhādhī - 42)

"The love of the Lord - with form like the cool blue ocean resting under the canopy of Anantha with his mirror-like hood, amidst the spray of milk particles - *for Divine Mother Srī is special,*

such that it predominates in the Lord's relationship with Srī Dévi, Bhū Dévi, and Nīla Dévi. What marvel!"

In the verse #41, āzhwār says that the Lord will always overlook the faults of His devotees. In the very next verse, āzhwar indicates the reason for this. It is because He is always surrounded by His three consorts (who are divine mothers of all the sentient) who are always ready to intercede on behalf of all the jīvās. Āzhwār also indicates the special status of Srī Dévi.

9. The special status of Srī Dévi MahāLakshmī (Periya Pirāttiār):

Reference was made earlier to the words of Srī Rāmapirān and the divine mother Sītā expressing their mutual inseparable status. We will refer them here once more. Mother Sītā's words addressed to Rāvana:

अनन्या राघवेणाहं भास्करेण प्रभा यथा

அந்நயா ராகவேணாஹம் பாஸ்கரேண ப்ரபா யதா.

ananyā rāghavenāhaṁ bhāskareṇa prabhā yathā (Srīmad Rāmāyanam Sundara kāndam 21-15)

"I am not separate from Rāghava the same as Sun's effulgence is not from the Sun"

Similar words used by Srī Rāma when deity Agni returns Dévi Sītā to Srī Rāma.

अनन्या हि मया सीता भास्करेण प्रभा यथा ||

ananyā hi mayā sītā bhāskareṇa prabhā yathā || (Srīmad Rāmāyanam Yuddha kāndam 118-19)

"Sītha is not different from me, even as Sun's effulgence is not different from the Sun."

Simply stated, Srī Dévi represents the effulgence of the Supreme Lord.

The special status of Srī Dévi MahāLakshmī (Periya Pirāttiār) indicated in various āzhwārs' divine works is also that *she is inseparably associated with the Supreme Lord*. For liberation (*mōksham*) from the shackles of the material world and its repetitive cycles of births and deaths, clear understanding had to be that the means (*upāyam ot prāpakam*) and the goal (*upéyam or prāpyam*) are both the same, namely the Lord (*Srīman Nārāyana*) is the means and the eternal service to the Divine (*Bhagavat Kaimkaryam*) is the end. This is irrespective of whether one adapts the difficult root of Bhakti Yōgam or the easier method of "saranāgathi or parapatti". The suffix "*matub*" added to *Srī* becomes "*Srīman*". This suffix indicates *eternal association*. We have seen numerous evidence of this from the Védic hymns as well as āzhwārs' divine *sūkthiēs* in the previous sections about this inseparable relationship. It was referred to earlier in connection with Srī Varāha charama ślōkam. Earlier in this section, we discussed how intercession of Srī helps in this process particularly for the erring souls. We also cited how Lakshmana got his desire to accompany Srī Rāma to the forest became fulfilled only after invoking the grace of mother Sītā in Srīmad Rāmāyanam. In the same section of the holy text, Lakshmana expresses his intention to serve both of them together in the forest clearly indicating that *service has also to be done to both the Lord and His inseparable Srī Dévi*.

भवांस् तु सह वैदेह्या गिरि सानुषु रंस्स्यते |

अहम् सर्वम् करिष्यामि जाग्रतः स्वपतः च ते || २-३१-२५

bhavāṁs tu saha vaidehyā giri sānuṣu raṁsyaté |

aham sarvam karishyāmi jāgrataḥ svapataḥ ca te ||

(Srīmad Rāmāyanam Ayōdhyā Kāndam –31-25)

"You along with Sītha enjoy yourself on mountain-ridges. I shall do everything while you are waking or sleeping".

In Srī Vaishnava tradition, the iconic forms of Nārāyana enshrined in Temples and at our own homes represent the "archa forms" of the Lord. The sacred shrines which had been sung by the āzhwārs are referred to as "*divya désams*" (divine places). There are about 108 such divya désams. Among these three are unique. In these three *divya désam* temples primary honors are given to the divine mother and the Lord is only given a secondary status in the Temple services. **Srī Dévi thāyār** rules in the divya désam of **Thiruvellarai** (near Trichy, TamilNādu). **Bhū Dévi thāyār** is given importance in **Srī Villiputūr** (the birth place of Srī Āndāl). Nīlā dévi has the primary honors in **Thirunaraīyūr**. This divya désam which is located near Kumbakonam (Thirukkudanthai) is actually known more commonly as **Nāchīyār kovil**. The word Nāchīyār means "தலைவி, அரசி" meaning "head or queen" The term is used often for divine mothers in Srī Vaishnava temples.

There are about **53 thiru nāmās (divine names)** referring to Srī Mahālakshmī in Srī Sūktham. The list of these nāmās will be appended also to this text. They are bound to bring all auspiciousness and grace when chanted alone or along with flower petals offerings (*archanā*) to the Divine Mother during meditation and prayers.

10. Srī Tatvam – Theological and Ontological Implications:

The Theological and Ontological Implications of the Concept of Srī have been addressed by Srī S.M.S. Chari in his publications. Swāmi Srī Sadagopan has summarized these in his publication on "Nīlā Sūktham" housed in Sadagopan.org. These are not repeated here. The previous sections 8 and 9 deal with these matters in detail. The inter-relationships of Srī Dévi with both Bhū Dévi and Nīlā Dévi are beautifully and clearly expressed in the commentary of the great āchārya Srī Periyavācchān Pillai of Srī Nammāzhwār's Thiruviruttam verse -3. Adiyén will in addition append an article written by my older brother Srīmān N.Rāajagopalan entitled "**Ontological Status and Role of Srī: – Some theological Perspectives**" at the end of this manuscript.

11. Conclusion:

Adiyén wish to conclude this article with six verses from Srī Thirumazhisai pirān's works, three from Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi (verses 14, 88 and 92) and three from Thirucchanda Viruttam (103,118, and120). Although this azhwār must have composed many *prabhandhams* during his long life time (4000 years according to traditional accounts), he himself picked out only these two works for posterity. ***These following verses are of interest since they reveal āzhwār's own practices. Viewed against the background of the topic and the substance discussed so far, benefits we derive probably will correlate to the extent our minds resonate with āzhwār's own practices.*** The verses and their meanings are given below here.

1. நாராயணன் என்னை ஆளி * நரகத்துச்

சேராமல் * காக்கும் திருமால் ** தன் - பேரான
 பேசப் பெறாத * பிணச் சமயர் பேசக் கேட்டு *
 ஆசைப்பட்டாழ்வார் பலர்
 nārāyanan ennai āli * naragaththuch
 sérāmal * kākkum thirumāl ** than - pérāna
 pésap perādha * pinach samayar pésak kettu *
 āsaippattāzhvār palar

(Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi -14)

"Narayana is my Lord who saves the devotees from the abyss of cycle of births and deaths. Many listening to those with dry faiths not blessed to utter the names of the loving Lord of Lakshmī wishing to live like them fall only to bad straits."

In the immediately preceding verse, இஷ்டப் ப்ராப்தி, "obtaining the desired" was shown. In this verse, āzhwar indicates அநிஷ்ட நிவ்ருத்தி (removing the undesired). நரகத்துச் சேராமல் காக்கும் "He protects the devotees from 'samsāra' the endless cycle of births and deaths (which is considered as நரகம் the true hell- in its outer form it is somewhat deceiving and appear to provide happiness) for He is "திருமால்", the loving Lord of Srī Lakshmī. Āzhwār clearly indicates the role of Srī MahāLakshmī.

2. உயிர்_கொண்டு உடல் ஒழிய* ஓடும் போதோடி*
 அயர்வென்ற தீர்ப்பான்* பேர் பாடி*
 செயல்தீர்ச் சிந்தித்து* வாழ்வாரே வாழ்வார்*
 சிறுசமயப் பந்தனையார் வாழ்வேல் பழுது
 uyir_kondu udal ozhiya* ōdum pōthōdi*
 ayarvenra thīrppān* pér pādi*
 seyalthīrach chindhiththu* vāzhvārē vāzhvār*
 sirusamayap pandhanaiyār vāzhvél pazhudhu.

(Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi -88)

"Those who choose to live singing the glorious names of the Lord who hurries to remove all sufferings of the soul when it leaves the body along with the vital air, taking Him as the way and feeling that there is nothing to be gained by any action truly live. The life of those who follow paths with ego centred actions resulting in bondage is wasted."

In this verse, āzhwār indicates how to live in this world. Those who take the Lord as their only way and guide deciding that there is nothing to be done either to get rid of misery or to bring happiness, truly live.

கடைத்தலை இருந்து வாழும் சோம்பர் (திருமாலை-38 - Srī Thondaradippodi āzhwār's Thirumālai – 38).

3. என்றும் மறந்தறியேன் * என் நெஞ்சத்தே வைத்து *
 நின்றும் இருந்தும் நெடுமாலை ** -
 என்றும் திருவிருந்த மார்பன் * சிரீதரனுக்கு ஆளாய் *
 கருவிருந்த நாள் முதலாக் காப்பு
 enrum marandhariyén * en nenjchatthé vaiththu *

(Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi -92)

ninrum irundhum nedumālai ** -

enrum thiruvirundha mārban * sirīdharanukku ālāi *

karuvirundha nāl mudhalāk kāppu

(Nānmukan Thiruvandhādhi -92)

"I will never ever forget that Lord to whom I am a servant keeping Him always in my heart standing, sitting and in all other states, Lord Srīdhara in whose heart forever resides mother Lakshmī, having been under His protective fold from the days of my sojourn in the womb".

Āzhwār not only obtained the grace of not forgetting Him ever but also was blessed to be in His eternal service. என்றும் திருவிருந்த மார்பன் * சிரீதரனுக்கு ஆளாய். என்றும் திருவிருந்த மார்பன் * சிரீதரன் – "Lord Srīdhara in whose heart forever resides mother Lakshmī," "akalakillén iraiyum endru * alarmél mangai urai mārbbā" அகலகில்லேன் இறையும் என்று * அலர்மேல் மங்கை உறை மார்பா -(Thiruvāimozhi 6-10-10). This verse indicates azhwār's state of devotion.

4. திருக்கலந்து சேரு மார்ப!* தேவ தேவ தேவனே,*

இருக்கலந்த வேத நீதி* ஆகி நின்ற நின்மலா,*

கருக்கலந்த காள மேக* மேனியாய நின் பெயர்,*

உருக்கலந்து ஒழிவிலாது* உரைக்குமாறு உரைசெயே.

thirukkalandhu séru mārba!* déva déva dévané,*

irukkalandha véda nīdhi* āki nindra ninmalā,*

karukkalandha kāla mégha* méniyāya nin peyar,*

urukkalandhu ozhivilādhū* uraikkumāru uraiseyē.

(Thirucchandaviruttam- 103)

"O'Lord, with the holy chest where Srī Dévi (Periya pirāttiyār) eternally resides! O' Supreme ruler of the nityasūris, sought after by all the dévās! O' Immaculate Being! The revelation of the Védās with their characteristic hymns is Thy nature. O' Lord Kanna, the cowherd with the form bright as the gold and the hue of the dark clouds! Bless me so I can recite continually Thy holy names portraying Thine beauty."

(This pāsuram often reminds adiyén of Srī Déva Perumāl - தேவ தேவ தேவனே - enshrined in the holy *kshétram* of Srī Kānchipuram and forms part of daily *anusandhānam*).

5. சொல்லினும் தொழிற்கணும்* தொடக்கறாத அன்பினும்,*

அல்லும் நன்பகலினோடும்* ஆன மாலை காலையும்,*

வல்லி நாண் மலர் கிழத்தி* நாத! பாத போதினை,*

புல்லியுள்ளம் விள்விலாது* பூண்டு மீண்டதில்லையே. (118)

sollinum thozhirkānum* thodakkarātha anbinum,*

allum nanopakalinōdum* āna mālai kāiyum,*

valli nān malar kizhaththi* nātha!pādha pōdhinai,*

pulliyullam vilvilāthu* pūndu mīndadhllaiyē.

(Thirucchandaviruttam- 118)

"O'Lord of Srī Periyapirātti (divine mother Srī Lakshmī)!, who resides in the wide soft freshly blossomed lotus! In words, in all physical activities of the body and in unending love, during the good night along with the evening twilight hours as well as during the good day along with the

morning twilight hours, my mind which was inseparably attached to and immersed in Thy lotus feet never retracted (from the same)".

6 இயக்கறாத பல்பிறப்பில்* என்னை மாற்றி இன்று வந்து,*
உயக்கொள் மேக வண்ணன் நண்ணி* என்னிலாய தன்னுளே,*
மயக்கினான் தன் மன்னு சோதி* ஆதலால்* என் ஆவிதான்,-
இயக்கெலாமறுத்து* அறாத இன்ப வீடு பெற்றதே.
iyakkarāḍha palpirappil* ennai mātri indru vandhu,*
uyakkol mégha vannan nanni* ennilāya thannulé,*
mayakkinān than mannu sōthi* āthalāl* en āvithān,-
iyakkelāmaruththu* arātha inba vīdu petrathé. (Thirucchandaviruttam- 120)

"In order to liberate this ignorant "me" from the continuous chain of many many births and to uplift me today, reaching me unconditionally, the Lord with the hue of the dark clouds, inseparably mixed His eternal replendent divine form in my heart (fixed on His self). Therefore, my *ātma* cutting asunder all the continuous cause and effect chain of ignorance and actions, attained the eternal bliss of Mōksham".

ஸ்ரீ திருமழிசைபிரான் திருவடிகளே சரணம்
Srī Thirumazhisai Pirān Thiruvadigalé saranam

ஓ மஹாதே³வ்யை ச வித்³மஹே விஷ்ணுபத்னீ ச தீ⁴மஹி .
தன்னோ லக்ஷ்மீ: ப்ரசோத³யாத் ..
ōm mahādēvyai ca vidmahéviṣṇupatnī ca dhīmahi .
tannō lakṣmīḥ prachodayāt

"May we know and meditate upon that great Srī Lakshmī Dévi, consort of Vishnu. May that Srī Lakshmī direct our mind and lead us to Her".

ஓ த⁴னுர்த⁴ராயை வித்³மஹே ஸர்வஸித்³த⁴யை ச தீ⁴மஹி .
தன்னோ த⁴ரா ப்ரசோத³யாத் ..
ōm dhanurdhārāyai vīdmahé sarvasiddhyai ca dhīmahi .
tannō dharā prachodayāt

"We meditate upon the One who blesses us with all success. May that Bhūmi Dévi) lead us in that meditation! "

ஓ மஹாதே³வ்யை ச வித்³மஹே விஷ்ணுபத்னீ ச தீ⁴மஹி .
தன்னோ நீளா ப்ரசோத³யாத் ..
ōm mahādēvyai ca vidmahéviṣṇupatnī ca dhīmahi .
tannō nīlā prachodayāt

"We meditate on this Mahā dévi Nīlā Pirātti. We devote ourselves to that Vishnu Patnī. May that nīlā dévi invigorate us."

***Srī Bhū Nīlā Samétha Srī Srīnivāsa Parabrahmané Namaha
Āzhwārgal āchāryārgal Thiruvadigalé śaranam***

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Srī:
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 ஸ்ரீஸூக்தநாமாவளி
 Srī Sūktha Nāmāvali

1. ஓம் ஹிரண்யவர்ணாயை நம:	<i>Om hiranyavarnāyai namaha</i>
2. ஓம் ஹரிண்யை நம:	<i>Om harinyai namaha</i>
3. ஓம் ஸுவர்ணஸ்ரஜாயை நம:	<i>Om suvarnasrajāyai namaha</i>
4. ஓம் ரஜதஸ்ரஜாயை நம:	<i>Om rajatasrajāyai namaha</i>
5. ஓம் சந்த் ³ ராயை நம:	<i>Om chandrāyai namaha</i>
6. ஓம் ஹிரண்மய்யை நம:	<i>Om hiranmayyai namaha</i>
7. ஓம் லக்ஷ்மய்யை நம:	<i>Om lakshmyai namaha</i>
8. ஓம் அநபகா ³ மின்யை நம:	<i>Om anapagāminyai namaha</i>
9. ஓம் அஸ்வபூர்வா யை நம:	<i>Om aśwapūrvāyai namaha</i>
10. ஓம் ரத ² மத் ³ யாயை நம:	<i>Om rathamadyāyai namaha</i>
11. ஓம்ஹஸ்திநாத ³ ப்ரபோ ³ தி ⁴ ந்யைநம:	<i>Om hastinādaprabhōdinyainamaha</i>
12. ஓம் ஸ்ரியை நம:	<i>Om srīyai namaha</i>
13. ஓம் மாயை நம:	<i>Om mayai namaha</i>
14. ஓம் தே ³ வ்யை நம:	<i>Om dévyai namaha</i>
15. ஓம் காயை நம:	<i>Om kāyai namaha</i>
16. ஓம் ஸோஸ்மிதாயை நம:	<i>Om sōsmithāyai namaha</i>
17. ஓம் ஹிரண்யப்ராகாராயை நம:	<i>Om hiranyaprākārāyai namaha</i>
18. ஓம் ஆர்த் ³ ராயை நம:	<i>Om ārdhrāyai namaha</i>
19. ஓம் ஜ்வலந்த்யை நம:	<i>Om jwalantyai namaha</i>
20. ஓம் த்ருப்தாயை நம:	<i>Om truptāyai namaha</i>
21. ஓம் தர்பயந்த்யை நம:	<i>Om tarpayantyai namaha</i>
22. ஓம் பத் ³ மேஸ்தி ² தாயை நம:	<i>Om padmésthītāyai namaha</i>
23. ஓம் பத் ³ மவர்ணாயை நம:	<i>Om padmavarnāyai namaha</i>
24. ஓம் சந்த் ³ ராயை நம:	<i>Om chandrāyai namaha</i>
25. ஓம் ப்ரபா ⁴ ஸாயை நம:	<i>Om prabhāsāyai namaha</i>
26. ஓம் யஸஸாயை நம:	<i>Om yaśasāyai namaha</i>
27. ஓம் ஜ்வலந்த்யை நம:	<i>Om jwalantyai namaha</i>
28. ஓம் தே ³ வஜுஷ்டாயை நம:	<i>Om dévajushtāyai namaha</i>

Srī:
 Srīmaté Rāmānujāya Namaha
 ஸ்ரீஸூக்தநாமாவளி
 Srī Sūktha Nāmāvali

29.	ஓம் உதா ³ ராயை நம:	<i>Ōm udhārāyai namaha</i>
30.	ஓம் தாயை நம:	<i>Ōm tāyai namaha</i>
31.	ஓம் பத் ³ மநேம்யை நம:	<i>Ōm padmanémyai namaha</i>
32.	ஓம் ஆதி ³ த்யவர்ணாயை நம:	<i>Ōm ādityavarnāyai namaha</i>
33.	ஓம் கீர்த்தயை நம:	<i>Ōm kīrthyai namaha</i>
34.	ஓம் ருத் ⁴ யை நம:	<i>Ōm rudhyai namaha</i>
35.	ஓம் க ³ ந்த ⁴ த் ³ வாராயை நம:	<i>Ōm gandhadhwārāyai namaha</i>
36.	ஓம் து ³ ராத ⁴ ர்ஷாயை நம:	<i>Ōm dhurādharshāyai namaha</i>
37.	ஓம் நித்யபுஷ்டாயை நம:	<i>Ōm nityapushtāyai namaha</i>
38.	ஓம் கரீஷின்யை நம:	<i>Ōm karīshinyai namaha</i>
39.	ஓம் ஈஸ்வர்யை நம:	<i>Ōm īshwaryai namaha</i>
40.	ஓம் மநஸ:காமாயை நம:	<i>Ōm manasahkāmāyai namaha</i>
41.	ஓம் வாச ஆகூத்யை நம:	<i>Ōm vācha ākutyai namaha</i>
42.	ஓம் ஸத்யாயை நம:	<i>Ōm satyāyai namaha</i>
43.	ஓம் பஸூநாம் ரூபாயை நம:	<i>Ōm paśūnām rūpāyai namaha</i>
44.	ஓம் அந்நஸ்ய யஸஸே நம:	<i>Ōm annasya yaśasé namaha</i>
45.	ஓம் மாத்ரே நம:	<i>Ōm mātré namaha</i>
46.	ஓம் பத் ³ மமாலிந்யை நம:	<i>Ōm padmamālinyai namaha</i>
47.	ஓம் புஷ்கரிண்யை நம:	<i>Ōm pushkarinyai namaha</i>
48.	ஓம் யஷ்டயே நம:	<i>Ōm yashtayé namaha</i>
49.	ஓம் பிங்களாயை நம:	<i>Ōm pingalāyai namaha</i>
50.	ஓம் துஷ்டயே நம:	<i>Ōm thushtayé namaha</i>
51.	ஓம் ஸுவர்ணாயை நம:	<i>Ōm suvarnāyai namaha</i>
52.	ஓம் ஹேமமாலிந்யை நம:	<i>Ōm hémamālinyai namaha</i>
53.	ஓம் ஸூர்யாய நம:	<i>Ōm sūryāyai namaha</i>

Ontological Status and Role of Srī: – Some Theological Perspectives:

(By Srī N.Rajagopalan)

Background:

By way of summing up, it is germane as a matter of theological interest, to examine the above aspect in the background of the differences in Sampradāya belief-practices between the two Srī Vaishnava sects in South India, in the Post-Pillai Lokācharya and Swāmi Dēsikan period, more specifically after Sri Manavālamāmunikal's era. Sri Dēsikan's life time was between 1269 and 1370 C.E. Srī Manavālamāmunikal was born near about Sri Dēsikan's departure from this world. Dēsika "Sampradāya" is popularly known as the "*Vadakalai*" or "*Northern School*" and that of Lōkāchāryar "*Thenkalai*" or "*Southern School*". The terms "*Vadakalai*" and "*Then Kalai*" presumably came into vogue, since the former sect gave more importance to the Sanskrit lore like the "*Prasthānatraya*" works, "*Itihāsa Purānās*", "*Dharmaśāstrās*" etc which are in Sanskrit, while the latter attached greater importance to Āzhwār's "*Nālāyira Divyaprabhandham*" in Tamil. Visishtādvaita Siddhānta and Sampradāya rest on the foundations of both Sanskrit Vēdānta and Tamizh Prabhandhams. The term "*ubhaya Vēdānta*" is often used to indicate the two being together. The difference between the schools has been mainly in the emphasis laid. Swāmi Dēsikan had, never made much of these differences, choosing to term them as "**yōjana bhēda**" (interpretational difference) and not "**mata - bhēda**" (philosophic difference). Pillai Lokāchārya who wrote in the "*manipravāla style*" (Tamil mixed with Sanskrit) in "*sūtra fashion*" (short aphorisms), authored eighteen "*rahasya*" (esoteric) works which, on their own, provide the base for the post-Rāmānuja Visistādvaita philosophy in general, and of specific theological importance to the Southern School. Swāmi Dēsikan believed to have been an incarnation of Lord Srinivāsa's sacred bell "*ghantā*" at Tirumalai shrine, adhered to the ideological foundations laid by Srī Nāthamunikal, Srī Ālavandār, Emperumānār, Pillān, and Nadāthūr Ammāl who were the preceding āchāryās. He was a multi-faceted genius, and arguably the greatest among master intellects of any time in the post-Rāmānuja era, authoring a dazzling array of works in Sanskrit, Tamil, and "*manipravāla*", ranging from esoteric theological doctrines – "*Rahasya traya sāram*" and miscellaneous "*rahasya granthās (texts)*", devotional lyrics in Sanskrit some 32 of them of moving spiritual and emotional appeal, devotional hymns in Tamil some 24 of them known as "Dēsika Prabhandham", commentaries or summaries of Rāmānujā's "Sri Bhāshyam and "Gitā Bhāshya", Srī Nammāzhwār's Thiruvāimozhi, "Kāvya" works, long poems, critiques, drama etc, besides versatile mastery over other practical arts. There is nothing that he touched which he has not adorned. Blessed by Garuda Bhagavān, and Lord Hayagrīva, and propagating the *Visishtādvaita Siddhānta*, in a broader "*Ubhaya-Vedānta*" frame work, through his writings, debates, and discourses, he earned the encomium of Lord Srī Ranganātha, with the honorific title of "Vedāntāchārya" and that of Sri Ranganāyaki Thāyar,

who acclaimed his devotion and versatile genius with the singular title of "*Sarvatantra Svatantrar*", not enjoyed by any other āchārya in the Sampradāya.

Reverting to both these distinguished Āchāryas, Sri Pillai Lokāchāryar and Swāmi Désikan were contemporaries, the former being older than Désikan by many years. They shared a mutually cordial relationship, and were both looked upon as principal āchāryas and spiritual heads of the *Sampradāya* in Srīrangam, the hallowed ground of Srīvaishnava religious and cultural heritage and community. The infidel Muslim invasion on Srīrangam temple around 1320 C.E. brought, in its wake, untold disaster to the temple and the peaceful community in the town, with thousands of Srī Vaishnavās mercilessly massacred defending the portals of the shrine. The Srī Vaishnava community turned to these two āchāryas, Srī Pillai Lokāchārya and Srī Désikan, for guidance on how to protect the shrine and temple premises. They both conferred and devised the plan under which the main sanctums were walled up with bricks, and Lokāchāryar saved the sacred image of Namperumāl, secretly exiting Srīrangam with a small entourage towards the South, and settling in a cave hideout at a place called *Jyotishkudi* near Madurai, where he shed his mortal coil with exertions heightened by age not long after. Swāmi Désikan proceeded west towards Karnataka with the "*vyākhyāna grantha*" (commentary) "*Srutaparakāsika*" on *Srī Bhāshyam*, and taking with him the two small children of Srī Srutaparakāsikāchārya. He settled in a small village called *Satyakālam* in Karnataka, and lived there for many long years, returning to Srīrangam only after forty and odd years, after enabling the return of Namperumāl and reinstallation of His sacred icon in the shrine.

Theologic Differences between the Two Schools:

Between these **two Sampradāyic theologies**, the differences are enumerated as eighteen in number. These differences became more pronounced after brilliant commentaries on the "*rahasya*" works of Srī Pillai Lokāchārya, composed by Swāmi Manavālamāmunikal,- believed to have been an "*aparāvathāra*" (re-incarnation) of Srī Rāmānuja, followed by sub-commentaries and propagations by his disciples, among them eight prominent ones collectively known as "*Ashtadik-gajangal*", the Schools becoming distinct "*Sampradāyas*" as mentioned above, and the divergences becoming exaggerated and controversial over time. Most of these differences were, in fact, ***semantic rather than substantive***, and are not of any interest here, except the ones relating to the ontological status of ***Srī:***, and the interpretational divergences that have cropped up between both Schools around this theme, more specifically as they relate to the "*svarūpa*" (essential nature), "*rūpa*," (form) "*guna*" (attributes) , and "*vibhava*" (emanations or incarnations), and "*vibhūti*" (splendor) of ***Srī:***. Swami Désikan faithfully propounded the "*svarūpa*", "*rūpa*", "*guna*" "*vibhava*" of ***Srī:*** in light of scriptural, and purānic texts and Āzhwārs' "*Divyaprabhandha pāsūrams*" as laid out in "*Pūrvāchāryās*" like Srī Nāthamuni, Srī Ālavandār and Srī Rāmānuja's treatises and hymns, commentaries on Thiruvāimozhi of Pillān, Srī Nanjiyar etc.

These have been presented at length in the earlier parts of the article. Succinctly stated, the "*svarūpa*" of *Srī:* is that of "*vibhu*" co-pervasive with her consort Vishnu, enjoying an equal status and partaking in all the functions of the Lord, excelling Him even in certain respects. In other words, She possesses all the characteristics of the Lord as appropriate to His status ("*anurūpa*") and also as liked by Him ("*svābhimata*") as in the opening statement of *Srī Rāmānuja "Śaranāgathi Gadyam"*. Swāmi Ālavandār set the Sampradāyic standard in this regard by his famous "*Chatuslōki*" hymn of four verses on *Srī:* that expounds Her principal Godhead status in eternal togetherness with the Lord, encapsulating the essence of all the above aspects.

The last line of this hymn sums up this:

"ரூபாணி ஸர்வாணி தாநி ஆஹு: ஸ்வைரநுரூப ரூப விப⁴வைர் கா³டோ⁴ப
கூ³டா⁴நி தே -

"*rūpāṇi sarvāṇi tāni āhuh: svairanūpa rūpa vibhavai gādopa gūdāni té*" - meaning that

"all the blissful, glorious, serene, essential nature of Hari's exalted "*Brahmaśabda*" in all His diverse forms is in perfect harmonious blend with thy form in a tight embrace, as it were, and for that reason that much dearer to Him". (Chatuslōki – 4)

As the Samhita declaration expresses it, "*Nārāyana Para Brahman, śakthir Nārāyaṇi ca Sā vyāpagavathi samsleshāt éka tatvamivottitau*" "The divine Lord and divine Mother are an inseparable Reality in eternal togetherness".

The Supreme Lord expresses this, in the words of "*Visvakséna Samhita*" thus: "*Mayā vyāptā tatā Sāpitayā vyāptōham īśvarah:*" "As She (Pirātti) is pervaded by Me, likewise I too am pervaded by her "*svarūpa*".

This identity is articulated by our āchāryas in their own delectable ways. Thus again, in the first verse of his "*Srīstavam*", *Srī Kūrattāzhwān* says that Bhagavān Hari performs all the functions relating to creation, dissolution and protection, prompted by the facial gestures and expressions of His consort *Srī:* as a voluntary subordinate ("*yasyāvikshya mukham tadingitha parādhīnapara*"). It is this synchronous harmony of their divine sport that He revels in, He being the "*parama rasika*", "*raso vai sah:*"

Srī Parāsara Bhattar observes in his *Srī Gunaratnakōsam*, that the Védāntic proof of the divine Lord as the "*para tatva*" "*the Ultimate Reality*", and His supremacy and unbridled freewill, is revealed by the presence of the divine Mother on His chest. In other words, *Srī:* is the Lord's "*svarūpa nirūpaka dharma*," ("the eternal qualities which are the identifying marks of the Supreme Lord") and wherever the Védic texts speak of the divine Lord, the divine Mother is implicit in them, ("*bhāskaréna prabhā yatha*" as described in *Srīmad Rāmāyanam*) and, therefore, they do not separately speak about Her.

தத் அந்தர்பா⁴வாத்வம் நப்ருத²க்³ அபி⁴த³த்தே ஸ்ருதிரபி "tat antarbhāvāt tvām na prutagabidatte Srutirapi" (Sṛī Gunaratna Kōsham- 28)

The same thought is phrased by Swāmi Désikan, by virtue of the "*sanniyōga sishta vyākaranā nyāya*" in the words, "*Sahavā pravrutti Sahavānivrutti*", that is, "They abide together, They go together". "சேர்ந்தே இருக்கும் அல்லது சேர்ந்தே போகும் ஒன்றைச்சொல்லும்பொது மற்றொன்றைக்கூறியதாகும்" ("*Sérndé irukkum, alladhu Sérndhé pōgum, Onraicchollum pōdhu matrondraikkūriadākum*"). In his Tamizh Désika Prabhandam, Désikan phrases this thus: "*Nin Tiruthanakku Nee Tiruvāki*", - and in his beautiful Sanskrit hymn "Sṛī Stuti" verse 9- "த³ம்பதீ தை³வதம் ந: "*dampatī daivatam nah*". ("The Couple are our Supreme Divinity").

As regards, "*rūpa*", "*guna*", "*vibhava*", and "*Aiśvarya*", the glory of the divine Mother is always spoken of as enhancing the excellences of the divine Lord. Sṛī Kurattāzhwān captures the unparalleled, unexcelled lustre, beauty, magnificence, strength, perfection, grace, and generosity of the divine Mother, in three beautiful verses in his "*Sṛī Vaikuntastavam*" (78-80).

In verse 78, he says that "it is by the name of *Lakshmī* that the name "Sṛī" itself and any lovely, lustrous substance in the world is usually described, and the affluence of any being, however high, would only be equivalent to an iota of Her magnificence.

In verse 79, he says of the divine Lord, "To gain whom (*Sṛī* :) Thou made great exertions to churn the milk ocean, on whose disappearance thou launched great search efforts, even to the extent of threatening total annihilation of the worlds, and who, as thy consort, is equal to Thee, and provides ever-abiding love and bliss".

In verse 80, he beautifully rounds up thus, "As a perfect complement to you in terms of the perfection of her enchanting beauty, all her auspicious qualities shining in a cascade of arrays, glory of her incarnations in the world (நித்யம் தவைவ ஸத்³ருஸீம் ஸ்ரியம் ஈஸ்வரீம் தாம் - nithyam tavaiva sadhruseem sriyam īswarīm thām) in tune with Thy incarnations and charity, sweetness of disposition and adroit conduct, She is the most appropriately, singularly, and evenly matched Consort to Thee."

Similar statements in *Vishnu Purānam* _

"*Rāgavathvé bhavat Sītā, Rukmini Krishnajanmani l*
Anyēshu avatāēsu Vishnoranapāyinī -ll

தே³வத்வே தே³வதே³ஹேயம் மநுஷ்யத்வே ச மாநுஷீ l
விஷ்ணோர் தே³ஹாநுருபாம் வை கரோத்யேஷாத்மநஸ்தநும் ll
Devatvé Devadēhā Iyam manushyatvé Mānushim l
Vishnorupām Vai karotyēshā ātmānastanum" – ll (Vishnu Purānam 1-9-145)

Nothing more need be said in this respect, after this exhaustive narrative of Sṛī Kurattāzhwān.

Srī Parasāra Bhattar, in a riposte to a possible poser from any quarters, as to why when the Sruti texts speak profoundly about the qualities of the divine Lord, they have little to say about **Srī**: apart from a tiny segment like "Srī Sūktham", addresses that query in his "Srī Gunaratnakōśam" (10) saying that the divine Mother's qualities are hidden from our view in the Védās like gems and diamonds secreted in a safety-vault, ("*tvad sadgunauga manikōśagruham*") but shine in all pristine splendor and glory, in the narratives of Itihāsa-Purānās like Srīmad Rāmāyanam and Srī Vishnupurānam ("*Upabhhramanās*"- auxillary texts), and Smruti texts like "*Manusmruti*", "*Lakshmī Tantram*" etc., and above all, in beautiful *āzhwārs' Divyaprabhanda pāsurams*, which elucidate Védic articulations which by themselves, are difficult to comprehend. In sum, as pointed out earlier, our Pūrvāchāryās (past Masters) have always portrayed Srī Lakshmī's "*mahimā*" in heart-warming superior light, as the divine Lord himself delights in that experience.

Speaking of the divine Lord's glory, even the Sruti texts wonder, if the "Védapurusha" knows or knows not the bounds of His powers. **Srī Kurattāzhwān** extrapolates the Védic poser in the first line of verse 8 of his **Srī Stavam**, "*Dēvi, tvanmahimāvadhīrna Harinā nāpi tvayā jñāyaté* ", meaning, "the bounds of thy divine Mother's) splendor, are not known to the Lord or even to thee. Striking a note of apology, āzhwān adds that this statement is not to be construed by the divine Couple as suggestive of taking anything away from their omniscience. What he really meant is that there is no finite limit to divine Mother's glory, in the same way as such a thing as "sky-lotus" is a metaphoric figment to convey what is not a existential reality.

The key points where the Southern school differs in the Sampradāyic belief-system surrounding the status and role of **Srī**: and grace of God may be stated as follows:

- **Srī**: is not "*vibhu*" (co-pervasive) like Vishnu but is atomic ("*anu*").
- Lord is the only "*upāya*" or means of liberation. **Srī**: is not the "*upāya*".
- **Srī**: performs the role of "*Purushakāra*" (*mediatrix*) only.
- God's grace is "nirhētuka" or "unconditioned". It springs spontaneously, on the analogy of the mother cat towards her kitten, (*mārajāla-kiśora-nyāya*).

As regards the first point, this seems to be based on the contention that the Upanishads speak of three ontological entities: "*īśvara*", "*cit*", and "*acit*". Thus says Svētasvatāra Upanishad, "*bhōktā, bhōgyam, prérītāram ca matvā*".

"*Bhōktā*" refers to the individual soul, which enjoys the "*bhōgyam*", the world of experience, and "*prérītāra*" the immanent driver, the *Īśvara* (God). Where does Goddess **Srī**: fit in this "*tatva-traya*" (three fold entities)? The same Upanishad also adds, that *Īśvara* alone rules both *cit* (*jīva*) and *acit* (insentient matter), ("*Īsaté Dēva ékah*"). By implication, it is sought to be held that **Srī**: thus, is to be included in "*jīva-kōṭi*" category, as the Upanishad only appears to recognize a unitary divine Power ruling over the world of beings and matter.

This is not a valid deduction as we shall see from the work of Srī Pillai Lokāchārya himself. Srī Lokāchārya in his "*Mumukshupadi*", admits that the reality of any substance is always established by the "*nitya-yōga*" of both "*Īśvara*" and "*Īśvari*" in eternal togetherness, and

upholds the view that this is implied in the word "*matup*" in the "*dwaya mahā mantra*", (130-131).

130. மதுப்பாலே இருவர் சேர்த்தியும் நித்யம் என்கிறது (mathuppālē iruvar sérththiyum nithyam engiradhu)

131. இவளோடே கூடியே வஸ்துவினுடைய உண்மை. (ivalōdē kūdiyé vasthuvinudaiya unmai)
(Mumukshūppadi - Srī Pillai Lokāchārya)

He accepts also that "*Srīyapatitvam*" of Nārāyana is His "*svarūpa-nirūpaka-dharma*" as much as his "*jñāna-ānanda*" qualities. Such "*nitya-yōgatvam*" holds good in all "*prākāras*" or modes and logically goes hand in hand with the "*vibutvam*" of divine Mother Lakshmī. This is also the position of Swāmi Désikan as brought out earlier. Thus there is indeed no conflict in the philosophic view between these two āchāryās on this aspect.

As regards the second point, Srī Pillai Lokāchārya states that like the Lord possesses dual positions as the "*upāya*" and "*upéya*" "means" and the "goal", *Srī:* also has two dimensions of role, which are "*purushakāra*" and "*upéyatva*". In other words, he does not consider *Srī:* as the "*upāya*" as such, but only as divine mediatrix; in other words, in his view "*upāyatva*" is to be construed only as "*purushakāratvam*". In "*dwayārtha prakaranam*" of "*Mumukshūppadi*" the first part of the "*dwaya mahāmantra*", *Srī:* is intended in her dimension of "*Purushakāra*". It is here, that he holds that to apply the "*upāyatva*" role to *Srī:* in this context is not appropriate. As he phrases it,

126. "உபாயத்வமுண்டு என்கிற பகஷம் யுக்தியுக்தமன்றென்க (upāyatvamundu enkira paksham yuktivyuktamanrenka)" (Mumukshūppadi – Srī Pillai Lokāchārya)

It is his contention that where the Lord is sought as the means "*upāya*", *Srī:* fulfils the role of "*purushakāra*". Srī Pillai Lokāchārya discusses this concept through several other aphorisms ("*sūtrās*" in his other work *Srī Vachana Bhūshanam*- "*Mudhal prakaranam*"). He says in *Sūtra* 13,

"உபதேசத்தாலே மீளாதபோது சேதநனை அருளாலே திருத்தும்; ஈஸ்வரனை அழகாலே திருத்தும்" meaning

"She will correct the "*jīva*" through *her grace*" ("*arulālē thiruttum*"). She works on the Lord through *her charm*, ("*īśvaranai azhagālē thiruttum*"). How She does that is by pleading with the Lord to soften His rigidity and melt with compassion toward the devotee. Her plea thus is simply, " if You keep counting the infractions of these helpless supplicants, none can gain redemption, as there is no other recourse for these hapless beings to seek refuge. Her grace works on the "*chétana*" (the sentient being) through "*upadésa*" by driving home to him, "you have no firm ground to stand on anywhere else. *Īśvara* being the free-wheeling "*Svatantra*" that He is, will enumerate all your sins and penalize you accordingly. If you wish to be saved from the dire

fate that hangs over your head, there is no other refuge available to you except to go and surrender at His feet. The Lord is an infinite repository of compassion, and on a mere gesture of prayerful prostration at His feet, will forgive your sins immediately and save you from perdition. ***Swāmi Désika echoes the same thought*** in verse 33 of ***Dayāsatakam***, how as a brilliant defence lawyer, *Dayā Dévi* as the embodiment of Lord Srīnivāsa's inherent compassion, and pleading the case of the "*prapanna*," (one who has surrendered to the Lord) counters every accusation of the plaintiff Lord Himself, by arguing that the sins are too numerous and inexhaustible ever, and the only course left to the egregious "*jīva*" to redeem himself is through his act of surrender that he has fulfilled now; the assurance that You yourself, have given that you would protect one who surrenders whole-heartedly at Your feet, can alone be pressed into service. So what is possible and feasible now, is to forgive all the offences of this person so that he can attain the abode of *Vaikunta*.

As regards, "*upéyatvam*" or "goal", Srī Lokāchārya concedes that at the stage of accepting the "*kaimkarya*" or services of the *prapanna* in terms of the meaning of the word "*namaha*" of the latter part of the "*dwaya mantram*", "**Srī:**" is equally the "*prāpya*", or ("goal to be obtained") along with the Lord, and here She magnifies the value of such "*kaimkaryam*" manifold by her presence, and helps foster such service in continuous flow.

Divine Mother's "purushakāratvam "is universally accepted in both schools, but to construe it as the only role of the divine Mother, and deny her "*upāyatva*", is not logically correct, when "***svarūpa vibhutvam***" or ***co-pervasiveness of both is accepted*** as the philosophic truth. The true position in this regard is stated in the following comprehensive ***Srī Pāncharātra Samhitā*** declaration of the Lord:

"*Aham matprāpyupāyovai sākshāth Lakshmīpatih:svayam l*

Laksmī: purusakāreṇa vallabāh Prāptiyogini" ll

"*Etasyāśca viséshoyam nigamānteshu sabhdyaté l "*

Note how the Lord refers to Himself as Lakshmīpati, and the use of the "mat" sabda. So there is no need for dilation on this point.

In ***Srī Gunaratna Kōsam***, Srī Parāsara Bhattar says of the divine Mother :

"ஐஸ்வர்யம் அக்ஷரக³திம் பரமம் பத³ம் வா
கஸ்மைசித் அஞ்சலிப⁴ரம் வஹுதே விதீர்ய
அஸ்மை ந கிந்சித் உசிதம் க்ருதம் இத்யதா²ம்ப
த்வம் லஜ்ஜஸே கத²ய கோயம் உதா³ரபா⁴வ:

aisvaryam akshara gatim paramam padam vā
kasmaichith-anjalibharam vahatē vitīrya |
asmai na kincith-uchitam krutam-ithyathāmba
tvam lajjasē kathaya kōyam udārabhāva: ||"

"Thou grant *aisvarya*, *kaivalyam*, or even *Vaikunta* as reward, as prayed for, for a mere symbolic "*anjali mudrā*", and yet, Oh Mother, you feel as if that was so little a reward and not commensurate enough, and indeed feel abashed for it, tell me, what graciousness is that?"

This verse rings a bell on āzhwār's pāsuraṁ from Periya Thiruvandhādhi, verse 53, "ஒன்றுண்டு செங்கண்மால்! யான் உரைப்பது * உன் அடியார்க்கு என் செய்வன் என்றே இருத்தி நீ" - "onrundu sengkanmāl! yān uraippadhu *un adiyārkkku en seyvan enré iruththi nī "

The point to note is that philosophically speaking, divine Mother's "*upāyatvam*" is no less than that of the Lord, though She does not directly perform such functions as "*Jagad-srushi*" and "*mokshapradatvam*". But it is true to say that Her "*upāyatvam*" usually and for all practical purposes, manifests in the role of "*purushakāra*". In *Srīmad Rāmāyanam*, Mother *Sītā* turns to *Srī Rama* as the "*upāya*" and tells *Srī Hanumān* that she would wait for *Srī Rama* to come and rescue her from Lanka, adding, "*sa tat tasya sadrusam bhavét*". It is significant that *Hanumān* performs the role of Her "*purushakāra*".

As regards the last point, viz. the nature of God's grace "*nirhétuka krupa*" or unconditioned grace on the concept of "*mārjāla kishora nyāya*" (mother cat-kitten analogy) associated with Southern school, verses "*sahétuka krupa*" or conditioned grace on the concept of "*markata-kishora nyāya*", ("mother monkey- baby monkey" analogy), attributed to the Northern school, this is *merely semantic*. That God's grace is "*nirhétuka*", that is spontaneous can never be disputed. The whole of Swāmi Dēsikan's beautiful hymn "*Dayāsatakam*" is a visualization of this quality of "*krupā*" or "*anukampā*" of the divine Lord as the divine consort *Dayādevī*, "*Srīnivasānukampā*".

Of the Lord *Deepaparakāsa* of *divya dēsam*, *Thiruttankā*, Dēsikan sings, "*Nityam Srīyā Vasudhayā ca nishevyamānam, nirvyājanirbharadayābharitam*" etc, (Sloka-2) The phrase "*nirvyājanirbharadayā*" is just "*nirhétuka*" or unconditioned grace. Swāmi Dēsikan has used similar phrases elsewhere. But grace is also conditional "*sahétuka*". Even in "*mārjāla-kishora nyāya*" or the analogy of "mother cat-kitten", though the cat may on its own, move her kitten from perceived threat to safer domain, some degree of hold may still be expected of the kitten in certain circumstances. The divine Lord expects that of the supplicant as *Lakshmī Tantra* puts it: "*Sarvajñōpi Visvesah: sadā kārunikopisun samsāratāntra vāhitvāt, rakshāpékshām pratīkshatē*" The overarching Ruler of the universe the divine Lord, who is all-knowing and full of compassion, bears also the responsibility of righteous conduct of life in this world, and looks for a demonstrated desire for protection on the part of the sentient being. Hence it is in "*śaranāgati*", "*goptrutvavarānam*" is an essential "*anga*". "*Tvameva upāyabhūto bhava iti prārtana matih: śaranāgatih*". "*tavāsmi iti yācatē*", "*yathā tathā vāpi sakrut krutonjalih*." etc. Therefore the nature of God's grace is **both** "*nirhétuka*" as well as "*sahétuka*". As Swāmi Dēsikan beautifully puts it in his own inimitable way,

"*Mukunda karunām vande mukteshvhadhika Vatsalām* 1

Svarūpa samstitau Yasyā nirhétuka-sahytukau ||

Swāmi Désikan uses the term "*Mukunda*", since it is *Mukunda* who is the "*moksha-pradah*", granter of liberation.

To round up the discussion we can summarize as follows:

The Special Status of Srī:

Divine Mother **Srī**: is *undoubtedly "vibhu"* or *co-pervasive* along with the divine Lord. She *is both "Upāya" and "Upeya" like the Lord*. Her "*purushakāratvam*" goes hand in hand with "*upāyatvam*". God's grace is "*nirhétuka*" as well as "*sahétuka*".

I would like to conclude this by quoting a yester-year doyen of Srī Désika Sampradāya Srīman D.Ramaswami Iyengar in his "Peeps into Mysticism". He has stated therein, "Désika in the course of his numerous works, blended the concept of Nārāyana and that of **Srī**: or Lakshmī into a Couple or "dampatī", as evident from phrases like "*divya dampatī*", "*śaranya dampatī*", and "*śéshi dampatī*". These show how Désika has postulated not the Lord alone, nor Srī alone, as the ultimate God-head, but the blend of the two in a *nitya-yōga (eternal union)* . The word "dampatī in Sanskrit is a "nitya-dvivachana", never lending itself to singular or plural terminology.

Inter-related Status of Srī:, Bhū and Nīlā:

The two deities Bhu and Nila are regarded as two aspects of "Vishnu-śakti", which according to Pāncarātra Samhitā, is the very Goddess Lakshmī. Vishnu is integrally associated with Lakshmī as one unitary God-head and "*para tatva*" or "*visishta Reality*", though He may be associated with other consorts. The Puranic lore indicate that Bhū and Nīlā are manifestations of Lakshmī. Thus while Goddess Srī: is the principal Consort who is eternally inseparable from Vishnu, Bhū and Nīlā are subordinate deities associated with Vishnu as His Consorts. While Srī: is "*vibhu*" by virtue of her essential nature ("*svarūpa*"), and as such on par with Vishnu, constituting a single Reality, Bhū and Nīlā are not "*vibhu*" in their essential nature (*svarūpa*) and are omnipresent and omniscient as his Consorts (the Viśvakséna Samhita supports this view). In Dayāśatakam (verse-7), Swāmi Désikan worships Bhū Dévi as embodying the attribute of "*kshama*" or forbearance and carrying all the load of the worlds, who now as Lord Srīnivasa's consort forgives, in her mercy, the infractions of offending humanity. In the next verse, Srī Désikan praying for Srī Nila devi's protection, praises her, whose dazzling beauty momentarily blurs the vision of Lord Srīnivasa, rendering the blemishes of the devotees presumably not noticeable by the Lord. In verse 36, Srī Désikan says that Lord Srīnivasa considers all three beautiful, lustrous Consorts Lakshmī, Bhū and Nīlā Devis, as reflections of Dayā Dévi, and for that reason has everlasting love and esteem for them.
