

SrImatE SaThakOpAya nama:

SrimatE rAmAnujAya nama:

Srimad Varavara MunayE nama:

HYMN IN PRAISE OF HIM THE SUPREME – THE PURUSHA SOOKTA

INTRODUCTION

Purusha sUktam is one of the greatest sUktas from the Vedas in praise of the Supreme Being. This sUkta provides a beautiful depiction of the visualization regarding the creation of the cosmos which the Vedics were blessed with. This sUkta contains several basic tenets of SrIvaishNavism.

The Purusha sUkta has been referred to in works like SrImad Bhagavad gItA, Sri Vishnu sahasranAmam etc. and also in the commentaries of PURvAchAryas. SrI RangarAmAnuja Muni has provided an elaborate commentary on the main part of the Purusha sUkta.

This write-up is an independent study of the Purusha sUkta while referring to Sri RangarAmAnuja Muni's BhAshyam or commentary.

AdiyEn has attempted to bring out the philosophical intricacies of this hymn under the guidance of SrImAn EmbAr RangAchArya swamy. All mistakes are adiyEn's.

adiyEn rAmAnuja dAsan

Vishnu Vinjamuri

NOTE: Uttara AnuvAkam and Appendices follow Purusha sUkta.

Mantra 1

sahasra SrshA purusha: sahasrAksha: sahasra pAt

sabhUmim viSwatO vRtvA atyatishThat daSAnGuLam|



The Supreme Lord Who has thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of feet, pervades over the universe that includes the earth. The universe appears to be of much shorter dimension in comparison to Him.

The expansion of Purusha is “Puru bahu sanOti iti purusha:” – The One Who gives in plenty. The bountiful Lord Who gives what we need without our praying to Him for the same, is Purusha.

Here thousand stands for uncountable.

Having uncountable heads indicates that He heads every part of the universe and thus stands for His swAmitvam or supremacy over the universe.

Having uncountable eyes stands for His overseeing the entire universe. This also stands for His readiness to bless the living beings (jIvas).

Having uncountable feet means that He has His feet everywhere in the universe. This indicates that all objects in the universe are at His feet or are subservient to Him.

Saying that the earth is included (sabhUmim) indicates relevance as we all are residents of this planet.

The word ViSwam used for the universe indicates that He has already entered the universe and is within it anywhere. The Lord is residing inside the universe as well as pervading it, is to be understood from “sabhUmim viSwatO vRtvA”

This Mantra is beautifully presented in Sri Vishnu sahasra nAmam as

Sahasra mUrdhA viSwAtmA sahasrAksha: sahasra pAt (Sloka 24).

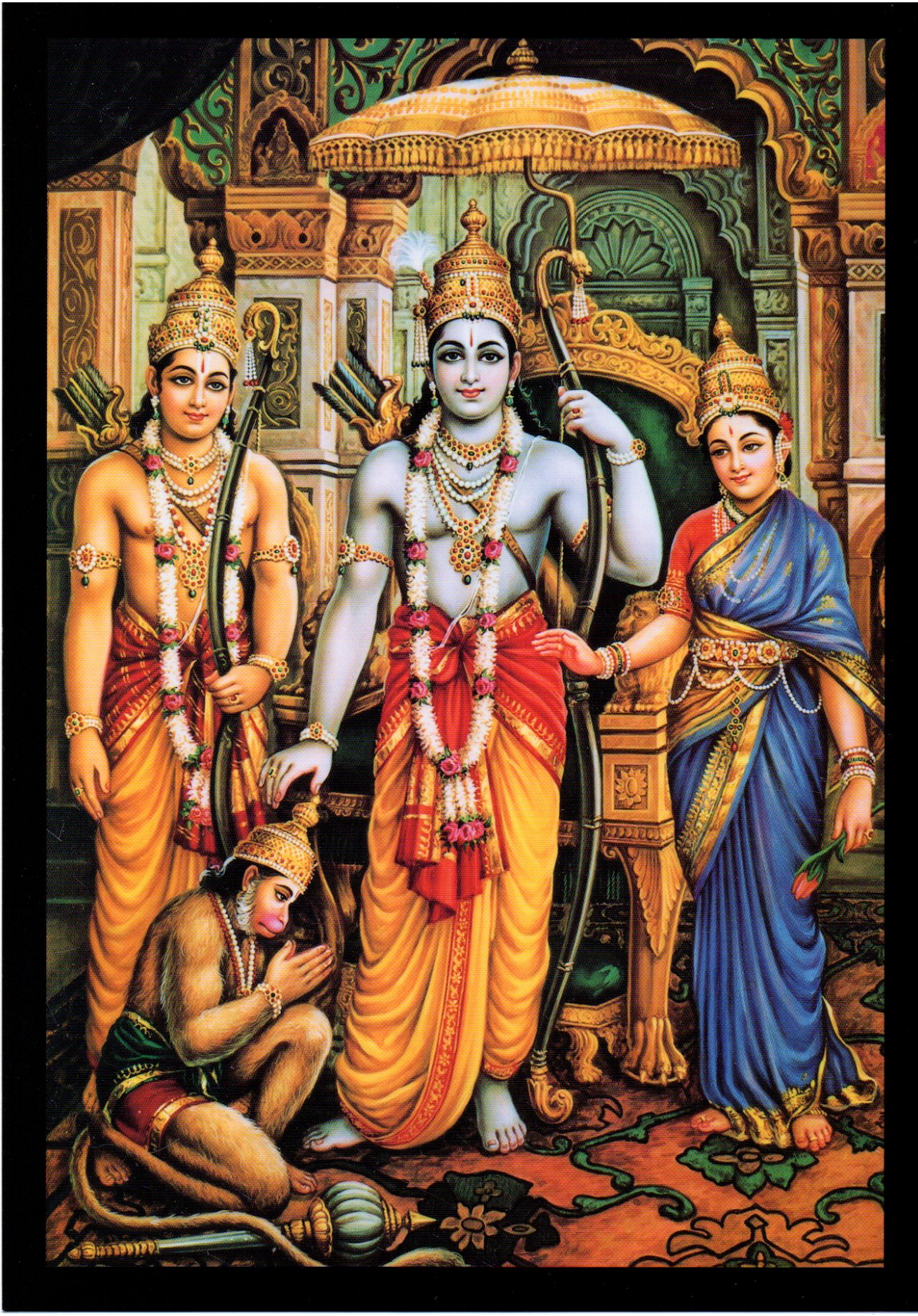
That the Lord is much bigger than the universe is indicated by daSAnguLam – here daSa stands for not ten but a state that is much bigger and anguLam means finger, which means He encompasses the entire universe which is less than a finger tip for Him. This further means He is beyond anyone’s comprehension in the universe.

The Supreme Being Purusha takes birth despite being unborn, which we will discuss later.

For example, in utara kANda of Sri Ramayana, sage agastya says:

asau rAmO mahAbAhuratimAnushachEshtayA

tEjO mahatttayA vApi sassmArayati pUrusham|



Lord SrIrAma, out of His superhuman deeds, splendour and greatness, reminds us of the Supreme Being hailed as Purusha by the Vedas. Here it is to be understood that Lord Rama is verily the Supreme Being Purusha.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 1:

sahasra SIrshA - thousand headed (of uncountable heads)

Purusha: - as given in the below commentary - the bountiful Lord

sahasrAksha: - thousand eyed (of uncountable eyes)

sahasrapAt (of uncountable feet)

sabhUmim - along with the earth

ViSwatO - the universe

VRtvA - has pervaded over

atyatishTat - He sits above that

daSa - a state (like daSA)

anguLam - finger

Mantra 2

Purusha EvEdam sarvam yadbhUtam yaccha bhavyam

utAmRtvatvasyESAnO yadannEnAtirOhati|



All this is the Supreme Being. All that was there and all that will be there is the Supreme Being as well. He is the Lord of divinity. He grows out as the object of enjoyment (annam) for those who believe He is everything for them.

The first line is beautifully presented in Sri Vishnu sahasra nAmam as

BhUtabhavyabhavatprabhu: (Sloka 1)

Those who believe He is everything for them are Mahatmas for the Lord as He Himself calls such a realized soul a Mahatma - "Vasudeva: sarvamiti sa mahatma sudurlabha:" (BG 7.19).

In Sri Ramayana utara kANda, sage agastya addresses the Purusha Who incarnated as Sri Rama as follows:

SarIrE tava paSyAmi jagat sarvE raghUdvaha!

tEjasA cha sudurdarSO madhyAhna iva bhAskara|



Meaning of the Sloka:

Oh Descendant of Raghu dynasty! In Your body, I see the whole world. Out of Your effulgence, You are very difficult to be looked at like Sun in the middle of the day.

MRtam is something that is worldly. amRtam is the opposite of it which means something non-worldly or divine. Thus amRtatvam means divinity. That He is the Lord of divinity means He delivers us from the worldly bondages and places us at His feet for eternity. Such people who are at His feet forever are called sUris or amaras. That He is the Lord of amaras is beautifully presented by nammAzhwAr in the very first verse of ThiruvAimozhi “ayarvaRum amararhaL adhipadhi yavan” – The Lord of the divine beings who are placed at His feet forever. The word “amarar” in Tamil means those who possess stability and thus are placed at His feet forever, which is very much in line with the Purusha sUkta mantra.

That such great souls do not have anything other than Him for their enjoyment is again presented by nammAzhwAr in ThiruvAimozhi 6.7.1 where he says “uNNNum SoRu paruhu nIr thiNNNum veRRilaiyum ellAm kaNNan” which means the food that is consumed, water that is taken in and betel leaves that are eaten all are the Lotus-eyed Lord (Lord of uncountable eyes in Purusha sUkta!).

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 2:

Purusha - (as defined before)
Eva - alone
idam sarvam - all this
YadbhUtam - that has happened
Yat cha bhavyam - all that will happen
utAmRtatvasya - For the divinity (divine beings)
ISAna:- The Lord (He is)
YadannEna - over the annam (bhogyam for the subjects)
atirOhati - grows out

Mantra 3

EtAvAnasya mahimA atO jyAyAmScha pUrusha:

PAdOsya viSwA bhUtAni tripAdasyAmRtam divi|



Such is the greatness of the Purusha. He holds the universe like the string of a bow. All the elements of the universe are at His feet. He crosses over the entire cosmos by His foot, far beyond the known material worlds. Placing His foot over the entire cosmos establishes its eternal subservience to Him, indicated by amRtam.

The term jyA means the chord of a bow. Like the chord of a bow holding it in position and serving as a base to shoot, the Lord forms the support for the universe. The existence of the universe is thus dependent on the existence of God. This is later presented by the Lord Himself in Bhagavad Gita as He says:

Matta: parataram nAnyat kinchidasti dhananjaya!

Mayi sarvam idam prOtam sUtrE MaNigaNA iva|

Oh Arjuna! There is nothing superior to Me. All the elements of the universe are held by Me like the gems are strung by a thread (BG 7.7).

The word “tri” is derived from the dhAtu or root तृ (tRoo or tRee - pronunciation depending on the region) which means taraNam or crossing over. The Lord is called trivikrama as He crossed over the entire cosmos by His foot.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 3:

EtAvAnasya mahimA - Such is His mahimA (greatness, supremacy, prowess).

ata: - So

JyAyAmScha - He stands superior like jyA (chord of a bow) for the universe (contextually interpreted)

PUrusha: - Purusha

pAdOsya - Whose feet (collective noun, otherwise it is written pAda: foot)

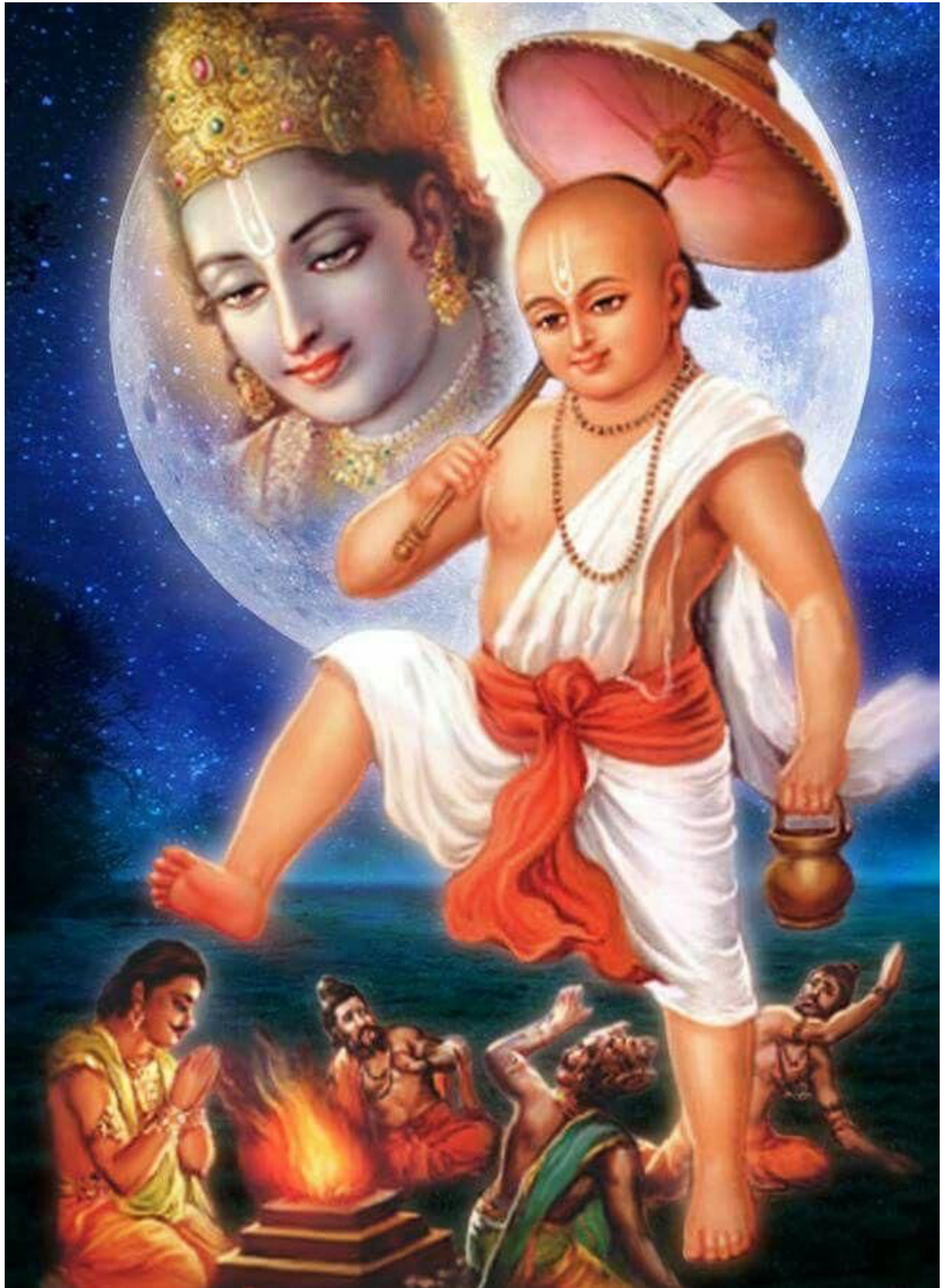
ViSwA bhUtAni - The elements of the universe

tripAdasya - by His foot that crossed over

amRtam divi - The cosmos for which its eternal subservience (amRtatvam) is established.

Mantra 4

**tripAdUrdhva udait purusha: pAdOsyaEhAbhavAt puna:|
tatO vishva~N (विष्वङ्) vyakrAmat sASanAnaSanE abhi|**



The Supreme Being Who crossed over all the higher worlds, reappears here to be realized through subservience or sense of being at His feet. He enters and pervades all the beings that eat and all the

beings that do not eat.

That the Lord enters and supports the universe is presented by the Lord Himself again in Bhagavad

Gita as He says:

VishTabhyAham idam kRtsnam

EkAmSEna sthitO jagat| (BG 10.42)

As a small pastime or IllA of Mine, I enter and engage Myself in the sustenance of the universe.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 4:

tripAt - His feet by which He crossed over (indicated by tri)

udait - and reached (udgatavAn - One who has gone up)

Urdhva - the higher worlds

Purusha: - Supreme Being (let us keep this in subsequent verses)

PAdOsya - From His feet (indicating Seshatvam)

iha - here

abhavAt puna: - reappears

tatah - there (here)

vishva~N - enters

VyakrAmat - occupies

sASana - those that eat

anaSanE - those that do not eat

abhi - into.

Mantra 5

tasmAt virADajAyata virAjO adhi pUrusha:|

sajAtO atyarichyata paSchAd bhUmim athO pura:|



The Purusha or Supreme Being assumes His cosmic form or virAD rUpam and hence is called virAT.

From this virAD rUpam, the Purusha comes to be known at the beginning of creation. Such Purusha Who assumed cosmic form is identified with all that was there before this earth, all that is now and all that will be hereafter.

The mantras or Vedic verses that follow speak about the creation of universe.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 5:

tasmAt - From Him
VirAT - Lord of the cosmic form
ajAyata - was born
VirAjO - from virAT
adhi pUrusha: - Purusha comes out
sa jAta: - The Purusha so born
atyarichyata - Is identified with
BhUmim - earth
athO- now
PaSchAt - after
Pura: - before

Mantra 6

YatpurushENa havishA dEvA yagnam atanvata|

vasantOsyAsIdAjyam grIshma idhmaSSaraddhavi:|

From the offering by the Supreme Being, Devas (see explanation), perform the Yagna or the ritual of offering which stands symbolic for the process of creation here.

In the Yagna, creation is used as ghee, sustenance is used as firewood and the outcome of creation and sustenance is used as the offering.

Explanation:

From the first line, it is clear that the Yagna is performed for the Lord's sake as willed by the Lord.

Devas means beings of divam or sky. Here dEvas stand for the beings that cannot be explicitly seen and are various unknown aspects of the Supreme Being Purusha.

Vasanta means spring season. grIshma means summer and Sarad means autumn.

Does this mean the above seasons were used in the process of creation? Is it possible when the earth and sun were not there and no seasons formed? Or are the Vedics speaking in today's parlance?

Here it is to be noted that the Vedics were well aware that the seasons are due to the solar system.

Vasanta comes from the root “vas” which means to dwell in. This can be derived as “vasanam tanOti” which means the one that gives a place to live. The spring season gets this name as the earth is very pleasant to live during this period. In the context of Purusha sUkta, vasanam is existence and Vasanta stands for creation.

GrIshma means summer and also means heat. This heat energy comes from sun. Sun stands for sustenance for various reasons and life derives its energy from sun. Thus grIshma stands for sustenance in the context of Purusha sUkta.

Sara stands for arrow and Saradam stands for giving out like the arrows from a bow. The season Sarad gets this name as the crops are at the stage of fruition by this time. In the context of Purusha sUkta, Sarad stands for fruition or outcome of the processes of creation and sustenance, this is nothing but His own enjoyment as His pastime.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 6:

HavishA - with the offering

YatpurushENa - by that Supreme Being

dEvA: - divi bhavA: - Those who belong to the skies (various unknown aspects of the Lord)

Yagnam - Yagna or the ritual of worship (standing symbolic for the process of creation)

atanvata - performed.

asya - Of that Yagna

Vasanta: - Something conducive to live (standing symbolic for creation)

Ajyam AsIt - was the ghee

GrIshma - Summer standing symbolic for sustenance

idhma: AsIt - was the firewood

Sarad - the season of ripening standing symbolic for outcome or fruition

HavirAsIt - was the offering or Havis.

Mantra 7

saptAsyAsan paridhaya: trissapta samidha: kRtA:

dEvA yad yagnam tanvAnA: abadhnan purusham paSum|

The yagnam had seven boundaries (paridhis) and twenty one pieces of firewood were used (see commentary).

Devas (as defined in Mantra 6) performed the Yagnam or carried out the process of creation, coordinating between various elements of the cosmos.

Commentary:

Paridhis means boundaries. The elements that define the boundaries of the Yagnam or process of creation are the pancha bhUtas or the five elements that are PRthvI, ap, tEjas,

vAyu, AkASa, and ahankAra and buddhi. These respectively mean solid material, water, light, air, sky, individuality and knowledge.

Here it has to be noted that the pancha bhUtas are His aspects only and are part of His cosmic form. Individuality or ahankAra is best taken as the individuality of the Lord by which He stands uniquely supreme, as indicated by the term “aham” in “aham tvA sarva pApEbhyO” (BG18.66).

Buddhi which stands for knowledge is best interpreted as His will or sankalpa by which He creates.

There are tri: sapta (3x7) samidhas. Here tri stands for three or the three processes of creation, sustenance and destruction. The seven elements mentioned above are used from the creation of the cosmos till its destruction. Thus the seven elements that define the boundaries of creation are used as firewood along with the Lord Who is the creator, sustainer and destroyer.

“Abadhnan purusham paSum” means the Purusha was tied as the animal of the Yagna or Yagna paSu. Does this mean the hymn is talking about some animal sacrifice? Is the Purusha just one among several deities of the Vedic pantheon? Obviously not!

So tying the Purusha here means tying together or coordinating between various elements and processes that form part of creation.

This verse very nicely fits into the Bhagavad Gita verse 4.24 which is as follows:

BrahmArpaNam brahma havi: brahmAgnau brahmaNAhutam

Brahmaiva tEna gantavyam brahma karma samAdhinA

The one who offers is Brahman (Supreme Being), offering is Brahman (Supreme Being), and the fire is Brahman in which the offering gets processed. The goal is Brahman (Supreme alone) for those who are constantly united with Him and engaged in His mission (Devas here).

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 7:

dEvA: - The dEvas

Yad Yagnam - The yagna

tanvAnA: - That they performed

asya paridhaya: - Its boundaries

sapta Asan - were seven

Trissapta - 3x7=21

samidha: - sticks of firewood

KRtA: - were prepared/gotten

dEvA: - The dEvas

abadhnan - tied

Purusham - The Purusha (The aspects of His cosmic form as elaborated above, going by the

SarIra - SarIri sambandham)

PaSum - as the Yagna PaSu

Mantra 8

tam yagnam barhishi praukshan purusham jAtamagrata:

tEEna dEvA ayajanta sAdhyA RshayaScha yE|



Enabled by the Purusha Who is the very embodiment of Yagna, the Devas blessed the original nature with Him and thus initiated the process of creation.

Commentary:

Here it is mentioned that the Yagna is the Lord Himself. This is consistent with the statement “YagnO vai Vishnu:” which repeats in the Yajurveda several times that the Lord (indweller of the universe or ViSwam) Himself is Yagna.

Prauikshan comes from the act called prOkshaNam. This has to be expanded as pra+ukshaNam which needs to be derived as prakRshTa ukshaNam in Sanskrit. PrakRshTa means well and the root uksh is used in the sense of sEchanam or drenching.

Barhis means bRmhaNa yOginI or the one that is vast and connected with the Lord which is mUla prakRti or the original nature at the beginning of creation.

Drenching well (prOkshaNam) with the Purusha means filling the nature with His blessings which was enabled by the Lord Himself. This is indicated by the statement tEna dEvA ayajanta – By Him, the Devas conduct the Yagna process of creation.

This act of blessing the nature is similar to the later act of the Lord when He blesses the earth as he appears as SrIrAma after being worshipped by the celestials and after a Yagnam by DaSaratha, both of which were coincidental with His will. This will be elaborated further in a latter verse.

The Devas are called sAdhyas, as they are always in the control of the Supreme Being and have the realization that they are under His control, unlike the ignorant.

The Devas are also called Rshis. The root Rsh stands for gatau or motion. The Devas are those who conduct themselves as per their nature of being subservient to Him.

Addressing Devas as sAdhyas and Rshis is consistent with the statement in Vishnu sUkta which is again on the Supreme Being Purusha, which says – tadvishNO: paramam padam sadA paSyanti sUraya: - that the realized ones (indicated by those of eternity in Sloka 2) have their thoughts constantly fixed on the lotus feet of the Supreme Being Vishnu.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 8:

Barhishi - In the grand entity i.e. original nature or mUla prakRti

dEvA: - Devas

tam Purusham - that Purusha

JAtamagrata: - Who appeared before

Praukshan - drenched

tEna - By Him

dEvA: - The Devas

sAdhyA: - Those who are controlled by Him

RshyaScha yE - and those who (are also) conduct themselves in Him

ayajanta - performed

Yagnam - The yagna

Mantra 9

tasmAd yagnAt sarvahuta: sambhRtam pRshadAjyam

PaSUmstAmSchakrE vAyavyAn AraNyAn grAmyAmScha yE|

From that Yagna, where everything was offered, and which was completely charged with Lord's power (see commentary), came out the animals including the forest animals and domestic animals and also came out the birds.

Commentary:

PRshadAjyam is to be expanded as pRshat+Ajyam. PRshat comes from the root pRsh which is used in the sense of sEchanam which has to be taken as pouring out here. Ajyam means ajasya iyam or the thing that belongs to goat i.e. goat ghee further used in the sense of cow ghee. Here aja is the One Who is Unborn i.e. The Supreme Being Purusha and hence Ajyam is His power.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 9:

tasmAt yagnAt- From that yagna

sarva huta: - Where everything was offered

sambhRtam - Which was filled with

Ajyam - The power of the unborn Supreme Being

PRshat - that was sprinkled

PaSUn tAn - those animals (which include)

VAYavyAn - birds

AraNyAn-forest animals

GrAmyAn-domestic animals

chakrE - were made out

Mantra 10:

tasmAd yagnAt sarvahuta: Rcha: sAmAni jagnirE|

ChandAmsi jagnirE tasmAt yajustamAdajAyata|



From that Yagna where everything was offered, first Rks or the Vedic statements in His praise were born. Then came sAmans which were sonorous. After this the rules of prosody or Chandas were created. Finally this resulted in Yajus which had all the above qualities to be recited in the performance of Yagnas in the worship of the Lord.

The Vedas represent knowledge and this indicates that all knowledge emanated from the Lord as said in Sri Vishnu sahasranAmam “VEdA: SAstrANi vignAnam Etat sarvam janArdanAt”.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 10:

tasmAd yagnAt sarvahuta: -As defined in previous verse

Rcha: - Rks or the Rg Veda mantras that are more statement oriented

sAmAni - sAmans or sAma vEda mantras that are more music oriented

JagnirE - were born

tasmAt - from that

ChandAmsi - rules of prosody

JagnirE - were born

tasmAt - From that

Yajus - Yajus or the Yajurveda mantras with all the above qualities

ajAyata - were born

Mantra 11

tasmAd aSvA ajAyanta yE kEchObhayAdata:

GAvo ha jagnirE tasmAt tasmAjjAtA ajAvaya:|

From that Yagna, horses were born. Animals like elephants were born. Cows and bulls were born. All moving and non-moving living beings as well as non-moving living beings like plants and trees and insentient things were born.

Commentary:

Horses stand for quick movement and meeting the travel needs of the ancients.

Animals like elephants eat in two ways by taking food and water first with the trunk and then putting it in the mouth and hence they are called dviradas (dvi:+ada) where the root adh stands for eating. ubhaya means both. So ubhayAdata: is interpreted as the animals like elephant, YALi or vyALa (an animal with elephant's trunk and lion's body) etc..

GO stands for cows (along with bulls). They stand special in Vedic culture and are revered as the Lord's manifestation or vibhUti for the following reasons:

- The term gO also means knowledge and sun's rays.
- Cow milk has medicinal and nutritional values.
- Even cow dung and urine have medicinal and purifying properties.
- Bulls are used for cultivation and transportation.

The root aja stands for motion.

The root yA again stands for motion, and the prefix "ava" stands for opposite. Thus avaya: is interpreted as both motionless living beings like plants and trees and all insentient objects or matter (known as achit in Vedic tradition).

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 11:

tasmAd - From that

aSvA - horses

ajAyanta - were born

YE kE cha - also those

ubhayAdata: - That take food in two ways (elephants and yALis) (were born)

GAvo - Cows and bulls

JagnirE - were born

tasmAt - from that

tasmAt - From that

aja - all moving beings (in a nutshell, including all those that were not mentioned)

avaya: Non-moving beings including the insentient or achEtanas

JAtA - were born

Mantra12

Yat purusham vyadadhu: katidhA vyakalpayan|

Mukham kimasya kau bAhU kAvUrU pAdAvuchyEtE|

With the special blessings of that Purusha, how many types of things did the Devas create from His cosmic body? What is said about His face, arms, thighs and feet? (See next verse).

Explanation:

adat means eating. The prefix vi stands for viSEsha or special. So “yat purusham vyadadhu:” is interpreted as obtaining the special blessings of the Purusha.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 12:

Vyadadhu: - Having enjoyed well

Yat Purusham - That Purusha (His blessings)

(dEvA:)

KatidhA - How many ways

Vyakalpayan - Did create?

asya - His

Mukham - face

Kim - what

uchyEtE - To say about?

Kau - what

BAhU - hands

uchEytE? - To say about?

Kau - what

UrU - thighs

uchEytE? - To say about?

Kau - what

PAdA - feet

uchEytE? - To say about?

Mantra 13

BrAhmaNOsya mukhamAsIt bAhU rAjanya: kRta:|

UrU tadasya yadvaiSya: padbhyAm SUDrO ajAyata|

The noble souls, who understand and expand the idea of Brahman or Supreme Being, are His face. The Rajas or those engaged in protection were done from His arms. People engaged in providing resources to the society form His thighs. Those who go around in serving the society are born from His feet.

Explanation:

This verse broadly classifies the people into four categories who completely fulfil the societal needs in terms of knowledge and mental peace, protection, providing resources and providing services, known respectively as Brahamanas, Kshatriyas (Rajas in Purusha sUkta), VaiSyas and Sudras.

The root BRh is used in the sense of expansion. Brahamanas are those who acquire and spread knowledge, and expand the idea of Brahman or the Supreme Being. The qualities of a Brahamana are described in the following verse of Bhagavad Gita (BG 18.42):

SamO dama: tapa: Saucham kshAntirArjavam Eva cha|

GnAnam vignAnam Astikyam brahmakarma svabhAvajam|

Control of senses, control of mind, submitting oneself to the Lord's will, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, knowledge, specialized knowledge, belief in the existence of Brahman, are the qualities by which a Brahamana conducts oneself.

Mukham or face stands symbolic for spreading or communicating. In the ancient society, imparting knowledge was mainly through oral communication. So it is said that Brahamanas are His face.

Rajas or Kshatriyas are those who protect kshama or the land. The qualities of a Kshatriya are as described in the following verse of Bhagavad Gita (BG 18.43):

Sauryam tEjO dhRtir dAkshyam yuddhEchApi apalAyanam|

dAnam ISwara bhAvaScha kshAtram karma svabhAvajam|

Valour, energy, courage, capability, not running away from war, generosity and authority are the qualities by which a Kshatriya conducts oneself.

BAhu means arm which is also known as karam in Sanskrit as it is the organ of action. Further Lord's hand stands for abhayam or making us fearless by offering His protection. Hence it is symbolically mentioned that those engaged in the act of protection are done from His arms.

The following qualities are mentioned for the VaiSyas and SUdras in Bhagavad Gita (BG 18.44):

KRshi gaurakshya vANiyyam vaiSyA karma svabhAvajam|

ParicharyAtmakam karma SUdrasyApi svabhAvajam|

Going by the above verse, a VaiSyA engages himself in agriculture, protecting cattle and business, and as such is resourceful to the society. Since thighs are the limbs that provide support to the body, symbolically it is said that the Lord's thighs are VaiSyas.

A SUdra moves around in serving the society. This is called paricharyA. Since feet are the limbs by which one moves around, symbolically it is said that SUdras are born from the Lord's feet. It further indicates SEshatvam or the sense of being at His feet, the ideal state true to the nature of any being that one should aspire to realize.

The term VaiSyA comes from the root viS which means to enter. ViSanam means shelter. Thus VaiSyA can be best interpreted as one who offers shelter to the society by being resourceful.

The term SUdra can be interpreted as SochanAt dravati iti SUdra: - one who moves away from worries with the conviction that everything happens by His divine will. This is because of the realization of his SEshatvam to the Supreme Being as indicated before as possible in an ideal society. This is in contrast to a Brahmana who at times may be worried about his understanding of the concepts related to the Brahman in the process of learning and communicating them.

Word-by-word meaning of Mantra 13:

BrAhmaNa: - Brahmins (collective noun)

AsIt - stay as

asya - His

Mukham - face

BAhU - (from) hands

rAjanya: - rAjAs (collective noun)

KRta: - are done

tadasya - His

UrU - Thighs

YadvaiSyas: - Are those vaiSyas (collective noun)

PadbhyAm - From the feet

SUdrO - SUdras (collective noun)

ajAyata - are born

Mantra 14

chandramA manasO jAta: chakshOssUryO ajAyata|

MukhAdindraSchAgniScha prANAd vAyurajAyata|

Moon is born from His mind. Sun is born from His eyes. From His face, Indra and fire are born. From His respiration, air is born.

Explanation:

Moon is the one whose light brings pleasantness to one's mind. As it is the Lord Who bestows the bliss upon us, it is symbolically mentioned that the moon is born from His mind.

The following SLOka from Sri Ramayana is worth noting in this context.

uttishTati SIItAmSu: SaSI lOkA tamOnuda:

HIAdayan prANinAm lOkE manAmsi prabhayA vibhO! (Bala kANda 34.17)



In the above SLOka, viswAmitra tells Lord Rama, “Oh Lord! The moon with his cool rays rises to delight the minds of living beings with his light.” By addressing Him as vibhu which means the Lord Who pervades in contrast to the individual souls who are aNu or atomic, sage viSwAmitra conveys that Rama is the Supreme Being Purusha of the cosmic form.

Sun provides life on the earth and provides light. From the statement that Sun is born from the Lord’s eyes, it is to be understood that the Lord’s glances provide support to the life. It can also be inferred that the Lord’s glances enable us to see.

Indra is in charge of all natural elements like rain, air, fire etc. and is thus head of all deities who are in charge of each natural element. Face is the body part that shows the expressions like tranquillity or prasannatvam, fury or raudram etc. As the various elements of the nature display these varying moods time to time, it is symbolically mentioned that the controller of the natural elements Indra originated from the Lord’s face.

For the same reason, Agni or fire which displays fury or raudram is mentioned to be emanating from His face. Also Agni has prasannatvam or favourability, in the form of JaTarAgni or the digestive process in the stomach.

As fire and air coexist, it is mentioned that His respiration gives rise to the air in the atmosphere.

That the Lord is the origin of all the light and energy that emanates from Sun, Moon and fire is presented by Himself in Bhagavad Gita (BG 15.12) as He says,

YadAditya gatam tEjO jagad bhAsayatEkhilam

Yacchandramapi yacchAgnau tattEjO viddhi mAmakam|

All the radiance from the Sun that lightens the whole world and all the light that originates from moon and fire, know that to be Mine.



Word-by-word meaning of Mantra 14:

Manasa: - From His mind

chandramA - Moon

JAta: - was born

chakshO: - From His eyes

sUrya: - Sun

ajAyata - was born

MukhAt - from His face

Indra: - Indra

ajAyata - was born

MukhAt - from His face

agniScha - fire also

ajAyata - was born

PrANAt - From His respiration

VAYu: - Air

ajAyata: - was born

Mantra 15

nAbhyA AsIt antariskham SIrshNO dyau: samavartata|

PadbhyAm bhUmirdiSaSrOtrAt tathA IOkAn akalpayan|

He is the origin of the entire cosmos that is looked after by Him. All the bright upper worlds are His head.

The earth is from His feet. All directions are His ears (see commentary). That is how He made all the worlds that can be visualized to exist!

Explanation:

nAbhi means origin. antariksham which stands for the cosmos can be expanded as anta: +iksham, something that is within His sight – the entire cosmos.

Earth is said to be His feet as the Supreme Being is visualized as standing on the earth with us paying obeisance to His feet. All the upper worlds glowing above are mentioned to be around His head, as head stands for swAmitvam or Lordship with all the illuminating celestial objects forming His crown.

SrOtra means ear. Directions are said to be from His ears as He observes all that happens anywhere in the cosmos in any direction.

Word-by-word meaning of Mantra 15:

nAbhyA - By His origin (By Him as the origin)

antariskham - The space

AsIt - stays

dyaU: all glowing objects (upper worlds)

samavartata - Stay as

SIrshNa: - His Head

PadbhbyAm - From His feet

BhUmi: - Is earth

diSa: - Directions are

SrOtrAt - From His ears

tathA - This way

akalpayan - He made

lOkAn - the worlds

It is worth noting that Mantra 14 and Mantra 15 of Purusha sUkta are beautifully presented in the following dhyAna SIOkam of Sri Vishnu sahsasranAma where one meditates on the cosmic form of the Supreme Being or Purusha.

BhU: pAdu yasya nAbhirviyat asuranila: Chandra sUryau cha nEtrE

KarNAvASA: SIrO dyaurmukhamapi dahanO yasya vAstEyam abdhi:

antasstham yasya viSwam sura nara khaga gO bhOgi gandharva daityai:

chitram ram ramyatE tam tribhuvana vapusham vishNum ISam namAmi|

In the above SIOka, the only difference that seems to be there from Purusha sUkta is Chandra or moon being mentioned as His eye along with sUrya or Sun. This can be interpreted as

manO nEtram as mind is also an organ that visualizes. Most importantly, the organs mentioned to be of the Supreme Being should be taken metaphorically and not physically or literally.

It is worth noting that the above SIOka does not befit any deity other than Lord Vishnu, and hence the Purusha mentioned the Purusha sUkta is Vishnu only and not some other deity like chaturmukha Brahma as claimed by some scholars.

Mantra 16

VEdAhamEtam purusham mahAntam Aditya varNam tamasastu pArE|

sarvANi rUpANi vichitya dhIra: nAmAni kRtvA abhivadan yadAstE|

It is said in first person – I know the Purusha to be the greatest and pay obeisance to Him Who is boundless in nature and is cannot be comprehended by the ignorant, Who enters various objects of different forms to rule over them and protect them, imparts distinct qualities to them, all for His pleasure and out of His will.

Explanation:

aditi stands for something boundless in any direction and Aditya is the one having this characteristic.

dhIra is interpreted as dhiyA ramamANa: - One Who delights in His own thoughts and thus He created the worlds for His pleasure out of His will.

The root chit stands for knowledge and consciousness and hence vichitya is interpreted as Lord's entering various objects of various forms, ruling over them and protecting them, all by His will.

Sri ParASara BhaTTar quotes this verse for the nAma viSwabhugvibhu: in Sri Vishnu sahasranAmam as he says “tathaiva vyApya bhunakti/pAlayati” which means He pervades the objects created by Him, enjoys them and rules over them.

A few related verses from Sri Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita:

The following verses from Sri Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita are worth noting in this connection.

In bAla kANda, ViSwAmitra says:

aham vEdmi mahAtmAnam rAmam satya parAkramam

VasishTOpi mahA tEjA: yE chEmE tapasi sthitA: (1.19.14)



I know Rama to be the Supreme Being and everlastingly powerful. So do other knowledgeable ones like VasishTa who submitted themselves to the Lord's will.

In Yuddha kANda, Brahma says:

BhavAn nArAyaNO deva: SrImAn chakrAyudhO vibhu:

EkaSRnga varAhasvAm bhUtabhavya sapatnajit| (6.120.14)

You are the Supreme Lord SrImannArAyaNa, wielding the mighty discus, Ruler of the worlds, Who appeared as the single tusked boar in His varAha avatAram, and Who wins over all the obstacles in our attaining Him in the past and future which is not just limited to defeating rAvaNa.

aksharam brahma satyam cha madhyE chAntE cha rAghava!

IOkAnAm tvam parO dharmO vishvaksEnO chaturbhujaj| (6.120.15)

SARnga dhanVA hRshIkESa: purusha: purushOttama:

ajita: khaDgaDhRt Vishnu: kRshNaSchaiva bRhadbala: (6.120.16)

You are the everlasting imperishable Brahman, whether at present or when the world is put to an end (by You). You are the Supreme means of attaining You the Supreme. You are vishvaksEna or the one with army all over the universe. You are of four-handed form. You wield the great bow SARnga and a great sword. You control the senses of all living beings. You are the benevolent Supreme Being. You are invincible. You are the all-pervading Vishnu. You are Krishna Who cultivates Bhakti. You are the Almighty.

DaSaratha says to Lakshmana:

Etattaduktam avyaktam aksharam brahma nirmitam

dEvANAm hRdayam saumya guhyam Rama: parantapa: (6.122.32)

As said, Rama is the Supreme Brahman Who is imperishable and beyond perception. He is the in-dweller of the hearts of Devas. He is ever-pleasing and is the Supreme Path of submission to the Lord (Himself).

ManDOdarI, the wife of rAvaNa and yet a highly realized soul, says about the Lord:

VyaktamEsha mahAyOgI paramAtmA sanAtana!

anAdimadhyanidhanO mahata: paramO Mahan| (6.114.14)

tamasa: paramO dhAtA Sankha chakra gadAdhara:

SrIvatsavakshA nityaSrIrajEya: SASvatO dhruva: (6.114.15)

Lord Rama is the primordial Supreme Being connected with the entire universe. He has no beginning, no middle and no end. He is greater than all that can be said to be great. He is the Creator wielding the conch, mace and the bright discus to dispel the darkness called ignorance. He bears the mark called Srivatsa on His chest and is eternally united with the divine mother SrIdEvI. He is eternal and stationed everywhere.

In Bhagavad Gita 8.9, the Lord says:

Kavim purANam anuSAsitAram

aNOraNIyAmsam anusmarEdya:

sarvasya dhAtAram achintya rUpam

Aditya varNam tamasa: parastAt.

The Supreme Being needs to be contemplated on as omniscient, primordial, One Who rules over the universe, subtle than the subtlest, Creator of all, beyond perception, and boundless in nature beyond the comprehension of the ignorant.

Word-by-word meaning of Mantra 16:

aham vEda - I know

Etam - This

Purusham - Supreme Being

MahAntam - To be Supreme

Aditya varNam - of boundless nature

PArE - Beyond

tamasastu - ignorance

sarvANi - All

rUpANi- forms

Vichitya - done by His will

dhIra: - One Who delights in His own thoughts (not dictionary meaning, but as per commentary)

nAmAni - Distinct qualities by which they are identified (names)

KRtvA - done

abhivadan - I pay obeisance

YadA AstE - (to Him) as how He is

Mantra 17

dhAtA purastAt yamudAjahAra Sakra: pravidvAn pradiSa: chatastra:|

tamEvam vidvAn amRta iha bhavati nAnyA: panthA vidyatEyanAya|

The Lord Who has been quoted to be the Creator before is all-powerful, omniscient and omnipresent. The one who realizes that Supreme Being attains eternity here itself. No other path is known to be better than this path. (Which path? In the next verse)

Explanation:

udAjahAra is interpreted as udAhRtavAn – or the One Who is quoted to be.

The root Sak stands for Sakti or power. Hence the name Sakra is attributed here to the Supreme Being Purusha or Vishnu as the all-powerful Lord who is capable enough to deliver the jIva out of His will.

The second part of the first line of the verse simply reads “Sakra: pravidvAn pradiSa: chatastra:” which means Sakra (generally Indra), highly learned person, directions and four. There is no linkage between the four words in this statement and the action is missing. However, commentators interpreted this as Indra who learned the Lord’s glory and spread it in all four directions.

As mentioned above, the term Sakra is attributed to the Lord Himself in this write-up so that the terms “pravidvAn”, “pradiSa: chatastra:” can also be attributed to Him and it connects well with the second line “tamEvam vidvAn...”

The second line of the verse encourages the human-beings not to worry about what happens after death and have confidence that the Supreme Being will deliver the living being blessed to realize Him.

Word-by-word meaning of Mantra 17:

Yam - The One

PurastAt - before

udAjahAra - quoted to be (udAhRtavAn) by the Vedas

dhAtA - creator

Sakra: - all powerful

PravidvAn - All knowing

PradiSa: chatasra: - (Who is) all directions

tamEvam - Him alone

VidvAn - One who knows

iha - Here (itself)

amRta - eternal

Bhavati - becomes

nAnyA: - No other

PanthA - path

VidyatE - is known

ayanAya - to be the path.

Mantra 18

YagnEna yagnam ayajanta dEvA: tAni dharmANi prathmAnyAsan|

tE ha nAkam mahimAna: sachantE yatra pUrVE sAdhyAssanti dEvA:|

This provides clarity as which path is the best path for attaining the Lord (see Mantra 17, which says no path is better than this).

By Yagna or the Supreme Being Purusha, the Devas served (ayajanta) Him – the Yagna or Purusha. This is the first and the only path among all dharmas or paths to attain the Supreme Being. Such great people or Mahatmas who realize that they have no means other than Him reach the state which is devoid of grief (nAkam) with the sense of servitude or being at His feet for eternity. This is verily the state that the Devas addressed as sAdhyas before belong to (see verse 8).

Explanation:

akam means sorrow and nAkam is the place which is devoid of grief. Being devoid of grief forever is possible only when we realize our servitude to Him and this realization continues with His blessing. The Lord's feet themselves are such place as per Vedas as it is said in Vishnu sUkta "tad vishNO: paramam padam".

In Purusha sUkta, the Devas carried out the process of creation with the help of the Supreme Being and for His sake.

As it is well-known from Vedas that the Supreme Being Vishnu or Purusha Himself is addressed as Yagna many times, this Mantra from Purusha sUkta goes well with the statement that Lord Himself is the means to attain Him, as told by the Lord in Bhagavad Gita 18.66 where He says:

sarva dharmAn parityajya mAm Ekam SaraNam vraja

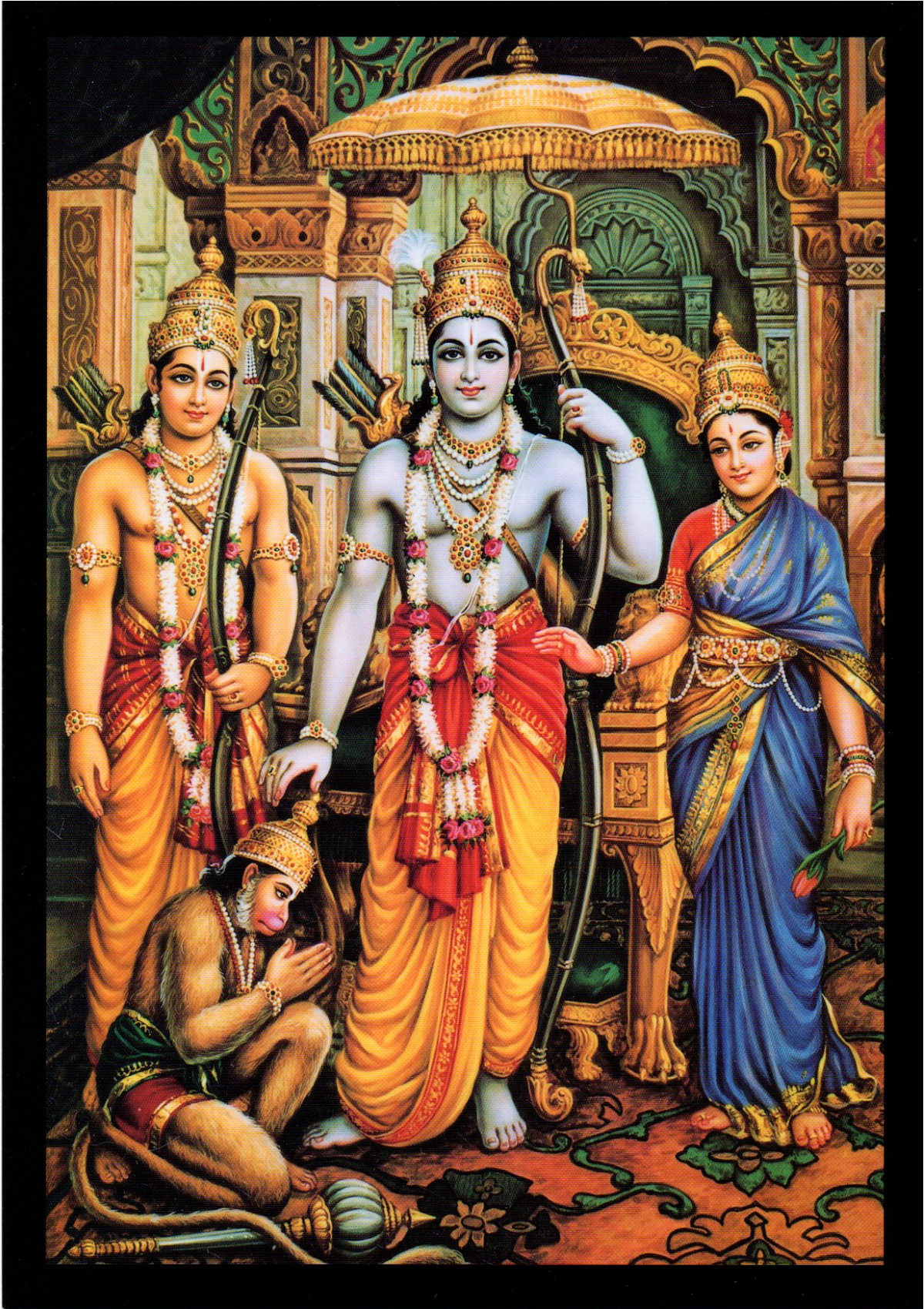
aham tvA sarva pApEbhyO mOkshayishyAmi mA Sucha:

This means:

Abandoning all means, take Me alone as the means and goal. I shall release you from all evils. Be not grieved.

Since Lord alone is the means as suggested by Him in Bhagavad Gita, the term prathama is interpreted as not just first but the only dharma in this write-up, as all other dharmas like Bhakti (servitude), prapatti (our relinquishing all other means and accepting Him), gnAna (knowledge that we are His and He is everything for us), karma (that He is the doer and we are instruments) are true to our nature (called swarUpa yuktam in Srivaishnavism) and not means to attain Him.

This verse which states that one has to depend on the Supreme to realize and serve Him and that He is the best among all paths to attain Him, is presented in Sri Ramayana in a single statement "rAmO vighrahavAn dharmas:" (araNya kANda 37.13), that the Supreme Being Who makes us enjoy Him is the very embodiment of Dharma or means to attain Him. This is reproduced in Azhwars' works as Poigai AzhwAr says "neRi vASal thAnEyAy ninRAnai" – The Lord Who stands as the path and the destination where one stays forever (mudhal thiruvandhAdhi verse 4).



As indicated in the explanation for Mantra 8, the episode of appearance of the Supreme Being as Lord Rama in Sri Ramayana is an elaboration of how the Lord blesses the nature (tam

yagnam barhishi praukshan – Mantra 8) and how the Lord is the means to attain Him and goal by Himself (yagnEna yagnam ayajanta dEvA: - Mantra 18).

In Sri Ramayana Balakanda Sarga 15, Devas were worried about rAvaNa and were pleading with Brahma to suggest means to eliminate him.

In the meantime, Lord Vishnu appears out of His own volition (EtasminnantarE vishNurupayAtO mahAdyuti: - Sloka 15.16). As the Lord appeared out of His will and reminded them that He is the protector with His conch, discus and mace (Sankha Chakra gadA pANi :), Devas pray to Him (also known as Yagna and Purusha) to eliminate rAvaNa. This is yagnEna yagnam ayajanta dEvA: or Devas worshipping the Lord by His will to get the boon of eliminating rAvaNa. Coincidentally with this yajanam or worship, Lord sees DaSaratha as His father and appears as Yagna Purusha from the Yagna being performed by DaSaratha longing for children (Sarga 16, Sloka 8). The Lord offers pAyasam or the rice pudding to DaSaratha after consuming which He is born as Rama, lakshmaNa, Bharata and Satrughna, this is again YagnEna – or by the Lord.

That the Yagna Purusha who appeared from the Yagnam of DaSaratha is none other than the Supreme Being is indicated by the statement that the Lord disappears from the assembly of the Devas (Sloka 16.10, Bala kANda). It is further reinforced by addressing the Yagna Purusha as mahad bhUtam, mahA vIryam, mahA balam, kRshNam (one Who is like a dark cloud ready to shower His blessings without any discrimination), dIptAnala SikhOpamam (accompanied by Lakshmi Who is like a flame of fire and hence glowing Himself as such) and so on from Slokas 16.11 to 16.14 in Bala kANda. Thus Devas fulfilled their worship or Yajanam of the Lord by the grace of the Lord. This episode is a perfect example of YagnEna yagnam ayajanta dEvA:.

In Srivaishnavism, the statement yagnEna yagnam ayajanta dEvA: is interpreted as Lord being upAyam (means) and upEyam (goal). Lord being the upAyam is also indicated by the Ramayana verse 15.16 in Bala kANda quoted above where it is said “EtasminnantarE vishNurupayAtO mahAdyuti:”. Here the term upayAta: or Lord came down indicates He is the upAyam. Lord appearing as Rama is the final upEyam or goal. Getting rid of rAvaNa stands as a metaphor for enlightening us by removing our ahankAra and mamakAra (ego that we are an independent entity and possessiveness over our body, soul and other elements of the creation).

That the Lord showered His blessings on the nature as indicated in Mantra 8 (tam yagnam barhishi praukshan) is nothing but the Lord blessing the earth as Rama and making everyone happy as per Sri Ramayana.

Word-by-word meaning of Mantra 18:

YagnEna - By Vishnu

dEvA: - Devas

ayajanta: - serve (yaj-means Deva Poojanam)

Yagnam - Vishnu

tAni – Those ways (in line with the above statement)

dharmANi - Among all paths

PrathamAni Asan – Are (were) the best ones

tE - Those

MahimAna: - Great people (realized ones)

Ha - for sure

sachantE - reach

Yatra - The place where

sAdhyA: - Devas

santi - were

PUrvE - before

UTTARA ANUVAKAM

Before this, we completed discussion on the main text of the Purusha sUkta which has 18 verses.

In this anuvAkam or annexure, the statements from the main text are re-emphasized on.

Mantra 1

adbhyassambhUta: pRthivyai rasAccha viSwakarmaNa: samavartatAdhi |

tasya tvashTA vidadhat rUpamEti tatpurushasya viSwam AjAnam agrE |

The universe which was born at the beginning to the Supreme Being and the original nature out of the offering consumed by Him and blessings He showered on the original nature, is conducted by the Supreme Being. He provided various forms to the various constituents of the universe.

Explanation:

The root pRth stands for prakshEpam or placing something. pRthivi or earth is an example of a place where the Lord sows the seeds of life. Here pRthivi stands for barhis or brhmaNa yOginI which is the mUla prakRti or original nature as defined in Sloka 8 of the main text of this sUkta.

adh stands for eating. So adbhya: means "from that is eaten or consumed". As can be seen from Sloka 6 of the main text, the offering is Sarad or the outcome of creation and sustenance as willed by the Lord. This is Brahma havis or offering that is Brahman (Supreme Being) as He Himself is the outcome with the universe that is created being His form and the consumer of the offering is also Him alone as the universe is for His pleasure.

Rasam stands for something that can be poured over. Thus the line adbhya: sambhUta: pRthivyai rasAccha fits well into the line "tam yagnam barhishi praukshan" in Sloka 8 of the main text which means the original nature was drenched in His blessings.

viSwakarmA means the Supreme Being Who is the maker of the cosmos as discussed in the main text. samavartanam means conducting well. This samavartanam is because He is present everywhere as indicated in verse 1 of the main text.

tvach means skin or cover. tvashTA can be interpreted as tvachi tishTati i.e. The Lord Who supports the form that He provided to the various constituents of the universe. It is also linked to the root tvish which stands for deepiti or glow. The Lord tvashTA as He makes the objects glow by which they can be visualized.

The line "tasya tvashTA vidadhat rUpamEti" stands for the line "sarvANi rUpANi vichitya dhIra:" in Sloka 16 of the main text.

The interpretation of the lines "viSwakarmaNa: samavartatAdhi tasya tvashTA vidadhat rUpamEti" can be found in Sri ParASara BhaTTar's commentary on Sri Vishnu sahasranAma for the names "viSwakarmA" and "tvashTA" in the line "viSwakarmA manu: tvashTA...".

The line “tat purushasya viSwam AjAnam agrE” is a retelling of the line “dhAtA pursastAd yam udAjahAra” in Sloka 17 where He was referred to as the Creator at the beginning.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 1:

tatpurushasya viSwam - The universe that is a belonging of that Purusha

AjAnam agrE - that was born before

adbhya: From that is taken in

rasAt- From the solids

PRthvyai - (added) to the fluids

sambhUta: - made

samavartata adhi- conducted well from above (the lord)

ViSwakarmaNa: - by the maker of the universe

tvashTA- One who stays in its form and provides it glow

Vidadhat - Gave

tasya rUpam - its form

Mantra 2

VEdAhamEtam purusham mahAntam Aditya varNam tamasa: parastAt |

tamEvam vidvAn amRta iha bhavati nAnyA: panthA ayanAya vidyatE |

The first line of this mantra is a reiteration of the first line of Mantra 16 and the second line is a reiteration of the second line of Mantra 17, from the main text.

Mantra 3

PrajApatiScharati garbhE anta: ajAyamAnO bahudhA vijAyatE |

tasya dhIrA: parijAnanti yOnim marIchInAm padamicchanti vEdhasa:

The Lord of all those who are born moves within this cosmos or brahmANDam. The One Who is unborn, is born in many ways. Those who have their thoughts fixed on Him know Him well to be the origin of the universe. Those wise ones desire to be at the feet of the enlightened.

Explanation

PrajA are all the beings who are born by His will and Purusha is their Pati or Lord. Garbha means inside and thus it is implied that He moves around inside the universe.

The Lord Who is unborn appears again and again. Even in this hymn, He was first Purusha and then assumed cosmic form (virAD) from which He came to be known (Mantra 5).

That He crossed over the cosmos by His foot in Mantra 3 indicates His incarnation as trivikrama.

tasya has to be interpreted as viSwasya – of the universe, in line with ParASara Bhattar’s interpretation of the name viSwayOni: in the line “anaghO vijayO jEtA viSwayOni: punarvasu:” in Sri Vishnu sahasranAmam.

Marlchi means ray of light. Hence marlchInAm padam is interpreted as the lotus feet of the enlightened souls. Thus servitude towards fellow BhAgavatas or those who realized their subservience to Him is stated to be the desire of the wise (vEdhasa:). This is called BhAgavata SEshatvam in Srlvaishnavism.

In this verse, the statement “PrajApatiScharati garbhE anta:” is the same as “tatO vishva~N vyakrAmat” in Mantra 4.

"ajAyamAno bahudhA vijAyatE” is indicated in the statement “tasmAt virAD ajAyata| virAjO adhi pUrusha:” in Mantra 5 as discussed above.

The statement “marlchInAm padamicchanti vEdhasa:” is an extension of “tE ha nAkam mahimAna: sachantE yatra pUrvE sAdhyA: santi dEvA:” as the wise desire to reach the feet of those who are already enlightened (Devas).

The statement “ajAyamAnO bahudhA vijAyatE” is explained by the Lord Himself in Bhagavad Gita as He says (BG 4.6)

ajOpi san avyayAtmA bhUtAnAm ISwarOpi san

PrakRtim svAm adhiShTAYa sambhavAmyAtmamAyayA|

Despite being unborn, inexhaustible and being the ruler of all elements of the cosmos, I take birth that is consistent with My nature out of My own will.

The Lord further says:

YadA yadA hi dharmasya glAnir bhavati BhArata!

abhuytthAnam adharmasya tadAtmAnam sRjAmyaham (BG 4.7)

Meaning: Oh Arjuna! Whenever dharma or the natural conduct of the society to live for each other and have faith in the Supreme Being is on the decline and adharmas or the opposite of dharma is on the rise, I make Myself appear.

In the context of Gita, the term BhArata can be interpreted as BhAram tardati – One who gets rid of the burden of his protection as arjuna gives up and surrenders to the Lord at the very beginning of

the Bhagavad Gita discourse (yacchrEya: syAt niSchitam brUhi tanmE SishyastEham SAdhi mAm
tvAm prapannam – BG 2.7)

The Lord continues:



ParitrANaya sAdhUnAm vinASAyacha dushkRtAm

dharma samsthApanArthAya sambhavAmi yugE yugE (BG 4.8)

Meaning: To protect those who have realized their SEshatvam or subservience to Me, and to ensure those who do not consider themselves subservient to Me fail in enjoying the results of their deeds, and to establish that I am the upAyam or means for one's liberation, I take birth time to time.

The root sAdh is used in the sense of samsiddhi or well-attainment. sAdhu is the one who is blessed to attain realization, with the Lord as the sAdhanam or means, and realization as sAdhyam or attainment. sAdhus mentioned here are similar to sAdhyas mentioned in verse 8 of the main text of Purusha sUkta. The interpretation of the term sAdhu in rAmAnuja gItA bhAshya is worth noting where the AchArya defines them as the best among Vaishnavas (VaishNavAgrEsarA:) who take refuge in the Lord completely and consider even a fraction of second without being able to visualize Him to be thousands of kalpas (cycles of time from creation to destruction).

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 3:

tasya garbhE - Within that universe (viSwam)
prajApati: - The master of the jeevas
charati - Moves around

ajAyamAna: - The One Who is unborn
BahudhA vijAyatE- Takes many special births

dhIrA: - Those who are steadfast in mind
ParijAnanti - Know Him to be
tasya yOnim - Origin of that universe

VEdhasa: - The knowledgeable ones
icchanti - Like (to reach)
MarlchInAm padam - The feet of the realized ones.

Mantra 4

YO dEvEbhya Atapati | yO dEvAnAm purOhita: |

pUrvo yO dEvEbhyO jAta: namO ruchAya brAhmayE |

Salutation to the splendid Brahman, Who manifested much before the Devas, enlightens them, and Who has the well-being of the Devas as His prime concern.

Explanation

The term tapas is interpreted by Sri ParASara Bhattar as gnAna or knowledge for the name mahAtapA: in Sri Vishnu sahasra nAmam in the line "amRta: SASvata: sthANur varArOhO mahAtapA:". Hence Atapati is interpreted as the Lord enlightening the Devas.

PurOhita is the one who has others' hitam or well-being as His prime concern.

rucha means one who is splendid.

BrAhmi means the Supreme Being or Parabrahman.

nama: means not mine.

Thus namO ruchAya brAhmayE means we are not ours but of the Lord's will or sankalpa which is His splendour by which we realize Him. This is nicely presented by nammAzhwAr where he says "mikka gnAna veLLa-c-chuDar viLakkAy" or the Lord Who points towards Himself as the lamp called knowledge (ThiruvAimozhi 2.6.2)

The statement that the Lord manifested or appeared much before the Devas is a retelling of the statement "tasmAd virAD ajAyata | virAjO adhi pUrusha:|" in mantra 5 of the main text.

The term nama: which means not mine but the Supreme Being's, is used in the sense of salutation. This namanam or salutation is a repetition of abhivAdanam in the second line of Mantra 16 (nAmAni kRtvA abhivadan yadAstE |)

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 4:

Ya: - The One Who

dEvEbhya- To the Devas

Atapati - Provides enlightenment

Ya: - The One Who

dEvAnAm purOhita: - Has the well-being (hitam) of Devas at His front (pura:)

Ya: - The One Who

JAta: Manifested

PURvE dEvEbhya: - Earlier than than the dEvas

nama: - Salutations to

ruchAya - The One Who is splendorous

BrAhmayE - The Parabrahman

Mantra 5

rucham brAhmam janayanta: | dEvA agrE tadabruvan |

Yastvaivam brAhmaNO vidyAt tasya dEvA asan vaSE |

The Devas who first spoke about the Supreme Brahman make His splendour known. One who knows the Supreme Brahman will have Devas at his command.

Explanation

Devas are the enlightened ones who enlighten us about the Parabrahman or Supreme Being.

That they spoke about the Brahman before is a reassertion of the statement in the first line of Mantra 17 of the main text “dhAtA purastAt yam udAjahAra” – The Lord Whom the Devas or Veda have quoted to be the creator before.

The one who knows about the Parabrahman attains eternity as stated in the second line of Mantra 17 of the main text “tamEvam vidvAn amRta iha bhavavti” – one who knows this attains eternity here itself. That Devas will be at his command indicates bhAgavata SEshatvam. This means every bhAgavata or the individual, who is knowledgeable of his subservience to the Lord, even if he is divine, will be subservient to the human being who knows the Supreme Brahman.

The line “Yastvaivam brAhmaNO vidyAt tasya dEvA asan vasE” is beautifully presented by swami nammAzhwAr as he says “virumbuvAr amaras moitthE” in ThiruvAimozhi (3.4.11) which means those who realized their SEshatvam (by following nammAzhwAr’s teachings) are liked and densely surrounded by amaras or Devas. This liking is to the extent of being serviceable to the bhAgavatas.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 5:

dEvA- The Devas

Janayanta: - Make known

rucham - the splendour

BrAhmam - of the Brahman.

dEvA - The Devas

agrE- Before

tad abruvan - Spoke about that Brahman

Yastva Evam - The one who this way

BrAhmaNO vidyAt - Knows the Brahman

dEvA - Devas

asan - happen to be

tasya vaSE - in his control.

Mantra 6

HrIScha tE lakshmiScha patnyau| ahOrAtrE pArSvE|

nakshatrANI rUpam| aSvinau vyAttam|



He has the aspects of taking away and blessing as His consorts. Day and night (knowledge and ignorance) are His two sides. Stars form His form. The horse-bodied aSwini Devas are His wide opened mouth.

Explanation

hrIScha tE laskhmiScha patnyau

The term hri is derived from the root hR which stands for haraNam or taking away.

There is another root hri which stands for modesty and those who have commented seemed to be carried away by this. When the object of description is the Supreme Being, all the terms used deserve the most superior interpretation. We have an example towards this in Sri Ranga Ramanuja Muni's commentary for Mantra 8 of the main text where he interprets barhis as per the root "bRmh" which stands for expansion instead of "barh" which stands for injury.

The line hrIScha tE lakshmiScha patnyau is one of the most important tenets of SrlvaishNavism due to mention of lakshmi as the Lord's consort.

lakshmi is derived from the root laksh which stands for AIochana or looking at and is used in the sense of targeting something. Thus lakshmi stands for His quality of selecting a jeeva and blessing him with deliverance.

Patni or spouse can be interpreted as "patim nayati iti patni" which means wife is the one who leads her husband. The Lord carries out the mission of delivering the individual as He is led by His quality of kRpA or compassion. As the Lord takes away things with Him right up to destroying all that is created, the aspect of haraNam or hri is also personified as His consort.

As kRpA or compassion is a motherly quality and the term lakshmi is derived from the root which means “looking at”, amarakOSam mentions Goddess lakshmi as “IOkamAtA” or Mother of all that is seen or visualized.

In the famous Sri Venkateswara mangalaLASAsanam part of Sri Venkateswara suprabhAtam, Sri PB Annan says:

lakshmi savibhramAIoka subhrU vibhrama chakshushE

chakshushE sarvalOkAnAm vEnkaTESAya mangaLam.

MangaLam or all glories to the Lord Venkateswara, Who sees and graces all the worlds with His eyes having beautiful eyebrows, intensely moving them all around.

Here lakshmi stands for gracing the worlds by His glances. The term “subhrU” or beautiful eyebrow is worth noting here. A beautiful eyebrow is always compared with the arc of a bow and thus His looks are very focused and aimed, like the arrows from His SARnga bow.

Lord’s association with Goddess lakshmi, His kRpA personified, is mentioned at umpteen places in Sri Vishnu sahasranAmam and beautifully elaborated by Sri ParASara BhaTTar. The interpretation of the term mAdhava (Lord of the Mother) in the line hiraNyagharbhO bhUgarbhO... is one such example. The qualities attributed to Goddess lakshmi by ParASara BhaTTar are apt only when She is not a deity/entity separate from the Lord. The Lord should always be paid obeisance as SriImannArAyaNa or nArAyaNa associated with Sri.

The meaning of mAdhava is worth analyzing further. MA means mother and means lakshmi in its highest sense as lakshmi or Sri represents Lord’s kRpA which is a motherly quality. dhava generally means husband/master/Lord. In the context of the Supreme Being Who is ever-associated with Sri (called nithya yoga by Sri BhaTTar), it can be further interpreted as dhAvati iti dhava: - One Who purifies. Then the term mAdhava can be interpreted as the One having both the qualities – yO mAcha dhavaScha sO mAdhava: , which means the Lord purifies us or removes our ahankAra mamakAra out of His kRpA or concern which is a motherly quality. The highest form of such kRpA is vAtsalya or dOsha bhOgyatva – even enjoying our vices with utmost love like the cow liking the dirt on its calf.

ParASara BhaTTar concludes his commentary of the name mAdhava with the statement from YajurVeda (taittiriya kATHaka 3.3) which says “SraddhayA dEvO dEvatvam aSnute” – or the Lord enjoys His Lordship from His concern for the jeeva. SraddhA can be expanded in this context as SrayaNam dadhAti – One Who provides refuge (the Lord’s concern personified as lakshmi).

ahOrAtrE pArSvE

aha means day and rAtram or rAtri means night. Day which is bright indicates knowledge and rAtri which is dark indicates ignorance. Thus enlightenment and causing ignorance are His two sides. To this, the Lord Himself says “matta: smRtir gnAnam apOhanam cha” in Bhagavad Gita (15.15) which means “remembrance, knowledge and the lack of it are due to Me”. This is presented by nammAzhwAr in ThiruvAimozhi 1.10.10 “maRappum jnAnamum...” verse where he says it is the Lord

who ensures that the jeeva does not forget Him without any effort on the part of the jeeva to forget Him or know Him.

nakshatrANi rUpam

As the Lord is of cosmic form, naturally all stars form His form. This goes well with the last line of the 15th verse of the main text which says “SIrshNO dyau: samavartata”. In relevance to the humans and other living beings on the earth that see, nakshatras or stars appearing in the night stand for Lord’s grace also as they provide light and enable the living beings to see around. Moon is also classified as a nakshatra from the point of view of glowing in the night (Bhagavad Gita 10.21).

Kshatra is expanded as kshatAt trAyatE iti kshatram or something that protects from getting hurt or destroyed. Nakshatra maybe expanded as naktE kshatram or something that protects in the night, the moon being the most prominent. The basis of definition is different between the Vedic science and modern science.

The name nakshatrI in Sri Vishnu sahasranAmam indicates that nakshatras are His form.

aSvinau vyAttam

aSvinI Devas are the twin stars who are considered the vaidyas or physicians of the Devas. They are horse-bodied and this symbolizes Lord’s tvaraNam or speed in setting things right. VyAtta means expanded or wide open and refers to a wide open mouth as in case of nabhaspRSam dIptam anEka varNam vyAttAnanam (BG 11.24). VyAttam or wide open mouth means swallowing all the worlds without harming, and digesting them or modifying them further to the extent of disassembling them. Thus the duo aSvinI Devas stand for Lord’s swallowing and keeping them without change as well as digestion (processing further). The root aS stands for eating.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 6:

HrIScha - hri representing the aspect of taking away and
lakshmlScha - lakshml
Patnyau - Are His consorts

ahOrAtrE pArSvE - Day and light on His sides

nakshatrANi- stars being
rUpam - His form

aSvinau - aSvinI dEvas being
VyAttam - His wide open mouth

Mantra 7

ishTam manishANa| amum manishANa| sarvam manishANa|

May the humans get what is desirable for them. May they get Him – The Purusha. May He be their everything.

Explanation

ishTam can be expanded in this context as icchAm dishTati it ishTam or something that shows what one should desire. The Lord is the One liked by the SishTas or the good ones who realized their SEshatvam to Him, as indicated by “SishTEshTa:” in Sri Vishnu SahasranAmam.

“amum” is the dvitlyA vibhakti for the word “adas” which means he. Hence “amum” means Him the Supreme Being Purusha.

“sarvam manishANa” is connected with realization that the Purusha is everything as said in the first line of the second verse of the main text which says “Purusha EvEdam sarvam”.

Word-by-word meaning of mantra 7:

ishtam - Something that is desirable

ManishANa - for the humans

amum - Him

ManishANa - for the humans

sarvam - Everything

ManishANa - for the humans

adiyEn rAmAnuja dAsan

Vishnu Vinjamuri

APPENDIX - I

List of names and lines from Sri Vishnu Sahasra Namam connected directly with Purusha Suktam

1. ViSwam
2. BhUtabhavya bhavat prabhu
3. Purusha
4. dhAtA
5. amara prabhu (amRtatvasya ISAna:)
6. ViSwakarmA
7. tvashTA
8. aja (ajAyamAnO)
9. ViSwayOni (tasya dhIrA: parijAnanti yOnim)
10. sahasra mUrdhA
11. sahasrAksha
12. sahasra pAt
13. ViSwabhugvibhu: (please see the write up for Mantra 16)
14. ishTa
15. SishTEshTa (14 and 15 for ishTam manishANa)
16. nakshatrI
17. JyOtirAditya
18. Brahma
19. BrAhmaNa
20. brahmI
21. Mahan (VEdAhamEtam purusham mahAntam)
22. Yagna
23. swayam jAta (bahudhA vijAyatE)

And many names in connection with "hrISchatE lakshmiScha patnyau".

Phala Sruti:

VEdASSAstrANi vignAnam Etat sarvam janArdanAt - Mantra 10 of Purusha sUkta

dhAyna SIOkam

BhU: pAdau yasya nAbhirviyat asuranila: Chandra sUryau cha nEtrE
KarNAvASA: SirO dyaurmukhamapi dahanO yasya vAstEyam abdhi:
antasstham yasya viSwam sura nara khaga gO bhOgi gandharva daityai:
chitram ram ramyatE tam tribhuvana vapusham vishNum ISam namAmi|
This was presented in mantras 14 and 15 as mentioned before.

APPENDIX – II

Purusha Sukta and Bhagavad Gita

Please see the write-up on each mantra for its meaning.

Mantra 3:

atO jyAyAmScha pUrusha:

Matta: parataram nAnyat kinchidasti dhananjaya!

Mayi sarvam idam prOtam sUtrE MaNigaNA iva |

Oh Arjuna! There is nothing superior to Me. All the elements of the universe are held by Me like the gems are strung by a thread (BG 7.7).

Mantra 4:

tatO vishva~N (विष्वङ्) vyakrAmat

VishTabhyAham idam kRtsnam

EkAmSEna sthitO jagat | (BG 10.42)

As a small pastime or Illa of Mine, I enter and engage Myself in the sustenance of the universe.

Mantra 7

saptAsyAsan paridhaya: trissapta samidha: kRtA:

dEvA yad yagnam tanvANa: abadhnan purusham paSum |

This verse very nicely fits into the Bhagavad Gita verse 4.24 which is as follows:

BrahmArpaNam brahma havi: brahmAgnau brahmaNAhutam

Brahmaiva tEna gantavyam brahma karma samAdhina

The one who offers is Brahman (Supreme Being), offering is Brahman (Supreme Being), and the fire is Brahman in which the offering gets processed. The goal is Brahman (Supreme alone) for those who are constantly united with Him and engaged in His mission (Devas here).

Mantra 13

BrAhmaNOsya mukhamAsIt bAhU rAjanya: kRta: |

UrU tadasya yadvaiSya: padbhyAm SUDrO ajAyata |

Bhagavad Gita (BG 18.42):

SamO dama: tapa: Saucham kshAntirArjavam Eva cha |

gnAnam vignAnam Astikyam brahmakarma svabhAvajam |

Control of senses, control of mind, submitting oneself to the Lord's will, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, knowledge, specialized knowledge, belief in the existence of Brahman, are the qualities by which a Brahmana conducts oneself.

Bhagavad Gita (BG 18.43):

Sauryam tEjO dhRtir dAkshyam yuddhEchApi apalAyanam |

dAnam ISwara bhAvaScha kshAtram karma svabhAvajam |

Valour, energy, courage, capability, not running away from war, generosity and authority are the qualities by which a Kshatriya conducts oneself.

Bhagavad Gita (BG 18.44):

KRshi gaurakshya vANijyam vaiSya karma svabhAvajam |

ParicharyAtmakam karma SUdrasyApi svabhAvajam |

Going by the above verse, a VaiSya engages oneself in agriculture, protecting cattle and business, and as such is resourceful to the society.

A SUDra moves around in serving the society. This is called paricharya.

Mantra 14

chandramA manasO jAta: chakshOssUryO ajAyata |

YadAditya gatam tEjO jagad bhAsayatEkhilam

Yacchandramapi yacchAgnau tattEjO viddhi mAmakam |

Mantra 16

VEdAhamEtam purusham mahAntam Aditya varNam tamasastu pArE |

In Bhagavad Gita 8.9, the Lord says:

Kavim purANam anuSAsitAram

aNOraNIyAmsam anusmarEdya:

sarvasya dhAtAram achintya rUpam

Aditya varNam tamasa: parastAt.

The Supreme Being needs to be contemplated on as omniscient, primordial, One Who rules over the universe, subtle than the subtlest, Creator of all, beyond perception, and boundless in nature beyond the comprehension of the ignorant.

Mantra 18

YagnEna yagnam ayajanta dEvA: tAni dharmANi prathmAnyAsan |

tE ha nAkam mahimAna: sachantE |

Bhagavad Gita 18.66:

sarva dharmAn parityajya mAm Ekam SaraNam vraja

aham tvA sarva pApEbhyO mOkshayishyAmi mA Sucha:

Meaning:

Abandoning all means, take Me alone as the means and goal. I shall release you from all evils. Be not grieved.

Mantra 3 – uttara anuvAka

PrajApatiScharati garbhE anta: ajAyamAnO bahudhA vijAyatE |

BG 4.6 :

ajOpi san avyayAtmA bhUtAnAm ISwarOpi san

PrakRtim svAm adhiShTaya sambhavAmyAtmamAyayA |

Despite being unborn, inexhaustible and being the ruler of all elements of the cosmos, I take birth that is consistent with My nature out of My own will.

The Lord further says:

YadA yadA hi dharmasya glAnir bhavati BhArata!

abhuythAnam adharmasya tadAtmAnam sRjAmyaham (BG 4.7)

Meaning: Oh Arjuna! Whenever dharma or the natural conduct of the society to live for each other and have faith in the Supreme Being is on the decline and adharma or the opposite of dharma is on the rise, I make Myself appear.

The Lord continues:

ParitrANaya sAdhUnAm vinASAyacha dushkRtAm

dharmam samsthApanArthaya sambhavAmi yugE yugE (BG 4.8)

Meaning: To protect those who have realized their SEshatvam or subservience to Me, and to ensure those who do not consider themselves subservient to Me fail in enjoying the results of their deeds, and to establish that I am the upAyam or means for one's liberation, I take birth time to time.

Mantra 6 – uttara anuvAka

ahOrAtrE pArSvE |

Matta: smRtir gnAnam apOhanam cha" in Bhagavad Gita (15.15) which means "remembrance, knowledge and the lack of it are due to Me".

APPENDIX – III

List of references for the write-up on Purusha Sukta

1. Sanskrit commentary by Sri Ranga Ramanuja Muni
2. Sanskrit commentary by sAyaNa (use for cross-checking and correlating)
3. Bhagavad Gita
4. Gita Bhashyam of Ramanuja
5. Sri Vishnu sahasra nAmam

6. Bhagavad GuNa darpaNam - Sri Vishnu sahasra nAmam commentary by Sri Parasara Bhattar
7. Sriramayanam of Valmiki (see note)
8. ThiruvAimozhi
9. Brihad Dhatu Rupavali by TR Krishnacharya
10. Dhaturupa Manjari by L. Anantha Rama Sastri
11. Sabda Manjari by L. Anantha Rama Sastri
12. Monier Williams online Sanskrit-English dictionary

Note: The utara kANdam Slokas quoted by Sri Ranga Ramanuja Muni for Mantra 1 are not seen in a few current versions of Sriramayana we have seen.