

THE POETRY OF SACRED EARTH

Lakshmi Stuthi

Soloist: Ranee Ramaswamy

An invocation in praise of the Goddess Lakshmi

Ishvara

Soloist: Aparna Ramaswamy

At no point in the cosmos does nature end and the Divine begin. It is nature itself that, through a subtle process of dissolution, turns into God, and it is God who, through a subtle process of manifestation, turns into nature.

Vishnusahasranāmam—the thousand names of Mahavishnu—describes him as master of all the worlds, the supreme light, the essence of the universe; all matter animate and inanimate reside within him, and he in turn, resides within all matter.

– ***Vishnusahasranāmam, from the Mahabharata***

The sun that lights the wide world folds its
many rays and joins the mountains as if
it swallowed the day. Darkness spreads with the
complexion of warring Thirumāl bearing a discus.
The beautiful moon rises up spreading light.
Lotus blossoms with thick stems close like the eyes
of those asleep. Trees slumber in bowing posture like
those embarrassed on hearing praises. Buds have
opened abundantly on bushes, resembling smiles.
Bees hum like music from tiny bamboo flutes.

– **Nallanthuvanār, *Kaliththokai* 119, Sangam era (300 BCE – 300 CE)**

Holding the silver sangu on the left
Vishnu doesn't show me his form
Entered my heart, makes me suffer
Every day I live to see his dance
Oh kuyil, you who enjoys and sings in the shenbaga flower
Quietly softly please koo so my Venkatavan comes to me.

– **Andal, *Nachiar Tirumozhi (Sacred Sayings of the Goddess)*, 9th c**

Mullai

Soloist: Ranee Ramaswamy

The skies have not failed, the forest
is beautiful and huge dark clouds have
showered their benefits.
Pattupoochis with red backs crawl
between sapphire colored kāyā flowers,
fine mullai flowers have fallen and
spread, appearing like the work of an
artist, in the red forest land.

– **Seethalai Sathanar, *Akananuru* 134, Sangam era (300 BCE – 300 CE)**

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(ctd.)

On his hills
the *manai* creeper that usually sprawls
on large round stones
sometimes takes to a sleeping elephant.

At parting,
his arms twine with mine.
He gave me guarantees
that he would live in my heart
forever.

Friend, why do you think
that is any reason for grieving?

– **Paranar, *Kurunthokai* 36, Sangam era (300 BCE – 300 CE)**

Neythal

Soloist: Aparna Ramaswamy

I am here:
my loveliness
eaten away by pallor
is lost in the woods by the sea.
My lover is comfortable in his hometown.
All the guarded secrets of our love
are all over the village square.

– **Venputhi, *Kurunthokai* 97, Sangam era (300 BCE – 300 CE)**

Marutham

Soloist: Tamara Nadel

There was a time when
my friend gave you
bitter neem fruit and
you called it
sweet lump of sugar.
But now she gives you
sweet water
from the ice-cool springs
of Pari's hill
and you call it hot and brackish.
Is this the way
your love has gone?

– **Milai Kanthan, *Kurunthokai* 196, Sangam era (300 BCE – 300 CE)**

Kurinji

Soloist: Ashwini Ramaswamy

What could my mother be
to yours? What kin is my father
to yours anyway? And how
did you and I meet ever?
But in love our hearts are as red
Earth and pouring rain:
mingled
beyond parting.

– **Cempulappeyanirar, *Kurunthokai* 40, Sangam era (300 BCE – 300 CE)**

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Prithvi Suktam

Soloists: Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy

May this Earth, whose
surface undulates with
many gradients, and
sustains an abundant
variety of herbs and plants
of different potencies and
qualities, support all human
beings, in all their diversity
of endowment, in mutually
supportive harmony and
prosperity.

– ***Prithvi Suktam (Hymn to the Earth), from the Adharva Veda***