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■c■rya Abhim■nam (taking spiritual refuge in a preceptor/teacher/■c■rya) is greatly lauded by Sv■m■ Pillai Lok■ch■rya in the ■r■v■ch■na Bh■■a■am while laying out the nuts and bolts of the process.

Sv■m■ establishes in S■tram 461 that it's another one of Vi■■u's . . .

Up■yam-s (means) that enables all of us J■v■tm■-s to attain Mok■am, though one can/should also use it as a compliment if they conduct ■aran■gati. That's what Lok■ch■rya states: "■c■rya-abhim■na■ t■■, prapatti p■l■ up■y■ntara■ga■ukku a■gamum■y svatantramum■y irukkum".

How is ■c■rya Abhim■nam's efficacy established? Sv■m■ Lok■ch■rya in S■tram 459 states, "'pa■ut■-k■to■■a■ind■■.....' e■gi■ap■■■ai p■rv■p■yattukku pram■■am■ka anusandhip-patu."

Here, the fourth Thiruvant■■i, p■suram 89, is quoted to prove the efficacy of . . .

this up■yam + endorse it. This p■suram reads: "I have realized an infallible means: worshipping those who resort to the Lord, meditating on the feet of the Lord of the milky ocean, without any distraction — whoever endures this life with humility will destroy accumulated . . .

sins, will open the doors of Vaiku■■ha and remain there with glory."

Now, what scriptural sources are considered the authorities of ■c■rya Abhim■nam? Sv■m■ Lok■ch■rya in S■tram 460 mentions four. First, he mentions p■suram 10:10 of ■nd■l's Nacchiy■r Thirumozhi . . .

where She says, "O my good maid! The supreme Lord, our supreme One, elevated on the serpent-couch is a wealthy, great Lord; we are insignificant humans, so what can we do? Vi■■u-citta (Periy■zhv■r) of ■r■villiputhur, if he is able to obtain a suitable prize from their God . . .

, let me see that!" In other words, ■nd■l turns to Periy■zhv■r, her father and teacher as She feels in this p■suram that Lord Vi■■u may be too beyond Her.

The second p■suram that Sv■m■ Lok■ch■rya cites as an authority is the 18th one of the Fourth Thiruvant■■i.

This reads: "The merits of these who praise those that praise in a special way the man-lion that ripped open the chest of the inimical demon, with sharp nails, will themselves vanquish those of the latter (the merits of those who praise the Lord directly).” In other words, . . .

praising those who praise Vi■■u (such as ■c■rya-s) is greater than those who do so directly.

The third p■suram that Sv■m■ Lok■ch■rya cites as an authority is the 65th one of Sv■m■ ■lavand■r's Stotra Ratnam. This one reads: "Grant me your grace regardless of my own . . .

conduct, having in view my grand-father, N■thamuni, the self-realised one who is the paragon of devotion to your lotus-feet.” Thus, Sv■m■ ■lavand■r seeks Mok■am by taking refuge in his grandfather, a well reputed ■c■rya.

The last p■suram that Sv■m■ Lok■ch■rya cites as an . . .

authority on ■c■rya Abhim■nam is from an unknown, lost text (all we know is that it starts with 'pa■ur manu■ya■'). This p■suram reads, "Those creatures who even associate with Vai■■avas, be they animals or humans or birds, will enjoy that highest place of Vi■■u.”

Interestingly, ■ndhrap■r■a (Vaduga Nambi) and Madhurakavi ■zhv■r, who solely took refuge in R■m■nuj■c■rya and Namm■zhv■r, respectively, are not mentioned as authorities, BUT their acts of ■c■rya Abhim■nam are lauded by Sv■m■ Lok■ch■rya in S■tram-s 409-411 of the ■r■v■ch■na . . .

Bh■■a■am.

■c■rya Abhim■nam's benefits are many (Mok■am itself). To end by quoting Sv■m■ Lok■ch■rya's 462nd S■tram in ■r■v■ch■na Bh■■a■am, "At first this [■c■rya-abhim■nam] makes the [latent] quintessence sprout, then flower and finally, produce the full fruit."