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.. shrI shAradAbhujangam by
Chandrashekhara Bharathi ..

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Author : Shri Chandrashekhara Bharathi Swami of Shringeri
Transliterated by : N.Balasubramanain bbalu at sify.com
Proofread by : N.Balasubramanain bbalu at sify.com
Translated by : N.Balasubramanain bbalu at sify.com
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Composed by Shri Chandrashekhara Bharathi Swami of Shringeri.

INTRODUCTION:- These following verses are in praise of Sharada Devi, the presiding deity at the famous temple at Shringeri in Karnataka state. They were composed by Shri Chandrashekhara Bharathi Swami who adorned the Sharada Peetam as its 34th pontiff. He was a great scholar, and a spiritual Everest. The numerous devotees who visited Shringeri considered him to be an incarnation of the Sharada Devi. They used to unburden their woes and problems in his presence and seek his blessings for their relief. He was greatly moved by their sufferings which are the consequence of straying away from the path of dharma and their inability to seek the Lord's grace by praying to Him. To help them in this matter he composed many stotras (hymns). These hymns are couched in simple language so that everyone can recite them. This Sharada Bhujangam is one such hymn. Herein the saint identifies himself with a lay person who is suffering because he is burdened with many problems. So, he prays to the Sharada Devi to take pity on him and grant relief from the sufferings.

Sharada Devi:- The Goddess Sharadha Devi is generally worshipped as the goddess of learning and speech. She is known by the popular name of Sarasvathi and as the wife of Brahma the god of creation. But, as in the case of all stotrams, She is depicted here as the Supreme Being capable of giving the ultimate goal, the supreme bliss (mokSham). The upanishad says that the Supreme Being alone that appears in many forms like Brahma, Siva, Vishnu, Indra etc. स ब्रह्म स शिवस्स हरिस्सेन्द्रस्सोक्षरः
परमस्वराट् ॥ (Narayana suktam.)

Thus, Sarasvathi has these names in Her 108 namavali -
सर्वदेवस्तुता = She is worshipped by all gods, चतुर्वर्ग-
फलप्रदा = She will

grant all the four goals and so on. The Mooka kavi says this in his Mookapanchasati (500 verses in praise of KamakShi) in the Arya Shatakam (40).

वदनारविन्द-वक्षो-वामाङ्गतटी-वशंवदीभूता ।
पुरुषत्रितये त्रेधा पुरंधिरूपा त्वमेव कामाक्षि ॥

This verse states that KamakShi alone is there as the wife of Brahma resident in His face, of Vishnu in His chest and Siva in lap on His left side. Another verse in the same century (78) salutes Devi saying She is Saraswathi and in that form She appears as the wife of Brahma, and also has the names Katyayani, Kali, Kamakoti Kala, Bharati, Bhairavi, Bhadhra, Shakini, Shambhavi, Shiva.

विद्ये विधातृविषये कात्यायिनि कालि कामकोटि कले ।
भारति भैरवि भद्रे शाकिनि शांभवि शिवे स्तुवे भवतीम् ॥

Lord Krishna says that He (the Supreme Being) alone appears as all deities. Any worship offered to any form and name goes to Him alone and He alone grants the wishes of the worshippers through that form. But such worshippers of these various forms do not realise the truth.

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयाऽर्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधम्यहम् ॥ BG(7-21).

Whichever form a devotee wishes to worship with faith, I make the faith more firm.

स तया श्रद्धया युक्तः तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान् मयैव विहितान्हितान् ॥ BG(7-22).

Possessed of that faith, he engages in the worship of that form and he obtains his desires that are indeed granted by Me alone.

Thus,

the Supreme being alone that is worshipped as Sharada Devi represents Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is said in one of Her names in the 108 names (नामावलिः) as :

ब्रह्म-विष्णु-शिवात्मिका । The list of 108 names also have the names

शारदा, रमा, शिवा-(शिवाभेदा शिवा), चण्डिका,

चामुण्डी, वाराही । She can be worshipped by all, though each one may have different desires, and She will fulfill all those desires.

The translation given is not exact, but general enough to convey the meaning of the verses. Some comments are also provided. The following abbreviations are used in the comments. 1- VS - Sri Vishnu Sahasranama with Sri Sankaracharya's commentary. 2 - LS - Sri Lalita Sahasranamam with the commentary of Sri Bhaskararaya. 3 - BG - Srimad Bhagavadgita with Sri Sankaracharya's commentary. 4 - BH - Srimad Bhagavatam. 5 - AS - Atmarpanastuti by Sri Appayya Dikshitar. 6 - SX - Sri Shivaparadha kShamapana stotram by Shri Shankaracharya. 7 - KU - Kathopanishad.

Now, let us go to the stotram proper. The poet prays that the wonderful form of Shri Sharada Devi, that is resplendent and radiates kindness should be present in his mind.

पुरानेक-जन्मार्जितागण्यपुण्यैः

यदासं मया शारदाभिख्यभाग्यम् ।

दयार्द्रं गुरुत्तंससंक्लृप्तचक्र-

स्थितं तत्सदा मन्मन्त्याविरस्तु ॥ १ ॥

Meaning:- May the great fortune that shines by the name Sharada, which is soaked in compassion, is seated in the Sri Chakra installed by the great guru Sri Sankaracharya, and obtained by me as the result of meritorious deeds performed by me in countless previous births be present in my mind all the time. Note:- Sharada Devi is called by the poet as the great fortune that shines by the name Sharada

- शारदाभिख्यभाग्यम् । The reason is that, as said earlier, it is the Supreme Being that is worshipped at Shringeri as Sharada. The scriptures say that the Supreme Being is beyond our senses. It is beyond sound, touch, form, smell etc. It is beyond words and thought also. अशब्दस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथारसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च यत् । KU (1-3-15). The question, then is, how can one worship It or meditate on It? It seems to be an abstract concept and perhaps uninteresting also. To facilitate worship, It is said to be available in five forms. They are पर, व्यूह, विभव, अन्तर्यामि, अर्चा । The first two forms are available in places like Vaikunta or Kailasa and so are not accessible for us for worship. So also, the avataras or incarnations like that of Rama or Krishna are also not available to us today. We are not able to feel the antaryami or the godhead available as the divinity within us. Very rarely, perhaps one in a few millions is able to curb the tendency of the mind to flow outwards and turn it to the God residing in our hearts. Yama, the Lord of death says this.

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयंभूः

तस्मात् पराङ्क्षयति नान्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षत्

आवृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥ KU (2-1-1).

Realising the limitations of the people, God, who is the very embodiment of compassion, has made Himself available for worship in every form and in particular in consecrated images where His presence is invoked and worshipped with faith and reverence. This is in the form of archa or idols and images. They may be installed in homes or temples and worshipped. Krishna talks about worship of the Lord in the form of idols in His advice to Uddhava. (Book 11 of Bhagavatam) Rituals in worship are only an aid in keeping our mind focussed and serious. But

the essence of the worship of the image is the intense feeling that God is presenting Himself in the image. Sage Naradha says (Bhakti sutra No.16) that deep involvement in performing puja to images etc., is a sign of devotion. पूजादिष्वनुराग इति पाराशर्यः । Prahladha mentions devotion to be of nine types.

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।

अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥ BH(7-5-23).

We may note that अर्चनम्

worshipping Him in images is given a high place in the above list.

Just as we can use a small electrical plug point in our house to

tap all the power we want for our use, so also, a worshipper

can use the small image he worships to draw all that he wants and

also unlimited satisfaction from it. We have to put the switch ON

for the power to flow from the plug point. Devotion is the switch

that makes the image to yield the devotee's wishes. Such a puja is

specially suited for the harried householders in these days when they

may have only limited time for worship. Great acharyas and saints

have worshipped the Lord in images. The list includes Sankaracharya,

Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Chaitanya, Meera and Ramakrishna. Saints

in charge of various maths perform elaborate pujas to idols in their

maths. These saints are spiritually much advanced themselves and need

not do any puja for their own upliftment. But they do the pujas to

inculcate upon the numerous people who come to visit them the need

to perform pujas. To them the image is not an insentient figure but

a living presence. To the saint composer Thiagaraja, the Supreme

Being as Rama was very much present in the idol he worshipped. He could

not think of being away from Him even for a short while as Rama, the

Prince of Ayodhya was resident in his house. So when he was invited

by the king of Tanjore to come to Tanjore he declined the invitation

saying service to his Rama was more important and gave him greater

happiness than any amount of wealth. Similarly, the great acharya Vedanta Desika refused to leave Kanchipuram when he was invited to Vijayanagar. He said that the Lord Varadaraja in the temple was the greatest wealth one can have. A devotee offers flowers, leaves water and some food to the Lord in the image. What he can offer in his puja is naturally limited. And even these are really not his but given by the Lord only. The worshipper should be aware of this and pray to God to accept the meagre offering and bless him. A poor farmer who gets a chance to meet a great king may offer only some fruits and vegetables grown by him in his field; but the great ruler will accept them with grace and reward him. Likewise God graciously accepts what little a devotee offers. A seed sown in a good soil grows into a healthy plant and returns greatly augmented results to the cultivator. So also what is offered to Him, He gives back in abundance. God has said that if a devotee offers a Tulsi leaf, flower, fruit or even a little water with love and devotion He accepts the offering with great satisfaction.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।

तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ BG(9-26).

Thus the stress is on devotion. The kindly Lord accepts with pleasure even such small offerings being present in an idol. Just as the electricity flows out of the humble plug point in the house, God's grace flows out of the diminutive image worshipped in the house or temple. The Supreme Being is present in the idol. Sri Vedanta Desika says that Lord Srinivasa available to us at Tirupati is the Supreme Being extolled by the scriptures. श्रुतिशिरसि विदीप्ते ब्रह्मणि श्रीनिवसे भवतु मम परस्मिन् शेमुषि भक्तिरूपा ।. Thus the idols worshipped in the temples and by us in our own humble house is our interface with the Supreme Being. Is it not a sign of our immense luck, then, that the Supreme Being that can grant us our wishes and salvation too if we ask for it is available to us so easily? So it

is that Sharada Devi is called by the poet as the great fortune that shines by the name Sharada - शारदाभिरख्यभाग्यम् ।.

In the Narayaneeyam (verse No.1) also the poet Narayana Namboodri exclaims with wonder that the Supreme Being that cannot be directly described by the scriptures and which is the form of liberation itself shines at Guruvayoor (as the idol of Krishna) as the good fortune of the people.

अस्पष्टं दृष्टमात्रे पुनरुरुपुरुषार्थात्मकं ब्रह्मतत्त्वं
तत्तावद्भाति साक्षात् गुरुपवनपुरे हन्त भाग्यं जनानाम् ॥

One does not get the fortune to see and worship Shri Sharada at Shringeri unless he is immensely fortunate. Usually people are very interested to visit hill stations, beaches and similar places where they can relax and have some fun. The problem with such visits is that they will come to end in a few days or weeks and one is back from where one started (i.e) to one's regular routine. Thus such pleasures are short lived. The time, emoney and effort spent in such travels is better spent when we spend it in visiting holy places like Shringeri and see the shrine of Sharada Devi. Such a visit will wash off the sins. This fact is not understand because the results are not patent. That is why it is said that one should have done meritorious deeds (punyam) in innumerable births to have Her darshan. So She is known as दुर्गमा (LS -189) = One who is difficult to attain. To have Her in our minds all the time is very difficult as our minds are replete with thoughts about ourselves and our family, friends, fortunes and problems. To make it to focus on God requires long and constant practice. In addition we will require God's gracd also. This is said later on in this poem.

What greatly enhances the glory of the temple of Sharada is the fact that the icon of the Devi was installed by the none other than the great Sankaracharya himself. This fact

is mentioned in the following verse from the Kamalajadayithashtakam (कमलजदयिताष्टकम्) composed in praise of the Devi by Shri Narasimha Bharati Swami, the 33rd pontiff of the peetam.

कल्यादौ पार्वतीशः प्रवरसुरगण-प्रार्तितः श्रौतवर्त्म
 प्राबल्यं नेतुकामो यतिवरवपुषागत्य यां शृङ्गशैले ।
 संस्थाप्यार्चां प्रचक्रे बहुविधनुतिभिः सात्वमिन्द्रधर्चूडा
 विद्यां शुद्धां च बुद्धिं कमलजदयिते सत्वरं देहि मह्यम् ॥ २ ॥

Meaning:- Lord Siva, the consort of Parvati, who was requested by the the gods at the beginning of the dark age of Kali to save the world, decided to do so by reviving the path shown by the vedas. He incarnated Himself with the body of a great renunciant (sanyasi) and coming down to Sringeri. He installed You - Sharada Devi. He worshipped You, who wear half the moon as an ornament, by several hymns. Please bless me quickly with wisdom and pure intellect.

But, what all that is said above need not make one think that She is beyond reach and discourage him from worshipping Her. She is described here as दयाद्रा । or dripping with compassion. She is the very embodiment of mercy. दयामूर्तिः = दयैव मूर्तिः
 स्वरूपं यस्याः । LS(581).

The poet talks of his own lowly status - one without any spiritual education - and prays for Devi's grace by surrendering to Her. By saying he is lowly etc., we have to understand that the author, who is a great scholar and saintly person is speaking on behalf of those who may be lacking spiritual education and practices. He is showing us the way to pray.

न मन्त्रं न यन्त्रं न वा स्तोत्ररीतिं
 विजानेऽम्ब वक्तुं च मह्युःखरीतिम् ।
 त्वदंघ्रिप्रणमो न पात्रं शुचः स्या-
 दिति त्वां प्रपद्ये तवैव प्रसादात् ॥ २ ॥

Meaning:-I do not know mantam or yantram or how to say something in praise of You. I do not know how to express my grief also. As someone who has prostrated at Your feet will not be affected by sorrow any more, I am surrendering to You by Your grace only.

Note:-

Mantram मंत्रम् is a formula or prayer sacred to a deity:
(e.g.) Om namah Shivaya ॐ नमः शिवाय । Yantram यंत्रम् is an amulet, a mystical diagram used as an amulet. One can get Her grace by worshipping Her by mantras or yantras or by chanting hymns that state Her glories. Or else one should be able to express one's problems in a manner that will move Her. If one is not capable of doing anyone of these one should surrender to Her. This is said in the following verse in the Devi Aparadhaxamapana stotram (श्रीदेव्यपराध-क्षमापण-स्तोत्रम्).

न मन्त्रं नो यन्त्रं तदपि च न जाने स्तुतिमहो
न चाह्वानं ध्यानं तदपि च न जाने स्तुति-कथाः ।
न जाने मुद्रास्ते तदपि च न जाने विलपनं
परं जाने मात-स्त्वदनुसरणं क्लेशहरणम् ॥ (1)..

Even to do this one requires Her grace. As an example, we see that there are many people who reside near a temple. But we find that on any day, only a handful few are inclined to visit the temple and worship the Lord. What is preventing others from doing such a simple job that costs no money? The answer is they lack the Lord's grace. Does this mean that God is capricious so that He showers His grace on chosen few and withholds it from others? No, His grace is available to all, but some are not receiving it because of their own deficiencies. A person with vision clouded due to some disease of the eyes does not see objects lit by sun light clearly. This is not because of any fault of the light, but of the defect in his eyes only. Similarly, one whose mind is clouded with negative qualities such as selfishness, anger,

avarice, jealousy cannot receive His grace though He is very much within everyone. The person with the diseased eyes can see properly after he gets rid of the malady by getting appropriate treatment from a qualified doctor. Similarly, a person with his mind sick with negative qualities should get rid of those qualities first. Then his mind cleansed of the impurities will be able to receive God's grace.

भवाम्भोदि-मग्नं भवाद्यैः सुदूरं

विसृष्टं महापाप-गेहायमानम् ।

विवेकादि-हीनं दयानीरधे ते

ममात्मान-मम्बांघ्रियुग्मेऽर्पयामि ॥ ३ ॥

Meaning:- I am fallen in the ocean of samsara (cyclic existence). I am distanced by Siva and others. I am verily the repository of great sins and devoid of qualities like discrimination. Such a one I am, I now submit myself at Your feet.

Note:- One who feels helpless to get out of the cycle of repeated birth and death (known as samsara), however lowly he be, may surrender to the Lord and get relief. He is reputed to be the source of great relief to the devotees and specific remedy for the dreadful disease of samsara for which there is no other known cure. Kulasekara says this in Mukundamala (27)

भक्तात्यन्तहिताौषधं भवभयप्रध्वंसनैकौषधं

श्रेयःप्राप्तिकरौषधं पिब मनः श्रीकृष्णादिव्यौषधम् ॥

He has these names that express this truth. औषधम् । -

संसाररोगभेषजत्वात् औषधम् । He is the specific remedy for the

disease samsara. VS(287). And भेषजम् - संसाररोगस्यौषधं

भेषजम् । VS(578). So, one has to approach Sharada Devi to get

relief from the grave illness known as samsara. She being the very embodiment of kindness, will accept such a person also and help him.

Krishna says that one might have never thought of God and lead a

life of a sinner. But when he decides to change his ways, the kindly

God is ready to accept him and uplift him.

अपि चेत् सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।

साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥ (BG-9-30).

A conflagration reduces to ashes a piece of straw thrown into it in a trice. Similarly, Devi destroys the sins of Her devotees in no time. She makes them pure. She helps them to tide over the cycle of birth and death. So, She has these names.

पापनाशिनी - पापं नाशयति स्वीयविद्यया जपादिना भक्तानामिति तथा ।

यथेषीकातूलमग्नौ प्रोतं प्रदूयतेवमेवास्य पाप्मनः

प्रदूयन्ते इति श्रुतेः । LS(168).

भवनाशिनी - भवं

संसारं नाशयतीति तथा । LS(175).

The devotee says he is

distanced by Shiva and others (भवाद्यैः सुदूरम् विसृष्टं ।)

The Lord is omnipresent, He is present everywhere. So, one can never be away from Him. This being so, how can the author say he is distanced by God? This may be explained by an example. Suppose one wants to listen to a particular program on his radio. But he is not receiving that program, but some other program. What does he do? He simply tunes his receiver to the correct station. He need not carry the receiver to any other place to hear the program because the radio waves are all over the place. Once it is properly tuned, he will hear the program immediately. In this way the program is very near to him. As long as the receiver is not properly tuned the program is not available and is as good as being far away. Thus, the program is both near and far away. Similarly, God is all over the place. Yet, he is near to some and far away for others. One has only to tune his mind to God to receive His grace. Tuning one's mind to God is done by devotion or bhakti. Devi is attained by devotion. So, She has

the name भक्तिगम्या - भक्त्या संराधनेन गम्या । LS(119).

The divine sage Naradha is well known as a great devotee of the Lord. He told Vyasa that he roams about the worlds singing Lord's glories. His mind is constantly tuned to Him. So The Lord readily reveals Himself in his mind as if summoned by him. BH(1-6-34).

प्रगायतः स्ववीर्याणि तीर्थपादः प्रियश्रवाः ।

आहूत इव मे शीघ्रं दर्शनं याति चेतसि ॥

Currently our minds are tuned to the outside world and are receiving wrong signals - relating to mundane affairs.

Because of this we are not able to receive signals from God who is very near to us, in fact within us only. But the wise men (desiring to reach God) direct their minds to Him and receive His signals clearly. Lord Yama says this in Kathopnishad. KU(2-1-1).

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूः-

स्तस्मात्पराङ्मशयति नान्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चिद्धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्ष-

दवृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥

Sometimes one may not receive the program properly even when the station is correctly tuned. This indicates that some thing is wrong with the set and not the program. May be, some of the components are defective; or rusty. So also one might have studied the shastras; but if his mind finds it difficult to tune to Him we may conclude that there is nothing wrong with God, but it is the mind that is defective. It may be covered by a thick coating of sins. The poet says this as महापाप-गेहायमानम् ।

" he is polluted with terrible sins. Such a mind will be agitated and cannot tune to God. Yama makes this clear in Kathopnishad. (1-3-24).

नाविरतो दुश्चरितन्नाशान्तो नासमाहितः ।

नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनामप्लुयात् ॥

He says that one, though he has a sharp mind, cannot reach to God if he has not given up evil conduct, or does not have a calm mind or if his senses are not under control.

The scriptures state that the qualities said by Yama are got by acquiring the four basic qualifications known as साधन चतुष्टय संपत्तिः । These are to be acquired by one who wants to take to the spiritual path. They are described in detail in texts like Viveka Chudamani. The text Tattvabodha defines them as follows. साधनचतुष्टयं किम्? नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेकः । इहामुत्रार्थफलभोगविरागः । शमादिषट्कसंपत्तिः । मुमुक्षुत्वं चेति । The capacity to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent, dispassion to the enjoyment of the fruits of one's actions here in this world and hereafter (in the higher worlds like heaven), the six accomplishments (inner wealth) beginning with shama (शम)and the yearning for liberation. The details are available in this text and Viveka Chudamni. These four qualifications purge the mind of pollutants like anger, jealousy, avarice and bless the student with a keen razor sharp intellect that is capable of understanding the subtle teachings of spiritual texts imparted by the teacher. Having got a pure mind by the above said practices one will be able to tune his mind to God and receive His signals clearly and without disturbance. The devotion will be fruitful. Else the devotion cannot bring any result and God will be far away from him.

Acquiring these qualifications is a long and arduous process. This is said by the sage Patanjali in his Yogasutra. स तु दीर्घकाल-नैरन्तर्य-सत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः ।(1-14).

The practitioner will face numerous obstacles, mainly from within. The mind is not used to any discipline. So, any attempt to discipline it will be firmly resisted. We have the stories of the sage Viswamitra who had to face serious impediments even when he repaired to forests

to practise penance. One is advised to pray and seek God's help to surmount the obstacles. Krishna assures that He will help His devotee in this process. मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात् तरिष्यसि ।

BG(18-58).

Keeping this in mind, the poet surrenders to Devi, who is ready to help such disadvantaged people, for success in this endeavour.

शरीरं स्वतन्त्रं तथाऽक्षाणि सर्वा-

ण्यहो किं करोमि क्व याम्यम्बिके वा ।

मया पोष्यमाणानि मद्दृश्यतां न

प्रयान्त्यञ्जसा मद्दशे तानि तन्याः ॥ ४ ॥

Meaning:- My mind and other organs are insubordinate and I am not able to bring them under my control. I feel helpless. What shall I do? You only have to make them come under my control.

Note:-We take so much care of this body that has all the organs, including the mind. But they are ungrateful in that they do not obey our wishes. In spite of our best efforts they they pull us in the directions they want to go. It is very difficult to control them and make them follow our wishes.

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।

इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥ BG(2-60).

In such a situation. How can we offer them at the feet of the Lord? Only She should make them come under our control when we can submit them at Her feet. Patanjali says in his Yogasutra that meditating on the Lord is an easy way to gain control over the mind. ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा । (1-22).

कदाचिच्च ते पादपद्मस्य पूजां

स्मृतिं दर्शनं वा वितन्युस्त्विमानि ।

विजनन्नहं तानि रक्षामि मातः

मृष नैव वक्ष्यामि शीघ्रं प्रसीद ॥ ५ ॥

Meaning:- I have been nurturing my bodily organs -like the limbs and mind in the fond hope that one day they will be useful in worshipping Your lotus-like feet, or think of You or have Your vision. This is the truth. So, Mother, please be kind to me.

Note:- Our shastras declare that the human birth is very special as it is got after numerous births. Such a precious thing should not be frittered away in chasing petty and short lived pleasures. It should be used to attain the highest goal of life which is liberation or mokSha. And attaining liberation is possible only in human birth. However the human body is fragile as one does not know when death will cut short the life. So the wise one should not waste time but use his body and try for liberation in this life itself. Krishna gives this advice to His friend Uddhava.

लब्ध्वा सुदुर्लभमिदं बहुसंभवान्ते

मानुष्यमर्थदमनित्यमपीह धीरः

तूर्णं यतेत न पतेदनुमृत्यु याव-

न्निःश्रेयसाय विषयः खलु सर्वतः स्यात् ॥ BH(11-9-29).

In view of this devotees have been telling themselves (by advising their limbs) to engage in the worship of the Lord. The devotee Kulasekhara asks his tongue to sing His glories, his mind to think of Him, His hands to engage themselves in worshipping Him, his ears to listen to listen to His stories, his eyes to see Him, his legs to visit His temples, his nose to smell the tulasi leaves used in His worship and his head to bow to Him. This is something like autosuggestion.

जिह्वे कीर्तय केशवं, मुररिपुं चेतो भज, श्रीधरं

पाणिद्वन्द्व समर्चयाच्युतकथाः-श्श्रोत्रद्वय त्वं शृणु ।

कृष्णं लोकय लोचनद्वय, हरेर्गच्छाङ्-द्वियुग्मालयं

जिघ्र घ्राण मुकुन्दपादतुलसीं मूर्धन् नमाधोक्षजम् ॥

Now, the saint says how, at different stages in our life, he lost control of our sense organs with the result that he did not think of the Mother at any time. He also gives the reasons therefor in the next three verses. The stages mentioned are the childhood, youth and old age. These verses bring to our mind the following popular verse in the Bhaja Govindam (7) of Shri Shankaracharya.

बालस्तावत् क्रीडासक्तः तरुणस्तावत् तरुणीसक्तः ।
वृद्धस्तावच्चिन्ता-सक्तः परे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न सक्तः ॥

The carefree child is lost in play. The youth is lost in his sweetheart's charms. The old man broods over his anxieties. Thus, there is none who thinks of the Lord.

मया बालभाव-स्थितेनांबिके त्वत्-
पदांभोजयुग्मं स्मृतं नैव जातु ।
क्षमस्वापराधं दया-वारिराशे
त्वदन्यच्छरण्यं न मे शारदेऽस्ति ॥ ६ ॥

Meaning:- O! Mother! As a child I was playful and so did not think of You. O Sharada! Ocean of mercy! please excuse my folly. I have no one to turn to for protection.

Shri Shankaracharya goes one stage earlier (i.e.) babyhood. He says that as a baby, he was interested in only feeding from his mother and was helpless to protect himself even from tiny insects that bit and harrassed him. In addition he had no control over his sense organs like the mind and limbs and so was he was steeped in ignorance. He was also a victim of many diseases and was crying. So, where is the question of thinking of the Lord? He begs the Lord to pardon his mistake. SX(2).

बाल्ये दुःखातिरेकात् मल-लुलित-वपुः स्तन्यपाने पिपासुः
नो शक्तश्चेन्द्रियेभ्यो भव! मल-जनिता जन्तवो मां तुदन्ति ।

नाना-रोगातिदुःखात् रुदित-परवशः शङ्करं न स्मरामि
क्षन्त्वव्यो मेऽपराधः शिव शिव शिव भोः श्रीमहादेव शंभो! ॥

Note:- Next, the poet talks about his youthhood.

तथा यौवने मत्तचित्तोहमासं
त्वदीयं पदाब्जं स्मृतं नैव नैव ।
क्षमस्वापराधं विधि-प्रेमकान्ते
न पुत्रे मनागप्युपेक्षा जनन्याः ॥ ७॥

Meaning:- Similarly, I was full of energy and hot headed as an youth. I did not think of Your feet even for a short while. O Sharada, the dear consort of Brahma, You should excuse my mistake. A mother will not ignore a child.

Note:- Shri Shankaracharya says that as a well developed youngster his mind was whisked away by senses. He lost his discretion and was lost in sense pleasures provided by money and the company of family, relatives etc. He was full of vigour and proud. He did not think of anything connected with the Lord.

So, he begs the Lord to pardon his mistake. SX (3).

प्रौढोऽहं यौवनस्थो विषय-विषधरं पञ्चभिर्मर्म-सन्धौ
दष्टो नष्टो विवेकः सुत-धन-युवति-स्वाद-सौख्ये निषण्णः ।
शैवे चिन्ता-विहीनं मम हृदयं अहो मान-गर्वाधिरूढं
क्षन्त्वव्यो मेऽपराधः शिव शिव शिव भोः श्रीमहादेव शंभो! ॥

The poet says that a mother will not ignore a child - न पुत्रे मनागप्युपेक्षा जनन्याः । and overlook the mistakes committed. The देव्यपराध-क्षमापण-स्तोत्रम् Devi-Aparadha- kShamapana Stotram has a similar verse wherein the poet talks of the various acts of omission and commission committed by him due to ignorance of rules of proper conduct (dharma) and sheer laziness etc.. He asks the Mother to pardon them saying there may be a vile son, but never a bad mother.

विधेरज्ञानेन द्रविण-विरहेणालसतया
विधेयाशक्यत्वात्तत्र चरणयो-र्याच्युतिरभूत् ।
तदेतत् क्षन्तव्यं जननि सकलोद्धारिणि शिवे
कुपुत्रो जायेत क्वचिदपि कुमाता न भवति ॥

Now, the poet explains as to why he could not even think of Devi in his old age.

जरारोग-संपीडिताङ्गो जरायां
कथं वा स्मरेयं पदं शारदाम्ब ।
क्षमस्वापराधं समस्तं मदीयं
क्षमाधूत-सर्वं सहाखर्व-गर्वे ॥ ८ ॥

Meaning:- In the old age, when my body would have become decrepit and host to a variety of diseases, O Sharada! how will I be able to remember Your feet? You, who excel the mother earth in forbearance should overlook my failings.

Shri Shankaracharya talks of the same thing as given here. SX(4).

वार्दक्ये चेन्द्रियाणां विकल-गतिमतश्चाधिदैवादि-तापैः
प्राप्तै रोगैर्वियोगै-व्यसन-कृशतनोर्ज्ञप्ति-हीनं च दीनम् ।
मिथ्या-मोहाभिलाषै-र्भवति मम मनो धूर्जटैर्ज्ञान-शून्यं
क्षन्तव्यो मेऽपराधः शिव शिव शिव भोः श्रीमहादेव शंभो! ॥

Note:-One can understand that in the three stages mentioned above one may not be able to exercise control over himself: in his childhood when one is not mature and also in the old age when the body would have become enfeebled and the mind, as a consequence would have lost its will power. So it is proper to beg forgiveness for the mistakes committed in these ages.

But what is the explanation for the lapses committed in between these ages? The response is, that as a fond mother, She should overlook his failings.

त्वदीयं पदाब्जं सदा पूजयेयं

तथा संस्मरेयं च पश्येयमेवम् ।

समिच्छंश्च मत्पूर्व-दुर्वासनाभिः

बलादाहतं मन्मनः किं करोमि ॥ ९॥

Meaning:- Truly speaking, I want to worship Your feet, think of them and look at them all the time. But the problem is that my mind is being forcibly pulled away as the result of evil tendencies that have been accumulated in my previous births. What shall I do?

Note:-

We have accumulated tendencies from our earlier births, They exert a powerful influence on our minds with the result that we tend to act in a way different from how we would like to. Krishna states this clearly. सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।

प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥ BG(7-12).

The poet anticipates that one may say that accumulated tendencies are the result of your own acts, and ask what can anyone do in this matter, he gives the answer in the following verse.

यदि त्वं वदस्यम्ब ते पूर्व-कर्म

त्वयैव प्रयत्नेन जेतव्यमेवम् ।

तदा मय्यजस्रं कृपा संविधेया

प्रयत्नं करोम्येव तत्रापि सम्यक् ॥ १०॥

Meaning:- If You were to say that the tendencies acquired by me are to be my conquered by my own efforts, even then You should extend Your mercy in this effort of mine unceasingly. I will, then, make strong effort to win over my tendencies.

Note:- The

fact is that though one may realise that his past tendencies prevent him from channelising his mind to Devi, he will be unable to control them. Therefore one requires Her grace to support his efforts and make them successful. What is impossible to achieve if one has Her support? Shri Sankaracharya makes a similar request in Sivanandalahari. (41). He

prays to Lord Siva to order that all his bodily organs, like tongue, mind, head, feet, hands, eyes and ears should engage themselves in His worship. Then only he will be cleansed of his sins and be fit for liberation.

पापोत्पात-विमोचनाय रुचिरैश्वर्याय मृत्युञ्जय
स्तोत्र-ध्यान-नति-प्रदक्षिण-सपर्यालोकनाकर्णने ।
जिह्वा-चित्त-शिरोऽङ्घ्रि-हस्त-नयन-श्रोत्रैरहं प्रार्तितो
ममाज्ञापय तन्निरूपय मुहु-मामेव मा मेऽवचः ॥

The Acharya prays in the last line that the Lord should repeatedly make his mind engage in His worship. तन्निरूपय मुहुः । Why say repeatedly? The reason is that our mind is and had been attached to the attractions of the world for many births. Even if the kindly Lord extends His hand for us to hold and we also grasp it, we will not be able to retain our hold for long. The pull of these attractions is very strong and will tear away our mind back to ourselves, our family, possessions etc. We have to be alert and watch the situation. The moment we feel our hold on the Lord is weakening, we have to renew our effort and tighten the grip. This effort is thus to be done repeatedly till we find that our hold is firm and no more weakening. It is for this reason that the devotee Dhruva also prayed to the Lord that his mind should repeatedly seek the company of holy men. BH(4-9-11).

भक्तिं मुहुः प्रवहतां त्वयि मे प्रसङ्गो
भूयादनन्त महताममलाशयानाम् ।

The poet puts forward an ingenious reason why Devi should come to his help even if he does not pray for it.

यदि त्वं मदीयां श्रुचं नापनुद्याः
तदा दुःख-वह्नि-प्रतप्तेऽन्तरङ्गे ।
मदीये स्थिताया-स्तवाप्यम्ब खेदो

भवेदित्यहं चिन्तया-ऽऽर्तोऽस्मि भूयः ॥ ११ ॥

Meaning:- If You do not deign to dispel my sorrow, then, O Mother, I am worried that You too will be afflicted, since You are residing in my heart that is hot with the fire of grief.

Note:- It may be

said that let me suffer as said above. But the Lord is resident in the hearts of all beings. ईस्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन

तिष्ठति । BG(18-61). In this case, where the author says his heart is full of sorrow, the sorrow will surely affect Devi also who is residing in his heart. No doubt Devi is the embodiment of bliss. Yet, because of Her association with one who is intensely suffering, She too will get a share of the suffering. Also since She is all pervading, She cannot also get away from the author's heart to some other clean place. Because of this reason, the author points out that She has to alleviate the distress of the author if She wants to escape any suffering.

The scripture say that Ignorance about the true nature of the Self is the cause of all the sufferings one goes through. So, the poet now prays to Devi to remove the nescience.

वदन्तीह शास्त्राणि सत्यश्चिदात्मा

ऽद्वयश्चान्यदार्तं समस्तं मृषेति ।

तथाप्यम्ब मोहो न मे विप्रनष्टो

ज्ञादित्यम्ब तं नाशयानर्थ-मूलम् ॥ १२ ॥

Meaning:- The scriptures declare that the individual soul is eternal, of the form of wisdom and non-dual (that is it is one without a second thing) while every thing else is unreal (will disappear with the dawn of realisation of the truth), and embodiment of sorrow. Still, my ignorance is not removed. O Mother! You have to dispel the ignorance that is the root of all sorrows.

Note:-

Our scriptures state that through God's grace alone one gets a desire for the supreme wisdom referred to above arises. For example, the Avadhuta Gita says - ईश्वरानुग्रहादेव पुंसामद्वैतवासना । महद्भयपरित्राणाद्विप्राणामुपजायते ॥ This grace of God has to be combined with one's own effort which is a must. Sarasvathi has the name ब्रह्मज्ञानैकसाधना = The only means of getting the wisdom that reveals the supreme being. So the poet prays to Devi for Her grace to gain the wisdom. The Lord had said that He will, out of compassion, remove the ignorance of His devotees and by granting them the supreme wisdom. BG(10-11).

तेषामेवानुकुं पार्थ महमज्ञानजं तमः ।
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञान-दीपेन भास्वता ॥

May be the ignorance is not removed in this birth as the poet has prayed for. He prays that he should be blessed with the remembrance of Devi in his last moments. This remembrance of the Goddess will ensure that he will not be born again and suffer the pangs of samsara - the cycle of birth and death.

यदा दण्डधृत्प्रेषिताः भीमदूताः
महापापिनं मां समाक्रष्टुमारात् ।
समायन्ति तस्मिन् हि काले दयाब्धे
मदीये मनस्याविरेधि त्वमम्ब ॥ १३ ॥

Meaning:- When the frightful messengers sent by Yama, the god of death come to take me, a great sinner, away, I beseech You, the ocean of mercy, to appear in my mind.

Note:- The author, having admitted that he is unable to shed his ignorance, now prays that he may be granted the privilege of having the thought of Devi in his last moments. Being a sinner, Yama's servants will come to drag him away to their master's presence to for judgement. This will be a terrifying moment for anyone. One will not know what to

do at that time. Krishna had said that one will reach Him if one has the thought of the Lord at his final moments. He adds that one will also reach whatever (if it is not God) he is thinking of at the time of death. B.G(8-5,6).

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।

यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेभरम् ।

तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय-स्सदा तद्भावं भावितः ॥

In view of this devotees had prayed to God to grant them His remembrance (and not of anything else) in their last moments. The devotee Kulasekhara addresses Krishna Himself who had said this. He prays that his mind should attach itself to Him now itself and not wait till his last moments. He wonders how he will be able to remember Him at the time of death as he is likely to be choked with phlegm and will be struggling to breathe.

कृष्ण त्वदीयपदपङ्कजपञ्जरान्तः अद्यैव मे विशतु मानसराजहंसः ।

प्राणप्रयाणसमये कफवातपित्तैः कण्ठारोधनविधौ स्मरणं कुतस्ते ॥ (9).

So, the author

prays that he should be blessed with Her presence in his mind in his final moments.

One may tell the poet that he had admitted to be a great sinner. Such being the case why he thinks that he will be blessed with the remembrance of the Goddess in his last moments, the answer given is that Devi is amenable to devotion.

महापापिनं मां समुद्धर्तुमेव

त्वया पुण्य-पापे परोक्षे कृते हि ।

न चेत्सर्वलोको विजानीयुरेनं

महापापिनं त्वां च वैषम्य-युक्ताम् ॥ १४ ॥

Meaning:- Only with an idea to uplift me, a great sinner, you have made the merits and sins one not perceptible to others. If it were not so, all would have known I am a great sinner and You as being favourably disposed to me.

Note:- The good and bad deeds of a person produce (punyam) merits and (papam) sins respectively. Every one will have to experience the results in the form of joy and sufferings in this or some other birth. The stock of one's merits and sins is invisible to the person concerned and to others also. It is known as अदृष्टम् । (unseen). They can only be inferred by the experiences we undergo in our lives. Kalidasa uses this idea in his Raghuvamsam (1- 20). He says that the king Dilipa kept his plans secret. His countenance also did not give out what he had in his mind. They could only be inferred from the results like the impressions of the previous births.

तस्य संवृतमन्त्रस्य गूढाकारेङ्गितस्य च ।

फलानुमेयाः प्रारंभाः संस्काराः प्राक्तना इव ॥

The past deeds leave their impressions on the mind of the individual. They continue to exert their influence in the current life also by making one act in a proper or improper way.

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृते-ज्ञानवानपि ।

प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥ BG (3-33).

The poet says that he had committed countless sins. Devi, out of immense mercy has made these sins invisible to others. Had it been not been the case, people would have known he is a great sinner. They would have insulted or shunned him. This is proof enough that She is kind to a great sinner as also with good people. Krishna says that God is equally inclined to every one. He has no one whom He hates or loves.

समोहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।

ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ॥ (Gita 9-29).

But, the Lord says that if one

worships Him with devotion, then he is dear to Him and vice versa.

This does not imply any partiality. This is like the case of the

fire. It is available to all. If one chooses to come close to it, it

gives him warmth. But, if one chooses to stay away from it, it does

not give him warmth and as a result will be exposed to cold. This is

no fault of the fire.

After talking about the compassion of Devi,

the poet describes in the next four verses, the remarkable changes

that devotion to Her brings about in a person and also the benefits

of devotion.

शरीरे स्वके-ऽहंत्वमस्तं प्रयाया-@@

दिति त्वां प्रपन्नाः जनाः शारदाम्ब ।

समस्तेषु वस्तुष्वहंतां भजन्ते

किमेतद्विचित्रं चिदानन्द-रूपे ॥ १५॥

Meaning:- Those who worship You with the desire to give up the

idea that I am the body, instead get the idea I am everything in

the universe. How wonderful this is!

Note:- Those who worship

Devi with the desire that they should discard their identification

with their body get it. The idea I am the body is a limited

vision. This is replaced with the vastly expanded universal vision I

am every thing. One ceases to identify oneself with the body when one

identifies with the soul or atma which is all pervading. This results

in the idea I am everything in the universe. This is said in Gita

(6-29). सर्वभूतस्थमत्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।

ईक्षते योग-युक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥ Naturally,

this is a very high stage in spiritual progress. Rarely one will find people who have got such a vision. Sage Narada tells about this to King Yudhishtira; that one should look upon deer, camels, donkeys, monkeys, rats, reptiles, birds and flies as his own children and asks what is it that distinguishes these from his children.

मृगोष्ट्र-खर-मकार्गु-सरीसृपखग-मक्षिकाः ।

आत्मनः पुत्रवत् पश्येत् तैरैषामन्तरं कियत् ॥ BH(7-14-8).

Muka kavi says the same thing but some what differently. He points out with wonder that those who have the blessings of Shri KamakShi Devi will see no differences between seemingly opposites like friend and foe, or home and forest and so on.

शिव शिव पश्यन्ति समं श्रीकामाक्षीकटाक्षिताः पुरुषाः ।

विपिनं भवनममित्रं मित्रं लोष्टं च युवतिर्बिबोष्टम् ॥

(Arya shatakam -48).@ The

reason is that Devi's grace will make them see every thing as one's own self. Thus there are no distinctions even between opposites as said above. The Brihadaranyopanishad (1-4-2) says द्वितीयाद्वै भयं भवति । that only when one sees something as other than oneself (i.e.) a second thing, there will arise feelings like suspicion, fear, jealousy, dislike in his mind. This leads to loss of peace of mind, restlessness, and unhappiness . An example is given by our texts to explain this phenomenon. A sparrow lands on a dressing table. It looks into the mirror and sees its own image. It mistakes the reflection to be another sparrow, its rival, and attacks it. In the same way, the same Supreme Being is resident in everything in the universe. Only, the forms are different. The containers (their bodies) are different, but the content - the godhead is same.

क्षेत्रज्ञं च मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत । BG(13-2)

Thus they are all one's own images. But one mistakes them to be

different from him. This misunderstanding gives rise to conflicts and confusion. But one who can see oneness is free of the delusion and is happy. The famous mantra from the Isavasyopanishad(7) says this.

यस्मिन् सर्वणि भूता-न्यात्मैवाभू-द्विजानतः ।
तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥

Intense devotion to Her yields such a vision. So, She has the name भेदनाशिनी - One who destroys distinctions. LS(179).

महा-व्याधि-शान्त्यै तथा निःस्वतायाः
प्रणाशाय ये त्वां भजन्ते नरास्ते ।
जवाच्छूलिनः स्युश्च कृत्तिं वसानाः
क एष प्रकारः प्रपन्नेषु तेऽम्ब ॥ १६ ॥

Meaning:-Those who worship You for getting their serious disease cured and similarly for getting rid of their poverty become possessors of tridents and dressed in the hide of elephant. O Mother! is it proper on Your part to conduct Yourself in this manner with those who surrender to You?

Note: - The serious disease is samsara or having to be born and die endlessly. By saying that the worshippers come to hold a trident and be dressed in the hide of an elephant indicates they get the form of Siva. Siva holds a trident and wears the hide of an elephant. Devi and Siva are one. This was pointed out earlier. शिवा = शिवाभेदा शिवा । She is not different from Siva, so Devi has the name Siva. LS(53). The devotees become one like Devi. This is known as सारूप्यम् or similar form and is one form of liberation.

तथा मोहशान्त्यै जनाः ये प्रपन्नाः@@
तदास्येक्षणा-त्सर्व-लोकोऽपि सद्यः ।
प्रमुह्यत्यवश्यं विचित्राम्बुराशौ

मनो मामकं शारदे मग्नमास्ते ॥ १७ ॥

Meaning:- In the same manner, people who see those who surrender to You to control delusion definitely get deluded. O Sharada! my mind is filled with wonder.

Note: - Delusion is the result of ignorance about the true nature of one's Self. Those who pray to Devi gets his delusion removed. But those who come close to him become themselves deluded, meaning charmed by him because of his greatness got as a result of Devi's grace. The popular hymn Shyamala Dandakam also says this . येन वा यावकाभाकृतिर्भाव्यसे, तस्य वश्या भवन्ति
स्त्रियः पुरुषाः । Men and women will come under the control of the one who meditates on Your shining complexion, possessing the hue of the red lac.

कनद्देह-भाधूत-सच्छातकुम्भां@@

लसत्तार-हाराड्य-वक्षोजकुम्भाम् ।

सदा त्वां जना ये हृदब्जे स्मरन्ति

स्मरन्त्येव ते देवि शारीर-कान्त्या ॥ १८ ॥

Meaning:- Those who meditate on You all the time as one having the complexion that is far superior to well polished gold, and with chest shining with chain that shines like a garland of stars become themselves Manmatha (cupid) with their outstanding beauty.

Note:-

By worshipping Devi one gets an exceedingly attractive form. Sharada Devi has an exceedingly beautiful form. She has the name चारुरूपा - चारु

सुन्दरं रूपं लावण्यं यस्याः । LS(241). By intensely meditating on Her the devotee gets an attractive form. This is like the case of an iron ball dropped in the fire. After some time the ball imbibes all the qualities of the fire. It also glows and looks like a ball of fire. A devotee is drawn close to Her and imbibes Her

qualities and gets a beautiful form. Next, the poet describes in the next four verses the state of mind of those who worship Devi.

कदा वा सुधाकुंभ-पुस्ताक्षमाला-@@

विबोधाख्यमुद्राः कराब्जै-र्दधानाम् ।

मुखश्री-पराभूत-पूर्णन्दु-विंवां

सदा त्वां स्मरन्वीत-शोको भवेयम् ॥ १९ ॥

Meaning:- When will I be able to think of You, bearing in Your four hands, the pot of nectar, book, rosary and chin-mudra and face that outshines the full moon and be without sorrow all the time?

Note:-

This verse describes the form of Sharada Devi that is suitable for meditation. Being able to think of Her all the time will be the summum bonum of life. By meditating on Her in Her form as said here one will be relieved of his/her sorrows. She has the name दुःखहन्त्री - दुःखस्य संसारिकस्य हन्त्री । LS(191). @@ After saying that by meditating on Devi one can get rid of his sorrows, the poet proceeds to say that one will also be blessed with infinite bliss.

कदा तुङ्गभद्रा-सरितीर-देशे@@

चरन्तीं समुत्तुङ्ग-कल्याण-दात्रीम् ।

सदा भावयंस्त्वां मुदा यापयेयं

मदायु-र्मदेभेन्द्र-याने-ऽम्ब वाणि ॥ २० ॥

Meaning:- When will I spend my days happily by meditating on You, moving around the banks of the Tungabadra river, showering on all the worlds wonderful bliss and having the gait of a proud elephant ?

Note:- Devi is known as सुखप्रदा - सुखानि इहिकामुष्मिक,

कैवल्यरूपाणि प्रकर्षण दत्ते सुखप्रदा । LS(192). She

gives in abundance happiness, be it relate to this world or the other world and also the supreme bliss known as liberation. So, Her devotee will be full of joy. The poet Bhartrihari expresses a similar

desire. He wants to reside on the banks of the sacred river Ganga, clad in a strip of cloth and with folded hands raised over his head keep loudly repeating the Lord Siva's names and pray for His mercy.

कदा वारणस्याममरतटिनीरोधसि वस-

न्वसानः कौपीनं शिरसि निदधानोऽञ्जलिपुटम् ।

अये गौरीनाथ त्रिपुरहर शंभो त्रिनयन

प्रसीदेति क्रोशन्निमिषमिव नेष्यामि दिवसान् ॥ Vairagayashatakam (87).

Next, the poet talks about the fruit of meditating on the glorious form of Devi.

कराब्जे-ऽक्षमालां वहन्तीं सदा त्वां

भजन्भृङ्गकीट-प्रकारेण मातः ।

करे मे-ऽक्षमालं करोम्येव नूनं

परं त्वन्मनस्त्वं सदा देहि मद्यम् ॥ २१ ॥

Meaning:- By meditating on You holding a rosary in Your lotus like hand, all the time like a wasp confined in its nest, O Mother!, I too have come to be holding a rosary in my hand. But, I pray to You to make my mind to hold on firmly to You.

Note: It is a popular

notion that the wasp confines the worm that has come out of its egg in a nest. It visits the nest frequently and stings the helpless worm. The worm is thus tormented and keeps thinking of the tormentor, the wasp, constantly in fear, with the result it metamorphoses itself into a wasp. In the same way, the poet says that by constantly thinking of Sharada Devi, he too have got himself transformed into Her. The Avadhuta sage says this to King Yadhu in avadhuta Gita. BH(11-14-22 and 23).

यत्र यत्र मनो देही धारयेत्सकलं धिया ।

स्नेहाद्वेषद्वयाद्वापि याति तत्तत्सरूपताम् ॥

On whatever object a person concentrates his mind intensely, either

through love or hate or fear, he attains the form of that very object.

कीटः पेशस्कृतं ध्यायन्कुड्यां तेन प्रवेशितः ।
याति तत्सात्मतां राजन् पूर्वरूपमसंत्यजन् ॥

The worm confined to
its nest by the wasp keeps thinking of it till it attains a form
resembling that of the insect. The poet, finally, describes the
method of offering oneself totally to the Goddess.

दृशौ दर्शने ते करौ पूजने स्तां
श्रुती त्वच्चरित्र-श्रुतौ वाक्स्तुतौ स्यात् ।
शिरस्त्वत्पदाब्ज-प्रणत्येक-सक्तं
भवत्वम्बिके ध्यानसक्तं मनो मे ॥ २२ ॥

Meaning:- Let my eyes be seeing You. Let my hands be engaged
in worshipping You. Let my ears hear stories about You. My
tongue should be describing Your glories. My head should always
be saluting Your feet. My mind should be engaged in meditating
on You.

Note:- Our scriptures say that the human life is
very precious, but is fragile. Every available moment should be
used in thinking of God or hearing about Him so that our sins get
washed away and we may escape the hands of Death. Sri Bhagavatam
says that only the time spent in this manner is time lived well.

आयुर्हरति वै पुंसामुद्यन्नस्तं च यन्नसौ ।
तस्यर्ते यत् क्षणो नीत् उत्तमश्लोकवार्तया ॥ BH(2-3-17)

It talks repeatedly
about this and uses harsh words to condemn those who stray away from
the path of devotion and waste their lives in other ways. In view
of this Shri Sankaracharya makes a similar request to Lord Siva as
the author of this poem in Sivanandalahari. (7).

मनस्ते पादाब्जे निवसतु वचस्तोत्र-फणितौ

करौचाभ्यर्चायां श्रुतिरपि कथाकर्णन-विधौ ।
तव ध्याने बुद्धि-र्नयन-युगलं मूर्ति-विभवे
परग्रन्थान् कैर्वा परमशिव जाने परमतः ॥

The Lord had said that He will take care of the welfare of those who are totally devoted to Him as described above. BG(9-22).

अनन्या-श्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

What about the large majority of people who cannot do so? Their mind is still occupied with attachment to their family, friends, assets etc. and because of this they are not able to spend much time in thinking of God. Arjuna's was such a case. He was torn between love for his kith and kin and to his sense of duty. His mind was not fully mature for devotion to the exclusion of all other attachments. To him Krishna said that he should carry on performing his duties and also remember the Lord. With the mind so fixed on Him, he will progress spiritually and in course of time reach Him.

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मय्यर्पित-मनो-बुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयः ॥ BG(8-7).

भुजङ्गप्रयाताख्य-वृत्तेन क्लृप्तां
स्तुतिं ये नराः भक्ति-युक्ताः पठन्ति ।
सुविद्यां मतिं निर्मलां चारु-कीर्तिं
प्रयच्छाम्ब तेषां भुजङ्गाभ-वेणि ॥ २३ ॥

Meaning:- O Mother with the long plait resembling a winding snake, You should bless those who read with devotion this hymn set to the Bhujangaprayata meter, good education, clean intellect and good reputation.

॥ ॐ तत्सत् ॥

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