maArgabandhusotram by Appaya Dixita

Document Information

Text title: maargabandhu stotra
File name: maargabandhu.itx
Category: shiva, appayya-dIkShita, panchaka
Location: doc_shiva
Author: Appayya Dixit
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Latest update: January 16, 2022
Send corrections to: sanskrit@cheerful.com

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January 18, 2022

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માગર્બ્રધુ અત્રા ભજે

શ્રીમાગર્બ્રધુ ચારમાલા

આથવા પચરત્નમાલા

માગર્બ્રધુ અત્રમ ભજે

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The sequence of the verses has variation; also with verse number 6.

Introduction and translation by N. Balasubramanian

A short life sketch of Shri Appayya DikShita (1520-1593 AD)

Shrimad Appayya DikShita was born at Adayapalam village, very near Arni, North Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, in the year 1520 AD. His father Shri Rangarajadhari was the son of Shri Acharya DikShita - also known as VakShasthalacharya who was in the court of Shri Krishnadevaraya. “Appayya” was an endearing form of his real name, Vinayaka Subramaniam. “The 16th century AD, in South India was an age of confusion when begotry and vigorous proselytism were rampant. Persecution of one sect by another with the help of the ruling dynasties was quite common. In such an age, the need was felt for a rare scholar with comprehensive vision and imagination, whose mission in life would be the reconciliation of the various creeds, cults and philosophies. Shri Appayya DikShita filled this essential need. He was a peace maker who pleade for harmony, tolerance and mutual goodwill and understanding at a time when people were quarrelling among themselves as to who was superior Vishnu or Shiva. (Dr. N. Ramesan IAS. Shri Appayya DikShita Page 3) “DikShitar's culture was at once profound, libeal and wide. His characteristic impartiality never failed him even in his out and out militant works.” (A. V. Gopalachariar. Introduction to Varadarajastava 1927. P vi) DikShitar’s learning, says Y. Mahalinga Shastri, was in the truest sense of the word encyclopaedic.

Shri DikShita is the author of not less than 104 works and had enjoyed the patronage of King Chinna Bomma of Vellore. He was offered “kanakAbhiSheka” by this king in 1582AD. He was patronised by Chinna Thimma and Venkatapati also. He lived upto the ripe age of 73 years and spent his last days in Chidambaram. Some of his most famous works are Shivarka maNidIpikA, NyAya rakShAmaNI, siddhAnta lesha sa.ngraha, parimala, chAturmata sArasa.ngraha, yAdavabhyudaya vyAkhyA, varadarAjastava and kuvalayAnanda. His stotras are simple, popular and effective, for example, mArgabandhu stotram, durgAchandrakalA stuti, ApitakuchambA stava, hariharabheda stuti.
Margabandhu stotram: This small hymn is about Lord Marga sahaya or Margabandhu of Virinchipuram, near Vellore, NA Dt., the family deity of DikShita. It is very effective when recited before and during journey to ward off accidents and ensure success. (The above life sketch is taken from the book Shrimad Appayya DikShita, published by Shrimad Appayya DikShitendrar Grantha Prakasana Samiti, Hyderabad.)

The following abbreviations are used in the commentary: (1) VS: Shri Vishnu Sahasranama stotram with Shri Shankara’s bashyam. (2) SS: Shiva Sahasranama stotram (called Vedasara sahasram) from Padmapuranam with the commentary (published by Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Library) of HH Shri Paramasivendra Saraswati - 57th pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam and the guru of the well known saint composer Shri Sadasiva Brahmandra Saraswati. (3) BG: Bhagavat Gita (4) BH: Shrimad Bhagavatam (5) KU: Kathopanishad. (6) MU: mundakopanishad (7)SVU: Svetasvatara upanishad. (8)TU: Taittriyopanishad. (9) SA: Shri Shivanama Ashtottara shata stotram from Skandam with the commentary (called Shivatattva Rahasyam) of Shri Neelakanta DikShita (grandson of Shri Appayya DikShita’s younger brother), a great scholar and poet in his own right.

Margabandhu = a way, road, path; બ્રધુ = relative or any one associated, well wisher. So the word માગર્બ્રધુ means one who comes along with you giving company and protection. This small hymn is about Lord Marga sahaya or Margabandhu stotram is a hymn praising the Lord ગુણમુક્તાનાંકં stotram (VS681) It talks about His qualities.

Margabandhu stotram: At this point it is relevant to say a few words about stotram. Our scriptures are explicit in saying that the Supreme Being is one. It is without name, form and any other attributes. It is called brahman in our scriptures. This is not its name but one of its many attributes. That which is big is brahman. Since the adjective ‘big’ is used simply without a noun to be qualified it implies that the bigness is unlimited. It is infinite and beyond time, space etc., unlike the objects and beings we see in the universe. The scriptures also aver that it is beyond our senses. The famous mantra from the Taittriyopanishad (Anu IV) says that the brahman is beyond the reach of our mind and words. If so, how does a seeker think of it or pray to it? This is where our scriptures come.
to our help. They also describe the same God (who indeed is without a form or name) as having many forms and names. This helps a seeker to worship Him through prayers, puja, pilgrimages to holy places etc. So we have gods like Rama, Shiva, Durga etc. The worship of the Lord with form and name is called (अजुः उपास-न ) saguna (sa = with; guna = attributes; upAsaNa = worship). The names and forms conceal the esoteric truths mentioned in the upanishads. Thus they, like a map, give us some idea of something which is very vast and cannot be grasped by our senses. The Lord graciously accepts the worship offered to Him in any form one may choose. Krishna says

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धाः तरिक्षते ।
tasya tasyāchalaṁ śraddhaṁ tām ev vidhāṇam ॥ BG.7-21

He says that in whatever form a devotee seeks to worship Him with faith He upholds that faith and makes it steady.

अ तथा श्रद्धा युक्तः: तस्यार्थानन्ददीह ।
लभते च ततः कामनं भविष्यतानि ॥ BG.7-22

He adds that the devotee engages himself with faith in the worship (as said above) and from that he obtains his desires which are really conferred by Me alone. These statements of the Lord lend validity and sanctity to the worship of God with name and form who indeed is without any name, form or attributes. Later on the Lord says

तेषां सत्त्वार्थनानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकā ।
धामी बुद्धिसयोगे तेन मायपुषान्ति तें। BG.10-10

He assures that to such devotees who worship Him with love He will give the clear wisdom by which they will reach Him. In this manner the saguna upAsana acts as a stepping stone to nirguna upAsana and through that the realisation of God.

Prahlada, the gem among the devotees, mentions nine kinds of devotion (BH 7-5-23). The first two amongst these (viz.) श्रवणम् listening to the Lord’s names and stories which bring out His glories and कौटुङ्कः chanting them are the simplest and easiest to practise. These can be done by anyone irrespective of age, caste or gender. They are suitable for the young and energetic as well as the old and decrepit, a pundit and also the ignoramus. Thus they are suitable for all. It is possible that their very simplicity deceives one to imagine that they are less potent than the other kinds of devotion. This is not so. Our scriptures repeatedly assert that they can confer the highest benefits on the devotee. The vedas contain stotras like the
Rudram, Shri suktam etc. Our puranas contain many. In addition our acharyas like Shri Shankara and other saints have composed soul-stirring compositions in many languages. All these are ideally suited for recitation.

One remarkable common feature to be found in these stotras is that each one may be in praise of a differently named god like Rama or Shiva. It will praise the attributes of that deity (in saguna form). It will also refer to incidents to be found in the puranas. The Bhagvat Gita says that the Lord incarnates Himself from time to time to subdue the evil and protect the righteous people. The puranas contain details of the incarnations and the deeds performed by Him to fulfill His mission. Behind all the glorification they will refer to His nirguna (without attributes) aspect also. The composition may be in praise of Shri Rama or Devi but it will also talk of the God as the Supreme Being. This clearly shows that the composer of the stotra was in fact praising the formless reality using the form of Shri Rama or Devi as a front. We can see this being done in this stotram also.

There is one more point to note regarding stotras. Poets have sung praises of nobles and kings for pecuniary gains. But these men and kings, howsoever great or rich they may be, are only human. They have their limitations and weaknesses. In view of this a poem in praise of a person has necessarily to overlook the subject’s foibles, exaggerate whatever virtues are to be found and if necessary innovate virtues! Exactly opposite is the case with God. He is pure and without limitations. As said earlier He is beyond the reach of the mind and words. So those who have composed stotrams in praise of the Lord have invariably felt severely handicapped because of their own limitations. We find such verses confessing the feelings of inadequacy even in the compositions of great acharyas like Shri Shankara and Shri Vedanta Desika.

Now let us go to the Margabhandhu Stotram proper.

\[
\text{शम्भो महादेव देव शिव शम्भो महादेव देवेश शम्भो -}
\text{शम्भो महादेव देव ॥}
\]

The stotram begins with the recitation of the holy names of the Lord. The recitation of the Lord’s names purifies the mind, makes it calm and fit for any serious undertaking. So
they are normally repeated before commencing any work like pooja, religious discourse etc. Here one may recall the familiar verses recited at the time of commencing puja or any religious ceremony.

These verses say “Anyone - may be impure or pure or whatever may be his condition - if just thinks of th lotus -eyed Lord is certainly pure inside and out. Sins committed by mind, speech or action go away by thinking of Shri Rama. This is certain.” Thus the chanting of the Lord’s names flushes out the impurities in the mind and invigorates it. The author can then look to the successful completion of the work taken on hand - in this case the composing of the hymn. Happily these names may be taken to apply to both to Shiva and Vishnu. They may be seen in the sahasranamams of both Shiva and Vishnu.

SHAMBHU  SH趔ぐ I शं  अवश्यमेति शंभु: (SS-74: VS-38) He blesses his devotees with happiness and prosperity शं = happiness, prosperity. All beings go through the repeated cycle of birth and death. They experience varieties of sufferings during each life. During the dissolution of the universe He withdraws all beings within Himself - out of mercy - and after some time He releases them again at the beginning of the next kalpa so that they get relief and respite.

यतः सर्वाणि पूर्वानि व्यवपियिगुणामेव।
यस्मिन ध्रुवं धार्ति पुनः तेजुष्मि युगाधिः SV-11

“From whom all beings come at the beginning of the kalpa and into whom they again merge at the end of the kalpa.” This implies that they are also sustained by Him during the period in between. This is mentioned in the TU (3-1).

यतो वा ध्रुवा यहानि जनने थेन जनानि ज्ञाने थेन
प्रक्षल्लिखिताःविखीति

“From whom all these beings emanate, by whom they stay alive and into whom they merge after death.”

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MAHADEVA Mahadev: - Mahadeva was worshipped by everyone. Also He is great because He pervades every thing. (SS22) He is called Mahadeva because of His superior knowledge and His greatness as the gretest of the yogis. Shivarahasya says that the sound “Mahadeva Maha-deva” is a divine medicine for those bitten by the serpent called samsara.

DEVA Deva: - The word deva indicates lordship. His lordship is unrestricted.

Effulgence does not stand only for light. It also means wisdom. Shiva stands for infinite knowledge. One who is omniscient and knower of all things. He bears the shine of knowledge. He is the form of shining knowledge. His form is effulent knowledge.

SIVA Shiva: - Shiva is the personification of auspiciousness. He is completely free from sorrows that characterise all created beings including plants, animals, birds, humans and devas like Indra and even Brahma the creator. He is the embodiment of supreme bliss.
He is devoid of the three qualities i.e. sattva (serenity), rajas (activity) and tamas (inertia). These qualities constitute ignorance (of Brahman or reality) and characterise all creation. So Shiva being free from these is pure. Patanjali sums up all this in his Yogadarsana (1-23) as कलेशक्षम्यदेवेवपरां धर्मार्थ यस्य (Dharmārthaḥ). १ कलेशा, अविधा, अभिनव, अत्व, द्वेष, अभाविनिवेशा, धर्म धर्मार्थम्, विकर्षणा: क्रमोऽल्लानि - जनंयुज्जोगोऽ, आशो द्वानात्-वासना:। अत: कर्मच्युतपरां धर्मार्थ:। कल्यः। ॥

He removes the sins of those who just think of His name. DakShayani says this to her father DakSha. शुद्धवात् (VS27) Shivaarahasya says this about the sanctity of Lord Shiva’s names: 

श्रुद्धानामानि भोक्ता-चेव सर्वदा।

All the names of Shiva give mokSha no doubt. But amongst them the name Shiva is the best and denominates brahman. The name Shiva is considered as the best among the Lord’s names.

विधासु जुतिस्तृक्षा सदैवकर्सनी ज्वलता।

Of all the knowledge the vedas are superior. Among the vedas Shri Rudram that consists of sixteen chapters is superior. In that the PanchakShari is superior. In that also the two letters SIVA are the best. The glory of the Lord’s names is dealt with in great detail in Puranas and hymns of the saints.

DEVESHA देवेश: - प्राप्य-चेव देवान्मीश: देवेश: He is the foremost among the gods like Indra, Agni etc.. VS(492) सुरेश: - सुराणां देवान्मीश: सुरेश: He is the lord of the devas. VS(85). He rules with a firm hand. None can dare to transgress His commandments without facing serious consequences.

भीषाणात् वात् परते। भीषोतिति सुर्यः।

It is for fear of Him that the wind blows; the sun rises; the fire and Indra perform their duties. It is for fear of Him that death the fifth runs about doing his work with diligence.
The same is said by none other than Yama, the lord of death:

Now let us go to the stotram proper. It consists of five verses and a sixth one - called that gives the benefit of reciting the hymn. In this hymn Lord Margabandhu is described as the God with form as Shiva bearing weapons, as the consort of Parvati. It refers to various incidents to be found in puranas that reveal His unrivalled power and glory. He is also praised in His aspect as the supreme reality, the attributeless brahman whose nature is existence, wisdom and bliss.

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foremost among the devas. SS(111). Shri Rudram says He is the foremost and is the inner self of the devas प्रथम इव: Such is His glory हस्तीनेतृक्षिप ेरण = eye: अर्धिवे = fire: एष = burnt: ऋषु = arrow: कीर्त = a worm, insect पण्युषु is the name  Manmatha, the god of love, because he has five arrows: they are अर्धिवे, अशोक, पुरुस्त, नवमल्लिका and नीलोपलम(  lotus, ashoka, mango, jasmine and blue lotus). The five arrows are also said to be सन्मोचन, दन्तव, शोभा, तांत्र and सत्मन: They are fascination, intoxication or extravagance of love, emaciation, suffering pain and benumbing or stupifying respectively. Kalidasa vividly narrates the story connected with Shiva destroying the god of love in his masterpiece Kumarasambhavam. Manmatha shot his arrow समोचन at Shiva who was deep in meditation. He wanted to seduce Shiva's mind and make Him fall in love with Parvati who was attending on Him, but failed in his attempt. Shiva could sense that something was amiss and looked about. He saw Manmatha cowering at a distance. He just knit his brows in annoyance. In that moment fire shot out of His third eye and reduced the wretched Manmatha into a handful of ashes. Manmatha is contemnously termed a worm or insect as he was foolish enough to try his tricks on none other than the great Shiva. So Shiva is known as कामारि: - कामस्य मन्नस्य अर्दि: कामारि: SA(25)

Leaving the story apart, the implication is that there is no place for carnal desires in the presence of the Lord; just like there is no place for darkness in the presence of the sun. By the same logic, there will be no place for evil tendencies in the heart of a devotee who establishes the Lord therein.

Shiva's third eye is situated in His forehead. So Shiva is known as हस्तीनेतृक्षिप: SA(159) and बधाकुप्त: SA(28) It is to be noted that the third eye is unique. None of the human beings and gods including Indra and the creator Brahma possess such an eye. So Shiva is also known as विदुष्टः 1 विदुष्टः विस्मृति बधाकुप्तः बोकविन्दुप्रिविन्दितविज्ञानी अश्वीलिङ्ग वस्तु स: विदुष्टः 1 SS(129). He has an abnormal third eye. The third eye situated in a high position (viz) forehead and stands for supreme knowledge उत्तरत्मान्ततविभिन्न शास्त्रदर्शितविज्ञान विश्वेत्तर्भजानाशास्त्रविभिन्न भविष्य शास्त्रविभिन्न वृक्षरूप मूर्तिम् SA(28). With such an eye He could easily look into the inmost recesses of anyone's heart and see the thoughts lurking there. So He could detect by a mere glance that the god of love has come to His presence with an evil thought and meted out severe punishment.

The Shiva-Mahimna stotram (15) says that for his foolishness Manmatha paid a heavy price with his life and became an object of memory अर स्मृत्यूलम् न दा वशिषु पथ्य: परिवर्धः 1 अर
Smarā is another name of Manmatha. His arrows have not failed anywher in the world of gods, demons and men. So he became conceited. Smara became (अर्ध्वयुक्त) an object of memory. The moral of the story, says the poem, is that an insult to the great will produce serious consequences वहकन्त्र - वहकन्त्र व्यापार वस: वहकन्त्र: (SS131) is also one of Shiva’s names. Bhartrihari in his Vairagya Satakam refers to this incident thus: बीलादलिविलुलकामशलभं (i.e.) who effortlessly burnt up the flippant god of love as a moth. A big fire instantly reduces a moth into ashes.

शूष्क = the Trident of Shiva; आङ्गर = struck; अशातिः = enemy; कुटे = mass, heap: Shiva has destroyed His enemies with His Trident. But Shiva has no enemies समेव वर्तमान न मे द्रष्टेदस्ति न प्रियः (BG9-29) “I am the same to all beings. There is none hateful or dear to me” says the Lord in Gita. So we have to take “enemies” to mean the enemies of His devotees. We find that during the Mahabharata war Lord involved Himself to help His devotee Arjuna. During the Kurukshetra war Arjuna was struk with wonder to see a figure radiant like the sun going ahead of him. The figure destroyed his enemies very easily with His trident. Arjuna tells this to sage Vyasa and asks who that radiant figure was. He adds that people think he has killed his enemies so valiantly though all the work was done by that figure. Vyasa says “You have seen Lord Shiva.” शिवाजनीधरं देवं दुःखवनसिः शुद्धरस् Krishna confirms this and says “Your enemies have already been killed by Me. Be a mere instrument.” BG(11-33) मच्छिते निदित्वो पूर्विचिक निषिद्धमात्रं भव स्वयंवरिष्ठि

The more dangerous “enemies” a devotee has to face are internal such as desire, anger etc., In reply to Arjuna’s question as to what impels a person to commit sins even though he may be unwilling, Krishna says कम अथ नेष अथ भग्नास्माद तथाग्नास्माद यजपन्नो महापामा विर्धन्यन्मित वैविलिष्ठमूः। BG(3-37) “It is desire. It is anger. They are born out of rajo guna. It has huge appetite and makes one to commit sins. Recognise it as your enemy.” And later on BG(16-21) He describes these as open gateways to hell that will destroy the self. He cautions Arjuna to be careful and avoid them. So a devotee in order to avoid these internal enemies installs Him in his heart and feels safe. Krishna tells Uddhava that once He is established in the heart evil tendencies like desires get destroyed काम दृणाभ्यां नस्चति शर्य भवेत् वर्ग आत्मं ज्ञाते स्वेततः। BG(11-21-26). They cannot live together like light and darkness. He is called कामसुरु - कामनु जनित मुन्यूस्वास्र अवकाशायिनी इति कामसुरु। He destroys the desires of His devotees who seek liberation and the intentions of those who trouble them. VS(294). Also कामनाश:}
Lord Shiva is the अदित्त गुरु: the earliest or the first guru. He teaches by demonstration. He shows He has destroyed His desires and wants His devotee to do likewise. He is only too willing to help him provided he makes his heart His temple. In view of this Bhartruhari describes a sadhu whose heart is pure as having devotion to Shiva with trident अल्म: शूलिनि

Unfortunately a devotee has to contend with one more “enemy” - more pernicious than the enemies mentioned in the preceding para. It is attachment. Desire is a longing to possess something which we do not have and we feel that thing can give us satis faction or pleasure or security. We try to get that thing and when someone or something thwarts the desire the desire turns into anger. Thus desire precedes anger or anger is the result of frustrated desire. Once the object of desire is got and is in our possession we tend to hold on to it. This inclination to bind ourselves to objects or people around us is known as attachment. We look to those objects or people to give us pleasure or security. Vedanta warns us to avoid getting attached to things or people; because firstly the objects of attachment are perishable as anything in the world is. If we develop strong attachment to something, then parting with it can be a very painful experience and we may sink under the load of the resultant grief. That was the case with Dasaratha who was excessively attached to his son Rama. He could not bear the pangs of separation from Rama who had to leave for the forest for fourteen years. He died in agony.

Secondly it is wrong to look to such objects or people for security as they are perishable and so are themselves insecure. Hence they cannot confer security on us. We will be left in the lurch. Attachment is called (छस्पा) IshanA. Three types of attachments are mentioned in our scriptures. They are attachment to (1) the money (2) wife/husband and (3) children. Further it is said that attachment, once developed to something, is very difficult to get rid of. It is like a blob of coaltar that has some how got stuck to our body. It will take a long time and repeated washing to get rid of it. So we are warned to be wary of developing attachment to anything or any person. This does not prevent us from showing love to others.

Pralhala gives a description of these attachments (BH 7-6) in his advice to his friends. Talking about the attachment to money he says दो नर्म्दतृप्ती विलुप्ति प्राणिवेदित्य इलिमित ॥ ये दीपार्थ्यस्विनि प्रेक्षितस्ततः सेवको विषिकः (BH 97-8-10) He says that money is valued higher than life itself and so who can give up attachment to it? The thief, the soldier and the
merchant trade their dear life for money. In view of this he warns all to stay away from the objects of attachment and seek the Lord. The boy Nachiketa said: He said man can never get satiated with the wealth when Yama offered him immense wealth in exchange for the teaching about self.

Kunti, the mother of Pandavas, in her prayer to Krishna before He leaves for Dwaraka says: She prays to the Lord to cut her attachment to her relatives so that her mind can think of Him without distractions. BH(1-8-41)

The foregoing introduction is to explain the other implication of shula or the trident of Shiva. The three sharp points of the trident can destroy the three kinds of attachment that can assail a devotee and hinder his progress.

The devotee shakes off his attachments to the worldly objects first. This was what Vibhishana did before surrendering to Rama. As the brother of Ravana and his minister he was very powerful. He was immensely rich. He had palaces, loving wives and children. But he gave up every thing and rushed to Rama without even taking leave of his wife and children. He said: Renouncing my wives and children I have surrendered to Raghava and again He transfers his attachment to the Lord and enshrines Him in his heart. Then the devotee ties His feet firmly with the cord of love and so He becomes immobilised (SS114): Shiva’s names.

Further it is said: The trident represents the three guns (traits). Shiva holding it in His hand shows He is in control of maya of which they are the constituents.

Forever He is free from maya (the illusion by which one considers the unreal universe as really existent and as distinct from the Supreme Spirit) and spiritual ignorance. This is made explicit by what is said about the moon next.
The moon appears as a special ornament to Shiva. Shankaracharya says in his Prasnottara ratnamalika: Who is the universal teacher? Shambu. From where can one get wisdom? From Shiva only. So we have the saying: One should pray to Maheswara for wisdom.”

We fear snakes because we identify them with death. And everyone is afraid of death. Shankaracharya says Sankaracharya in his Prasntottara ratnamalika. The symbolism...
is used in our scriptures frequently. For example: अस्त कालकिनारसरमाने विश्वासरसुभुधीस्तः BH(11.8.41) meaning “who else, other than the Lord can save one seized by the serpent of Time? When Gajendra, the lord of the elephants was seized by a crocodile and found that he could not extricate himself from its grip he called the Lord saying य: काश्चेत सभिष्टोऽक्षरेः। प्राप्तेषु विद्येयासितान्तो बुधुः। भीतं प्रज्ञ: पद्धितं वयास्यन्तु:। प्रावात्सरसन्तं तमिः। BH(8.2.33) He says “Whosoever be the almighty God, who protects one, who has surrendered to Him being very much afraid of the powerful snake in the form of Death - that is very fast and is after him - and from fear of whom Death himself runs hither and thither, let us seek Him as our refuge.”

Kala means the Supreme principle which devours everything and Yama the god of death who is also known by the names Antaka and Mrutyu. So at level one He is Yama मृत्युः सर्वं श्राहः Krishna says “I am Death who seizes all life.” BG(10.34) He is Antaka अंतकः - अन्ता दश्रिति बृहत्तमिति अन्तकः VS(520). He causes the end of all life. At the higher level He is the kala or Supreme principle which destroys everything including Yama, the god of death at the time of dissolution. Lord Kapila gives a description of Kala to His mother Devahuti. BH(3.29. 36-45). He says it is none other than Vishnu who draws everything into Himself क्षो - क्षयिति सर्वमिति क्ष: - क्ष: क्षयतामात्र: - गीता १०.३० एति भगवद्भन्तः VS(418) and SS(33). The Lord is not limited by time or space or by any material अन्ततामात्र देशः कालो वस्तुतापिक्षितत्वात् अन्ततामात्र VS(518). He is not subject to destruction or anything that causes destruction. अमृतः। भूतसृणानां त्वज्जातृपत्यः न विद्धिते एति अमृतः। VS(198). In fact it is He the seer and all knowing who had created the gods (including Yama) and assigned to them their duties says Isavasyopanishad. अरिपपुरूपपिताः द्यथमयूः यथात्मतंसत्तेः तथाप्राध्यायाः अपात्वं समाध्यं। So the snakes, representing kala or death, cannot harm Him but He wears them implying He uses Death for His services. Yama himself says मृत्युःधोपयोगमात्। Death to Him is like pickles or achAr - a thing He uses in the process of consuming the creation. KU(1.3.25). Remember that one uses a small quantity of pickle only to push in a large amount of food - the main dish. Similarly the Lord uses the services of Yama in a small measure for His main work. क्लात्तातै। क्लात्त मृत्योर्क्ता। SS(83) and क्लात्ता। क्लात्त यात्। भप?। क्लात।।। SA(29) are His names. He destroyed even Yama, the god of death to protect His devotee Markandeya. The name also indicates that He is the supreme Lord who withdraws everything, the entire creation, including the god of death into Himself at the
time of dissolution and releases them again at the beginning of the next cycle of creation. His other names are मृत्युंजयः: - मृत्यु: मरणं अवभासिनं मृत्युं जन्ति, स्योपसालोतिना पवित्रति यति मृत्युंजय: SS(123), SA(71). He removes or avoids the death of His devotees. The sage Markandeya confidently sings अनुशीलनमाये: मम कु लश्चकटिक deepcopy: “I take refuge in Lord Shiva. What harm can Yama do to me?” This is also said symbolically in the story of Dhruva. Towards the end of the story it is said that a chariot came to take him to the place reserved for him in the skies. The Lord had told him that it was a special place because there will be no return to this world again meaning he had crossed death and will not be reborn. At that time Yama - the god of death - approached him and bowed down. Dhruva stepped on Yama’s head and climbed into the vehicle .. तदा यशोऽपि ज्ञाते एकत्र आदि आदि भस्मादुपं जीतः BH(4.12.30)

At this point let us take a small detour and see what our scriptures have to say on the subject of life and kala or death. This may sound a bit morbid: but since it is literally a matter of life and death we should know some details.

One who is born has to die and one who dies is reborn जन्तु: विद्म मृत्युं: मृत्युं: मृत्युं: जन्तु: BG(2.27). From this it appears that this is a never ending process. One can view it in either of the two ways as follows. 1 - One does not believe in the existence of the other world. There is no inclination to think about or enquire into the process. Such people are known as Nastikas. 2 - This one - known as Astika - believes in the shastras and the existence of the other world. He tries to find a way out of it.

The shastras say that the people coming under the first category are to be pitied. The human birth is superior to other forms of births. Only humans are endowed with free will and ability to discriminate between the right and the wrong: the good and the bad. Only they have the ability to work for their own and other’s uplift. The animals do not have free will. Their life is governed by instincts. Because of this they do not incur any sin for their actions. One obtains a human birth after going through the inferior births and as a result of some good deeds and blessings of the Lord. It is therefore incumbent on us to use this privileged position to our advantage and seek higher goals including liberation from death. But if one fails to seize the rare opportunity that has come his way but fritters his life on petty sense pleasures and garnering pelf he falls from his status and is considered an ignoramus. BH(11.7.74) या: प्रायो मागुर्य लोपे मुक्तिलोकपार्गतः धृतं अववश्यकस्तमावधधृतं विदः
The question of escaping death has been discussed again and again in our scriptures. We will structure the discussion as answers to the following questions.

1 - What leads to rebirth?
2 - What is wrong with rebirth or why rebirth is to be avoided?
3 - What is the process called death? and
4 - Can death be avoided and if so how to avoid death?

1 - What leads to rebirth?
Everyone has to work, at least to keep the wolf from the door. In addition people work to improve their standard of living, to provide for the rainy day, old age etc. All these activities - called karma - can be classified as good or bad. The good ones are those that are enjoined by our scriptures and those that can be called virtuous, selfless and such. The bad ones are those that are prohibited by our scriptures and those that are motivated by greed, anger, selfishness etc. Both acts produce results which are to be “enjoyed” by the doer.

(Yagnavalkya Smrithi) Then he climbs up the ladder slowly and gets the human birth again after a long time says Lord as Kapila to His mother Devahuti.

Bh(3.31.34) Yama - the god of death - tells the same to Nachiketa: “One who is infatuated with wealth; not having a thought for the other world; such an ignorant person believing there is no such thing as hell or heaven comes within my clutches again and again.”

So the doer of the deeds has to be prepared to enjoy or suffer the fruits. If the fruits cannot be exhausted in one lifetime one has to take another birth and try to exhaust them. The problem, according to our shastras is, that everyone of us had taken countless number of births, done karmas in these births and
accumulated vast amounts of the karmas. This accumulated store waiting to bear fruit is
called संशित कर्म sanchitam karma. In addition we continue to do karma in this life also
and add to the stock of sanchitam karma thus necessi tating more and more births. Out of
this vast stock a chunk begins to yield the results. This chunk is called प्रस्रव्यम prarabdham.
There is no escape from the results of the prarabdham. It determines the duration of life,
the wealth, education and the mode of death even as one is born आत्म अति विना विधा निधनमेव व.
पुष्पायतनविविध्या ज्योतिः। । We have to infer the impressions of the
past deeds only when we are confronted with the results. Kalidasa says this in Raghuvamsa
(1.20) इवतादुःस्या प्रारम्भः संक्षर्ता प्रक्रिती च।

2 - What is wrong with rebirth or why rebirth is to be avoided?
If one asks what is wrong with being born, saints like Shri Shankara want us to think and
find out if anything is right with it? ति परस्औ ति सारे अवधेशादि विविध्याणमिर्मयेव (Prasnottara
ratnamalika). If one were to think that Shankara was a sanyasi and so had such a dark view
of life, so did Bhartruhari and Kulasheakharha who were kings and had access to all kinds
of pleasures न संसारोपत्ते धर्मसाधनपूण्यामु दुः। (Bhartruhari Vairagya Shatakam).
The problems start right from the beginning. Sage Kapila points out that nothing can equal
the pain one suffers while in the womb गर्भवाससमयं दुः न्यूर्ति न विन्दुः। BH(3.31.9). Then
look at the troubles one goes through as he grows up. As one runs around earning and
looking after his family one is assailed by worries and sickness. He is all the time growing
old imperceptibly. याधीन तिष्ठति तत्त पवित्रत्वः, रोगाद्य शरीर च धर्म च चार्बन्ति द्वम्यं says Bartruhari
in his Vairagya shatakam. He says that old age is crouching there like a tigress frightening us,
and diseases attack our bodies like enemies. Then there is the fear of the inevitable death.
In view of all these Krishna describes rebirth as the seat of pain and impermanent. पुरुषर्यं
दुःसम्पत्तं श्रापायतं त्रद्वं त्रतिकान्तस्य च। BG(7.15) Later on He again says this world is impermanent and joyless
अनिन्मसंपूर्ण लोकं मिर्मयें। BG(9.33). We clearly see that everything in this world is impermanent.
This includes our bodies, our relations, friends and possessions. The question then is how
can one feel happy when thrown into such a situation? Time is constantly gnawing at our
life quietly. Bhartruhari says life is oozing away like water leaking from a pot with a crack
आयुः पवित्रविन्दुः बन्धर्ताम्य। Death is imminent and can strike anyone at any time. This
being the case, Krishna asks “how can one find pleasure in wealth or enjoyment? It cannot
please him, who like an animal, is being dragged to be slaughtered.” BH(11.10. 20)कृपया
suṣyaṣṭhaṁ kāmoṁ vā maṁṣuṇaṁś. ādāntantaṁ nityamanantaṁ vācyakarmo n tuṣṭaṁ।

Next, Krishna said this world is joyless. This is because the pleasures are transitory. They have a beginning and an end and so are fleeting by nature. Their departure may leave a void and a trail of sorrow. Or they may make one to hanker for more of it and leave him restless and unhappy. So He says that one endowed with discrimination will not enjoy them वे विषयमहायोगा: दुःखोमयो अवेतेत। अद्यन्तस्तः वैनेत्तेन ते तथो समस्तेषु भूषः। BG(9.22) Such sensory pleasures are trivial and cannot be termed as pleasures in the true sense.

In view of what is stated here, rebirth is not desireable and one should, if possible, avoid it.

3 - What is the process called death?

This is mentioned briefly in clinical fashion in the Brihadaranyopanishad. It says that as the end approaches the individual’s breathing becomes hard and he starts gasping. His pranas, along with the sense organs, withdraw from their respective foci and gather around jivatma - the individual soul. As he (jiva) departs, the pranas and the sense organs follow him. He gets a body as in a dream and enters another body. The impressions of his karma and the knowledge about brahman that he had acquired in that birth also follow him. He gets a body suitable to his karma in this world or some other world.. अवमेवावमानमकाले सर्वे प्राणः अविसमायानि चतुर्द्वैतविस्मायासी भवति। (4.3.38) tathuhāu tatra prāṇānāṃ prāṇām agraśākyāntaṁ sarvāṃ prāṇaḥ anumūkaṁ sarvadāva Tricks aśvāṁ bhavati sarvāśvāṁ nāyabāvanāṁ prāṇām sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvābhivyaktiṁ sarvāśvāṁ māyāvाभिकारस्य दुर्ग्रस्ते(4.4.4) Krishna says that the knowledge he had acquired in the earlier birth carries him forward in his next birth and he progresses in the spiritual path. He does not have to start ab initio. पुर्णावासुन्तनेन तेवस्य द्रष्टे भवेष्वरपि स: BG(6.44) Some puranas describe it in detail making it sound a bit scary. Sage Kapila gives a description in His talk to His mother. This is on the same lines as stated above in the upanishad. He says that the individual soul living in the gross body has, in addition, a subtle body called Linga Shariram or SukShma Sariram which is invisible. It is made up of seventeen components (viz.) the five sense organs of perception (called gnanendriyas), the five sense organs of action (called karmendriyas), the five pranas, the mind and the intellect. It requires the gross physical body for functioning. It does not perish when the gross body perishes in the process called death which takes place at the end of prarabdham karma. The Jiva just migrates to another body (called birth) with the Linga Shariram according to the nature of past karmas and generates new karmas which add on to the sanchitam karma and
becomes the seed for future births.

4 - Can death be avoided and if so how to avoid death?

Luckily there is a way to escape death and the birth that follows. Krishna says “on reaching Me there is no rebirth.” (BG(8.16) The question, now is: ” where is He? and how to reach Him?” The answer to these questions form the main topic of discussions in our scriptures like Gita, Upanishads and puranas like Shri Bhagavatam and is beyond the scope of this essay and so is not attempted. One has to learn it from a qualified teacher.

The river Ganges, according to our scriptures, originally flowing in the heavens. The story of Lord Vishnu’s incarnation and His seeking three feet of land from the king Bali is familiar to all. When He lifted up His foot to measure the heavens, Brahma the creator, seized the rare opportunity and washed the holy foot of the Lord that has come his way with water from his water pot. The waters became the holy river Ganga.

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The story of the descent of Ganga to earth is also familiar. It is mentioned briefly in Bhagavata in skanda 4 - chapter 17 and skanda 9 - chapter 9. It is given in detail in the Balakanda of Ramayana. Sage Viswamitra narrated it to Rama and LakShmana as he was taking them to Mithila after he had successfully completed his sacrifice with protection offered by the brothers. King Bhagirata - a scion of the ikShvAku dynasty to which Rama belonged - was instrumental in bringing the river to earth by performing severe penance. At his request Shiva received the mighty flow of Ganga falling from the heavens and released it as a stream on the earth. A large gathering comprising the residents of the higher worlds...
and great seers came to witness the wonderful event. They, along with the people of this world, praised the waters of the river Ganga as pure because of its contact with Lord Shiva placed on the head. Hence the saying श्रामणं तु मार्गम-मूर्ति: (ie.) death in Kasi, now known as Varanasi, brings about salvation. King Parikshit decided to spend the last seven days of his life at the banks of the river because of this reason: BH(1.19.6) It asks “which dying man will not resort to such a holy river?”

Ganga:-

Now let us get behind the story of Ganga and see what it means. Brahma to whom Bhagirata prays blesses his efforts. But He cautions the king that he should pray to Lord Shiva and involve Him in this matter because the earth cannot withstand the fall of Ganga from the heavens. He adds that no one other than Lord Shiva is capable of receiving the torrent from the heaven. This is because Brahma knows that Shiva is firm and unshakeable. 

The ग in the name Ganga stands for Gayatri which represents the eternal, supreme Brahman. In Gangashtakam, she is addressed as the very embodiment of Brahman, पूर्वमयस्य (ie.) She is eternal and formed by the fusion of the powers extracted from three - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. So Gayatri is worshipped in their forms during the three times it is recited (viz.) morning, noon and the evening. In view of this Shiva has placed her on the head - in the chakra called Brahma-randram. The scriptures define six chakras or seats of power in one’s body. The chakra on the head is above all these and is the seat of Brahman. This is also the seat where one visualises one’s guru in the form of Brahman and meditates on him because one’s guru is not different from Brahman गुरुस्यां श्रमयस्यः . The fact that she is formed from the powers of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is stated symbolically in the story of Ganga. अद्यावधिश्रितामः निधिधिषात्रपिं जनव, पश्चात् पश्चाताहिनो भगवत: पादिहर्ष पानम् ॥ वृष्ण: शब्दु: जना निम्प्रभुमेमिष्यो निम्प्रभुमिष्यो, कन्या कववनानिनी भगवती नागीरथी ्भूत्वे। This says that “you Ganga started as water in the water pot of Brahma, then came into contact with the foot of Vishnu and again became the crown jewel on the locks of Shiva etc.”

Placed on the head of Shiva who is Himself the embodiment of knowledge the stream of Ganga is symbolic of knowledge. So Shankaracharya refers to it in his Kasi Panchakam as
The stream of right knowledge is the pure original Ganga. Again later he says निम्नुननंनी व्यापिनी ज्ञानगुण्डा (ie.) the Ganga of knowledge is the mother of the three worlds. This Ganga who is Gayatri and Brahman and is kept in the chakra in the head by Shiva is same as Uma or Parvati can be deduced from the following references. These are taken from the well known Lalitasahasranamam (LS).

1 - She is of the form of the three gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. 

सूंकान्तर भ्राम्या LS(265) गोरी

अविनरुपिणी LS(267) संहारणी रुप्या LS(269)

2 - She is Gayatri गोरी LS(420)

3 - She is Bhavani भवाणी LS(112). Durga दुर्ग LS(190). Parvati पार्वती LS(246). Uma उमा LS(633)

4 - She is seated on the head in the Brahmarandhram. शरस्थता LS(591)

So Ganga is Brahman, is Gayatri and is Uma or Parvati. She proclaims the Ardhanari (the inseparable combination of the male and female principles) concept (अर्धनारी स्वरूपम् ) of Shiva which is not explicitly seen in His representations (where Uma is shown as a separate figure). Thus one who knows Ganga knows Shiva and vice versa. Krishna says अश्सालस्वभि जलवी Of the rivers I am the Ganges. So it is not an ordinary river that the Lord had placed on His head. No wonder, then, that the very utterance of the name Ganga washes away one’s sins even when one is miles away from the river. This is said in this popular verse that is normally recited before taking bath. गंगेज्यातं तुंगतरंगं गंगेः भूयात् योजनानां शतीरथ। मुख्ये सर्वसापेल्यो विष्णुलोकं संज्ञित। The avadhuta saint Sadasiva Brahman has composed a song in praise of Ganga (jaya tungatarange gange जय तूंगतरंगं गंगे ) wherein he salutes Ganga as one who purifies the worlds and cuts asunder the manifold bonds of mankind (कलचष्करसहवं पिरणे, बहुविधकल्लवेलं)। रमिं = sickle; instrument for mowing). Shri Gangashtakam says that if one dies on the banks of Ganga he goes to higher lokas compared to which even the world of Indra looks very inferior.

त्युंगतरंगं गंगेः पति त्यातं क्षुद्रतृप्तानं तदा

मातृ शार्करसहःपिणे न अल्लि

We can make one observation on the story of Bhagirata bringing down Ganga. The Lord - being the father - always gives much more than what one seeks from Him though this fact
is not appreciated. He is કામાણે: 1 ભક્તિ કામાણે: પાકિલું 44નીથતિ કામાણે: VS(298). He knows what the devotee asks and why he asks for it. The Lord not only gives what is asked for but goes further and fulfills his mission though unasked. In the case of Bhagiratha, he could have asked Shiva for salvation for himself and his forefathers and got it. Instead, he just asked Him to bear the Ganga as she came down from the heaven. But Lord Shiva helped the king not only in bringing down the river but also gave salvation to his forefathers then and there itself. Please carefully look at what Shiva told the king when He appeared before him. He said “I am pleased with you. I will do what is dear to you.” Ramayana (1.43.3 and 4) તમાણે: શિવતિ: સત્તમકાયમાયત્તિ! પ્રિતસ્ટધાે રાતિશે કરિમાયં તબ પ્રમસ્ું।

We all know what was dear to the king and what was it that had been haunting his mind for years and made him do severe penance, once to Brahma (for thousand years eating once a month and so on) and again to Lord Shiva. The king’s idea was to then lead the river to the place where the ashes of his forefathers were lying for ages and perform their final rites so that they will attain release. But this was what he got as bonus. In addition he got salvation for himself also though he did not ask for it. Ganga represents Brahman and Shiva is DakShinamurthi - the giver of knowledge about the Brahman. Thus the story of the king getting the Ganga with Shiva’s help implies he got the knowledge of Brahman directly from the Lord which knowledge results in salvation.

This was what happened in the case of Arjuna also. He met Krisna at Dwaraka and asked His help during the KurukShetra war. Krishna agreed to help but He said He will not take up arms. But even at the time when Arjuna made his request Krishna knew what was the mission for which he was seeking His help. And He fulfilled it then and there. Later on when teaching Gita before the war had even started He told Arjuna: “These enemies of yours had been killed by me already. You just be the instrument and enjoy all the glory.” તમાણે કામાણે યશો નભસ્વય યોજણ કરણનું મુક્તિશય રાજન્ય સમુદયું।

At the time, Arjuna was unaware of the greatness of Krishna whom, as he admits later on, he considered as his friend only. He laboured hard and “fought the war” but it was over even before it started. He “won” it and got all the glory. In the same way King Bhagirata took the trouble to drive ahead of Ganga all the way to the seas and then to the nether world where he saw the ashes of his forefathers, performed the last rites with the holy waters from.
Ganga and “got them salvation.” which was already an accomplished fact. The Ganga was
named after him as Bhagirathi. This was the case with Dhruva, who wanted to be a king
but he got that and also a permanent place in the heavens.

અેકાક્ષરં પરં બ્રહ્મ, Manu, the famous law giver, says that the letter OM by itself
represents the ultimate reality - the Brahman. He adds that the creator Brahma extracted
the three letters from the three vedas and so the syllable Om is the essence of the vedas
બ્રાહ્મણ� પ્રણવં કુયાર્દાદાવ્રતે ચ સવર્દા, the first born when he was in deep
meditation.

Pranava :-

We can see discussions about pranava in Mandukya, Shiva Atharvasikha, Prasna and
Nrisimha Uttaratapini upanishads. This is also mentioned in Vicharasagaram. Here we will
see it in brief. પ્રણાવ: - પ્રણાવી નામ પરમાત્મનો બાજુ રોગિનાર: ,
તાસિદ્ધયાન्त્રિકનો પ્રાણવ: (VS-957). He is in the form of pranava represented by OM. He is not different from the creation.
So pranava represents both brahman and the universe. Sage Patanjali also has said this in his Yoga Sutra (1.26): 

**Prajñāpāramitā sūtra:** 
1. **Prajñāpāramitā nāma:** 
   Ameṣa-praṇavaṇa pravṛttam. Pratikām pratyakṣaṃ brahmanā. "śakti" kādhal evamokta ahamgrahadhyanam. Y ogam ved, y ogam ved (Mandukya 12) They represent the two aspects of God (viz.) with form and without form respectively. The “sound” part signifies the saguna Iswara and the “silent” part the nirguna Iswara. Thus one can worship OM as God with form. This is like invoking our favou rite deity in an idol or saligrama stone. Here we invoke the God about whom we do not have firsthand knowledge but learnt from scriptures or from some other source in the idol or some other form of representation and worship. The representation is known as pratikam prāriṇā. Meditating on the fourth or the silent part as “I the Self” is known as Ahamgrahadhyānam. One who meditates like this is called a muni. 

**Prajñāpāramitā sūtra:** 
2. **Prajñāpāramitā nāma:** Ameṣa-praṇavaṇa pravṛttam. Pratikām pratyakṣaṃ brahmanā. "śakti" kādhal evamokta ahamgrahadhyanam. Y ogam ved, y ogam ved (Mandukya 12) They represent the two aspects of God (viz.) with form and without form respectively. The “sound” part signifies the saguna Iswara and the “silent” part the nirguna Iswara. Thus one can worship OM as God with form. This is like invoking our favou rite deity in an idol or saligrama stone. Here we invoke the God about whom we do not have firsthand knowledge but learnt from scriptures or from some other source in the idol or some other form of representation and worship. The representation is known as pratikam prāriṇā. Meditating on the fourth or the silent part as “I the Self” is known as Ahamgrahadhyānam. One who meditates like this is called a muni. 

The question, now is, if He is Himself omkara or the pranava, why then say He is the deer in the park called OM? The answer is that He is OM the park as Paramatma as well as the deer the individual JIvatma. They are one and the same but look different to the uninitiated. The deer, unaware of its status, roams around in the park feeding and enjoying...
itself. This is an echo of the famous Mundakopanishad mantra ∴ અસુધારંભા સમાયા સમান પૂર્વં પણપવયનેતલી। tatyosas: chirapal styaipunamanyo abhityakshinti. MU (3.1.1) This mantra talks of two friendly birds sitting side by side on a tree. One is eating and relishing the fruits and the other one is quietly watching it. Here one of the birds represents the Jivatma. Eating the fruits is enjoying the results of the past karma and the other bird which looks on is the Paramatma as He is not attached to the fruits of action. Similarly Devi is described as ઓકાષપનજાણુકયં a female parrot in the cage called OM in the Devi Navaratnamala. The saint composer Thiagaraja of Tiruvaiyaru addresses Rama as ઓકાષપનજાણુકયં a parrot in the cage called OM in his famous song beginning Jagadanandakaraka. Similarly the saint composer SadasivaBrahmam talks of Krishna as પ્રેણયંએઅગાબજાણુકયં one who is hidden inside the lotus of pranava (in his song kridathi vanamali kridati vanamali)

લિંકણેશેવિતાધી - લિંકણ = a superhuman being of great purity and holiness possessing eight supernatural powers called siddhis. Can also be taken to mean a great sage લિંકણિત = worshipped; અંધ્ર = foot He is worshipped by great sages and other semidivine beings endowed with supernatural powers લિંકણિત: - લિંકણિત: યામેરાતલિતિ: કારકણિતિયા વનાલા વનિતા: | ઉપવસક્ષામેઠા સ્ત્રોત-જ્ઞત-પૂર્વ-તપ અદીનામૂ (SS536) લિંકણે: સંસુઠિત: | લિંકણે: લિંકણ રાયિતિયા લિંકણ વષેલિત: સંસુઠિત: | લિંકણ રાયિતિયા લિંકણ વષેલિત: સંસુઠિત: | લિંકણ રાયિતિયા લિંકણ વષેલિત: સંસુઠિત: | લિંકણ રાયિતિયા લિંકણ વષેલિત: સંસુઠિત: | લિંકણ રાયિતિયા લિંકણ વષેલિત: SS(777) The word siddha લિંકણ means accomplished or perfected. Linking with the earlier word, the muni meditates on the pranava. લિંકણાર બિનુદંડ નિસચય યાયિતય યોગિતિ: Once he understands that he, the meditator, and the Iswara the object of meditation represented by pranava are not different , then he achieves his goal and becomes a siddha purusha. The Mandukya Upanishad sentence quoted earlier says this only (viz.) that one who realises the true meaning of the Omkara - that it stands for the non-dual, indescribable Shiva obtains his goal which is his own Self. Shri Shuka mentions this in his prayer before he begins to narrate Bhagavatam to King ParikShit. મદાળિયાચારેમાંસમાલિયાદ્રામયા વશાનુસારંધતર લિંકણ વષેલિત: BH(2.4.21)

Such a realised sage abides in his Self. So it is said તલખારે પનાને પદ સાં પાણ મતની પુશ્ હનમન is such a siddha who has immersed himself in the sacred Ganga and drank deep its water of knowledge. So he is known as બુનદિમતાવિલિક = best among the knowledgeable people. He sees his Lord Rama within himself all the time. Whenever His name is mentioned the Ganga within him wells up and flows out as tears of joy and his hands go up
over his head in salute and in adoration of Rama the Celestial River Ganga waves can be seen as waves of the celestial river Ganga, who is like a deer in the garden of Omkara and whose feet are served by siddhas (great seers).

Since the siddha has identified with Ishwara he is detached from his body. He knows that he got his body because of prarabdham and it will continue to hang on as appendage as long as the vestige of prarabdham remains. He is aware that prarab dam will take care of it. So he is not concerned about it just as drunkard does not overly bother about his dress. Krishna says this to Uddhava:

Once his prarabdhram is exhausted the body drops off. There is not death in the usual sense. His soul does not go anywhere as in the case of death of ordinary people but just merges in the all pervading brahman. This is like a pot getting broken. The space within the pot is not disturbed but just becomes one with surrounding space. This is said clearly in Brihadaranyakopanishad (4.4.3) and is repeated in the case of Bhishma’s death. This was what is said to have happened in Bhishma’s case. So Lord Margabandhu is worshiped and is said to harbor Margabandhu the Lord Margabandhu.

I worship Lord Margabandhuon whose limbs snakes appear prominently, whose head looks charming with the waves of the celestial river Ganga, who is like a deer in the garden of Omkara and whose feet are served by siddhas (great seers).
This verse is the third among the five verses that make up the stotram. Thus it forms the centre-piece and is loaded with precious vedantic truths. It was said earlier that a stotram will describe the Lord with form and will also refer to His formless aspect. We see the formless aspect of the Shiva being emphasised here: नित्यं च दानं दृश्यं - नित्यं = eternal, ever lasting, imperishable विद्यं = pure intelligence आनं = supreme bliss धर्मं = form.

These words are the repetition of the famous upanishadic mantra शत्यं ज्ञानं ब्रह्म that says Brahman is satyam, jnanam and anantam. This is one of Shiva’s names. The verse is the third among the five verses that make up the stotram. Thus it forms the centre-piece and is loaded with precious vedantic truths. It was said earlier that a stotram will describe the Lord with form and will also refer to His formless aspect. We see the formless aspect of the Shiva being emphasised here.

The word ‘Nityam’ implies eternal existence - that is - it never ceases to be. It is not limited by time. Terms like the past, present and future are not applicable with reference to it. Lalita is known as Nitya नित्या कल्याणेयमाया. श्रीललिता वा अणेदधामालेति श्रुते. LS(136).

शाश्वत: and सत्यम् are two other names that have the same meaning as Nityam शाश्वतः। सत्यं अर्थात्वा अणेदधमाले नातीति शाश्वतः। “शाश्वतों पुराणोऽहं” तिति श्रुति:। SS(398). (ie.) He exists in all times in the same form or without any change शाश्वत सत्यं अर्थावति शाश्वतः। “शाश्वत शिवमयुतम्” तिति श्रुते। VS(56).

satyam सत्यम्। कल्याणेयाऽऽत्मस्य SS(432) अविकल्याणेयत्वात् परमात्मा सत्यं “सत्यं ज्ञानमन्तः प्रकाश” होति श्रुते। VS(106) In the invocatory verse to Shri Bhagavatam Shri Vyasa salutes the Lord saying सत्यं परेदीमिद्वीत्वा: (ie.) we meditate on the supreme Reality that is not affected by the three time periods - the past, present and the future. BH(1.1.1). He also winds up with the same words सत्यं परेदीमिद्वीत्वा BH(12.13.19) implying what is discussed in between the beginning and the end or the subject matter of the purana is none other than Brahman which is Satyam.
Shri Lalita is known as Santosahansana. I say: “Brahman” “Bhagavatam” “Brahmanandavalli” (LS(790)).

Bhartrihari, in the invocatory verse to his Satakantrayam salutes the Lord saying “Bhagavatam” “Bhagavadgita” “Bhagavatam”. He says that God is of the form of eternal consciousness unlimited by spatial direction, time etc, speech, thought, mind, heart, the eternal, omniscient, Lord. He says: “Bhagavatam” (LS(251).)

From where did He get His wisdom? In reply the invocatory verse in Shri Bhagavatam referred to earlier says: “Bhagavatam” “Bhagavatam” (SS(456).)

Ananda: Brahmn is of the form of pure bliss. He is omniscient. His knowledge is inherent and not obtained from anyone else or any other source. It is knowledge itself without a trace of ignorance.

The Taittiriyopanishad has a chapter exclusively devoted to the ananda aspect of brahman. This chapter is hence known as Brahmanandavalli or Anandavalli. This chapter is unique in that it talks of several grades of ananda experienced by different beings. It starts with the maximum happiness that is possible to be experienced by a human being as the unit of measure. The next higher grade of ananda is hundred times this unit. Thus several grades are mentioned (including that of Indra and Brihaspathi) and the top most one mentioned is that of Brahma the creator. But a wise person who has studied the shastras and got discrimination knows that even Brahma’s happiness is fragile and limited. The Brihadaranyopanishad says that any ananda experienced by any being is just a droplet derived from the bliss that is Brahma’s ananda.

Incidentally this is one of the names of Shri Lalita: Santosahansana (LS(790)).
Lalita. (LS365) Swāyamānāṅgīpi būt ṛṣhmatānantaṁśaṁtiti: । The commentator Bhaskararaya explains this name referring to these quotations only. He says śrṣṭi āţatamāśaḥ । eva āţatamāśaḥ bhuvānābhuvānā bhuvānā bhāvāh । sa ṛṣhmatābhūtāḥ । ॥ “(refering to The vāmanayāna-sūtra of Indra” śrṣṭi । tattvīcha āţatamāśaḥ vāmanācārīnātmanānāh । pragnaḥ pragnāvājanānānām 。” śrṣṭi । tattvīcha āţatamāśaḥ vāmanācārīnātmanānāh । pragnaḥ pragnāvājanānānām ॥

One may wonder why should the upanishad take the trouble to describe the many grades of ananda starting from the bliss that can be enjoyed by a human being. The answer is that the detailed description is a carrot the upanishad is dangling before us. It wants to reveal the fact that even the highest degree of happiness that one could enjoy is just a particle of that limitless ocean of bliss. It wants us to get excited at this revelation. It wants to prod us to strive hard and reach the pinnacle of bliss that is brahmanananda and not be content with merely scratching its surface. The following are the Lord's names in this context

नरेऽ परमाणवतत्रेऽ नरेऽ। “विङ्गतमाननव अभजर्तिष्ठुनति” श्रुतिः । SS(189) and VS(618)वनरेऽ। सुपर्यर्षवपतवतु अनरेऽ VS(560)। Also अभजर्ति: । अभजवप अनरेह अभजर्तः: । “अनरं अभज मां जाता न बिभेन तुनिरन्ते” लिपिः। “अनरं अभजो विङ्गन्तिः” लिपिः । SS(560) and साहनेऽ: । कल्याणावलिनिनितिर्यसुप्रवर्त: साहनेऽ। “विङ्गतमाननव अभजर्तिष्ठुनति” श्रुतिः । SS(673)“

- निहृत = eliminated = अश्रेष = without remainder = वोडेश = lord of the universe - here it refers to Indra वैरवसाद = enemy वर्तप =dignity, glory, valour.

Shiva is the destroyer of the valour and pride of Ravana who was the enemy of Indra. Once Ravana tried to lift Kailasa as he felt he was strong enough to carry even the abode of the Lord. He was inebriated with power because he could conquer even Indra and other gods. He forgot that all his might and glory were only due to the blessings of the Lord. He even said that Shiva has not known that a danger has come to Him! This incident is mentioned in Ramayana (Uttara Kanda - canto 16). विङ्गतमानव न जानीते अभजस्तवपमात्रतम्भा(Uttara kanda - 16-24). Shiva wanted to teach him a lesson and curb his pride. So He playfully pressed His toe. The pressure applied by Him crushed Ravana under the mountain.

ततो राम भवद्वियो देवां ग्रहो छः: ।
Ravana struggled hard but was not able to extricate himself from the tight spot. Finally he prayed to the Lord and got himself released. So Shiva gets the name अरुणशिरस् वधूनाथदर्शकः। अरुणशिरस् पादः कुर्दाग्रे वधूनाथस्य रामायणं हर्ष गर्व वस्तिति कः। हरते रामायणाती प्रशियम्। तिकवर्जे। अभूवः त्वकेवासः महत्त्वकल्पनाय मुखान वलादैवासेदिपी त्याविवस्ती विक्रमद्। अलक्यापालावेदावल्यविविकित्तकुश्यिरसि प्रतिष्ठा तवल्यासिश्वधुमुपाधिति मुख्यति पवति। \( \text{II} \) “नमः सहङ्गात्म निम्नाधिन” हतिश्वरुः। SS(623).

Ravana was the grandson of the great sage Pulastya and the son of an equally great sage Vivasva. He was born as an asura due to a curse. Krishna gives a description of asuric nature in the 16th chapter of Gita entitled हैवस्युः सम्बधिकाञ्ज्ञोऽहि: and also in the 18th chapter. He says that people with asuric nature are given to ostentation, arrogance, lust, anger and insolence. They will nurture innumerable hopes. These tendencies will pave the way for their downfall. We see that Ravana’s character fits this description exactly. These qualities lead to his ruin. Ravana was vastly learned (as is indicated by ten heads): but was foolish enough to think he could shake the Lord who is निद्रण: all pervading, firm and unshakeable अस्वत्तः अस्तः। BG(2-24). In fact if He shakes the universe will shake and without His will one can not move even a blade of grass. This is graphically described in a story in Kenopanishad. Thus Ravana committed a great mistake but Shiva curbed his pride and let him off कार्त्तिकसरचन्द्रग्राहम्। कार्त्तिकसरसम्बिनुक्षेप्यकर्मः। अर्थः = gold: अन्तः = mountain: ततः = lord and in this context means best: अपः = bow: This refers to Shiva using Meru - the famed mountain of gold - as a bow in His fight against the three asuras. The three demons named KamalakShan, DarukakShan and Vidyumnali were very powerful because of the boons they obtained. They lived in three cities built by Maya the divine architect. They troubled the devas to no end. The devas entreated Shiva to save them from these asuras. When Shiva started to fight them the devas wanted to take part in the fight. The earth became the chariot, the sun and the moon became the wheels, Meru the bow, the snake Seshan the bow string, Vishnu the quiver and so on. But Shiva felt that all these elaborate paraphernalia was superfluous for the task. So He discarded them and destroyed the three cities just with a smile. When the asuras repented Shiva forgave them and took them into His service. This deed of Shiva is often referred to in hymns.
So He gets the following names: Purusha, the Creator, Rama, the universal being, and Sita, the one who is pure. He is also known as Bhagavan, the God of Gods. He is the Lord who is capable of doing anything, as He used just a piece of straw to conquer Kakasura. He is also known as the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Omniscient. As Rama He used just a piece of straw to chase Kakasura who misbehaved with Sita. In the case of Tipura He chose to use a mountain as His bow. He can do without any weapon also. He discarded the bow and burnt down the three cities with a smile. He subdued Ravana with a little pressure from His toe. He destroyed Manmatha with a mere look. The Tripura episode conceals the essence of Vedanta as do the stories in our puranas. Krishna mentions this fact to Uddhava in His final advice: “The words of the sages are indirect in their import.” BH(11-21-35). The reason is that these great truths are meant only for those who have faith in the words of the shastras and the teachers who expound them, are sincere and are ready to put in the needed effort to learn them. They cannot be laid bare to those who are not qualified to receive them. In fact such
people run the risk of misunderstanding the teachings and being mislead by them. That is why Krishna, after concluding the teaching of Gita, warns Arjuna that the valuable lessons taught to him should not be imparted to one who is not devoted etc., as said above छै ते नातपकाय नावकाय क्रिया। न आश्चर्येव वायु न च मा योद्धस्युपितिः। BG(18-67). Great truths, like precious diamonds are not meant to be hawked in the streets like cheap vegetables. A diamond merchant keeps the diamonds carefully locked in an iron safe in his shop. Only a handful of people out of several millions in the city will be fit to enter the shop and enquire about them. The merchant, will welcome the customer, engage him in small talk and enquire about his requirements. By then he would have assessed the customer's worth and seriousness to do business. Then only will he unlock the safe, bring out his wares and show them to the customer. Similarly vedantic truths are invaluable and are to be guarded carefully and given only to the deserving. Brief explanation of the Tripura episode follows.

It was said that our body is viewed as being made of three layers - the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. These three bodies are the three puras or cities. The paramatma who is of the form of chaitanyam or consciousness is omnipresent and is present in the body also, and enlivens it. The body itself, being mere bundle of matter, is inert. Krishna says this छै शाश्वतेन इत्यक्ष्वमेवतिभिपीयते and in the next verse श्लोकः च मा विद्व पर्यायश्च भास्त। BG(13-1 and 2). The consciousness present in the body is known as atma or jiva or jivatma. But it is not a part or product of the body that is liable to decay and destruction. Such modifications of the body do not affect the jivatma. Even on death it is the subtle body which travels to take another body (as stated earlier). The atma being all pervading does not travel anywhere. It is like a pot being made. We may call the space confined in the pot as pot-space (to distinguish it from the total space though really there is no such division) but it was not created when the pot was made. When the pot is broken, it is pot that is destroyed and not the “pot space.” It has nowhere to go. The confines of the pot having gone it just merges with the total space that is out side the pot also. Thus the atma has nothing to do with the body. This is said in Tattvabodha clearly as आत्मा कै ?What is the Self? शौम्य-शौम्य-शारद- शशीद्रां व्यतिरिक्तः प्रग्योद्भावितः अन्तः अवस्थायस्यवाही सर्विधानस्यवर्धम् अन्य योद्धस्युपितिः। Self is other than the gross, subtle and causal bodies. It is beyond the five sheaths and the witness to the three states of consciousness. It is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss.

Thus there is no birth or modifications or death for the jivatma as is the case with the body.
Krishna says this: न जयते प्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भृूषः। अजो नित्यः शाश्वतो इति पुराणाश्च जयते कुष्मान्दे। BG(2-20).

The pot because of which the infinite space (that has nothing to do with the pot) gets the apparent limitation as “pot space” is called upadhi. In the same way the body mind complex is upadhi for the paramatma and it gets the name jivatma (though both are one and the same). Its glorious state gets covered by the veiling power of maya (called avidya or ignorance) and it gets bound. This leads the jiva to identify itself with the limitations of the three bodies. It imagines it is a finite creature, helpless and subject to sorrows like sickness, old age, death etc.. This is known as samsara. Truly speaking the jivatma being none other than the paramatma and of the form of pure wisdom does not act or undergo any change. Since it does not act it does not also reap the fruits of action called कर्मवृत्तम (ie.) joy or sorrow. That is, it is not a कर्ता or अभोक्ता (i.e.) doer or enjoyer or in other words atma is said to be akarta and abhokta (अकर्ता and अभोक्ता). One who has shed his identity with the body and clearly established his oneness with the Self is, therefore, not bound by the results of actions. The mistaken identification with the body and imagining he or she is an individual who has to act etc., is called ego or ahankara and is the cause of all the problems. प्रकृतः अप्रकृतः जूहः कमलिः सर्वशः।। आद्वायामृदुःकिमः कतार्थिमिति मन्यते। BG(3-27). An example will illustrate this peculiar situation. A person goes to sleep in his cozy house after a sumptuous meal. After some time he enters the dream world. In his dream he travels to a distant land and is stranded. He has lost his belongings and is famished. But he has no money to buy anything. The person is not used to such a privation and so is feeling miserable. This goes on for some (dream) days.Ultimately the intensity of the suffering becomes too much to bear and he wakes up with a start. To his utter delight he realises all that had happened was only a dream and he has not left his comfortable bed. He feels sheepish to think of the suffering he had gone through.

In the case narrated above all the suffering and misery was unreal. But it appeared real because the person identified himself with the dream body that was not his. The dream body was merely a projection of his mind and so had no substance. When the dreamer woke up he gave up the identification and was free from sorrow. In the same way vedanta says that the individual’s bondage and ensuing samsara are imaginary and due to wrong identification with the body-mind complex. This mistake is the result of ajnanam or ignorance. It will go
when the individual sheds his ignorance and realises that he is not the body-mind complex but the atma whose nature is self Śivamahashayam as said in the first line of this verse. Krishna says this to his friend Uddhava: ॥ अर्धशोकोपि न रश्यो विवा-स्वप्नायशेषित: ॥ अर्धशोकोपि देखतः कुमारिन् अपुदुपक्षः ॥ BH(11-11-8). A wise man, though he appears to be in the body, has no identification with the body like the one who had woken up from a dream. But a man without discrimination is like one having a dream. He has chosen to (dis-identify with his true body and) identify with his (dream) body (and suffers the consequences). The dream body is only thought in the mind but the thought is so powerful that it makes him identify himself with the dream body, undergo the vicarious suffering and forget his real body that is ensconced in the bed.

Thus there has to be a second waking up, as it were, from our so-called waking stage to the real awakened stage with the advent of knowledge or jnanam. Till then one is in the clutches of agnana or ignorance which forces us into karma or action that brings in the fruits of action which in turn results in rebirth etc.. The grace of the Lord confers this wisdom and takes one beyond the three bodies that envelop the jiva. This is said in the DakShinamurthy Stotram as ॥ साक्षात-कुरुन्ते प्रभोभायमे स्वमान-मेवालं तत्मै श्रीजल्लोचनय नम हर्ष श्रीद्विशालमूर्खौ च। When the dreamer wakes up from the nightmare the dreamer merges with the waker (if we may so call the one who has woken up) and not “become” the waker. He alone remains. He does not see the waker but claims himself to be the waker. This claiming is साक्षात-कुरुन्ते So also in the case of self-knowledge one does not experience or “become” the atma; but स्वमान-अर्धमेव साक्षात-कुरुन्ते owns up his true nature as atma. Shiva’s names relating to Tripura are त्रिपुराणत: ॥ नीलि पुराणि त्रिपुराणि, त्रिपुराणि अर्थं त्रिपुराणतः ॥ नीलि पुराणि श्रीराणि, “पुराणश्रीराणनिर्माणनःपुराणश्रीराण” हि त्रिपुराणविवाह-नातु। तत्त्वं व श्रूवं-श्रूवं-कार्यात्मकं- श्रूवं बोधिकर्मेव, सुकृतं विकुग्धार्थं, कार्यं तस्यधार्मिकमिति। अर्थं त्रिपुराणि अर्थं त्रिपुराणतः; श्रीमाणस्य य श्रिदेव्यक्तेशुद्धयं मनोपनिषिद्ध श्रुतम्। हर्ष य श्रूतिप्रसिद्ध नामं, “श्रीमाण त्रिपुराणतः श्रीमाणिर्क्रिकाय श्रीमाणिर्क्रिकाय नमं” हि त्रिपुराणतः ॥ पुराणं श्रीराणं श्रूवं-श्रूवं-कार्यात्मकं अर्थं श्रूवितश्रुतित श्रुतितं पुराणतः ॥ तदानन्दतितं व श्रीमाण स्वात्म स्विदे देव्यक्तेशुद्धयं मनोपनिषिद्ध प्रकसिद्धिः। तथ। SA(38)पुराणतः ॥ पुराणं श्रीराणं श्रूवं-श्रूवं-कार्यात्मकं अर्थं श्रूवितश्रुतित पुराणतः ॥ तदानन्दतितं व श्रीमाण स्वात्म स्विदे देव्यक्तेशुद्धयं मनोपनिषिद्ध प्रकसिद्धिः। तथ। SA(68). Krishna tells Uddhava that He is Himself Shiva who destroyed the three cities त्रिपुराण बुधभासम् BH(11-11-20). Meru mountain. The Meru mountain is mentioned in our puranas, Mahabharata and Ramayana etc.. It is said to be rich in gold and other precious jewels and is said to be in the center of the earth. The Himalayas are in the
southern part of the Jambudwipa in whose center is the Meru. The Bharathavarsha (India) is in the south of the Himalayas. One of the mountains surrounding the Meru is the Mandhara which was used by the gods to churn the ocean of milk. Shri Suka mentions this when he gives a description of the creation of the gods. The sages performed in the mountains situated in the southern part of the Himalayas. The sun and the moon are said to go round the mountain. Our poets mention this fact often. Kalidasa refers to the sun going round Meru in his Raghuvamsa (7-24). He says that Aja and Indumati going round the sacred fire during their wedding was like the day and the night revolving round Meru

Krishna says that He is Meru among the mountains. He is dressed BG (10-23) and the mountain is BH(11-11-21). All these show that meru is considered a very holy mountain

कुतिमां= bark of a tree, skin, hide पशु= dress. Shiva is reputed to be dressed in the bark of trees and skins of tiger and elephant. Once some rishis of Daruka forest performed a sacrifice. It seems they were very proud of their spiritual accomplishments. Shiva wanted to test their mind-set and teach them a lesson. So He passed by in the form of a shabbily dressed mendicant. The sages were furious to see the mendicant. From the sacrificial fire they created a ferocious elephant and a tiger and set them to attack the mendicant. But Shiva killed the animals, and wrapped Himself in their skins. The sages were humbled. They realised their mistake and surrendered to Shiva. So He gets the following names. याज्ञवल्क्यम्: याज्ञवल्क्य अमरं विश्वसं; “तथा पिनाककस्त: कृतिकायां” हिंदु शृंगी: । SS(108). जगद्यमन्द: गजसुरस्य वर्ण कृतियां वापि विश्वसं: जगद्यमन्द: । शृंगी: । SS(158). कुतिमां: कुर्षि शाङ्कः-मुनिजनविभाषितपत्रीक्रमालक्षणसृपक्रम: वर्ण वापि विश्वसं: तथा: अत्यव: शाङ्कः शिवमहत्त्वाविश्वास आग्रहाणुः: “प्राप्तिःः कृतिकायाः पिनाकी” शृंगी: । SS(909) कुतिमां: कुर्षि शाङ्कः-मुनिजनविभाषितपत्रीक्रमालक्षणसृपक्रम: वर्ण वापि विश्वसं: तथा: अत्यव: शाङ्कः शिवमहत्त्वाविश्वास आग्रहाणुः: “तस्यो: याज्ञवल्क्योऽदानो: आज्ञाम् नमायुः:” तपाधूर्योऽभिधास्ते अस्मि: ।
Now a few words about Shiva wearing the bark or skins of animals: First this kind of dress, His matted locks etc., proclaim that Shiva is beyond all varnas or grades of society - like brahmin, kShatriya etc., - and ashramas or stages of life - like student, householder etc.. In other words He is an अलिङ्गाश्रमी Such a one is not bound by any rules or regulations applicable to any varna or ashrama. He only gave out the scriptures to enable us to become mature spiritually and realise Him. So He is known as bhandhu or well wisher ब्रह्मण् । ब्रह्मणं विलक्तितोपेताः नृत्तिशून्यकालं उत्तपाणित । “स नो ब्रह्मणं निर्देशिते” तत् श्रुति: । SS(581). So these very same rules cannot bind Him. The description of Shri Suka in Shri Bhagavatam matches the above description of a paramahamsa. It says त्र्यम्बकः भगवान् यथापनम् यथोपनम् यथासिद्धां नामर्थवानोदितः । अवश्यबिस्त्रो निजस्वार्थः वृद्धयोगवृत्तविशः । BH(1-19-25).

Secondly, the bark of the tree and the skins that Shiva wears represent the cessation of birth. Birth and rebirth have been discussed earlier. We saw earlier while discussing the implications of Tripura that one’s mistaken identity with the body is the cause of all problems starting with karma resulting in fruits of karma and then birth(s) to “enjoy” the results of karma. The dawn of wisdom will dispel the ignorance about the reality and reveal one’s true status. This will end the cycle of birth and death. Lord’s grace can give us the wisdom. So Shiva is called Hara हर । स्व विषय लमनाविधिबिक्षुप्राप्तः । SS(392). The
late Paramacharya of Kanchipuram had explained the incident of Shiva burning the three cities with a smile thus. “The All-pervasive, All-knowing Supreme alone can liberate us from the cycle of birth and death by vouchsafing us the jnana to throw off the fetters of this restricting human body and to find bliss supreme in the merger of the jivatma with the paramatma. Shri Parameswara destroyed Tripura by the smile that appeared on His face on a contemplation of the humour of the situation. In relation to ourselves, the Tripura is the physical body in the three states of sthoola, sookShma and karana. The consciousness of these three states of our body can be overcome only when we realise the supreme bliss that radiates from Iswara.” (Acharya’s Call-Part1- P251).

The body is the result of prarabdham and another one is just waiting around the corner when this drops. So one should not get attached to it but be ready to leave it without regret when the prescribed hour comes. Instead, one should use one’s lifetime to gain discrimination and not chase the shadows. The avadhuta sage tells this to king Yadu तूँ यत्र न पतेदनृत्य याविनियमसाय विषयः पलु सर्वतःः स्यात्। BH(11-9-290). The human body is invaluable as it is got after innumerable births. No doubt it is frail and impermanent. But it is with this human body alone one can work to attain the life’s goal. Plants and animals come lower in the rung of evolution. They face many limitations. So our shastras say that if one fails to properly use the rare human birth but lives to eat and leads a hedonistic life-style without a thought about the hereafter he is most unwise and incurs incalculable loss. In fact they say that such a one is no better than a brute or a tree. Harsh words indeed but they are born out of anguish and meant to rub in the point िवत: क न झूठ न पतेदनृत्यः िवत: क न भानु न भानु: I ातःः राममुख्यावोपरः II ातःः पुष्प: पुष्पः I ाधरक्षोपिनी जलू सात: न भानु:। BH(2-3-18 and 19). “Do not trees live? Do not bellows breathe? And do not the domestic animals (other than the human beast) take their food and indulge in sex? The human beast who has never heard of the story of the Lord has been declared to be as good as a dog, swine, a camel and a donkey.” But the Lord who is an ocean of mercy is ready to save such a person also if he wants to turn a new leaf and worships Him with single minded devotion. Krishna says he will be considered a righteous person. BG(IX-30,31)अथ यथार्थायां भजते मामन्तवाणुः। यथार्थव: स मन्तवः समयमयसितो ितः। BH(11-9-290). The bark and animal skins that Shiva wears proclaim this fact symbolically. They convey the above
assurance that those who turn to Him with devotion will be saved from repeated births irrespective of the kind of life they might have lived. So Shiva has the following names वेष्जम् - संसारोपयोगी वेष्जम् VS(578)ब्रह्मवेष्जम् - ब्रह्म-संसार- सत्य देविनारुष संसारात्मता। “भवस्य
क्रेयेङ जगता पतथ” यति शुरुः। SS(272)तारः। तारथित समासारात्मतिः तारः। SA(07) तारणः।
संसारात्मतात्मात्मात्मतिः तारः। VS(337) तारः। गंगा भगवान्युक्तापायु स्यात्मात्मात्मतिः तारः।
VS(338) तारः। गंगा भगवान्युक्तापायु स्यात्मात्मात्मतिः तारः। “नमस्तात् नम: श्रमवे श्रेष्ठिति शुरुः।
SS(76) ब्रह्म नं दिव्यसंसाराणस्मृतः। दिव्य = divine संसाराणस्मृतः = a companion to one who treads
the righteous path ब्रह्म = I worship; means I worship the lord who is a companion to one who
takes to the righteous path. This line provides more than one interpretation. समारः। संसाराणस्मृतः।
means the virtuous path: the path trodden by the saints and noble people and
that is in keeping with the shastric injunctions महाभारतसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसार
the great men as they have followed the path and realised the results. The guru,
in Vivekachudamani, tells the disciple who had approached him for instruction that he will
show the path which ascetics took for crossing samsara संसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसारसंसार
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Krishna says that if one chooses to neglect the path laid out by the scriptures it will lead
to his downfall. So He urges Arjuna to follow them य: शास्त्रविविधतम वृत्ताति क्रमारः। न स
सिद्धिमयापोति न सुपुरं न परं गतिम्।।।।।।। तत्तारकः श्रमात्मकाऽऽत्र तत्तारकः श्रमात्मकाऽऽत्र
कर्म रित्विदुश्ततः। BG.(16.23,24.) For those who follow the virtuous path He becomes a
friend and guide. But for those like Ravana, who out of vanity or arrogance choose the
prohibited path He is not a friend but metes out severe punishment by casting them
into inferior births. तत्त्वं द्रोष्ट: कूर्ट: संसारस्य नराधमानुः। श्रिययमांशुस्यनासुसुरीययेव थोनिष्व।
BG.(16.19) Sankaracharya explains “inferior births” as cruel beings such as tigers, lions and
the like असुरस्य सन्तनस्य असुरस्य सन्तनस्य असुरस्यस्य असुरस्यस्य असुरस्यस्य असुरस्यस्य असुरस्यस्य असुरस्यस्य
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स्यात्मकाऽऽत्र तत्तारकः श्रमात्मकाऽऽत्र। Kalidasa prays in the invocatory verse in Malavikagnimitra समारः।लोकानाय
samsara

Being brahman He is the best guide and companion one can get on the way to liberation.
The path of self knowledge, says Yama, is very difficult to tread upon. It is just like walking over the sharp edge of a razor. It is very difficult to tread upon. It is just like walking over the sharp edge of a razor. The knowledge about the Lord is most profound. The means to get it is difficult for the unprepared mind. When one gets struck on the path He (being with us all the time and very much within us), like a sign post, points the way to the next stage. He is a guide and companion as long as a seeker looks for Him. Like the rain bearing clouds He showers His grace on His devotees without expecting anything in return. Mundane bandhus (relatives) are the cause of bondage and ensuing misery. In fact they are called bandhus only because they bind themselves with us. They alone bind. But lord Margabandhu is a unique bandhu who causes all bondage to drop off (as He is Sat). He is known as Shri Sankara in Bhajagovindam. So every one prays to Him for getting free from bondage (known as Margabandhu). Ignorance is like a thick layer of scum covering our wisdom. When the scum is removed the underlying wisdom shines. Wisdom shows the seeker that he is himself Margabandhu. The seeker realises there is no where to go and the seeking ends. So He is known as Margabandhu. He is sought by people who want liberation. He is the path through which one can get infinite bliss. Only by knowing Him liberation is attained through bhakthi. He removes the clouds of scum from this path. The former path is available to those who perform duties and sacrifices prescribed in the Vedas. Karmas may be performed with desires also (known as sakama karma). One may, for example, perform a sacrifice for achieving wealth or property or even swarga loka. The karmas done properly produce results without fail. One who does the prescribed karmas go to world of manes or pitruloka after death through the dark path. One can also do the karmas without any desire (known as nishkamakarma). They are done as offering to the Lord and the results are accepted as gifts from Him. Such karmas naturally do not have a binding effect but result in purity of the mind. So, now one with a purified mind can add meditation or upasana on the Lord in any chosen form, that is saguna Iswara, like Krishna, Rama, Shiva etc. This becomes a powerful combination and and gives better results(i.e.) they go to devaloka through the bright path. These are said to be superior worlds as the pleasures enjoyed are superior.
We saw earlier that even the worlds of gods are finite and so one who attains such a place has to come down and be reborn after his merits are exhausted. So it is not considered wise to keep on doing karmas. Those who take to a combination of karma and upasana can practise austerities and develop mental maturity and detachment. They go to Brahmaloka through the bright path that leads to Him.

Meaning of the verse. I worship Lord Margabandhu who is eternal, of the form of consciousness and bliss, who curbed the pride of Ravana, who used Meru the golden mountain as a bow, who wears the bark of a tree and skins and who is a companion to those who choose to tread the spiritual path leading to liberation.
Aman: sahasratvagami mohek cha vrth । BH(10-32-2), that is His beauty will cast a spell on
Manmatha himself. So where is the question of his feeling proud in the Lord’s prescence?
In view of this He is known as jyotirasvagam । BH(10-32-3). “Kama KamaGupta” kari
shruti । SS(416). Also sukhras: vishvatishaviiracamanabhirhatatva sukhras: । VS(791). One who
is more beautiful than anyone else sukhras: l shubhavayam as sukhras: । “MaGularatnan deva
yudhamatishodandam gaGhamsatadisthita brumhitam brumhitam Brahmasthirthe samayam.” kari
“Shiva-Om” shruti । SS(249) shubhaguna: - sukhras: tatu baraman sukhaguna: । VS(586). Also shubhaguna: - shubhaguna.
Saints and devotees have lost themselves in singing about the beauty of the lord. Let us
savour some samples. This description of Shiva is from Navaratnamala by the saint Shri
Sadasivabrahmendra karpipakshatasukumandruvamgandhini drutam shivam yadhre Shiva’s divine form is millions
times more beautiful than that of Manmatha. Likewise the saint Shri Narayana Tirta in
his Krishna Leelatarangini repeatedly calls Krishna as karpipakshata, manasaGobindahramabhirgham,
brumhitam chrohan, karpipakshasukeda, jagmohita, that is Krishna is millions of times more beautiful
than Manmatha. Such being the case his beauty is completely eclipsed in the prescence
of the Lord: just like the feeble light of the stars is lost in the blazing light of the sun. Let us
look at another example. This one is from Shri Krishnakarnamrutam by Lilasukha. He is
amazed at the sweet form of Krishna and could only exclaim “Oh! He is sweet,sweet, the
very embodiment of sweetness.”

Shri Vedanta Desika should have had the same sentiment as Shri DikShita and addresses
the lord at Tirupathy as karpipaksha sundeiva hivayantu! “the One whose beautiful form destroys
the pride of Manmatha” (in Venkatesa suprabatam). The use of the word karpipaksha for Manmatha
is significant. The name means that he was proud right from birth. Even the pride of such
a being vanishes in the prescence of the Lord.

2 - We are in the habit of describing things that have no defined form or have no form
as beautiful if they please our senses. Thus we say the weather is beautiful or a smell is
beautiful when it is is pleasing to our senses. Similarly we describe the nature, for example
the sun rise, as beautiful because it is colourful and it is also cool at that time. We do not
call the scene beautiful after a couple of hours when the sun is sizzling! In the same way we
describe the formless Lord as beautiful as He confers bliss on us. Further weather etc., can
give happiness in a very limited manner, that is for a limited time or in a limited quantity only. Soon they tend to pall or they will turn sour. So we may not call them really pleasing.

Considering this Krishna says

\[ \text{BG(5-22)} \]

In sharp contrast the Lord is of the form of unlimited bliss and so infinitely beautiful. And it never gets stale. One never gets sated with looking at the form. Lilasukha is charmed by Krishna's form and describes it in his Shri Krishnakarnamrutam thus:

\[ \text{BG(5-22)} \]

3 - At a different level we may say that Manmatha was not destroyed really as it is said. He came on a mission but failed miserably. But Shiva was in total control of Himself and so could not be shaken. He has many names that attest this fact. Some of them are:

\[ \text{BG(5-22)} \]

Thus Manmatha was no match to Shiva. He totally lost himself in the presence of Shiva. This is said to be the destruction of Manmatha. Shiva’s anger was a flash and disappeared soon after as is wont with noble souls and this is why the punishment was a token. Shiva yielded to Rati’s pleadings and brought Manmatha back to life as he has a role to play in the creation.

\[ \text{BG(5-22)} \]
overwhelming superiority

कालकुट = धर्म = black or dark-blue colour काल = throat. This means one whose throat has a dark colour. It refers to Shiva whose throat has a bluish hue. This is said to have happened after he swallowed the poison that was given out by the serpent Vasuki when the ocean was churned by the devas and asuras. Like Manmatha in the episode narrated above, the poison also lost its virulence and became impotent in Shiva’s presence. So Shiva has the following names

नीलकुट = नील = dark-blue colour कुट = throat.

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The following names of Shiva are based on this incident. 

The story of churning of the ocean is mentioned in the puranas. It appears in 8th book of Shrimad Bhagavatam. Some verses from this are given for reference
“Seeing that effervescent, unbearable and irresistible poison possessing tremendous force and spreading in all quarters, as well as above and below, and finding no protection (anywhere), living beings along with their leaders got much frightened and flew for protection to Lord Sadasiva (the ever-auspicious one).” They prayed to Shiva to protect them. They said

देव देव महादेव बूतालमुं बूतमावन ।

“O god of gods! O supreme deity! the protector, nay, the very self of all created beings! save us who have sought refuge in You, from this poison that is burning all the three worlds.”

Shiva saw their plight  तथ दीर्घ वचःं तताशं सुधा बुधुष्पनिति ।

Shiva who was the embodiment of mercy was very much affected by their plight and told His consort Sati this

अछि अत भवाने-चतुत् प्रजनं पश्च ैशसम् ।

And seeing the calamity that has come up on these people from the poison Kalakuta that had appeared during the churning of the ocean of milk.”

आसः प्राणप्रहीणस्नान विषयमयमि ति मे।

Saying this Shiva swallowed the poison He had gathered in His hand

निशामय कर्म तत्तदमिं तपेतयथ मीलम: ।

Observing the benevolent act of Lord Shiva those who approached Him, Sati, Brahma and Lord Vishnu praised it.

Refering to this episode of Shiva swallowing the poison and the wearing Ganga on His head, the author Shri DikShita says that the Lord performed these acts not because the poison was tasty or Ganga has purifying power: but only to save the world and because of extreme compassion. And these two acts could not have been performed by anyone else

गंगा प्रावतं न ब्रह्मांश शिव पावनीति नास्वाहितो मधुर हल्लवि दल्वृः ।

(Brahmatarkastavam) महेशम् - मछलि is a substitute for मछलि.
meaning big or great कङ्ग: is synonymous with कङ्गः and means lord or master महेशः is the name of Shiva महादार्शिकः महेशः । “acja परस्माः महेशः” कङ्गः शुरूतः । SS(26)महेशः- स्वरूपिकाणितिशिवुत्थायोगाविशिष्टवः इदं गुरुनाममयस्मितः। यदाहि भक्तिशःश्रावः उत्तात्त्वाति प्रकरणः

Because sky.

While the other gods like Yama may be lords of their respective quarters and have powers but the Shiva is their Lord also. Their lordships and powers were given by Him only. And it is to Him only they all rush for protection when they see a danger to all, as happened in the story just narrated. Later on it is said अतः चतुर्विदाया�्याधिकारतः कार्यं गौरविकालवते महादीशिवुत्थायोगाविशिष्टवः महेशः कङ्गः समृद्धं कङ्गः। धर्मः गुरुनामां तत्पत्रे, भक्ति औषधिशिवुत्थायोगाविशिष्टवः महत्त्वाति। Indra and other gods like Yama were given by Him only.

The sky was first created and came from Him only. Then other things were created from the sky. Thus Ganga came from the same source from which the entire creation started and so the river occupies a lofty position in our esteem. Besides it has an unique sacredness attached to it that is not attached to any other river or even to the rain water that falls from the sky. In fact the rain water is considered to be ordinary. It stays for a short time and is lost: but Ganga’s flow is perennial and is symbolic of His grace. Ganga came from the heaven. Her waters came in a big torrent. Because the water fell from a great height the stream got scattered into fine spray and came down as an immense cloud. Shiva spread out His hair to cover the sky so that the cloud of spray got in and was trapped. Ganga lost her way and could not come out. This was done to curb her pride. She was released again when Bagiratha prayed to Shiva.

The use of the adjective महत in the word महामोक्षेश्म् meaning great or
big is significant महाव्योम meaning “the big or the great sky” is said to distinguish it from the “small sky” that is mentioned in the Upanishads. अथ वर्तक-मशिन्नु प्रकाशणु हर्षं पुश्करे वेदम वाटेलिनिरस्तिराणी-स्तम्भीय यथं-शृग-वेदयं तत्वं विजितालितायमिति। Chandogyopanishad.(8-1-1). What is mentioned here is known as Dahara Vidya. Ordinarily people may may find it to visualise brahman that is described to be without a form, name or any other attributes. It may appear to be something like a vacuum. It is the intention of Dahara Vidya to provide them something gross on which they can meditate upon. Daharam means small (हर्षं अल्पं ) and अल्पपुरुं is our body. Briefly stated this says that there is a small space within the heart in the body in which one can visualise brahman and get all his desires fulfilled. The Upanishad says that this is because the space that is inside the heart encompasses all that is there outside.

કુદાબદ્રતમ્-કુદમ = jasmine flower आऽ = likeness, resemblance दंत= tooth. Shiva’s teeth are white and have the luster or the soft glow like the jasmine flower. They are uniform and packed closely like the petals of a jasmine flower. They are specifically mentioned as they are in the mouth of the Lord that is the birthplace of all sounds, grammar and the Vedas. It is said that the Vedas are the very breath of the Lord. Shiva has several names based on this fact. Some are given here

અસ્તય મકતો શ્વાસાયં ભૂતસ્ય અસ્ય = વાસ્થિક: । “�સ્તય મકતો સુલસપસ નેશાસિલ્લિમિતયેદ્ગ્રેયોજાણું” હલાયડ શ્રુને = II ॐત અ સુખાલેલ અશાસ્થોનિતભાઈદી। મિષુટ અ ભાષાલેલ મકત: અંગેદી: શ્રાટ યાંચિ કરાયડેઠી। SS(318)

દતાયા: - ત્રખા યેની મૂલફાનગ્રિનમિતા આગમા: પ્રાકાકરમાનયા: અસ્ય અશીદ: સ્થિર અને અસ્ય દીવાલિત અતાનિશિચિસ્વાર આગમાય યાં અ: દતાયા: । “अસ્તય મકતો સુલસપસ નેશાસિલ્લિમિતયેદ્ગ્રેયોજાણું” હલાયડ શ્રુને = I SS(444)

વેદનિશિચિત: - વેદ અંગેદી: નેશાસિલ્લિમિત યેનાયાણે પૃથવિનિશાસ્ય ભવિત: અંબ યાં અ: વેદનિશિચિત: । “�સ્તય મકતો સુલસપસ નેશાસિલ્લિમિતયેદ્ગ્રેયોજાણું” હલાયડ શ્રુને = I SS(733)

વેદકર: - વેદતે ચરમાકષાનિ અલ્લિચિત: વેદ: આખાય: તાનુ કલોત નેશાસિલ્લિમિત ઉચાયા હિતિ વેદકર: । “�સ્તય મકતો સુલસપસ” હિતિ શ્રુને = I SS(887). Thus the sacred Vedas in the form of His breath are always wafting in His mouth and are in constant touch with His teeth making them very pure and endowing them with unique sacredness. For these reasons the comparison of the teeth with the jasmine flower is to be found often
in the compositions of the saints and devotees. Some examples are given here. Shri Narayana Theertha addresses Krishna as कु-देशण and कु-दुर्दू-रण in his Krishna Leela Tarangini. (२३ = tooth.) This description of Devi’s teeth is in Shyamala Dandakam. कु-दुर्दू-शुरू-लिन-ज्ञ-नाय-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-वी-श्री-श्री-

सुरेश - सुर = god or deity. Shiva is the lord of gods like Indra, Brahma. He could ward off Yama also. Thus all the gods could not assess and understand His greatness and glory. That is why they were naive enough to plan and send Manmatha on that infamous mission. He was also worshipped by asuras like Ravana who subjugated the devas. He could crush Ravana and make him realise his helplessness and finally surrender to Him. There is none equal to Him or greater than Him. So Shri Suka salutes Him saying this निर्मलात्मिषातन्य सघना वधामनि भ्रमण्यि रंध्यते नमः । BH(2-4-14) निर्मलात्मिषातन्य सघना वधामनि भ्रमण्यि रंध्यते नमः । तेन राधसा अछरायोऽर्थात्मिषातन्य सघना वधामनि भ्रमण्यि रंध्यते नमः (Shridhara’s commentary). Shri Sadhaka Brahendra bows to Him saying (in Navaratnamala- 12) निर्मलात्मिषातन्य सघना वधामनि भ्रमण्यि श्रीम। तुष्ण = comparison. So he says “I salute Shiva of incomparable glory.”

कृष्णाक्रमण = 10 millions प्रकाश bright, brilliant, bright, shining. The Lord shines like a million (infinite) suns. There are so many suns and stars in the universe. The Lord gives them their brightness and He also shines because of His own glory without depending on anyone else. So He has these names सूर्यक्रिष्णक्रमण - सूर्यक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रिष्णक्रि-

\(\text{मार्गन-पुस्तोत्रम् अपाध्येयक्षिणेत्रेष्व विशिष्टम्}\)

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This is the fifth and the last verse in the stotram to be followed by the \textit{કુલલુત્તીત}, a verse that states the benefit of reciting the stotram. The preceding verses referred to some incidents to be found in the puranas. These incidents were used to highlight some qualities of Shiva. They also mentioned some aspects of His form, like the moon and Ganga on His head. Of course the references are to His સાગુણ aspect or aspect with name and form as Shiva. In His સિનગુર્ણ aspect He is without name, form and qualities. These references brought out the greatness of the Lord like His compassion, readiness to come to the help of the distressed etc. Thus, He destroyed Manmatha because he committed a serious offence. But when entreated by Rati (Manmatha’s wife) He readily granted his life back. This shows His infinite compassion. Whatever be the name or form by which we choose to address Him, be it Shiva or Rama or Hari, we find that His qualities are endearing and draw one to Him. Shri Kulasekara states this in this popular verse in his Mukundamala (No:18) as follows.

\begin{verbatim}
શ્રીપ્રણમુદ્યમારમુદ્ય છે, તમારાં સર્વોમંચસેન્યક,  શ્રીપ્રણમુદ્ય છે, તમારાં સર્વોમંચસેન્યક,  

the Fruits" verse that states the benefit of reciting the stotram. The preceding verses referred to some incidents to be found in the puranas. These incidents were used to highlight some qualities of Shiva. They also mentioned some aspects of His form, like the moon and Ganga on His head. Of course the references are to His \textit{સાગુણ} aspect or aspect with name and form as Shiva. In His \textit{સિનગુર્ણ} aspect He is without name, form and qualities. These references brought out the greatness of the Lord like His compassion, readiness to come to the help of the distressed etc. Thus, He destroyed Manmatha because he committed a serious offence. But when entreated by Rati (Manmatha’s wife) He readily granted his life back. This shows His infinite compassion. Whatever be the name or form by which we choose to address Him, be it Shiva or Rama or Hari, we find that His qualities are endearing and draw one to Him. Shri Kulasekara states this in this popular verse in his Mukundamala (No:18) as follows.

\textbf{Mandarabodhishtya -} 

\begin{verbatim}
= It is the name of one of the five trees in Indira’s paradise. It is said to be capable of granting one’s desires like the famed Kalpa tree, also of the paradise \textit{ભૂલુત} = grandeur, dignity, riches \textit{મદરામુ} = generous, liberal. So the word \textit{મદરાબૂદ્ધ} means that Lord Shiva is more generous in granting one’s wishes than the Mandara tree. So He is known as \textit{કામપ્રદ} - \textit{ભક્તેયઃ} \textit{કામાન્} \textit{પ્રકષણ} \textit{દદાતીઃ} \textit{કામપ્રદ} \textit{।} VS(298). He gives all that His devotees may need in abundance. Shri Vedanta Desika cites the case of Kuchela as an example and says \textit{ધાનામુષ્્ટમુચચે કુચેલમુનયે દત્તે ચ વિવત્તેશતામ્} meaning that He made His devotee Kuchela rich as Kubera in return for a handful of pounded rice he offered Him. He is also known as \textit{વર્દ} - \textit{અમિતસાં પાણનુ દ્યતીતિ વર્દ} \textit{।} VS(330). He grants boons desired from Him. Also \textit{વર્દ} - \textit{મજાનાંમિતરશ} \textit{“વર્દ ટેપ્મીત” મિસત શ્રુતિ દી} \textit{।} SS(107). And \textit{વર્દ} - \textit{મજાનાંમિતરશ} \textit{અપ્રૌચદ} \textit{વૃદધ} \textit{“અમિતમદુદુષ્તતમ” મિસત શ્રુતિ દી} \textit{।} SS(315). Saint Sadasiva Braharendra calls Him as

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“the wishing tree of heaven” in his song Bṛha re Gopalam. Again he calls Him as Bhaja re Gopalam. - “the Mandara tree planted in the residential quarters of His devotees” in the song Bṛha re Gopalam. - Manasa sanchara re. We find the mantra Namo vṛkṣāṅgī: in the eighth anuvaka of Shri Rudram. The explanation states that Rudra, who can take any form, has assumed the form of trees to help the world. He stands in the form of Palasa, Bilwa, Peepal and other holy trees which can be used in sacrifices for gaining heaven and the form of heavenly trees like Kalpaka, Mandara, Parijata etc., which grant all wishes. So He gets the following names: 1. Bhaja: - pādakamal, pādakamal, pādakamal. - BH(10-80-11). BG(7-23). Sankaracharya, in his commentary, points out that सामान्य आदिलोकान्: अनन्तुकला, अलंकरणसंग्रह, घ्रात्यतेन तत् घ्रात्यतेन। “though there is the same amount of exertion (in the two kinds of worship), people do not resort to Me so that they may attain infinite results. Alas! it is very miserable” -thus the Lord expresses His anguish. This is the reason for calling them as “men of small intellect.” But, unlike the tree, the Lord is infinite eternal as said in verse No. 3. He is not subject to decay etc., as the tree. So He is capable of granting finite material benefits like good health, wealth etc., besides liberation or mokṣa (i.e.) that is ever lasting or infinite. In fact He is willing to give Himself to His devotee. Aṃśa: pādakamal-mālakamal-cakṣat. BH(10-80-11). This idea is repeated by Shri Kulasekara in his Mukundamala (31):सः svarpa pādakamal dātārī: suṣṭ: nārāyaṇaḥ lītāt । The infinite thing obviously includes the finite things. The true devotees know this and so do not seek benefits that are finite from Him. The Lord is very dear to them and they are very dear to Him. In this way, the Śaiva worship is a Saṃśaya-dhyāna, as the Bhāṣya says: „So He naturally takes care of them. Has not He said तेषा निवालिन्यं मथाक्षमं वर्जयेन मथाक्षमं?’ “To them who are ever devout, I secure them gain and safety.” BG(9-22). Here योजन and श्रीम: “gain and safety” is
explained by Shri Sankara as यो: अप्राम्य प्राप्‌ए, क्लेवः तद्भवाः, तदुर्यं प्राप्यायमि अकम् । (i.e.)
Gain implies securing what is not already possessed; and safety means preservation of what
is already possessed. Shri Sankara adds that while the lesser devotees work themselves for
their gain and safety the true devotees do not. The Lord alone is their refuge. Wherefore
the Lord Himself secures to them gain and safety श्रीश्रीशालिृष्ठत्वतः ते: अत भगवान् अय
tेषां योगकृएङ्कूदिति । Thus the true devotees do not lack anything. If their be any lack,
it is taken care of by the Lord. The safety of their possessions is also taken care of by the
Lord. What more can one desire? They are carefree and therefore relaxed. The Tamil saint
Manikkavachakar said that the Lord was more concerned about him than the mother of
her new born child. He said that He anticipated his needs and fulfilled them. The brahmin
Kuchela was another such devotee. Outwardly he appeared to be very poor but inwardly he
was very rich: he was totally contented and never felt any want यदृयोपपणेन वर्तमानो गृहश्रीमी
। BH(10-80-7).

मर्दरागेर्द्रसारः - मर्दरः = is the name of a mythical mountain अतः = mountain. ठनः = the first
or the best (of any class of objects). So the word मर्दरागेर्द्र means Mandara, the best among
the mountains. शारेः = strength. Mandara was used by the gods and demons to churn
the ocean to get the nectar. It is said to be situated adjacent to the mountain Meru. मर्दरो मेघमन्द्रः
सुपुष्कः कुमुद हिति अयुतविजेन्ना विस्तारोत्पलका मेरोधसुतुर्क्षतामस्मिन्न गिरिः उपक्षमः
। Of the four sides of Mount Meru stand the Mandara, Merumandara, Suparswa and Kumuda mountains forming
its buttresses (as it were) and having a length and height of 10,000 yojanas. BH(5-16-10).
Shiva is said to be as strong as Mandara, the best among the mountains. He is unmovable,
like a mountain शारणम्: शालेऽयौ: अयौ: - शारणतत्वतः शालेऽयूः छ्वि शिरः छ्वितेतत्
। शिरेन्तवातः अवः अवः अत्यः। Because He is all pervading, He is stable like a pillar. Because He is stable He
is firm.BG(2-24). The proof is that the mighty Ravana tried to lift His abode Kailasa and
was crushed. But His unlimited strength is not demoniac but it is mellowed with kindness:
so when Ravana realised his mistake and pleaded, He pardoned him and let him go. So He
is known as महाबलः - अतिनिमोक्षितत्वम्, महाबलः
। He is stronger than those who are said
to possess great strength. VS(172)

महाबलपतः - महाबलं शारिरं साम्यम सैंचरं वा शेषां ते महाबल:। छन्नीप्रभुगूर्तिः तेषां परः श्रेष्ठः परेषाः
। "तमीलवािसहं परस्म महाबलः"भिति श्रुतः । SS(604). In fact He is known as अधिकः - अद्वितिक्रममः,
परेष्य छिदि यावतः। "तं शान्तम् व"भिति श्रुतः । श्रीश्रीविश्वे

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महाध्रुक — महाध्रुगत्य गिरपेण धरतीत महाध्रुक, "महाध्रुगत्य गिरपेण धरतीत महाध्रुक"

VS(369).

He held up Mandara during the churning of the ocean and lifted the Govardana mountain as Krishna. So He gets the name महाध्रुक — महाध्रुगत्य गिरपेण धरतीत महाध्रुक.

VS(180).

The fact that He is mightier than the mightiest and has compassion makes Him the ideal protector. Shri Vedanta Desika has expressed this idea beautifully in his works.

Ashtabhujashtakam — (5) त्वरसमतिरत्र चारक्षेत्र रक्षकैः इति निश्चत धीः श्रयाः तयं रहरेवे वेगवती तटाश्रयं श्रवाम् ॥

Shri Kamasikashtakam — (8).

He asks: "When one is protected by You what use is there of other protectors? Again, when You are angry and decide to punish someone, what use is there of other protectors?" This reminds us of the famous incident of Kakasura in Ramayana. The asura misbehaved with Sita when she was in the forest with Rama. Rama was furious at his conduct and sent an arrow that chased him wherever he went. He ran to Indra, Brahma etc., for protection. But they hurriedly turned him away when they learnt that he had incurred Rama's wrath and is being hunted by Rama's arrow. Finally, feeling helpless, he surrendered to Rama Himself who forgave him readily. This incident was mentioned by Sita to Hanuman. She said

नीनु लोकान्तः संपिरिकम्य तमेव शाङ्ग गतः ।

यत निपिततं भूमिः शाङ्ग शाङ्गालं ।

संपुर्णमिव कलुक्तः कण्टाक्यापायतः ॥

(Ramayana. Sundara Kanda. 38-32,3).

Great asuras like Ravana obtained wonderful boons from Brahma and other gods. With those powers they could subdue the three worlds. They were very proud of their powers and were convinced they were invincible and safe. But in the end they found themselves helpless when their time was up. Ravana bemoans this fact when he sees his army being decimated in the fight with Rama

अहो सुभास्वानो रामो महद्वाग्नलं वै ।

युध्य निक्षमात्रयं शाङ्गसा निधनं गततः ।

तं मने राघवं वीरं नारायणालम्बम्यम् ॥ (Yuddha kanda 72-10,11).
In contrast young devotees like Prahlada were under His protection. They faced trials and tribulations with the assurance that the Lord will protect them. So no harm could befall them. We also referred to the episode of Markandeya being saved by Shiva from the jaws of death and mentioned that one of His names is श्रीमहेंद्रेश्वर - SS(123) and SA(71). Shri Ramana Maharshi explains how the Lord Mrityunjaya saves His devotees from death. He puts it in a unique way in his work Sat-darsanam. He says

महागायर्दूरम् - महा = great, गायर = the name of Parvati, महागायर्दूर = great or glorious, Gauri अदूरम् = close by, not far away दूर = distant or far off. Gauri or Parvati is the consort of Shiva and is said to take up half of His body. In view of this it is said here that She is not far off from Him. So Shiva is known as अर्धनारीश्वर - नार्य = female अर्धनारीस्वरी, अर्धनारीस्वरित इश्वर = अर्धनारीश्वर = अर्धनारीश्वर = नार्याश्रामदर्शनसाधनामिति: । तदुक्तमाचायः । प्रवालप्रवाहप्रभाशाष्मात: ॥

The Maharshi says that when a devotee seeks the protection of the Lord from fear of death He protects him by destroying the individual! This sounds alarming and confusing. But what the Maharshi means is that normally one identifies himself with the body-mind complex and not the Self that is one’s true nature. Thus the individual feels separate from the Self which is immortal and not subject to destruction. This separative idea is formed in the individual’s mind. As long as one cherishes this mistaken notion one is in the grip of the vicious samsara. He is subject to repeated birth and death. This wrong notion that makes one to identify himself with the body is known as ahamkara or ego. When one surrenders himself to Lord Mrityunjaya who is very much in everyone’s heart the ahamkara loses itself. It is only a chimera that thrives as long as one’s ignorance of his true nature persists. The Lord’s grace confers the wisdom that destroys the ignorance. Consequently the ego gets stripped of all its coverings and ceases to be the ego. Rid of the ego the Self shines in its pristine glory. The individual finds his original nature and thus he goes beyond birth and death. He becomes immortal.

महागायर्दूरम् - महा = great, गायर = the name of Parvati, महागायर्दूर = great or glorious, Gauri अदूरम् = close by, not far away दूर = distant or far off. Gauri or Parvati is the consort of Shiva and is said to take up half of His body. In view of this it is said here that She is not far off from Him. So Shiva is known as अर्धनारीश्वर - नार्य = female अर्धनारीस्वरी, अर्धनारीस्वरित इश्वर = अर्धनारीश्वर = अर्धनारीश्वर = नार्याश्रामदर्शनसाधनामिति: । तदुक्तमाचायः । प्रवालप्रवाहप्रभाशाष्मात: ॥

SS(437) रेडार्धशतां - रेडस्य अर्ध वामवर्गः, क्षणामः यथा सं देवार्धशताः
Krishna has said वितायं जगतो माता धाता वितामः। BG(9-17). “I am the father of this world, the mother, the dispenser of the fruits of action and the grandsire.” That He is both the father and the mother is symbolised by the Ardhanari form. Kalidasa says this in the invocatory verse to his great poem Raghuvamsam.

वागर्तीविव रुखपूर्ण वागर्त्रतिपत्ते।

जगत् पितली ववे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरी॥

“I salute Parvati and Parameswara who are the parents of the universe and who are inseparably united like the speech and the sense, for obtaining the correct knowledge of the words and their meaning.” Thus Krishna says that He is both the intelligent cause and the material cause of the creation. He is का-विद्या वस्तुं कर्म ज्ञातस्य कर्ताः, “यो वै भावाक अवेशां पुरुषां कर्त्ता क्रिया तत् कर्म स के विद्यां्।” की-ु-ज-कृ ति श्रुते॥ VS(316). कर्ताः - जगदुपाती साधुव्र कायम्। VS(378) कर्ताः - उपदार्श निमित्तं व कायम्। VS(379) विकता - विविध भूमि निमित्तं श्रुते। विकता स अेव ब्रजवान् विषुः। VS(381). The material cause is also known as prakriti which Krishna called as His inferior aspect in BG Chapter 7. Prakriti is also called maya that deluding power of Iswara जगत्स्य पुरुषां माया विद्यां विद्याभाविनः तु महादेशम्। SVU(4-10). Prakriti is maya and the Lord Maheswara is in control of it. Krishna says that His maya is very powerful and very hard to overcome तैय अवेश गुणभीमि मम माया दृढ्यत्वय। BG(7-14). “This divine illusion of Mine, made up of gunas, is hard to surmount.” So He is known as महामायः। मायाविनामपि मायाकालितवात् महामयः, “मम माया दृढ्यत्वया” श्रुति भगवद्गुणान्तः। VS(170). Krishna says that in fact He is both: the intelligent cause and the material cause called prakriti. Thus मूर्त्तिः is one of His names मूलमुद्रा प्रकृति मूलप्रकृति: जगदलकारणं, तत्वमितोपलब्धस्तं आभिमायत्। “तैत्तिक, भौतिक प्रज्ञाति” श्रुति श्रुति॥ अर्थस्तिति ईशानकृतृत्वातिकालकालितवात्, बुद्धिमातिप्रेरणानेतुप्रकृतियानवम्भम्। SS(411). Also प्रकृति: - जगदुपातीवस्तु: परमेश्वरः प्रकृति:। अर्थम: सूक्ष्मकारण निर्मित:। प्रकृतिः प्रतिक्षा, नृत्तां प्रतीत्तिमित्तकालितप्रकृतिः। निवृत्तं वदि। भावाकरण सश्रुतपूर्वप्रकृतियानवम्भम्। SS(570) मायावेश:। मायावेश कायमित्तमिति यावुः। अेव व मायावेश अव्यक्तो वातिकालवातु वातिकालवातु शैलित्तेन स्वतं-त्नाभावतेन जगत् ईशवेश्वरज्ञतमुपस्थते।

देवलशक्ति स्वयूद्वीपिनूजधाति ह श्रुति:। SS(557). The prakriti mentioned as the mother is symbolised as the Lord’s consort and is variously called as Parvati, Ambika, Gauri, Bhavani, LakShmi etc.. प्रकृति, वन्धुवाली, नारायणस्वरूप स्वरूप नारायणस्वरूप नारायणस्वरूप are names of LakShmi to be seen.
in LakShmi Ashtottarashatanama stotram. Thus the Lord as brahman is one but, as Iswara and Devi appears as two. This is stated beautifully in the उममाहेश्वरस्तोत्रम् (Ummameswara stotram) as follows: नमः शिवाय नवयौननामाय पर्स्म्यणिर्मियुष्मायम्। I salute the two Shivas who are eternally young and whose bodies are entwined with each other. Krishna also adds that we the created beings are in the clutches of prakriti and go through the cycle of birth and death till wisdom dawns on us but He is beyond it and maya, however powerful it may be has no influence on Him. So He is known as मायासंब्रद्धादितृत्वम्: “अत्मस्कम्मात्मामिति” (1) SS(121). and निर्माता: मायाविर्जते निर्मलात्ः। यद्भि “मायान्तु” प्रकृतिभिः विधामाविने तु महेश्वरे” हृति मायासंब्रद्धान: श्रुतिः दुःखते, तथापि मायाम: कल्यात्तौ वास्तवमच्छायावात् कल्यात्तौ समपेय प्रृति:। अत अभियात्तौ परिभाषितं: अक्षरायात्तौ:। “अत्मस्कम्मात्मामिति” (1) SS(121). Bartruhari states the fact that the Lord is not in the clutches of maya in his own way in his Vairagyasatakam.(17)

The prakriti is subservient to Him. This is depicted in our puranas by showing Parvati and LakShmi as serving the Lord with great dedication. For example, Devahuti, the daughter of Manu, is said to have served her husband, sage Kardama, with the same delight as Goddess Parvati looks after Her consort, Lord Shiva निहतं पर्यङ्कर्तु प्रीत्या अत्मनीभवस्य प्रायुम्। BH(2-23-1). The following names are thus derived from the facts stated above।

पार्वतीपरिमुक्तिः: पर्वतः उममाहेश्वरम् तत्क तु प्रीतवत तमः परिमुक्तिः। तस्याः: परिमुक्ति:। तदुक्त: सूतसांतिवित्स्याः: “सा शिवा शुद्भायुष्मातीतमा श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति अश्रुसांतिवित्स्या श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति अश्रुसांतिवित्स्या श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति अश्रुसांतिवित्स्या श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति अश्रुसांतिवित्स्या श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति अश्रुसांतिवित्स्या श्रीबल्लाद्वृत्ति अश्रुसांतिवित्स्या

श्रीवल्लाद्वृत्ति: पर्यङ्कर्तु प्रीत्या अत्मनीभवस्य प्रायुम्। BH(2-23-1). The following names are thus derived from the facts stated above।

मार्जनमूलादित्वम् अपविद्विनिः सिंहतम् -

maargabandhu.pdf
Devi Gauri is called महत or great or glorious because of Her greatness. But one has to remember that She is dependant on Him for Her greatness. Shiva’s greatness is revealed by the fact that He married Her though She was only the daughter of the mountain Himavan. This marriage conferred greatness on Parvati and Himavan also. Similarly as Vishnu He married LakShmi, the daughter of the ocean, and conferred honour on LakShmi and the ocean also. This is stated symbolically in our puranas. For example, DakShayani wanted to attend and participate in the sacrifice organised by Her father DakSha. Shiva told Her not to go and warned that if She disregarded His advice and went to the function She will meet with humiliation. But She went to the function overriding His advice only to be met with a barrage of insults in the assembly. Unable to bear the insult, She sacrificed Her body and was reborn as Parvati. She had to perform severe penance to please Shiva and married Him again. A similar incidence is narrated in Ramayana also. Sita spent happy days with Rama in the forest till She saw the the golden deer and became infatuated with it. She sent Him away from Her to capture it. This invited trouble for Her. The moment Rama turned His back on Her, Ravana appeared on the scene and carried Her away to Lanka. She was incarcerated for a long time and suffered greatly रक्ततामृ = red lead दूर = distant, far off प्रायस्म = going away. That is, Shiva’s complexion is very red and it outshines the colour of the red lead. Shri Rudram says असो वस्तासो अवरण उत्त भद्रासुम्यग = This says that Rudra is भद्र = copper coloured, अवरण = rosy, भद्र = golden yellow, सुम्यग = highly auspicious and beneficient. Only a few can understand and worship the avyakta or impersonal God. A larger number can contemplate Rudra as residing on Kailasa. For the benefit of the others, who form the majority of mankind, He stands in the form of the sun. The sandhya vandana mantra says सूर्य अतेम जग्मत: तस्युष्मः = the sun is the self of the world, movable and immovable. The sun is the most acclaimed and worshipped power of nature. It is said that असो वस्तासो इत्यनेन आदिर्मुखपविष्टे तद्वियं आसिस्वेत: रक्ततामृ: वायुः = The votary should praise and worship the sun by means of the rik असी वस्तासो in the Rudram. So तद्वित्त: अक्षस्ते = नमस्तस्ते ये” तिष्ठति: इ नमस्तस्तास्व ये तिष्ठति: | SS(572) is one of His names. Also He is compassionate. The quality is represented by the red colour. So His form is suffused with that colour. He is known as ध्वाणु: - ध्वान्तितो ध्वाणु: अनेन परमेश्वरस्य या शान्ता तनू सर्व भविष्यः
The word धीर is used to mean a person of wisdom or discretion. It does not waver even when assailed by deleterious forces that are capable of perverting it. The Self passes into childhood and youth and old age, so does He pass into another body. The wise man has no delusions in this regard and so is not troubled in the mind. Again He is not afflicted by pleasure and pain, and so is not troubled in the mind.

Here Krishna says a wise man who is not afflicted by pleasure and pain is fit for immortality. Such a man of wisdom is called as धीर and also as द्वितीय, अभिध्य, etc.. The Upanishads use the word धीर to indicate a man of wisdom and realisation. This example is from Kathopanishad. Another example is from the Bhagavata. 

The indwelling Lord of all beings; who is one without the second and has everybody under His control; transforms His one and single entity into multifarious; those wise persons who always observe (meditate upon) that Lord abiding in self; (it is they who) enjoy that eternal bliss; not the others.” One other interpretation of the word is धीर: - धीर = to urge, elevate, bring to life. Thus the word धीर means the Lord who is behind the intellect and gives life to it. We worship Him through the Gayatri mantra as धीर = to urge, elevate, bring to life. The avaduta sage lists the similarities between a realised man and the ocean in his conversation with the king Yadhu. The story is seen in Shri Bhagavata. He says:
The conversation is narrated by Krishna in His advice to Uddhava. The avaduta says: The sage should be placid and profound, difficult to fathom and to cross over, illimitable and immovable, like the ocean with its mass of waters at rest. And whether he has an abundance of enjoyable things or he has none, the sage, who has set his heart upon the Lord, neither overflows nor shrinks, like the ocean on account of the waters of the rivers. These verses say that a jnani's mind is clear. He is mature and अभिः deep or profound. Describing the qualities of Rama, Narada tells the sage Valmiki that Rama was profound like the ocean समुद्र ् रव अभिः (Balakanda-1-17). The sage will appear to be simple, but his depth of knowledge and maturity cannot be measured: दूरिगाहः. Because of his immense wisdom he cannot be overcome or overpowered. He is firm. He is beyond time and space as he has found he is अनन्त and अपार: । अपार: means shoreless. A jnani is limitless and all pervading as he has found his true nature स्वभूमि: . He is unshakeable; this refers to his emotional strength. On this point Krishna says दूरिगाहः: सुभद्र विगतानु:। वीरराजपूर्वः: स्थितियां मुनिनस्यते । BG(2-56).

His heart is not distressed in calamities. It does not long for pleasures. He is free from attachment, fear and anger. He is called a sage, a man of steady knowledge.

The sage is not disturbed by his experiences, be they favourable or unfavourable. King ParikShit was such a person. He was born in the royal family and brought up in the lap of luxury. He was said to be calm and serene like Lord Shiva प्रकटे गिरिस्थिलोम्यः । BH(1-12-23). But adversity hit him hard in the form of a curse. He had only seven days left to live. But though he was initially upset, he gathered his wits and immediately started thinking of what he should do next. He renounced his kingdom, went to the banks of Ganga and sought the advice of sages about what one in his condition should do. The jnani has realised his fulness पूणतमः. So he has no wants. His sensory experiences are like the rivers: they may bring in flood waters or may dry up. But the ocean does not swell or shrink in size. It retains its fullness. This is with reference to material possessions also. So whether he owns all desirable
possessions समृद्धाम or has none, he treats both situations like नशस्यपुरशः gifts from God. Ramayana gives a fine example in Rama for this. He was to be made the king but this was not to be. He was asked to go to the forest instead. But this sudden change of fortune did not upset Him in the least. Valmiki says: न पं गन्तुक्षरमस्य तस्मिन वसु-चरम् | सर्वदीक्षितस्य वक्तृते विचित्रिकाय || (Ayodhya Kanda -19-33). No change of mood was perceived in him,- any more than in a (master) yogi who surpasses all (common) men (because of his having risen above all pairs of opposites),- even though he was ready to retire to woods and was renouncing the sovereignty to the globe. The man of wisdom does not become arrogant or depressed. Rama was said to be like this सर्वज्ञातिगत साधृति: समुद्र छैं शिलालिनि: Bala (1-16). He was always sought by the righteous even as the ocean by the rivers. The commentators explain that just as the ocean maintains its level even when rivers flow into it, Rama was level-headed even though sadhus were regularly calling on Him. He did not become proud. It emerges then, that in the case of a man of wisdom real possessions are not material possessions and adversity is not poverty. Prosperity for him is remembrance of the Lord and calamity is forgetting Him संपदे नैव संपदः विषयी नैव विषयः: विषयः विस्मयः विस्मयः संपदं संस्मरणं कर्ति: It is possible that in adversity one’s weakness shows up and all thoughts of Lord recede into the background. But this does not happen in the case of a true devotee. He is not daunted by reverses. In fact Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas found from experience that calamities made her think of Him and so she prayed that she should be regularly visited by them! 

विषयः अस्तु नस्ताः स्वात्मात्र तत्तथालिकः अस्तु नस्ताः अस्तु नस्ताः स्वात्मात्र तत्तथालिकः || BH(1-8-25).

A jnani has realised his oneness with God. So there is no question of his forgetting Him. So, let us pray to the great Lord Margabandhu to show us the way. महामार्ग-नुस्तः || महामार्ग-नुस्तः = I worship महामार्ग-नुस्तः = the Lord Margabandhu. In this verse the poet uses four similies to glorify Shiva’s generous nature, His strength, His complexion and His wisdom. Talking about figures of speech one has to note that they are used by poets to highlight some quality or emphasise some thing. This works all right with the things in the universe (i.e.) with finite things. But when one tries to use similies while talking about God who is not finite but infinite they fail. The desired effect cannot be produced. One cannot find something equal to or greater than Him. Shri DikShita says this in his poem Varadarajastavam
He says that one cannot describe His beauty directly, or by comparing it with a like object or by exaggeration. Describing it directly is not possible because His form is very subtle and cannot be grasped by words. There being none equal to it, one cannot use a simile and offer a comparison. Also one cannot use exaggeration to highlight His form. For example Kalidasa says that King Dilipa was tall like a tree राघुः : Raghuvamsa (1-13). This makes nice reading and sounds definitely better than saying that Raghu was exceptionally tall. But exaggeration will not work when talking about His qualities as nothing can excel them. Still poets resort to the use of the figures of speech as with the worldly objects while praising Him. This is done in their enthusiasm to sing His glory and we accept it in the right spirit.

Meaning of the verse. I worship Lord Margabandhu who is more generous than the divine Mandara tree, who is stronger than the Mandara mountain, who is close to the great Gauri, who is of crimson colour and who is more profound than the mighty ocean.

6

6. अपथ्यवशेषेन्द्र गीतं स्तोत्रसङ्ग पदेक्ष्टुः भक्त्या प्रयाः।
तस्याः सिद्धिः विपे भार्जमयेतांि आशुतोषी मंडेशः।
शामोऽ ...

अपथ्य = the name of the author चरणः = performer of sacrifices गीतं = sung स्तोत्रसङ्ग great poem पदेक्ष्टुः = reads य = whoever भक्त्या = with devotion प्रयाः = during a journey तस्य = for him. अथ = wish, desire सिद्धिः = fulfilment, complete attainment विपे = arranges. मंडेशः = middle or central part मार्गमये on the way आशु = freedom from fear, security आशु = fast, quick आशुतोषी = satisfaction, pleasure, delight. मंडेशः = name of Shiva. This verse gives the benefit or the fruit of reciting the poem and is known as फलश्रुतिः। फलं means the fruit, the result or the reward. The author says that one who reads the poem with devotion during a journey will be successful and attain his goal or wishes. In addition he will feel secure and be protected by the Lord on the way. What is the nature of
the Lord? He is the Lord of the lords like Indra and Brahma. It is to Him that they all rush when they are confronted by fear or serious danger. This name was explained in verse No. 4 where it occurs. But though He is the supreme Lord a devotee can easily please Him by offering items that can be obtained without difficulty. He is known by following names: 

*Pramāṇa* - भक्तानां साल्यमूङ्क्तम्, *Purāṇa* - महाभारतायेषु. 

He is easily pleased by offering some leaves, flowers or fruits. The lowly woman Sabari could please Lord Rama by offering Him some fruits she had gathered in the forest. Krishna accepted with great delight some pounded rice which the poor brahmin Kuchela brought Him. Shri Krishna says that His devotees can attain the highest results by just offering a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water etc. He says: भक्तानां साल्यमूङ्क्तम् - BG(9-26) Shiva is known as: कर्षिकेश्वर - कर्षिकेश्वरायक्ष्मि पुराणायेषु. 

One of Shri Lalita’s names also states this fact: शिवपूज्यायेषु प्राणमूुङ्क्तम् - शिवपूज्यायेषु प्राणमूङ्क्तम्. One need not strain himself and go on pilgrimages etc., in search of Him but just by saying some words and reciting this stotram and praying to the Lord to ensure his safety during the journey. As a result the enemies could not carry out their plan and Shri DikShita could complete his travel in complete safety. We too can recite this stotram and be protected by the Lord in our travels.

It is our tradition to mention the कुष्ठुतिः or the fruits of reciting or listening to stotras or puranas or other holy texts. This is usually said in the end of the text but sometimes is mentioned in the beginning of the text or in both places. The purpose of the कुष्ठुतिः is to interest one in reading or listening to the composition. The author in this case had lead a religious life. He had built two temples in his native village. He had performed several
sacrifices as is expected of a brahmin. So he gets the appellation dikShita appended to his name. He also states this fact by calling himself as yajña. The Manusmrithi states that performing sacrifices is one of the duties of a brahmin, the yajña being one of the veda sacrifices as

Kalidasa says that the kings of the solar dynasty tended the sacrificial fires by means of offerings and honoured the guests also. Vivekachudamani elaborates the definition as

Anandagiri appends this meaning to the original definition as

Krishna talks at length about various kinds of sacrifices in Gita (in chapter IV). He eulogises the performance of sacrifices by saying

Eating the ambrosia, the remnant of the sacrifice, they go to the eternal brahman. Even this world, which is common to all beings is not for one who does not perform the sacrifices mentioned. How can there be to him another world which can be secured only by superior means? (BG 4-31). The Lord Himself is called yajña-panca yajñasya kṣetram yajña-“yajña viṣṇu” (v-1-1-4) ॥ VS(445). Also yajña-panca yajñasya kṣetram ॥ “tāṁ yajñaśrīṁ viṣṇu” दिनति श्रुति: ॥ SS(160). The performance of prescribed duties or what is known as karmas is necessary to get purification of the mind. This is the necessary first step in the path of spiritual progress विंतत्व शूद्ये कर्म says Shri Sankaracharya in his Vivekachudamani. He defines such a person who has been regularly performing the sacrifices as noble minded महात्मान: आनुवंशितव: in his commentary (BG-19-13). Anandagiri elaborates the definition as महात्मान: अम्ल: शोक्तिदिनिः: शोविन्त आत्मा सत्यं वेषां - those whose minds have been purified by sacrifice etc.. Such a person who is sincere, performs the duties expected of him and is broad minded is known as आनंद: अनंद: यथार्थवक्ता: a credible, trustworthy person. Such persons speak from experience. So we need not question their sincerity but accept what they say as the truth with complete faith. Thus our tradition says आनंदवक्ता प्रमाणः: Great men act and speak for the good of the world only. They have no axes to grind. King ParikShit mentions this point when he greets the great sages who had come to see him in his last days साधकाः: सर्वत्र अथव सर्वे तेह तथा नूतनस्थिकृतेः ॥ नेपालवमुनाः च दक्षनार्य नते परापुरुषालम्बीवः ॥
The king said “shining like the vedas you have all come together from every quarter. You have no purpose of your own in this world (to achieve) in this world or in the next, except doing good to others, which is your innate disposition.” BH(1-19-23). Shri Sankaracharya also talks about this trait of great men:  

Shanata mahanta nivasaantu satito vasantavalkvikitva varnata: ।

Tieji: svayam bhimarvaayin janahdaituka vaanapti tarakanta: ॥ (Vivekachudamani).

There are good souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring, and who, having crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death, help others also to cross the same, without any motive whatsoever गीता = sung, chanted. The poet says that he had sung the poem. Does it mean he had not composed it? For example, one of the definitions of the word भगवद्वैता is that it was sung or chanted by Krishna: श्रीभगवत भैतिक. This implies that He was not the author of the work (सूक्ष्मता) but was merely repeating what had been said by someone else earlier. Krishna Himself told Arjuna that He had imparted the same teaching long back to the Sun (Vivasvat) at the commencement of evolution by Him. This was then handed down in regular succession among the royal sages (men who were at once kings and sages). Thus it was an ancient teaching. The text may be different but the contents are essentially the same. They can be found in the upanishads also. One of the Gita Dhyana states this:

अवौपिनवज्ञी ज्ञाने, दीर्घो गोपालनन: । पाथो वतसः,

सुधीराविखंत, दूरान्गीतामुरु मकतु ॥

The upanishads are like the cows. Gopala is the one who milks them. Partha (Arjuna) forms the calf. The pure minded one is the partaker and the supreme nectar Gita is the milk. In the same manner, in this case also the poet had glorified the Lord by stringing together some of His attributes. These attributes are to be found in the puranas etc., and so were known long back. Also the fact that singing the glories of the Lord will confer great benefits is also known from time immemorial. In the introduction to the Vishnu Sahasranama Bhishma tells Yudhishtira: I will tell you some of the renowned names of the Lord culled from various sources (such as the vedas and puranas) by great sages. These names will confer all merits भानि नामानि गौणानि विश्वातानि महत्ति: । इचिति पदिगीतानि तानि पदाति भूतचे ॥

Thus, the use of the word “sung” (गीतम्) seems appropriate. Why this piece is called श्रीविधा श्रीगुरुम्
“the sovereign science, the sovereign secret.” It is called sovereign because it talks of brahman and not of any lowly subject. It shows the way to wash off one’s sins and attain brahman. Similarly this stotra glorifies the Lord who is brahman, who is limitless and thus supreme. It does not talk of some thing that is inferior or perishable like a monarch or gods like Indra and Brahma who are all in the clutches of time. It says then पञ्चयेश्वरुः भक्तया प्रयाहे तस्य अर्थसुचिद्विधेऽपि (i.e.) whoever reads this with devotion during a journey, the mission will be completed successfully. The emphasis is on the word भक्तया - with devotion. This implies that such great hymns should not be read or chanted mechanically, by rote but with devotion. One should put his heart and mind in it. Bhishma says so in the introduction to Vishnu Sahasranama: “Among the dharma prescribed the one I am going to say namely, worshipping the Lord by singing His glories with devotion is, I consider the best.” अष्टे भवेन्तर्मात्रां धार्मिकाधिकतमो मतः। भद्रवक्ष्या पुष्पीक्रः स्ववेर्यः सङ्क।।।।। This is in reply to King Yudishtira’s question to him “which among the dharmas or duties you have mentioned is, according to you the best?”

की धर्मसर्वधर्मालां भवत: परमो मतः? Bhakti (devotion) while chanting the names of the Lord is mentioned more than once in the end after the stotram also. For example it is said: भक्तिमात्र: सहोत्तथाल शुचिस्तदध्यात:। सकलं वासुदेवस्य नामवामेतत प्रकीर्येऽत्।।॥ परः स्तवमप्रीत्यानाः श्रद्धामित्समस्मित:। युज्मेरांसुन्भूक्ष्याति-श्रीकृतिमृत्तिथिः॥।॥

Thus a great deal of emphasis is laid on devotion and faith. The Lord is अनिवर्षी always awake VS(215) and on the look-out for people who have devotion. He has innumerable number of ears, eyes, mouths etc.. सर्वत: पाशिपाटं तत्र सर्वनिष्ठ:क्रियेऽर्भुः। सर्वत: श्रुतिभावौऽस्वम्भूत: तिष्ठते॥। SU(3-6). His (as Ganesa) ears are big and very sensitive. With them He can hear even prayers muttered softly. With His long proboscis He can detect even the faintest aroma of piety. He loves sincere prayers offered by His devotees and blesses them. He has the name: स्तवप्रियः VS(680). This does not mean that He loves adulation. He has no need for it. It is we who benefit by singing His glories. It was said पञ्चयेश्वरुः भक्तया प्रयाहे तस्य अर्थसुचिद्विधेऽपि
Who at the time of death, thinking of me alone, leaves the body and goes forth, he reaches My being; there is no doubt in this. BG(8-5). And; 

Thinking of whatever Being at the end a man leaves the body, Him alone, O son of Kunti, he reaches by whom the thought of that Being has been constantly dwelt upon. The word Being may mean any personal God (like Shiva or Devi) other than Krishna or any friend or relative or anything else (may be his house or bank balance or even his pet) that had been occupying the person’s thought. This is mentioned in the upanishad also.

An example is to be found in the story of the sage Bharatha that is familiar to all. This is told in the fifth book of Bhagavatham. The great king ruled over the entire country. It is because of him that the country has come to be known as Bharatam. The king was a great devotee of the Lord. After ruling the country for a long time he handed over the kingdom to his sons and retired to the forest. There, in the forest, he devoted his time in the worship of the Lord and derived great satisfaction. But he developed an infatuation for a fawn. His mind got diverted from the worship of the Lord. He was engrossed in protecting and caressing the
young deer. Even as he was spending his time playing and protecting the deer the hour of death approached him. He died looking on the deer intently.

As a consequence he was reborn as a deer. BH(5-8-27). Shri Suka says in anguish that Bharatha, a great devotee, instead of attaining the supreme goal, died like other common people and was reborn. A person with unfulfilled desires at the time of death gets the birth suitable to the fulfilment of the desires. So to one who wants to avoid rebirth Krishna says: BG(8-7)

Therefore at all times you meditate on Me and fight; with mind and reason fixed on Me you shall doubtless come to Me alone. Here “fight” means doing one’s allotted duty. This means that if one thinks of Him in his last moment he will attain Him. “Attaining” means realising Him by knowing His true nature. Krishna says this a bit later in clarification.

He says – BG(8-22). That Purusha, O Arjuna! within Whom all beings dwell, by Whom all this is pervaded, may be won by means of exclusive devotion. Shri Sankaracharyya in his explanation says that “exclusive devotion” means exclusive devotion, characterised by jnana or knowledge of the self. Of them (the four types of devotees mentioned in verse No.16) all, the knower, ever steadfast and exclusively devoted excels. Shri Sankaracharya says that the wise man knows the truth and so is steadfast. He is exclusively devoted; for none else is seen deserving of devotion. Attaining Him means liberation from the repeated cycle of birth and death. Bhishma mentions this fact as he lay dying on the bed of arrows. Krishna was present by his side. He prepared to shed his body at the auspicious time since he had the power to do so. He praised Krishna for His kindness to be present by his side at the crucial moments. He says:

Bhishma indicates the name of the ship Vayu.
A yogi who casts off his body with his thought fixed on Him through devotion and chanting His name with his tongue is rid of all hankerings and released from the bondage of actions. Then Bhishma stopped the wanderings of his senses and praised the Lord in verse 1-9-31. The first verse he said in praise of the Lord shows that he had shed his attachments and he was surrendering his pure mind to Him.

He said that on the eve of his departure from this world he offers his mind which is free from all thirst for worldly enjoyment to the Supreme Lord. He begins by saying धर्मः - “thus or in this manner.” “In this manner” means “in the manner as advised by You.” Has not Krishna promised earlier that: ” with mind and reason fixed on Me you shall doubtless come to Me alone?” Thus Bhishma said that he was offering his mind that was free from all hankerings to Him and was thus qualified for liberation. Now, because such attainment of the Lord is the ultimate goal one can desire, saints pray to Him to bless them with His thoughts in their last moments. Thus Lilasuka prayed:

He prays that he should be blessed with the vision of his favourite God Krishna that is at once bewitching and radiant, and a picture of kindness, standing with His legs crossed, decorated with a peacock feather tucked in His hair, playing the flute with His slightly inclined head, in his dying moments. Now, Krishna says that by thinking of Him in one’s last moments one can escape death and get relief. So can one be “smart” and think of Him only in his last moments but after leading a wayward or a “busy” life that had left him no time to think of the world to come? “No,” say our scriptures and saints. The reason is that the last moments can be very traumatic for a variety of reasons. As one grows old and infirm his will power becomes steadily weaker. His subconscious is saturated with numerous thoughts. These thoughts will take over and his free will will not be able to function. If a person had laboured hard chasing “success” in life, accumulating wealth and all the appurtenances
that go with it then he would have developed strong bonds with all of them. The thought of having to leave all those hard earned possessions behind will be hovering in his mind and be very painful. Thus he will die thinking of his money and perhaps worrying how all that is going to be managed in his abscence. Or one may be very attached to his family members. The thought that he will soon be whisked away from them can be very excruciating and occupy his mind at that critical moment. Or it is possible that one may live long but may be overcome by debility and sickness in the old age. The suffering can be so intense that any other thought is rendered impossible. Further no one can predict precisely when the end will come. So it is not possible to plan and work on thinking of the Lord in the last moments. Thus, there can be many reasons for not being able to think of Him. So one should practise thinking of Him right from young age and at all the time possible. In this way the mind, slowly but steadily, gets saturated with the thought of God. Then there is a good chance of the thought surfacing at the right time. The words अन्तःकरण इत्यादि literally mean “in the final moments also.” The “also” means, not only the final moments, but also the time preceding the crucial moments - “all through the life” as then only one can expect to be blessed with the thought of the Lord. The devotee Kulasekara prays

कुलसेकरा प्राणायामसः कर्तः-प्रज्ञांसानां, अभिबंधनेन विषयैः
मानसः-श्रवणः ||
प्राणःप्रायामसः कर्तः-प्रज्ञांसानां, अभिबंधनेन विषयैः
स्मावः कुलसेकराः ||

He prays to Krishna that his mind should now itself surrender to Him. He asks how it will be possible to think of Him in the final moments when the throat will be choked with phlegm etc.. and consequently there will be acute suffering. The celebrated vaishnavite saint Periazhwar makes a similar request. He says that the last moments will be painful. His physical strength will be depleted. His faculties will not be functioning properly. In such a situation he will not be able to think of Him. Because of these reasons he says that he is surrendering to the Lord now itself when the body has strength and mind is functioning properly. Then what happens to the atheist who keeps himself busy earning for himself, his family with no thought of the hereafter and perhaps leads a sybaritic life? It is a sad situation, say our scriptures. Lord Kapila in His advice to His mother Devahahuti gives a graphical, albeit terrifying picture of the last moments of such a person. He says:

वाद्युन्नमधुलोकः कुर्संस्थितात ॥
(At the approach of death) his eye-balls are shot out by the action of the life-breath trying to find an exit: his wind-pipe gets choked with phlegm, coughing and breathing cause him exertion and death-rattle is heard from his throat.

Lying (in his bed) surrounded by his sorrowing relations and caught in the noose of Death, he cannot utter a word even when addressed.

Thus a man of uncontrolled senses, who is absorbed exclusively in worldly concerns, dies with a mind afflicted and stupified, and with his relatives standing by, crying with grief. Further it is said that in the case of such person the memory of the present life slowly fades. The pārabhm pertaining to the next birth is ready to take over and the person gets a vision of the next birth to come. In addition, Sage Kapila says that, the person will also have a vision of the messengers of Death who have come to lead him away from this world.

He then sees before him two emissories of Yama, huge in size and menacing with their terrific eyes. The sight makes him shudder and evacuate in fear. BH(3-30. 16 to 19). Kapila says further:

Thus a man who lives his life entirely for the pleasure of his body and for the support of his family is wrenched away from both and subjected to the sufferings of purgatory. BH(3-30-30).

The body which a man has nourished by exploiting and inflicting cruelty on other creatures, he will have to abandon here and go alone to hell with the wages of his sins as his sole asset. BH(3-30-31).
A man who lives in this world merely for supporting himself and his family by thoroughly unrighteous means will certainly reach Andhatamisra, the hell of utter darkness. BH(3-30-33).

Then attaining again to this world, he passes through various animal bodies one after another as part of his punishment until, having paid for his sins, he is purified. He is then born again as a man. BH(3-30-34). Now, let us hear the same thing from the horse’s mouth.Yama the god of death told the boy Nachiketa:

Hypnotised by the attraction of wealth he fails to take notice of the other world. For him the visible world is everything and there is nothing like the other world (heaven or hell). Such a person comes within my clutches again and again. Having gone through the above material about the “last moments” let us seek the answers to the following questions:

1- why does one fear death?
2- when do the “last moments” begin?
3- how should one prepare himself for the “last moments?” and
4- how much time the preparations will require?

We will try to answer the questions here.

1- why does one fear death?

One can be expected to fear or abhor or shun some experience if he had had previously tasted it and found it unpleasant or painful. But death can not be such an event. One could not have experienced death earlier in this very life and carry on the experience of it in the same life. We find that even insects try to avoid death. Because of this reason our scriptures say that this fear is inherited from previous births. The sage Patanjali mentions this in his Yogasutras and calls the fear अभिनवेशः। He says that the fear affects the wise people also.

2- when do the “last moments” begin?

3- how should one prepare himself for the “last moments?” and

4- how much time the preparations will require?
2- When do the “last moments” begin?
Suppose a person plans to go on a long trip, say, to Kasi and he had never been there earlier. One can easily imagine the excitement that wells up in his mind. He will start running around, gathering all the information about the place. He will start looking for people who can provide the information, the train fare and numerous other details. All these activities will be occupying his mind constantly as there will be some associated tension also. He may be physically present in his home town but his mind has already gone to the other place. So we may say that the journey begins the moment it is conceived of. The actual travel is also there and will follow. Similarly our journey begins the moment we start thinking of the other world. The pilgrimage to Kasi may come through or not: but this journey we are talking about has to be undertaken by everyone. The details are plunged in mystery. So it is incumbent on everyone to start knowing the complete details about the travel and making the preparations. All these are to be done now and without delaying it any further. It is said that death takes birth along with our birth. BH(10-1-38). Vasudeva points this out to Kamsa. 

From that moment it never leaves us even for a moment. Rama says this to Bharata when the latter meets him in Chitrakoota. Bharata is inconsolable at all the tragic events that had happened in his absence. His father had died leaving his three mothers widowed, Ayodhya was plunged in grief and to cap it all his dear brother Rama had been expelled from the kingdom. Rama consoles him and points out that death is inevitable. There is no use in grieving over the dead as every one is inexorably moving towards his own end. So Rama advises him to stop crying over the king who is gone and instead to grieve for himself.
Passing days and nights quickly end the life-span of all living beings in this world, (even) as sunbeams suck up the water in summer.

Grieve for yourself (alone), why do you grieve for another? In fact, the life-span of each and every creature, whether staying (at home) or departed (for another place), gets shortened (every moment).

Death ever walks with us (when we are walking) and remains seated with us (while we are sitting). (Nay,) having travelled a very long distance (with us) death returns with us (on our return). (Ayodhya Kanda -105-20, 21 and 22). Thus, one has to be alive to the fact that death is shadowing us. Because of this reason there has to be a sense of urgency and every moment has to be considered as the last moment. This is where the glory of Shrimad Bhagavatham becomes evident. If Ramayana teaches us the art of living then Shrimad Bhagavatham becomes an excellent treatise on the art of dying. This is because this purana gives in detail the answer to the third question: 3- How shoud one prepare himself for the “last moments?” This is one of the two questions asked by the king ParikShit to the sage Suka as the king is left with just a week to live. He asks:

“I enquire of you, the greatest preceptor of the Yogis, the character and the means of the highest realisation. What should be done under all circumstances by a man who is on the verge of death?” BH(1-12-37). The answer to the questions is given in the Book II of Bhagavatam and has been elaborated in the further Books also. This is similar to what is said in chapter 8 of Gita. We have seen that those who are soaked in samsara and lead a Bohemian life get inferior births. Those who perform their duties and rituals with desires get births suitable for the fulfilment of the desires. Those who perform desireless karmas and also upasana (which includes offering prayers, worship of the Lord in any particular form etc.) form the next higher category. Krishna advises that such people
should, at the time of departure, cut off all attachments. Then they should concentrate on the Lord in His cosmic form as Virat Purusha or Viswarupa Iswara and leave the body. They attain liberation in stages called कम्पुजितः।
प्रायाप्य कोवो मनसायत्तन बक्त्या युक्तो योगयत्तन ैैै।
बुजोऽभ्यः प्रायामवेश्यः संख्या १ ्तं परं पुक्तायुपैति दियम्॥ BG(8-10).

But a person of wisdom - jnani- who has realised his true nature does not worry about death as it is meaningless to him. He is free and liberated - मुक्तः। He is totally detached from the body. The celebrated Tamil saint Pattinaththar presents this matter in his own unique rather blunt way. The body by itself is inert only. It is the presence of the consciousness in it that keeps it alive. Thus the only difference between a living body and the dead one is the presence of the animating life in the living body. And sooner or later the living body will also become dead or a corpse. So the saint, who was the personification of detachment, calls it as the “will-soon-be-dead” corpse! Or to put it in his language one is a dead corpse and the other a “will-soon-be-dead corpse” only. If one accepts this truth then one need not grieve over death. This is a well known fact only, but comes as a rude revelation. He is amused at the sight of a group of people surrounding a dead body and crying over it. He asks Lord Shiva at the famous Kanchipuram temple “O Lord! whence is this confusion; some will-soon-be-dead corpses falling and crying over a dead-corpse?” A pregnant, though a very disturbing one, statement that leaves us much to ponder.

4- How much time the preparations will require?
The “preparation” is for escaping death and it is meaningful only for one for whom “death” has meaning. As pointed out earlier “death” is irrelevant for a person who has gained wisdom. “One can escape death only by knowing Him. There is no other way to escape death.” So assert the shastras. तमेव विद्विद्यतातिमृत्युपैति नाखः पुत्र विद्विद्यतेनवध नाव। SU(3-8).

Thus the one who has gained wisdom is clear that death can destroy only the body and not him. So he has no fear of death. Yama-the Lord of death says this to the boy Nachiketa who sought wisdom from him:
अश्वरीः शशीवशु अन्यशेषध्वचित्म्।
महानं विगुघुमायां मन्त्रं धीरो न शोििति।॥
The wise person does not grieve. He knows that the all-pervading, the greatest Supreme Self is present without body among all the perishable bodies. KU(1-2-22). Thus the preparation
is relevant only to others who are in various stages of spiritual progress. They have to gain wisdom first to be able to reject death. This is illustrated by the story of Markandeya. He was a devout worshipper of Lord Shiva. He knew death was imminent. When the hour of death approached he embraced Shiva (who is the very embodiment of knowledge) implying he got wisdom and with the wisdom rejected death and as a result he became immortal.

The question now becomes how long does it take to gain wisdom about ourselves. Unfortunately Krishna says it is a very long process and may involve many births अहंकार जनना मनो करं जननां मां प्रप्यते । वासुदेव सर्वनिश्चित स महाम व सुर्यभ: ॥ BG(7-19). At the end of many births, the man of wisdom comes to Me, (realising) that Vasudeva is the all: he is the noble-souled, very hard to find. Shri Sankaracharya explains in his commentary that these many births are required to gain the mental maturity to make him fit enough to acquire and assimilate the supreme wisdom that liberates him. अहंकार हे जननां मनो करं संस्करणां श्रीमानः अन्ते समार्थी जननां वासुधेवप्राप्तज्ञानाम भवेऽवशे च प्रभुः प्रप्यते । He then realises the goal to be reached is Vasudeva who is the inner self of all. Why such a person is extremely rare to find? Krishna had said earlier: मन्यन्ति तदनन्तरुप विकृतिती विद्वाने । यतंतामपि सिद्धां श्रीमानं वेति तत्रतः ॥ BG(7-3). Just one man among thousands strives to win the knowledge: among those who know and strive, only one comes to know Me in truth. What is the reason for this unfortunate situation? Why are people not interested in the path of knowledge that assures them liberation? The reasons can be many. One is that we have tenanted the body in innumerable births and have become attached to it. The attachment is so great that we have come to take the body to be ourselves. It sounds preposterous to hear that we are not the body, but something occupying it. It is naturally difficult, almost impossible to shake off the attachment that we have so assiduously nourished over such a long time. Secondly all the talk about the other world and liberation etc., sounds very theoretical. Things like heaven and God appear nebulous and remote. What they are said to offer is not certain. So one tends to prefer the bird in the hand and not the promised land. We do not come across anyone who had been there and could narrate their experiences. All that we hear about is only culled from various books. Thus it is very difficult to get a lively interest in the subject. Then there are enough discussions on other mundane topics that can veer us away from the subject. The influences of the media, the alien religions, the many incidents that happen around us and some of our own experiences add to the scepticism and help to slacken
what little interest one might have developed in the subject. Then the preparatory steps that one is expected to go through to become a qualified student for taking up the study of vedanta can be daunting. They too can put off one from taking serious interest in the subject. Because the steps known as अध्ययन चतुर्भुजसंपतिः or the four fold qualifications include things such as control of the mind to curb its wandering tendencies so that it becomes focussed on a subject, control of the sense organs so that they become disciplined, detachment to the pleasures of the world. Thus the reasons why people are not interested in the topic of liberation can be many. One is busy during the active part of the life. The general tendency is to put off religion for the post retirement period. But then it may be too late! Old age will bring with it its own problems. So Shri Sankaracharya wails: अवलोकते वैराजसः तत्क्षत्व तत्क्षीत्सात्त्रतिः | पृथ्विश्वास्विनित्तसात्त्रतिः परेवामलि कैरिनि न सकातः | So our scriptures advise one to start the practices early in life before one gets sucked into the whirlpool of life. Prahlada tenders this considered advice to his friends: दीपार्जुनसुधारणां भवसन्तानिक । BH(7-6-1). When young the mind is fresh, receptive to advices and is not yet polluted by the pulls and pushes of the world. Kalidasa mentions that the kings of the solar dynasty, about whom he writes in his great work Raghuvamsam, acquainted with this subject even when young. He says शैववेदवस्तविधानी (1-7). Our tradition says that only that learning that leads to liberation can be called education. तेश्वेभवशवविधानी। Shri Sankaracharya also defines education as आत्मा भोधि while commenting on the popular verse beginning विद्या विनयांपूर्वे ब्राह्मणे गच्छितम। BG(5-18). It is knowing about Self. Thus Devi (LakShmi, Lalita) is called Vidya विद्या। The commentator's explanation is: मोक्षक्रियायायरुपतवादिक्रिया। (Lalita Sahasranamam. No 549). Other subjects are learnt only to eke out a living. They will not be useful beyond a point of time. Thus they are inferior. So a wise person will not fail to give utmost importance to this subject. This is said in our upanishads

इं विद्या विनाशिते श्रद्धा इ अ स्वाभाविकं वहन्ति परा श्रीवारी ।

तत्प्रसारा विनाशहि रघुवंश: सामवेदान्तविनाश: विद्या। उक्ते व्यासपणं

निरुक्तं छोरी ज्योतिषमिति। अत पश्चा यथा तदक्षरसबिंगमते ।

MU(1-4 and 5).

These mantras say that there are two Vidyas worth knowing to men - Para and Apara. Out of these two; the vedas, and all their branches through which one can gain the worldly and otherworldly enjoyments is the inferior one and is called Apara Vidya. Para or the
superior one is that through which the imperishable brahman is known. Yama also tells this to his student Nachiketa: श्रीयुत्र ध्वस्त मनुष्यमेतत्सारं संस्कृतिकृत विनिमिति प्रीतः। KU(1-2-2). 
He says that two paths present themselves before every one. One is called sreyas i.e., the one that offers release from all miseries for ever and the other is called preyas i.e., the means of obtaining the pleasures of this world. The wise person prefers the former viz., sreyas in comparison to preyas. The Tamil saint Tiruvalluvar also points this out in his great work Tirukkural. He asks what profit have those derived from learning if it does not lead to the worship of the Lord who is possessed of pure knowledge? But generally all these warnings and advices fall on deaf ears. Consequently we have to take the long path for salvation. The story of Gajendra, the elephant narrated in the eighth book of Bhagavata illustrates this point. The elephant symbolises one covered with ignorance. The elephant has a large family comprising of she elephants and baby elephants - a typical samsari. He was “enjoying” the life. He was afflicted with the heat and entered a lake full of fragrant waters. The fragrant waters represent the vAsanAs or the latent tendencies accumulated in previous births. He enjoyed a refreshing bath, sprayed the cool waters on the female elephants as well as their young ones and made them also drink. This he did out of attachment to his own herd. Shri Suka adds - like a householder ज्याजुडी। Such a one steeped in samsara normally does not imagine there can be trouble around the corner. Thus the elephant could not foresee the imminent problem - मथु खृष्ण दुम्पुर्वजमातुः। A crocodile - representing kala - caught hold of the elephant. The elephant struggled hard to free himself but did not succeed. The gods looked on the struggle without coming forward to help. The struggle went on for thousands of years. This long time represents the numerous births one wrapped in ignorance has to take. The elephant found that his family members left him one by one. He was left alone, drained of energy and helpless. At this point the distraught animal cried to the Lord for help. Indra, Brahma and similar gods did not respond as they too are in the grip of time. The appearance of the Lord shows the dawn of wisdom. He killed the crocodile and released the elephant meaning that with the gaining of wisdom one is released from samsara or the cycle of birth and death.

Shri Suka gives another example of the king Khatwanga of the solar dynasty. He was very powerful and on several occassions had helped the gods in their fights against the asuras. Once, after such a fight the devas wanted to offer a favour in return for the help they have
received from the king. The only favour the king wanted was to know the duration of life remaining. Much against their will the devas had to inform him that he had only about an hour to left to live. The king at once rushed back to earth, renounced every thing, meditated on the Lord in that brief period of time and got liberation

BG(6-43).

Most appropriately Shri Suka calls the king राजर्षि or royal sage, a saint like king. How can this be possible when Krishna had said that one can get liberated only after repeated births? The answer lies in the fact that one has to take several births before coming to the path of devotion: but having stepped into the right path he will get births suitable for his spiritual progress

BG(6-43).

Krishna says that in his new birth he gains touch with the knowledge that was acquired in the former body. He strives with greater vigour than that with which he strove before for perfection. Thus the progress continues and does not stop till one gains wisdom mentioned in our shastras. At that stage one’s preparations are over. Thus the king too was making progress. He got birth in the right environment i.e., the solar dynasty. He got the right education even as a child just like Kalidasa said of the kings of the solar dynasty शैवेष्ठवत्सलविध-नामः। The story of Khatwanga is told in book nine of Bhagavatha. The king, on being informed of the short span of life left did not panic or get agitated: but was smart enough to take appropriate steps without delay. He said that even as a child he knew what was reality and was not attached to sense pleasures offered by his vast kingdom. Thus, thanks to the right education he had received in his early days he had wisdom. He could renounce his kingdom etc., without hesitation and sit in meditation. These characteristics were also typical of the kings of solar dynasty i.e., चन्द्रकांब्रविने ते they were alert at all times when vigilance was called for and then at the end (of their lives) they abandoned their bodies by means of meditation योजनान्ते तनु-धार्मः। This is mentioned by Kalidasa in his Raghuvamsam. No wonder, then the king got the result he wanted in a short time. Shri Suka gives the example

of a great monarch to king ParikShit: not that of an ordinary person or a sanyasi so that ParikShit will get confidence that even a king like himself who had lived in the lap of
luxury could work and get liberated in a short time. But in his case Parikshit had one full week to get freedom. So Shri Suka advises him to shed fear first as there was ample time. Then it was said that the one who reads the stotram with devotion will feel secure as he will be protected by the Lord on the way. 

It was stated earlier that our journey has already started and so we are on the way. The question, now, is how can reading the stotram with devotion confer security on the way? This becomes more relevant as the Upanishads say अहं भजतां सत्यवासी विषयं । न विवेषित कदाचनेति । the person having experienced the bliss of brahman ever fears not. (TU-II-4-1) that only by realising the Self one can shed his fears. We are long way from realising brahman. We very much seek security. We have the constant fear that the things that we consider as contributing to our security may get damaged or destroyed or leave us. Thus we worry about sickness, loss of money, friends or relatives etc. The remedy for this feeling of insecurity is to realise that all these listed above can not last for ever. Either they will leave us or we will have to leave them some day. Everyone knows this but wants them to last for ever. Thus we want the body to be youthful and last for ever. One is unwilling to grow old and end one’s days. Being insecure themselves nothing on the earth can confer security. This is a fact and has to be accepted howsoever bitter this may be. But strangely no one is prepared to accept this. Acceptance requires wisdom and it is not got in a day. It is a difficult process. The recital of the stotrams and other texts like the puranas pave the way for gaining the knowledge. They describe the endearing qualities of the Lord in a manner that will make our heart turn to Him. Once He gains entry into our heart He clears the accumulated sins and brings in the wisdom. Krishna has given this assurance in Gita (10-10) तेषां सत्यवासी ज्ञाता प्रीति-पूर्द्धकम् । 

“ ’To these, ever devout, worshipping Me with love, I give that devotion of knowledge by which they come to Me.’ Thus devotion develops where even the seed of it was absent earlier. This is the power of listening to His glories

Such devotion dispels grief, infatuation and fear. Shri Suka lays stress on the fact that this happens even one decides to listen to the Lord’s stories (श्रुयमाणाया) leaving us to imagine what benefits it can confer when one actually takes to listening to them. Shri Vedanta Desika states this clearly in his poem Abhitistavam (5).
He says:

The Lord or salutes Him or remembers Him or recites hymns about Him or circumambulates Him or knows about at least one of His attributes does not encounter fear of any kind at any time from anyone at any place. This is repeatedly stated towards the end of Vishnu Sahasranama stotram in the 

This was what happened to the king ParikShit when he listened to Shri Bhagavatham. The experience totally transformed him. He shed the fear of death, gained wisdom and got release. God grants us the wisdom that removes the fear. So he is called bhayapaha:

We do not realise the fact that He is never away from us even for a moment. We are used to looking out for security and not within. The devout Pandavas knew that they could get His help readily whenever it was needed. Kunti, the mother of Pandavas, acknowledged this fact gratefully. She said:

She said that Krishna protected them from poison, from a conflagration, from the look of man-eating demons, from the assembly of evil people (Duryodhana and his associates), from the many perils met during their stay in the forest, from the missiles of many great warriors (like Bhishma, Drona etc..) in every battle and lastly from the missile discharged by Aswatthama (the son of Dronacharya). The gopis also stated that Krishna saved them time and again from death from poisonous water, demons in various disguises, showers, storm and lightning and other perils.
Thus the truly devout people never miss Him and are, therefore do not feel insecure on the way. The “way” or यात्रा: may be viewed allegorically also. Our scriptures talk of many ways to worship Him. These are meant for people with differing tastes based on their temperaments. The Shiva-Mahimna Stotram says this:

"क्षणवीक्षणेन पर्वतप्रति वै धैर्यविनिति प्राप्तिः प्रयत्नान्तरे परमिनिति व। अथर्वेदां वैविध्यादृकुटिल-नानापविष्टा नृस्मान्को गम्भीरस्वतमः पवस्माळ्यविनि॥ (7).

There are different paths (of realisation) as enjoined by the three vedas, Samkhya, Yoga, Pasupatha doctrine and Vaishnava shastras. People follow different paths and each considers some particular path to be the proper one. This is because of the difference in their temperaments. But ultimately they all reach You only just as the rivers enter the ocean. Krishna says that all paths of worship lead to Him only and It is He who rewards them, just in the way they seek Him.

"ये पथे मा प्रपद्यन्ते तांत्रिकै व्यंजनानाम्। मम परमानुपत्तने स्वयं गर्भास्वर्भः॥ BG(4-11).

Shri Rudram salutes Lord Shiva who is in the form of various paths. It says - पुर्वीनां पत्रे नमः। पुर्वीनां = शास्त्रोक्त यहिँ धर्मोऽतरे- तृतीय-मार्गानुर्युते पति:। This says that Rudra is the protector of the three paths described in the sastras. Later It again says: नमः सूत्याय च पथाय च। The narrow path indicates tortuous religious beliefs and practices. Krishna talks about this:

"मूलदृष्टान्तः स्वचालित्वेऽवलिते तथ:। परस्परशक्तानां भवते। ततरमसंकुलस्तमः॥ BG(17-19).

The penance which is performed obstinately, with self-torture, or for the purpose of ruining another is declared to be Tamasic. The broad and firm ways represent the beliefs and practices inculcated by the great teachers. They are the safe ways and are intended to be trodden by the common people महाजनानां देविभ: स। पथः says Mahabharatha. Saint Thiagaraja talks about this in his famous song “Sakkani raja margamu undaga.” He asks..."
“when there is the well-laid king’s highway of devotion to God, why do foolish people stray into hard, tortuous and thorny footpaths and suffer?” Saint Manickavachagar has stated the same idea in his Tiruvachagam. He says “I was straying in the company of fools who did not know the path to liberation. The Lord pointed out to me the path of devotion and how to shake myself free from my past acts. He flushed out the impurities in my mind. He made me Shivam or the auspicious one and ruled me with grace. Oh! who had received in full measure the bounty God has showered on me? I mistook the wrong paths to be the right ones. He prevented me from following the small pathways and showed me the broad ones for obtaining His divine grace.” Again Shri Rudra says नम इृिया प्रपं या च | Prapathyaya: pathway trodden or resorted to by many. The Lord helps all who seek Him by following various paths. He says: मथित नर्जुलागिरि महासाधति: | Fix your heart in Me. You shall, by My grace, cross over all difficulties. So let us latch on to Him and win His grace.

Thus we have come to the end of this gem of a poem. Quotations from various sources have been given to stress the point that the Lord is one but known by various names and forms. We can find that though this is a small piece of work it condenses in itself the gist of vedantic truth and is very suitable for regular recitation. I submit this commentary of mine at the feet of my preceptor Shri Vedanta Desikachariar Swami. He litererally flooded me with ideas on this poem But my bird brain could retain only an iota of what he communicated to me. I trust this work will receive the approval of the readers. Namaste. Om Tat Sat.

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