
mArgabandhustotram by Appayya Dixita

மார்க³ப³ந்து⁴ஸ்தோத்ரம் அப்பய்யதீ³க்ஷிதேந்த³ரை: விரசிதம்

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மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ஸ்தோத்ரம் அப்பய்யதீ³க்ஷிதேந்த³ரை: விரசிதம்



ஸ்ரீமார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴பஞ்சரத்நமாலா அத²வா பஞ்சரத்நஸ்தவம்

மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ஸ்தோத்ரம் |

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ, ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸ ஸம்போ⁴ ||

பா⁴லாவநம்ரத்கிரீடம் பா⁴லநேத்ரார்சிஷா த³க்³த⁴பஞ்சேஷுகீடம் |

(பா⁴லப்ரதீ³ச்யாத்கிரீடம் பா⁴லநேத்ரார்சிஷா த³க்³த⁴புஷ்பேஷுகீடம்)

ஸூலாஹதாராதிகூடம் ஸூத்³த⁴மர்தே⁴ந்து³கூட³ம் ப⁴ஜே மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் |

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ, ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸ ஸம்போ⁴ || 1 ||

அங்கே³ விராஜத்³ப⁴ஜங்க³ம் அப⁴ரக³ங்கா³தரங்கா³பி⁴ராமோத்தமாங்க³ம் |

ஓங்காரவாஊகுரங்க³ம் ஸித்³த⁴ஸம்ஸேவிதாங்க⁴ரிம் ப⁴ஜே மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் |

(ஹ்ரீங்காரவாஊகுரங்க³ம் ஸூத்³த⁴)

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ, ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸ ஸம்போ⁴ || 2 ||

நித்யம் சிதா³நந்த³ரூபம் நிஹ்நுதாஸேஷலோகேஸவைபிரதாபம் |

கார்தஸ்வராகே³ந்த³ர்சாபம் க்ரு³த்திவாஸம் ப⁴ஜே தி³வ்யஸந்மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் |

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ, ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸ ஸம்போ⁴ || 3 ||

கந்த³ர்புத்³ர்பக்⁴நமீஸம் காலகண்ட²ம் மஹேஸம் மஹாவ்யோமகேஸம் |

குந்தா³ப⁴த³ந்தம் ஸுரேஸம் கோடிஸூரியப்ரகாஸம் ப⁴ஜே மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் |

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ, ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸ ஸம்போ⁴ || 4 ||

மந்தா³ர்பூ⁴தேருதா³ரம் மந்த³ராகே³ந்த³ர்ஸாரம் மஹாகௌ³ர்யதூ³ரம் |

ஸிந்து³ரதூ³ர்ப்ரசாரம் ஸிந்து⁴ராஜாதி⁴ரம் ப⁴ஜே மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் | (ஸிந்து³ரகௌ³ர்ப்ரசாரம்)

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ, ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸ ஸம்போ⁴ || 5 ||

அப்பய்யஜ்ஜவேந்த³ர் கீ³தம் ஸ்தோத்ரராஜம் படே²த³யஸ்து ப⁴க்த்யா ப்ரயாணே |

தஸ்யார்த³ஸித்³தி⁴ம் வித⁴த்தே மார்க்³மத்⁴யே⁵ப⁴யம் சாஸு⁴தோஷா மஹேஸ: |

(அப்பய்யமகி²வர்யரசிதம் பஞ்சரத்நஸ்தவம் மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ருதா³ரம் |

நித்யம் படே²த³யஸ்து ப⁴க்த்யா தஸ்ய முக்தி: கரஸ்யைவ ஸாயுஜ்யரூபம் |)

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ, ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸ ஸம்போ⁴ || 6 ||

இதி ஸ்ரீஅப்பய்யதீ³க்ஷிதேந்தீ³ரை: விரசிதம் மார்க³ப³ந்து⁴ஸ்தோத்ரம் ஸம்பூர்ணம் |

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.

அப்பய்யதீ³க்ஷிதேந்தீ³ரா-நஸேஷவித்யாகு³ருநஹம் வந்தே³ |

யத்க்ரு³திபோ³தா⁴போ³தௌ⁴ வித்³வத்³வித்³வத்³விபா⁴ஜகோபாதீ⁴ || (பு⁴ட்டோஜீதீ³க்ஷித:)

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 Brahmendra Saraswati. (3) BG: Bhagavat Gita (4) BH: Shrimad Bhagavatam (5) KU: Kathopanishad. (6) MU: mundakopanishad (7)SVU: Svetasvatara upanishad. (8)TU: Taittiriyanopanishad. (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.

மார்க³ = a way, road, path; ப³ந்து⁴ = relative or any one associated, well wisher. So the word மார்க³ப³ந்து⁴ means one who comes along with you giving company and protection ஸ்தோத்ரம் Stotram is a hymn praising the Lord கு³ணஸங்கீர்தநாதமகம் ஸ்தோத்ரம் (VS681) It talks about His qualities.

மார்க³ப³ந்து⁴ஸ்தோத்ரம்

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 ப³ரு³ஹத்தமத்வாத் 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 Taittiriyanopanishad (Anu

IV) says that the brahman is beyond the reach of our mind and words யதோ வாசோ நிவர்தந்தே அப்ராப்ய மநஸா ஸஹ 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 (ஸகு³ண உபாஸநா) 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

யோ யோ யாம் யாம் தநம் ப⁴க்த: ஸ்ரத்³த⁴யா⁵ஶ்ரீசிதுமிச்ச²தி ।

தஸ்ய தஸ்யாசலாம் ஸ்ரத்³த⁴யா⁵ம் தாமேவ வித்³த⁴யா⁵ம்யஹம் ॥ 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.

ஸ தயா ஸ்ரத்³த⁴யா⁵ யுக்த: தஸ்யாராத⁴நமீஹதே ।

ஸப⁴தே ச தத: காமாந் மயைவ விஹிதாந்ஹிதாந் ॥ 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

தேஷாம் ஸததயுக்தாநாம் ப⁴ஜதாம் ப்ரீதியூர்வகம் ।

த³த⁴யா⁵மி பு³த்³தி⁴ஸம்யோக³ம் யேந மாமுபயாந்தி தே । 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.) ஸ்ரவணம் listening to the Lord's names and stories which bring out His glories and கீர்தநம் 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 .

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ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ சிவ ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வேஸா ஸம்போ⁴ -

ஸம்போ⁴ மஹாதே³வ தே³வ ||

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 .

அபவித்ர: பவித்ரோ வா ஸர்வாவஸ்தா²ம் க³தோ³பி வா |
ய: ஸ்மரேத் புண்ட³ரீகாக்ஷம் ஸ: பா³ஹ்யாப்⁴யந்தர: ஸூசி: ||

மாநஸம் வாசிகம் பாபம் கர்மணு ஸமுபார்ஜிதம் |
ஸ்ரீராமஸ்மரணைநைவ வ்யபோஹதி ந ஸம்ஸய: ||

ஸ்ரீ ராம ராம ராம ||

These verses say “Anyone - may be impure or pure or whatever may be his condition - if just thinks of the 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 ஸம்பு:⁴ | ஸம் ஸுக²:³ம் பா⁴வயதீதி ஸம்பு:⁴

(SS-74: VS-38) He blesses his devotees with happiness and prosperity ஸம் = 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.

யத: ஸர்வாணி பூ⁴தாநி ப⁴வந்த்யாதி³யுகா³க³மே |

யஸ்மிம்ஸ்ச ப்ரலயம் யாந்தி புநரேவ யுக³க்ஷயே || VS-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).

யதோ வா இமாநி பூ⁴தாநி ஜாயந்தே யேந ஜாதாநி ஜீவந்தி யத்
ப்ரயந்த்யபி⁴ஸம்விஸந்தி

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

MAHADEVA மஹாதே³வ: - மஹாம்ஸ்சாஸௌ தே³வஸ்ச மஹாதே³வ: |

மஹத்வம் ச சுகலபூஜ்யத்வாத்வா விபு⁴த்வேந ப்ரமாணதோ மஹத்வாத்வா He is worshipped by everyone. Also He is great because He pervades every thing. (SS22) ஸர்வாந் பா⁴வந் பரித்யஜ்ய ஆத்மஜ்ஞாநயோகை³ஸ்வரீயே மஹதி மஹீயதே தஸ்மாது³ச்சயதே மஹாதே³வ: (VS492) 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 மஹாதே³வ மஹாதே³வ மஹாதே³வேத்யயம் த்⁴வநி: ஸம்ஸாரஸர்ப-த³ஷ்டாநாம் தி³வ்யௌஷத⁴மநுத்தமம் |

DEVA தே³வ: - ஸ்வாமிபர்யாயோ தே³வஸப்³த:³, நரதே³வ இதிவத் | அகுஞ்சிதஸ்வாமித்வம் ச ஸிவஸ்யைவ The word deva indicates lordship. His lordship is unrestricted தி³வ்யதே³ர்தே³வ: (SA93) He is effulgent. Krishna says ” I am the splendour of those who possess splendour,” தேஜஸ்தேஜஸ்விநாமஹம் BG(10-36) Accordingly, தமேவ பா⁴ந்தமநுபா⁴தி ஸர்வம் தஸ்ய பா⁴ஸா ஸர்வமித³ம் விபா⁴தி KU(2-2-15). All these (the sun, the moon, the stars, the lightning and fire) shine only after Him. It is with the infinitesimal part of His luminosity that all these shine.

தேஜோமூர்தி: SS413 and அமிததேஜா: SS34 are His names. In the course of teaching of Gita at KurukShetra, Arjuna requests Krishna to show him His cosmic form as Iswara. The gracious Lord obliges and reveals His universal form. Arjuna is overwhelmed by the splendour of the form he sees. He feels as though a thousand suns had risen at once in the sky தி³வி ஸூரீயஸஹஸ்ரஸ்ய ப⁴வேத்³யுக³பது³த்தி²தா | யதி³ பா:⁴ ஸத்³ரு³ஸீ ஸா ஸ்யாத்³பா⁴ஸஸ்தஸ்ய மஹாத்மந: | (BG 9-12). Here, as is usual with the scriptures, thousand is only indicative and stands for many or infinite. This is a popular verse and is said to have been quoted by the scientist Oppenheimer to describe the explosion of the first atom bomb which he witnessed.

Effulgence does not stand only for light. It also means wisdom. Shiva stands for infinite knowledge ய: ஸர்வஜ்ஞ: ஸர்வவித் MU(1-9) One who is omniscient and knower of all த்³யுதித⁴ர: த்³யுதிம் ஜ்ஞாநலக்ஷணம் தீ³ப்திம் தா⁴ரயதீதி த்³யுதித⁴ர: VS(275) He bears the shine of knowledge தீ³ப்தமூர்தி: தீ³ப்தா ஜ்ஞாநமயீ மூர்திரயஸ்யேதி தீ³ப்தமூர்தி:

VS(719) He is of the form of shining knowledge ப்ரகாஸாத்மா | ப்ரகாஸஸ்வரூப ஆத்மாயஸ்ய ஸ: ப்ரகாஸாத்மா VS(276) His form is effulgent knowledge.

SIVA சரிவ: - சரிவ: மங்க³ளஸ்வரூப: || நிர்ம்ரு³ஷ்ட நிகி²லது: ³கா²நுஷங்க³பரமாநந்த³ரூப இத்யர்த: ² | 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 Brahama the creator. He is the embodiment of supreme bliss. (SS18) Also நிஸ்த்ரைகு³ணதயா ஸூத்³த⁴வாத் சரிவ: (VS27)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 க்லேஸகர்மவிபாகாஸயைரபராம்ரு³ஷ்ட: புருஷவிஸேஷ: ஈஸ்வர: | க்லேஸா:, அவித்³யா, அஸ்மிதா, ராக³, த்³வேஷ, அபி⁴நிவேஸா, கர்ம த⁴ர்மாத⁴ர்மௌ, விபாகா: கர்மப²லாநி - ஜந்மாயுர்போ⁴கா: ³, ஆஸயோ ஜ்ஞாநாதி³- வாஸநா:, ஏதை: காலத்ரயே⁵பராம்ரு³ஷ்ட: புருஷவிஸேஷ: ஈஸ்வர: இத்யர்த: ² ||

ஸ்ம்ரு³திமாத்ரணை பாவயந் சரிவ: He removes the sins of those who just think of His name. DakShayani says this to her father DakSha யத்³வ்யக்ஷரம் நாம கி³ரேநிதம் ந்ரு³ணம் ஸக்ரு³த் ப்ரஸங்கா³த³க⁴மாஸூ ஹந்தி The celebrated two syllables SIVA uttered with the tongue even once and that too casually, immediately wipes off the sins of those (who utter them).(BH 4.4.13) Shivarahasya says this about the sanctity of Lord Shiva's names:

ஸர்வாணி சரிவநாமாநி மோக்ஷதா³ந்யேவ ஸர்வதா³ |

தேஷ்வப்யத்யுத்தமம் நாம சரிவேதி ப்³ரஹ்மஸம்ஜ்ஞித ||

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 .

வித்³யாஸூ ஸ்ருதிருத்க்ரு³ஷ்டா ருத்³ரைகாத³ஸநீ ஸ்ருதௌ |

தத்ர பஞ்சாக்ஷரீ தஸ்யாம் சரிவ இத்யக்ஷரத்³வயம் ||

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 தே³வேஸ: - ப்ராதா⁴ந்யேந தே³வாநாமீஸ: தே³வேஸ: He is the foremost among the gods like Indra, Agni etc.. VS(492) ஸுரேஸ: - ஸுரா⁴ணம் தே³வாநாமீஸ: ஸுரேஸ: 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 .

பீ⁴ஷாஸ்த³வாத: பவதே | பீ⁴ஷாதே³தி ஸு³ர்ய: |

பீ⁴ஷாஸ்த³க்³நி³ஸ்சே³ந்த³ர³ஸ்ச | ம்ரு³த்யு³ர்தா⁴வதி பஞ்சம:

TU(VII-1) 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:

ப⁴யாத³ஸ்யாக்³நி³ஸ்தபதி ப⁴யாத் தபதி ஸு³ர்ய: |

ப⁴யாதி³ந்த³ர³ஸ்ச வாயு³ஸ்ச ம்ரு³த்யு³ர்தா⁴வதி பஞ்சம: | KU(3-3).

Now let us go to the stotram proper. It consists of five verses and a sixth one - called ப²ஸ்ருதி: 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 .

1

1. பா⁴லாவநம்ரத்தகிரீடம் பா⁴லநேத்ரார்சிஷா த³க்³த⁴பஞ்சேஷுகீடம் |

ஸு³லிவாஹதாராதிகூடம், ஸு³த³த⁴மர்தே⁴ந்து³கூட³ம் ப⁴ஜே மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் |

ஸம்போ⁴ ...

பா⁴ல: - forehead; bhAla is preferred to (wrongly used) phAla; அவநம்ர - descended or come down; கிரீடம் - crown: indicates that Lord Shiva wears a crown on the head கிரீட - கிரீடமஸ்யாஸ்தீதி கிரீட (SS782). The crown implies that Shiva wears other ornaments also ஹிரண்ய: (SS273) and ஹிரண்யபா³ஹு: (SS387) ஸுவர்ணவர்ண: - ஸுவர்ணஸ்யேவ வர்ணே⁵ஸ்யேதி ஸுவர்ணவர்ண: VS(737). One who is golden-hued and ஹேமாங்க: - ஹேமேவாங்க³ம் வபுரஸேதி ஹேமாங்க: VS(738) One with body like gold are also His names. Shri Rudram salutes Him saying நமோ ஹிரண்யபா³ஹவே | பாதா³வநம்ரத்தகிரீடம் is another reading found in some books பாத: = foot; implies that

when gods like Indra bow down to salute Him their crowns touch His feet. The crown indicates lordship. Please see the comments on DEVESHA above. He demands respect and in fact He is the only one to be respected பூஜ்ய: || பூஜாயோக்³ய: பூஜ்ய: ஸர்வவந்த்³ய: இத்யர்த:² SS(70) He deserves to be worshipped by all. There is none equal to or greater than Him says Shri Suka while saluting Him before he begins to narrate Bhagavatam to King Parikshit நிரஸ்தஸாமயாதிஸயேந ராத⁴ஸா ஸ்வதா⁴மநி ப்³ரஹ்மணி ரம்ஸ்யதே நம: BH(2-4-14)அதுல: - துலோபமாநமஸ்ய ந வித்³யதே இதி அதுல: He has none equal to Him. VS(355) அநுத்தம: - அவித்³யமாந உத்தமோ யஸ்மாத் ஸ: அநுத்தம: There is none greater than Him. VS (80). Further there is none superior to Him. VS(626) அநீஸ: - ந வித்³யதே⁵ஸ்யேஸ இதி அநீஸ: All other devas including Brahma the creator are limited by time and are subject to sorrows ப்ரத²ம: - தே³வாநாம் ப்ரதா⁴நபூ⁴த ஆத்³யோ வா ப்ரத²ம: He is the first and foremost among the devas. SS(111). Shri Rudram says He is the foremost and is the inner self of the devas ப்ரத²மோ தை³வ்ய: Such is His glory பா⁴லநேத்ரார்சிஷா த³க்³த⁴பஞ்சேஷுக்³டம் - நேத்ரம் = eye: அர்சிஸ் = fire: த³க்³த⁴ = burnt: இஷு: = arrow: கீட: = a worm, insect பஞ்சேஷு: is the name Manmatha, the god of love, because he has five arrows: they are அரவிந்த்³ம், அஸோகம், சூதம், நவமல்லிகா and நீலோத்பலம்(lotus, ashoka, mango, jasmine and blue lotus). The five arrows are also said to be ஸம்மோஹந: , உந்மாத்³ந:, ஸோஷண:, தாபந: and ஸ்தம்ப⁴ந: They are fascination, intoxication or extravagance of love, emaciation, suffering pain and numbing or stupefying respectively. Kalidasa vividly narrates the story connected with Shiva destroying the god of love in his masterpiece Kumarasambhavam. Manmatha shot his arrow ஸம்மோஹநம் 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 contemptuously 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 காமாரி: - காமஸ்ய மந்மத²ஸ்ய அரி: காமாரி: 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 பா⁴லநேத்ர: SS(159) and லலாடாக்ஷ: 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 விருபாக்ஷ: | விருபாணி விருத்³த⁴ஸ்வருபாணி லோகவிருத்³த⁴த்ரிதவவிரிஷ்டாநி அக்ஷணி யஸ்ய ஸ: விருபாக்ஷ: | SS(129). He has an abnormal third eye. The third eye situated in a high position (viz) forehead and stands for supreme knowledge உந்ததஸ்தா²நவர்திலோசநஸாலித்வகீர்தநேந விஸ்வோத்தரஜ்ஞாநஸாலித்வம் ஸூசிதம் 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 ஸ்மர: ஸ்மர்தவ்யாத்மா ந ஹி வஸிஷு²பத்²ய: பரிப⁴வ: | ஸ்மர Smara is another name of Manmatha. His arrows have not failed anywhere in the world of gods, demons and men. So he became conceited. Smara became (ஸ்மர்தவ்யாத்மா) an object of memory. The moral of the story, says the poem, is that an insult to the great will produce serious consequences வஹ்நிநேத்ர: - வஹ்நிநேத்ரம் லலாடே யஸ்ய ஸ: வஹ்நிநேத்ர: (SS131) is also one of Shiva's names. Bhartrihari in his Vairagya Satakam refers to this incident thus: லீலாத³க்³த⁴-விலுலகாம ஸலப:⁴ (i.e.) who effortlessly burnt up the flippant god of love as a moth. A big fire instantly reduces a moth into ashes.

ஸூல: = the Trident of Shiva; ஆஹத = struck; அராதி: = enemy; கூடம் = mass, heap: Shiva has destroyed His enemies with His Trident. But Shiva has no enemies ஸமோஹம் ஸர்வபூ⁴தேஷு ந மே த்³வேஷ்யோஹஸ்தி ந ப்ரிய: (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 struck 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.” ஈஸாநமீஸ்வரம் தே³வம் த்³ரு³ஷ்டவாநஸி ஸங்கரம் Krishna confirms this and says “Your enemies have already been killed by Me. Be a mere instrument.” BG(11-33) மயைவைதே நிஹிதா: பூர்வமேவ நிமித்தமாத்ரம் ப⁴வ ஸவ்யஸாசிந்

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 காம ஏஷ க்ரோத⁴ ஏஷ ரஜோகு³ணஸமுத்³ப⁴வ: | மஹாஸநோ மஹாபாப்மா வித்³த⁴யேநமிஹ வைரிணம் | 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 காமா ஹ்ரு³த³ய்யா நஸ்யந்தி ஸர்வே மயி ஹ்ரு³தி³ ஸ்தி²தே BH(11-21-26). They cannot live together like light and darkness. He is called காமஹா - காமாந் ஹந்தி முமுக்ஷு³ணம் ப⁴க்தாநாம் ஹிம்ஸகாநாம் சேதி காமஹா He destroys the desires of His devotees who seek liberation and the intentions of those who trouble them. VS(294). Also காமநாஸ: || முமுக்ஷு³ணம் காமம் நாஸயதீதி காமநாஸ: SS(126). Lord Shiva is the ஆதி³ கு³ரு: 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 ப⁴க்தி: ஸூ³விநி

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 satisfaction 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 (ஈஷண) 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.

Prahlada gives a description of these attachments (BH .7-6) in his advice to his friends. Talking about the attachment to money he says கோ ந்வர்த²த்ரு³ஷ்ணம் விஸ்ரு³ஜேத் ப்ராணேப்⁴யோ⁵பி ய ஈப்ஸித: || யம் க்ரீ³ணுத்யஸுபி:⁴ ப்ரேஷ்டை²ஸ்தஸ்கர: ஸேவகோ வணிக் | (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 ந வித்தேந தர்பணீயோ மநுஷ்ய: 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 ஸ்நேஹபாஸமிமம் சி²ந்தி⁴ த்³ரு³ட⁴ம் பாண்டு³ஷு வ்ரு³ஷ்ணிஷு | 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 த்யக்த்வா புத்ராம்ஸ்ச தா³ராம்ஸ்ச ராக⁴வம் ஸரணம் க³த: Renouncing my wives and children I have surrendered to Raghava and again பரிக்த்யக்தா மயாலங்கா மித்ராணி ச த⁴நாநி ச Lanka, friends and all wealth had been left behind by me. (Ramayana-Yuddhakanda-17-16 and 19-6). Then 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 ப்ரணயரஸநயா த்⁴ரு²தா²ங்க⁴ரிபு³ம்: BH(11-2-55). Thus firmly stationed in the devotee's heart He destroys the evil tendencies therein ஹ்ரு³த்யந்தஸ்தோ² ஹ்யப⁴த³ராணி விது⁴நோதி ஸுஹ்ரு³தஸ்தாம் BH(1-2-17) ஸூலஹஸ்த: - ஸூலம் ஹஸ்தே யஸ்ய ஸ: (SS114): ஜிதஸத்ரு: - ஜிதா: ஸத்ரவ: யேந ஸ: ஜிதஸத்ரு: (SS211) and ரிபுக்⁴ந: - ஸுரரிபூந் ஹந்தீதி ரிபுக்⁴ந: (SS370) are Shiva's names.

Further it is said த்ரைகு³ண்யம் ஸூலமேதஸ்ய - ஏவம் பூ⁴தஸ்ய ஸூலஸ்ய கரஸ்த²த்வோக்த்யா த்ரிகு³ணுத்மிகாயா மாயாயா ஸ்வாதீ⁴நத்வமுக்தம் ப⁴வதி SA(11) The trident represents the three gunas (traits). Shiva holding it in His hand shows He is in control of maya of which they are the constituents.

ஸூத்³த⁴ம் = காலத்ரயே⁵பி பரமார்த²த: மாயா⁵வித்³யாதி³ ஸம்ப³ந்த⁴ரஹித: ஸூத்³த⁴ | ஸூத்³த⁴மபாபவித்³த⁴ம் இதி ஸ்ருதி: (SS310) 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.

அர்தே⁴ந்து³கு³ட³ம் - அர்த⁴ = half இந்து: ³ = the moon கு³ட³ = crest, Shiva has partial moon on the crest ஸோமவிபூ⁴ஷ: - விஸிஷ்டா பூ⁴ஷா விபூ⁴ஷா, ஸோம: விபூ⁴ஷா பூ⁴ஷணம் யஸ்ய ஸ: ஸோமவிபூ⁴ஷ: சந்த³ரத⁴: (SS32) and also ஸஸரிமௌலி: = ஸஸீ சந்த³ர: மௌலௌ யஸ்ய ஸ: ஸஸரிமௌலி: (SS929)The moon appears as a special ornament to Shiva ஸஸரிஸேக²ர: - அயம் சந்த³ர: பரமேஸ்வரஸ்ய ஜ்ஞாநருப இதி ஸிவாக³மே த³ர்ஸிதம் | யதோக்தம் “ ஜ்ஞாநசந்த³ரகலாகு³ட³ம் |” SA(5). The moon represents His infinite wisdom. Please see notes under Deva above. It is to be noted that the crown that Shiva wears does not cover the moon. This implies that Shiva's lordship over the universe -

His omnipotence - does not veil His wisdom. The shining moon announces to the world that one who yearns for knowledge should come to Him. Shankaracharya says in his Prasnotara ratnamalika கோ ஹி ஜகத்³கு³ருருக்த: ? ஸம்பு: , ஜ்ஞாநம் குத: ? ஸிவாதே³வ | Who is the universal teacher? Shambu. From where can one get wisdom? From Shiva only. So we have the saying ஜ்ஞாநமிச்சே²த் மஹேஸ்வராத் ” One should pray to Maheswara for wisdom.”

பு⁴ஜே = worship: மார்க்³பு³ந்து⁴ம் = the Lord Margabandu. I worship Lord Margabandu who wears a crown, who destroyed the insect like god of love with the fire from His eye in His forehead, who destroyed the enemies (of gods) with His Trident, who is pure(i.e.) beyond maya and ignorance and who wears the moon on His head as an onament.

2

2. அங்கே³ விராஜத்³பு⁴ஜங்க³ம் அப்⁴ரக³ங்கா³தரங்கா³பி⁴ராமோத்தமாங்க³ம் |
ஓங்காரவாகுரங்க³ம் எதித்³த⁴ஸம்ஸேவிதாங்க⁴ரிம் பு⁴ஜே மார்க்³பு³ந்து⁴ம் |
ஸம்போ⁴ ...

அங்கே³ விராஜத்³பு⁴ஜங்க³ம் - அங்க³ம் = limb; may mean hand, or leg; விராஜத் = shining or appearing prominently; பு⁴ஜங்க: ³ = serpent, snake; Lord Shiva is decked with snakes ஸர்ப்பு⁴ஷ: - ஸர்பா: பு⁴ஜகா: ³ பூ⁴ஷா: பூ⁴ஷாநி யஸ்ய ஸ: ஸர்ப்பு⁴ஷ: (SS43) His other names are ஸர்பஹார: ஸர்பா: நாகா: ³, தே ஹாரா: யஸ்ய ஸ: (SS494) and நாக³கூட: ³ - நாகோ³ வாஸுகி: கோடரப³ந்த⁴நார்த²ம் தூட³யாம் யஸ்ய ஸ: நாக³கூட: ³ (SS736). Shiva wears a garland of snakes and has tied Vasuki -the king of snakes - around His head to keep His locks of hair in place.

Snakes:-

We fear snakes because we identify them with death. And everyone is afraid of death கஸ்மாத்³பு⁴யமிஹ? மரணத் says Sankaracharya in his Prasnotara ratnamalika. The symbolism is used in our scriptures frequently. For example: க்³ரஸ்தம் காலாஹிநா^{SS}த்மாநம் கோ^Sந்யஸ்த்ராதுமதீ⁴ஸ்வர: 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 ய: கஸ்சநேஸோ ப³லினோ^Sந்தகோரகா³த் ப்ரசண்ட³வேகா³த³பி⁴தா⁴வதோ ப்⁴ரு³ஸம் || பீ⁴தம் ப்ரபந்நம்

பரிபாதி யத்³ப⁴யாந்மரு³த்ய: ப்ரதா⁴வத்யரணம் தமீமஹி | 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 ம்ரு³த்ய: ஸர்வஹரஸ்சாஹம் Krishna says “I am Death who seizes all life.” BG(10.34) He is Antaka அந்தக: - அந்தம் கரோதி பூ⁴தாநாமிதி அந்தக: 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 கால: - கலயதி ஸர்வமிதி கால:, - கால: கலயதாமஹம் - க³தா 10.30 இதி ப⁴க³வத்³வசநாத் VS(418) and SS(33). The Lord is not limited by time or space or by any material அநந்தாத்மா | தே³ஸுத: காலதோ வஸ்துதஸ்சாபரிச்சி²நந்தவாத் அநந்தாத்மா VS(518). He is not subject to destruction or anything that causes destruction. அம்ரு³த்ய: | ம்ரு³த்யர்விநாஸ: தத்³தே⁴துர்வாஸ்ய ந வித்³யதே இதி அம்ரு³த்ய: 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. கவிர்மநீஷீ பரிபூ:⁴ ஸ்வயம்பூ:⁴ யதா²தத்²யதோ²ஸ்தா²ந்வயத்³தா⁴ச்சா²ஸ்வதீ⁴ய: ஸமாப்⁴ய: So the snakes, representing kala or death, cannot harm Him but He wears them implying He uses Death for His services. Yama himself says ம்ரு³த்யர்யஸ்யோபஸேசநம் Death to Him is like pickles or achAr - a thing He uses in the process of consumig 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. காலஹந்தா | காலஸ்ய ம்ரு³த்யோர்ஹந்தா SS(83) and காலகால: || கால: யம:, தஸ்யாபி கால:, . 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 dissoluton and releases them again at the beginning of the next cycle of creation. His other names are ம்ரு³த்யுஞ்ஜய: - ம்ரு³த்ய: மரணம் ஸ்வப⁴க்தாநாம்

ம்ரு³த்யும் ஜயதி, ஸ்வோபாஸநாதி³நா பரிஹரதி இதி ம்ரு³த்யுஞ்ஜய: SS(123), SA(71). He removes or avoids the death of His devotees. The sage Markandeya confidently sings சந்த³ரஸேக²ரமாஸ்ரயே மம கிம் கரிஷ்யதி வை யம: “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 .. ததோ³த்தாநபாத:³ புத்ரோ த³த³ர்ஸாந்திகமாக³தம் || ம்ரு³த்யோ-ர்மூர்த⁴நி பத³ம் த³த்த்வா ஆருரோஹாத்³பு⁴தம் க்³ரு³ஹம் | 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 ஜாதஸ்ய ஹி த்⁴ருவோ ம்ரு³த்ய: த்⁴ருவம் ஜநம் ம்ரு³தஸ்ய ச 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) ய: ப்ராப்ய மாநுஷம் லோகம் முக்தித்³வாரமபாவ்ரு³தம் | க்³ரு³ஹேஷு³ க²க³வத்ஸக்தஸ்தமாரு⁴ச்யுதம் விது:³ |

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 additon 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. ஸ்வகர்மனோ⁵நுருபம் ஹி ப²லம் பு⁴ஞ்ஜதி ஜந்தவ: | ஸாபே⁴ந கர்மனா பூ⁴திர்து: ³க²ம் ஸ்யாத்பாதகேந து || Skanda Puranam. The good deeds produce happiness, prosperity etc.. and lead to higher births - life of better quality and happiness in this world or higher worlds. The bad deeds produce unhappiness, misery etc.. By neglecting to do the duties expected of him and also doing acts that are prohibited he falls and is thrown into inferior births.

விஹிதஸ்யாநநுஷ்டா²நாத் நிந்தி³தஸ்ய ச ஸேவநாத் |

அநிக்³ரஹாச்சேந்த³ரியாணம் நர: பதநம்ரு³ச்ச²தி ||

(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. அத⁴ஸ்தாந்நரலோகஸ்ய யாவதீர்யாதநாத³ய: | க்ரமஸ: ஸமநுக்ரம்ய புநர்த்ராவ்ரஜேச்ச²சி: | 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.” ந ஸாம்பராய: ப்ரதிபா⁴தி பா³லம் ப்ரமாத³யந்தம் வித்தமோஹேந மூ⁴ம் || அயம் லோகோ நாஸ்தி பர இதி மாநீ புந: புநர்வஸமாபத்³யதே மே | KU(1.2.6) 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 ஸஞ்சிதம் கர்மா sanchitam karma. In addition we continue to do karma in this life also and add to the stock of sanchitam karma thus necessitating more and more births. Out of this vast stock a chunk begins to yield the results. This chunk is called ப்ராரப்த⁴ம் 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 ஆயு: கர்ம ச வித்தம் ச வித்³யா நித⁴நமேவ ச | பஞ்சைதாநி விவிச்யந்தே ஜாயமாநஸ்ய தே³ஹிந: | 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) ப²லாநுமேயா: ப்ராரம்பா:⁴ ஸம்ஸ்காரா: ப்ராக்தநா இவ

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? கிம் ஸம்ஸாரே ஸாரம் ? ப³ஹுஸோ⁵பி விசிந்த்யமாநமித³மேவ(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 Kulashekhara who were kings and had access to all kinds of pleasures ந ஸம்ஸாரோத்பந்நம் சரிதமநுபஸ்யாமி குஸலம் (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 க³ர்ப⁴வாஸஸமம் து:³க²ம் ந பூ⁴தம் ந ப⁴விஷ்யதி 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. வ்யாக்⁴ரீவ திஷ்ட²தி ஜரா பரிதர்ஜயந்தீ, ரோகா³ஸ்ச ஸத்ரவ இவ ப்ரஹ்ரந்தி தே³ஹம் says Bhartruhari 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. புநர்ஜநம் து:³கா²லயமஸாஸ்வதம் BG(7.15) Later on He again says this world is impermanent and joyless அநித்யமஸுக²ம் லோகமிமம் 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
ஆயு: பரிஸ்ரவதி பி⁴ந்நக⁴டாதி³வாம்ப:⁴ 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)கோந்வர்த: ஸுக²யத்யேநம் காமோ வா ம்ரு²த்யுரந்திகே! ஆகா⁴தம் நீயமாநஸ்ய
வத்⁴யஸேவ ந துஷ்டித:³ | 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 யே ஹி ஸம்ஸ்பர்ஸஜா போ⁴கா:³ து:³க²யோநய ஏவ
தே | ஆத்³யந்தவந்த: கௌந்தேய ந தேஷு ரமதே பு³த:⁴ | 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 desirable 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 .. ஏவமேவாத்மாநமந்தகாலே
ஸர்வே ப்ரணா: அபி⁴ஸமாயாந்தி யத்ரைததூ³ர்த்⁴வ்வோச்²வாஸீ ப⁴வதி | (4.3.38)
தமுத்க்ராமந்தம் ப்ராணோ⁵நூத்க்ராமதி ப்ராணமநூத்க்ராமந்தம் ஸர்வே ப்ராண
அநூத்க்ராமந்தி ஸவிஜ்ஞாநோ ப⁴வதி ஸவிஜ்ஞா மேவாந்வவக்ராமதி தம்
வித்³யாகர்மாணி ஸமந்வாரபே⁴தே பூர்வப்ரஜ்ஞா ச | (4.4.2) அயமாத்மேத³ம் ஸரீரம்
நிஹத்யாவித்³யாம் க³மயித்வாந்யந்நவதரம் கல்யாணதரம் ரூபம் குருதே(4.4.4)
Krishna says that the knowledge he had aquired 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. பூர்வாப்யாஸேந தேநைவ ஹ்ரியதே ஹ்யவஸோ⁵பி ஸ: 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.” மாமுபேத்ய து கௌந்தேய புநர்ஜநம் ந வித்³யதே 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.

அப⁴ரக³ங்கா³தரங்கா³பி⁴ராமோத்தமாம்ங்க³ம் - அப⁴ரம் = sky; க³ங்கா³ = the river Ganges. So the word அப⁴ரக³ம்ங்கா³ means the heavenly river Ganges; தரங்க³ = wave; அபி⁴ராம: = pleasing, charming; உத்தம = best; The word உத்தமாம்ங்க³ம் indicates the best limb in the body viz. the head; This says that Shiva looks charming with the waves of the divine river Ganges on His head க³ங்கா³த⁴ர: - த⁴ரதீதி த⁴ர: || க³ங்கா³யா: த⁴ர: இதி க³ங்கா³த⁴ர: (SS146) and SA(27). Also தூ⁴ர்ஜடி: - தூ⁴: க³ங்கா³ ஜடாஸு யஸ்ய ஸ: தூ⁴ர்ஜடி: | நம: கபர்தி³நே இதி ஸ்ருதி: (SS286)ஜடார்த³ர: - ஜடஸு கபர்த³நாமிகாஸு க³ங்கா³ப்ரயுக்தமார்த³ரம் யஸ்ய ஸ: (SS797).

The river Ganges was, 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.

தா⁴து: கமண்ட³லுஜலம் தது³ருக்ரமஸ்ய
பாதா³வநேஜந-பவித்ரதயா நரேந்த³ர |

ஸ்வர்து⁴ந்யபூ⁴ந்நப⁴ஸி ஸா பததீ நிமார்க்ஷடி

லோகத்ரயம் ப⁴க³வதோ விஸதே³வ கீர்தி: || BH(8.21.4)

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 ப⁴வாங்க³பதிதம் தோயம் பவித்ரமிதி பஸ்ப்ரு³ஸு: (1.43.28). Hence the saying காய்யாம் து மரணந்முக்தி: (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 கஸ்தாம் ந ஸேவேத மரிஷ்யமாண: | 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. ஸ்தா²ணு: | ஸ்தி²ரத்வாத் (VS 28). Also SA(72) ஸ்தா²ணு: வ்ரு³க்ஷ: தத்ஸாமயாத் ஸ்தா²ணு: | வ்ரு³க்ஷ இவ ஸ்தப்³தோ⁴ தி³வி திஷ்ட²த்யேகஸ்தேநேத³ம் பூர்ணம் - புருஷேண ஸர்வம்

The க³ in the name Ganga stands for Gayatri which represents the eternal, supreme Brahman. In Gangashtakam, she is addressed as the very embodiment of Brahman, பூர்ணப்³ரஹ்மஸ்வரூபே . She is eternal and formed by the fusion of the powers extracted from the 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 Brahmarandram. 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 கு³ருஸ்ஸாக்ஷாத்பரம்ப³ரஹம் . The fact that she is formed from the powers of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is stated symbolically in the story of Ganga. ஆதா³வாதி³பிதாமஹஸ்ய நியமவ்யாபாரபாத்ரே ஜலம், பஸ்சாத் பத்ரக³ஸாயினோ ப⁴க³வத: பாதோ³த³கம் பாவநம் || பூ⁴ய: ஸம்பு⁴ ஜடா விபூ⁴ஷ்ணமணிர்ஜஹ்நோர்மஹர்ஷேரியம், கந்யா கல்மஷ்நாஸிநீ ப⁴க³வதீ பா⁴கீ³ரத்² பூ⁴தலே | 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 ஜ்ஞாநப்ரவாஹோ விமலாதி³ க³ங்கா³ The stream of right knowledge is the pure original Ganga. Again later he says த்ரிபு⁴வநஜநநீ வ்யாபிநீ ஜ்ஞாநக³ங்கா³(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.

ஸ்ரு³ஷ்டிகர்த்ரீ ப்³ரஹ்மரூபா LS(265) கோ³ப்த்ரீ

கோ³விந்த³ரூபிணீ LS(267) ஸம்ஹாரிணீ ருத்³ரரூபா LS(269)

2 - She is Gayatri கா³யத்ரீ LS(420)

3 - She is Bhavani ப⁴வாநீ LS(112). Durga து³ர்கா³

LS(190). Parvati பார்வதீ LS(246). Uma உமா LS(633)

4 - She is seated on the head in the Brahmarandhram.

ஸிரஸ்தி²தா 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 (அர்த்நா⁴ரீ ஸ்வரூபம்) 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 ஸ்ரோதஸாமஸ்மி ஜாஹ்நவீ 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. க³ங்கே³ க³ங்கே³தியோ ப³ருயாத் யோஜநாநாம் ஸதைரபி | முச்சயதே ஸர்வபாபேப்யோ விஷ்ணுலோகம் ஸ க³ச்ச²தி | The avadhuta saint Sadasiva Brahman has composed a song in praise of Ganga (jaya tungatarange gange ஜய துங்க³தரங்கே³ க³ங்கே³) wherein he salutes Ganga as one who purifies the worlds and cuts asunder the manifold bonds of mankind (கமலப⁴வாண்ட³கமண்ட³பவித்ரே, ப³ஹுவித⁴ப³ந்த⁴ச்ச²த³லவித்ரே | லவித்ரம் = 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 .

த்வது³த்ஸங்கே³ க³ங்கே³ பததி யதி³ காயஸ்தரு⁴ப³தா³ம் ததா³
மாத: ஸாதக்ரதவ-பத³ல்லாபோ⁴ஸ்யதிலகு:⁴

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 காமப்ரத:³ | ப⁴க்தேப⁴ய: காமாந் ப்ரகர்ஷேண த³தா³தீதி காமப்ரத:³ 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) உமாபதி: பஸுபதி: ராஜாநமித³மப்³ரவீத் | ப்ரீதஸ்தே³ஹம் நரஸ்ரேஷ்ட² கரிஷ்யாமி தவ ப்ரியம் |

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."

தஸ்மாத்வமுத்திஷ்ட² யஸோ லப⁴ஸ்வ ஜித்வா ஸத்ரூந் பு⁴ங்க்ஷவ ராஜ்யம் ஸம்ரு³த்³த⁴ம் |

மமவைதே நிஹிதா: பூர்வமேவ நிமித்தமாத்ரம் ப⁴வ ஸவ்யஸாசிந் | BG(11.33)

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.

ஓங்காரவாடகூரங்க³ம் - ஓங்கார = the holy syllable OM; (variation ஹ்ரீம் bIjmantra; வாட = garden, park; கூரங்க: = deer; Shiva is likened to a deer in the garden of the holy syllable - meaning He is represented by OM also known as pranava. ஓங்காரரூப: - ஓங்கார: ரூபம் ஸ்வரூபம் யஸ்ய ஸ: ததா²(SS138) Shri Krishna says in His Gita (10-25) "I am OM among the words." கி³ராமஸ்மயேகமக்ஷரம் Manu, the famous law giver, says that the letter OM by itself represents the ultimate reality - the Brahman ஏகாக்ஷரம் பரம் ப்³ரஹ்ம 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 அகாரம் சாப்யகாரம் ச மகாரம் ச ப்ரஜாபதி: || வேத³த்ரயாந்நிரது³ஹ்த³ பூ⁴ர்பூ⁴வ: ஸ்வரிதீதி ச A similar reference is seen in Chandogyopanishad (2.23.3) தாந்யப்⁴யதபத்தேப்⁴யோ⁵பி⁴தப்⁴யே⁴ய ஓகார: ஸம்ப்ராஸ்ரவத்த³யதா² Shri Bhagavatam says that sound OM was acquired

spontaneously by Brahma - the first born when he was in deep meditation. BH(12.6.44 and 39) . It says that the origin of the sound consisting of three parts is unmanifest. It flashes by itself and it reveals the nature of the almighty and supreme spirit.

ஸமாஹிதாத்மநோ ப்³ரஹ்மந் ப்³ரஹ்மண: பரமேஷ்டி²ந: |

ஹ்ரு³த்³யாகாஸாத்³பூ⁴ந்நாதோ³ வ்ரு³த்திரோதா⁴த்³ விபா⁴வ்யதே ||

ததோ³பூ⁴த்³ த்ரிவ்ரு³தோ³ங்காரோ யோ³வ்யக்தப்ரப⁴வ: ஸ்வராட் |

யத் தல்விங்க³ம் ப⁴க³வதோ ப்³ரஹ்மண: பரமாத்மந: |

Manu says further that a student (during his gurukula days when he learns the vedas) should utter OM both when beginning and ending his studies. The reason, he says, is that without uttering OM in the beginning the learning perishes and if OM is not said in the end what is learnt will not be retained ப்³ராஹ்மண: ப்ரணவம் குர்யாதா³தா³வந்தே ச ஸர்வதா³ | ஸ்வவத்யநோங்க்ரு³தம் பூர்வம் புரஸ்தாச்ச விஸீர்யதி | In view of this Kalidasa compares Manu -the first of kings in the solar dynasty to OM in a grand simile ஆஸீந்மஹீக்ஷிதாமாத்³ய: ப்ரணவஸ்சந்த்³ஸாமிவ

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. ப்ரணவ: - ப்ரணவோ நாம பரமாத்மநோ வாசக ஓங்கார: , தத³போ⁴தோ³பசாரேணயம் ப்ரணவ: (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)தஸ்ய வாசக: ப்ரணவ: | ப்ரகர்ஷேண நூயதே அநேநேதி ப்ரணவ: God is greatly praised by this. Earlier we saw that a stotram mentions the attributes or the qualities of the subject of the stotram. Thus pranavam indicates the auspicious qualities of the Lord and obtains His blessings to one who chants it. Patanjali adds (1.27): தஜ்ஜபஸ்தத³ர்த²பா⁴வநம் The chanting of pranava with understanding and faith is meditation on the Iswara. Pranava is made of the three letters A,U and M. These three letters represent the consciousness presiding over the three states - waking, dream and deep sleep states which one passes through every day. The consciousness is same but it functions differently in these states. The Mandukya upanishad views pranava as being composed of two parts: one having sound and the other without sound. The OM as specified above made up of the three letters is pronounced and constitutes the “sound”

part. The upanishad says that the brief interlude that preceeds and succeeds this “sound” part forms the “silent” component - the fourth letter அமாத்ரஸ்சதுர்தோ² ஸ்வயவஹார்ய: ப்ரபஞ்சோபஸம: ஸிவோ ஸ³த்வைத ஏவமோங்கார ஆத்மைவ ஸம்விஸத்யாத்மாநம், ய ஏவம் வேத³, ய ஏவம் வேத³(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 ப்ரதீகம். Meditating on the fourth or the silent part as “I the Self” is known as Ahamgrahadhyanam அஹங்க³ரஹத்யாநம் One who meditates like this is called a muni மநநாத் முநிருச்யதே In this type of meditation there is no difference between the meditator and Iswara or the object of meditation. As a result of this meditation the muni is blessed with the knowledge of the Self and crosses over the samsara. Thus is explained Shiva’s name ஓங்காரரூப: | ஓங்காரம் ரூபம் ஸ்வரூபம் யஸ்ய ஸ: ததா²| ஓங்காரரூபத்வம் ச தத³பி⁴தா⁴நத்வாத்³வா, தத்ப்ரதீகத்வாத்³வா | தத³பி⁴தா⁴நத்வம் ஓமித்யக்ஷரமித்யாதி³நா ப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம்| ஓங்கார ப்ரதீகத்வம் து ய: புந்ரேதம் த்ரிமாத்ரேணேத்யாதி³நா ப்ரஸ்நோபநிஷதா³தெள³ ப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம்| பரம் சாபரம் ச ப்³ரஹ்ம யதோ³ங்கார இதி ஸ்ருதி: VS(138).

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 த்³வா ஸுபர்ணா ஸயுஜா ஸகா²யா ஸமாநம் வ்ரு³க்ஷம் பரிஷஸ்வஜாதே | தயோரந்ய: பிப்பலம் ஸ்வாத்³வத்த்யநஸ்நநந்யோ அபி⁴சாகஸீதி | 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 ஓங்காரபஞ்ஜரஸூ³ a female parrot in the cage called OM in the Devi Navaratnamala. The saint composer Thiagaraja of Tiruvaiyaru addresses Rama as ஓங்காரபஞ்ஜரகீ³ர a parrot in the cage called OM in his famous song beginning

Jagadanandakaraka. Similarly the saint composer SadasivaBrahmam talks of Krishna as ப்ரணவபயோருஹக³ர்ப⁴கபாலீ one who is hidden inside the lotus of pranava (in his song kridathi vanamali க்ரீட³தி வநமாலீ)

ஸித்³த⁴ஸம்ஸேவிதாங்க⁴ரிம் - ஸித்³த⁴ = a superhuman being of great purity and holiness possessing eight supernatural powers called siddhis. Can also be taken to mean a great sage; variation is ஸுத்³த⁴ for pure; ஸம்ஸேவித = worshipped; அங்க⁴ரி = foot He is worshipped by great sages and other semidivine beings endowed with supernatural powers மஹர்ஷிவந்தி³த: - மஹர்ஷிபி⁴ வாமதே³வாதி³பி⁴ ஹரப⁴க்தாதி³பி⁴ஸ்ச ஜ்ஞாநார்தம் வந்தி³த: | உபலக்ஷணமேதத் ஸ்தோத்ர-ஜப-பூஜா-தப ஆதீ³நாம்(SS536) ஸத்³பி⁴ ஸம்பூஜித: | ஸத்³பி⁴ ஸாத்விகைக³தே³வர்ஷ்யாதி³பி⁴ ஸம்பூஜித: || ப⁴க்திஸ்ரத்³தா⁴தி³நா க³ந்த⁴புஷ்பாதி³பி⁴ ப்ரத³க்ஷிணநமஸ்காராதி³பி⁴ஸ்ச பூஜித: ஸம்பூஜித: SS(777) The word siddha ஸித்³த⁴ means accomplished or perfected. Linking with the earlier word, the muni meditates on the pranava. ஓகாரம் பி³ந்து³ஸம்யுக்தம் நித்யம் த⁴யாயந்தி யோகி³ந: 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. யத³ங்க⁴ர்யபி⁴த⁴யாநஸமாதி⁴தௌ⁴தயா தி⁴யாநுபஸ்யந்தி ஹி தத்த்வமாத்மந: BH(2.4.21)

Such a realised sage abides in his Self. So it is said தத்³விஷ்ணே: பரமம் பத³ம் ஸதா³ பஸ்யந்தி ஸூரய: Hanuman is such a siddha who has immersed himself in the sacred Ganga and drank deep its water of knowledge. So he is known as பு³த்³தி⁴மதாம் வரிஷ்ட:² = 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 யத்ர யத்ர ரகு⁴நாத கீ³ர்தநம் தத்ர தத்ர க்ரு⁴தமஸ்தகாஞ்ஜலிம் பா³ஷ்பவாரிபரிபூரிதேக்ஷணம் மாருதிம் நமத ராக்ஷஸாந்தகம் says a popular verse about Hanuman. So his being shown as seated at the feet of Rama brings out the idea that siddhas worship the feet of the Lord. Truly speaking a siddha has nothing to worship as he has no second to him. Whatever he does becomes an act of

worship. Sankaracharya says this in his Shiva mAnasa puja

ஆத்மா த்வம் கி³ரிஜா மதி: ஸஹசரா: ப்ரா³ண: ஸரீரம் க்³ரு³ஹம்
பூஜா தே விஷயோபபோ⁴க³ர்சநா நி³ரா ஸமாதி⁴ஸ்த²திதி: |
ஸஞ்சார: பத³யோ: ப்ரத³க்ஷிணவிதி:⁴ ஸ்தோத்ராணி ஸர்வா கி³ர:
யத்³யத்கர்ம கரோமி தத்த³கிலம் ஸம்போ⁴ தவாராத⁴நம் ||

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 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:

தே³ஹம் ச நஸ்வரமவஸ்தி²தமுத்தி²தம் வா
ஸித்³தோ⁴ ந பஸ்யதி யதோ³த⁴யக³மத்ஸ்வரூபம் |
தை³வாத³பேதமுத தை³வஸாது³பேதம்
வாலோ யதா² பரிக்கு³தம் மதி³ராமதா³ந்த:⁴ | BH(11.13.36)

Once his prarabdham 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) யோ³காமோ நிஷ்காம ஆப்தகாம ஆத்மகாமோ ந தஸ்ய ப்ரா³ண உத்க்ராமந்தி ப்³ரஹைவ ஸந் ப்³ரஹ்மாப்யேதி This was what is said to have happened in Bhishma's case . ஆத்மந்யாத்மாநமாவேஸ்ய ஸோ³ந்தஸ்வாஸ உபாரமத் BH(1.9.43)

ப⁴ஜே = I worship மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் 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).

3

3. நித்யம் சிதா³நந்த³ரூபம் நிஹ்நுதாஸேஷலோகேஸாவரிப்ரதாபம் |
கார்தஸ்வராகே³ந்த³ர்சாபம் க்ரு³த்திவாஸம் ப⁴ஜே தி³வ்யஸந்மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் |
ஸம்போ⁴

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 நித்யம் சிதா³நந்த³ரூபம் - நித்யம் = eternal, ever lasting, imperishable சித் = pure intelligence ஆநந்த³ =supreme bliss ரூபம் = form.

These words are the repetition of the famous upanishadic mantra ஸத்யம் ஜ்ஞாநமநந்தம் ப்³ரஹ்ம TU(2.1.2) that says Brahman is satyam, jnanam and anantam. This is one of Shiva's names ஸச்சிதா³நந்த³ரூப: | ஸத்பதே³ந காலத்ரயாபா³த்யம் ஸ்வரூபமுச்யதே | சித்பதே³ந ப்ரகாஸாந்தரநிரபேக்ஷதயா ப்ரகாஸமாநம் | ஆநந்த³பதே³ந நிரதிஸயப்ரேமாஸ்பத³தயா ஸுக²ரூபம் ஏதத்த்ரிதியாத்மகரூபம் யஸ்ய ஸ: ஸச்சிதா³நந்த³ரூப: | SS(653). Rama's form is existence, knowledge and bliss ஸத்யஜ்ஞாநாநந்த³ஸரீரீ says the saint Sadasiva Brahmendra in the song கே²லதி மம ஹ்ரு³த்யே (kelati mama hrudaye). So is Shri Lalita's form: ஸச்சிதா³நந்த³ரூபிணீ | ஸத்வம் சித்வமாநந்த³ஸ்ச ஸ்வரூபமத ஏவ வித்³யாந்தரேஷு³பஸம்ஹார்யமஸ்யா இதி ஸச்சிதா³நந்த³ரூபிணீ | LS(699)

நித்யம் - 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 நித்யா காலத்ரயே³ப்யபா³த்யா | அவிநாஸீ வா அரே³யமாத்மே தி ஸ்ருதே: | LS(136).

ஸாஸ்வத: and ஸத்யம் are two other names that have the same meaning as Nityam ஸாஸ்வத: | ஸர்வேஷு காலேஷு ஏகரூபதயா ப⁴வதீதி ஸாஸ்வத: | “ஸாஸ்வதோயம் புராண:” இதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(398).(ie.) He exists in all times in the same form or without any change ஸஸ்வத் ஸர்வேஷு காலேஷு ப⁴வதீதி ஸாஸ்வத:, “ஸாஸ்வதம் ஸிவமச்யுதம்” இதி ஸ்ருதே: | VS(56).

satyam ஸத்யம் | காலத்ரயாபா³த்யம் ஸத்யம் SS(432)அவிதத²ரூபத்வாத் பரமாத்மா ஸத்ய: “ஸத்யம் ஜ்ஞாநமநந்தம் ப்³ரஹ்ம” இதி ஸ்ருதே: | VS(106) In the invocatory verse to Shri Bhagavatam Shri Vyasa salutes the Lord saying ஸத்யம் பரம் தீ⁴மஹி(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 ஸத்யம் பரம்

தீ⁴மஹி 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 ஸத்யஜ்ஞாநாநந்த³ரூபா | ஸத்யம் ஜ்ஞாநம் ஆநந்த³ஸ்ச ரூபம் யஸ்ய: || “ஸத்யம் ஜ்ஞாநமநந்தம் ப்³ரஹ்ம்” “விஜ்ஞாநமாநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மேதி” ஸ்ருதே: | LS(790).

Bhartrihari, in the invocatory verse to his Sataktrayam salutes the Lord saying தி³க்காலாத்³யநவச்சி²ந்நா அநந்தசிந்மாத்தரமூர்தயே He says that God is of the form of eternal consciousness unlimited by spatial direction, time etc தி³ஸ: ப்ராச்யாதி³தி³க்ப்ரதே³ஸா:, காலா பூ⁴தப⁴விஷயத்³வர்தமாநரூபா, ஆதி³ஸப்³த³ஸங்க்³ருஹீதாநி வஸ்தூநி ததா² ச தி³க்காலா ஆத³யோ யேஷாம் தாநி தி³க்காலாநி | தைரநவச்சி²ந்நாபரிக்லூர்ப்தா | விபு⁴வாந்நித்யத்வாதே³கத்வாச்ச தே³ஸத: காலதோ வஸ்துதஸ்சாபரிச்சி²ந்நேத்யர்த: ² | அத ஏவ அநந்தாபரிமிதா | ட்ரிவித⁴பரிச்சே²த³ஸூந்யத்வா த³க²ண்ட³த³ண்டா³யமாநே- த்யர்த: ² || சித் - chit means pure intelligence and indicates brahman. So the Lord gets the following names சிதா³த்மா | சித் - சைதந்யம் ஆத்மஸ்வரூபம் யஸ்ய ஸ: சிதா³த்மா SS(456). Also சிந்மய: | சிந்மயஸ்சித்³ரூப: || SS(829). Devi is described as சிந்மயீ || சித³பே⁴தா³ச்சிந்மயீ LS(251). Now let us go back to the reference from Bartruhari: (ie.) அநந்தசிந்மாத்தரமூர்தயே || சிந்மாத்தரா ஜ்ஞாநக⁴நா ச || சிதே³கரஸேதி யாவத் | தாத்³ரு³ஸீ மூர்திர்யஸ்ய தஸ்மை | ஏதத்³ரூபாயேத்யர்த: ² | No doubt brahman is without any limitations mentioned above. But it is not void or empty like space which also seems unlimited. It is not inert but shines in the form of consciousness. This is clarified here.

From where did He get His wisdom? In reply the invocatory verse in Shri Bhagavatam referred to earlier says: அபி⁴ஜ்ஞ: ஸ்வராட் | ஸவேநைவ ராஜதே யஸ்தம் | ஸ்வத: ஸித்³த⁴ஜ்ஞாநமித்யர்த: ² | 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.

ஆநந்த³ Ananda : Brahman is of the form of pure bliss ஆநந்தோ³ ப்³ரஹ்மேதி வ்யஜாநாத் TU(3.6.1). The Taittiriyanopanishad 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 Brahman ஏதஸ்யைவாநந்த³ஸ்ய அந்யாநி பூ⁴தாநி மாத்ராமுபஜீவந்தி(4.3.32) Incidentally this is one of the names of Shri Lalita. (LS365) ஸ்வாத்மாநந்த³லவீபூ⁴தப்³ரஹ்மா³யாநந்த³ஸந்ததி: | The commentator Bhaskararaya explains this name referring to these quotations only. He says ஸ்வஸ்யா ஆத்மரூபோ ய ஆநந்த³ஸ்ய லவீபூ⁴தா இந்த³ரா³யாநந்த³பி³ந்து³பர்யாலோசநயா ஸாக³ராயமாணத்வேநாலவா அபி தே³வ்யாநந்த³ஸாக³ரஸ்ய லவா: ஸம்பத்³யமாநா: ப்³ரஹ்மா³தீ³நாம் ஸ்ரு³ஷ்டிகர்த்ரு³த்வாதி³த³ர்மவிஸிஷ்டாநாம் ப்³ரஹ்மவிஷ்ணுருத்³ராணமாநந்தா³நாம் ஸந்ததய: ஸம்யக்ஸமுஹா யஸ்யா: ஸா | “ ஏதஸ்யைவாநந்த³ஸ்யாந்யாநிபூ⁴தாநி மாத்ராமுபஜீவந்தி” தி ஸ்ருதே: | தைத்திரீயே மாநுஷாநந்த³மாரப்ய உத்தரோத்தராதிக்யேநவர்க மத்⁴யே பரிக்³ணிதாநாம் ப்³ரஜாபத்யாத்³யாநந்தா³நாநாமபி பரிச்சி²நந்தவேந புருஷார்த²த்வாயோக்³யோநாபரிச்சி²ந்நாநந்த³ஸ்ய நிர்க்³ணஸ்ய ஸித்³த³வாச்ச புருஷார்த²ஸாத⁴நஜ்ஞாநோபக்ரமாதி³ தாத்பர்யநிர்ணயக ப்³ரமாணவிரோதா⁴ய தத்பத்³ஸ்ய நிர்⁴மகாத்மலக்ஷகத்வமேவ யுக்தமிதாஸ்ய: |

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 brahmananda and not be content with merely scratching its surface. The following are the Lord's names in this context

நந்தீ³ | பரமாநந்த³விக்³ரஹோ நந்தீ³ | “விஜ்ஞாநமாநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மே”தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(189) and VS(618)ஆநந்தீ³ | ஸுக²ஸ்வரூபத்வாத் ஆநந்தீ³ VS(560) . Also ப்³ரஹ்மாநந்த³ | ப்³ரஹ்மரூப ஆநந்தோ³ ப்³ரஹ்மாநந்த³ | “ஆநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்ம மாம் ஜ்ஞாத்வா ந பி³பே⁴தி குதஸ்சநே” தி பாத்³மே | “ஆநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மணோ வித்³வாநி” தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(560) and ஸதா³நந்த³ || காலத்ரயா⁵பா³தி⁴தநிரதிஸயஸுக²ஸ்வரூப:

ஸதா³ந்த:³ | “ விஜ்ஞாநமாநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மே” தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(673)

நிஹ்ருதாஸேஷலோகேஸுவைரிப்ரதாபம் - நிஹ்ருத = eliminated அஸேஷ = without remainder லோகேஸு: = lord of the universe - here it refers to Indra வைரிந் = enemy ப்ரதாப: =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). விஜ்ஞாதவ்யம் ந ஜாநீதே ப⁴யஸ்தா²நமுபஸ்தி²தம்(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.

ததோ ராம மஹாதே³வோ தே³வாநாம் ப்ரவரோ ஹர: |

பாதா³ங்கு³ஷ்டே²ந தம் சைலம் பீட³யாமாஸ லீலய் ||

பீடி³தாஸ்து ததஸ்தஸ்ய சைலஸ்தம்போ⁴பமா பு⁴ஜா: | (UK. 16-27,28).

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

அங்கு³ஷ்ட²ஸிரஸா லங்காநாத²த³ப்ரஹர: | அங்கு³ஷ்ட²ஸிரஸா பாதா³ங்கு³ஷ்டா²க்³ரேண

லங்காநாத²ஸ்ய ராவணஸ்ய த³ப்ரம் க³ர்வம் ஹரதீதி ஹர: | இத³ம் ச ராமாயணுதௌ³ ப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம் | ஸிவரஹஸ்யே - அமுஷ்ய த்வத்ஸேவாஸமதி⁴க்³தஸாரம் பு⁴ஜவநம் ப³லாத்கைலாஸே⁵பி த்வத³தி⁴வஸதௌ விக்ரமயத: | அலப்⁴யாபாதாலே⁵ப்யலஸசலிதாங்கு³ ப்ரதிஷ்டா² த்வய்யாஸீத்⁴ருவமுபசிதோ முஹ்யதி க²ல இதி | || “நம: ஸஹமாநாய நிவ்யாதி⁴ந” இதி ஸ்ருதி: | 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 தை³வாஸூர ஸம்பத்³விபா⁴க்³யோக: 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 நித்ய: all pervading, firm and unshakeable ஸர்வக³த: ஸ்தா²ணு: அசல: | 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 கார்தஸ்வராகே³ந்த்³ர்சாபம் - கார்தஸ்வரம் = gold: அக: ³ = mountain: இந்த்³ர் = lord and in this context means best: சாப: = 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 Vidyunmali 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

க்ஷாணீ யஸ்ய ரதோ² ரதா²ங்க³யுக³ளம் சந்த்³ரார்க-பி³ம்ப³த்³வ்யம்
கோத³ண்ட: ³ கநகாசலோ ஹிரபூ⁴த் பா³ணே விதி: ⁴ ஸாரதி: ² |
தூணீரோ ஜலதி⁴-ர்ஹயா: ஸ்ருதிசயோ மெளர்வீ பு⁴ஜங்கா³தி⁴ப:
தஸ்மிந் மே ஹ்ரு³த்யம் ஸுகே²ந ரமதாம் ஸாம்பே⁴ பரப்³ர்ஹ்மணி ||

So He gets the following names புரந்த்³ர்: | ஸுரஸத்ருணம் புராணம் தா³ர்ணுத்³புரந்த்³ர்: | த்ரிபுரஹா | “ஸ திஸ்ர: புரோ பி⁴த்வே” தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(45) and VS(335). One who shattered the cities of the enemies of the gods புரத்ரயவிகா⁴த்¹! புரத்ரயம் விஹந்தீதி புரத்ரயவிகா⁴த்¹! ஆதி³த்யபுராணே த்³விஸப்ததிதமாத்⁴யாயே- “அத்² ருத்³ர்ஸ்ய தே³வஸ்ய நிர்மிதோ விஸ்வகர்மண¹! ஸர்வலோகமயோ தி³வ்யோ ரதோ² யத்நேந ஸாத்³ர்ம் ||” இதி ப்ரஸ்துத்ய ஸர்வலோகபூ⁴ததே³வேவேத³மயஸ்சந்த்³ர்ஸுலர்யமயசக்ரத்³வ்யேத்³ விஸிஷ்டரத²நிர்மாணந்தரம் ரதா²ருடே⁴ பரமேஸ்வரே, மேரெள சாபே விஷ்ணவாதெள³ பா³ணருபே ப்³ர்ஹ்மண ப்ரேரிதே, அநந்தரம் தே³வாநாம், அநாதி³ஸித்³த⁴தயா வித்³யமாநமேவ பஸூத்வம் பணவிநோதே³ந, த்³ர்⁴க்ரு³தே தத³நு தே³வைர்விநாயகே பூஜிதே, அநந்தரம் இந்த்³ர்ஸ்கந்தா³தி³பி⁴ஸ்ச பரிவ்ரு³உதே, தத³நு புரத்ரயஸ்யைகத்³ர் ஸமாக³மநே ரு³ஷ்யாதி³பி⁴ஸ்ச ஸந்தோஷபுர:ஸரம் ஜயஸப்³தே³ க்ரு³தே ப்³ர்ஹ்மண

“ஜய” இதுபுத்தே அத² தே³வோ மஹாதே³வ: ஸாவஜ்ஞம் ததை³க்ஷத¹ புருத்ரயம் விருபாக்ஷஸ்ததக்ஷணுத⁴ஸ்மவைக்ரு³தம் இத்யாதி³ ப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம்¹ உக்தம் ச ஸிவரஹஸ்யே- ரத:² க்ஷோண் யந்தா ஸதத்ரு³திரகே³ந்த³ரோ த⁴நுரதோ² ரதா²ங்கே³சந்த³ரார்கௌ ரத²சரணபாணி: ஸர இதி¹ தி³த⁴க்ஷோஸ்தே கோ⁵யம் த்ரிபுரத்ரு³ணமாட³ம்³ப³ரவிதி⁴- ர்விதே⁴யை: க்ரீட³ந்தோ ந க²லு பரதந்த்ரா: ப்ரபு⁴தி⁴ய: || இதி இத்³மபி ரஹஸ்யாந்தரம் - ஸாங்க்³ராமிகேண வபுஷா ப்ரவிராஜமாநம் த்³ரவ்யத்³புரத்ரயத்ரு³ணஸநமந்த³ஹாஸம்¹ தை³த்யாந்தி³த⁴க்ஷுமசலேஸ்வரசாபபாணிம் த்யாயேத்³புராரிமமரௌக⁴ரதா²தி⁴ரு⁴த⁴ம் || இதி ஸ்ருதிஸ்து “தேஷாமஸுராணாம் திஸ்ர இத்யாரப்ய ஸ திஸ்ர: புரோ பி⁴த்வேத்யேவமந்தா” இதி¹ || SS(104). and புரஞ்ஜய: - புரம் த்ரிபுரம் ஜயதீதி புரஞ்ஜய: | “தேஷாமஸுராணாமி”தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(939). One who conquered the three cities and கி³ரித⁴ந்வா - கி³ரி: மேரு: த⁴நுர்யஸ்யேதி வா த⁴ந்வ யஸ்யேதி வா கி³ரித⁴ந்வா¹ இத்³ம் ச அர்த²த: ஸ்ருதிப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம் நாம;“ ருத்³ராய ஸ்தி²ரத⁴ந்வநே கி³ர:” இதி ச்²ந்தோ³கா³நாம், தே³வ்வரதே ச “ நம: ஸ்தி²ராய ஸ்தி²ரத⁴ந்வநே” இதி¹ One whose bow is mount Meru. SA(65). Incidentally, this episode shows that the Lord is capable of using anything as a weapon. 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 பரோக்ஷவாதா³ ரு³ஷய: ” 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 misled 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 இத்³ம் தே நாதபஸ்காய நாப⁴க்தாய கதா³சந¹ ந சாஸுஷ்ருஷவே வாச்சம் ந ச மாம் யோ⁵ப்யஸூயதி¹ 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 இத்³ம் ஸரீரம் கௌந்தேய க்ஷேத்ரமித்யபி⁴தீ⁴யதே and in the next verse க்ஷேத்ரஜ்ஞம் ச மாம் வித்³தி⁴ ஸர்வ க்ஷேத்ரேஷு பா⁴ரத | 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 ஆத்மா க:What is the Self? ஸ்தூ²ல-ஸூக்ஷ்ம-காரண- ஸரீராத்³ வ்யதிரித்த: பஞ்சகோஸாதீத: ஸந் அவஸ்தா²த்ரயஸாக்ஷீ ஸச்சிதா³நந்த³ஸ்வரூப: ஸந் யஸ்திஷ்ட²தி ஸ ஆத்மா | 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: ந ஜாயதே ம்ரியதே வா கதா³சி-ந்நாயம் பூ⁴த்வா ப⁴விதா வா ந பூ⁴ய: || அஜோ நித்ய: ஸாஸ்வதோ⁵யம் புரா⁴ணோ ந ஹந்யதே ஹந்யமாநே ஸரீரே | 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 கர்மப²லம் (ie.) joy or sorrow. That is, it is not a கர்தா or போ⁴க்தா (i.e.) doer or enjoyer or in other words atma is said to be akarta and abhokta (அகர்தா and அபோ⁴க்தா). 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 ahamkara and is the cause of all the problems. ப்ரக்ரு³தே: க்ரு³யமாணாநி கு³ஶண: கர்மாணி ஸர்வஸு: || அஹங்காரவிமூடா⁴த்மா கர்தாஹமிதி மந்யதே | BG(3-27). An example will illustrate this peculiar situation. A person goes to sleep in his cosy 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 நித்யம் சிதா³நந்த³ரூபம் as said in the first line of this verse. Krishna says this to his friend Uddhava: தே³ஹஸ்தோ²ஶபி ந

தே³ஹஸ்தோ² வித்³வாந்ஸ்வநாத³யதோ²த்தி²த: || அதே³ஹஸ்தோ²஽பி தே³ஹஸ்த: ² குமதி: ஸ்வநந்த³ரு³க்³யதா² | 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 agnanam 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 ய: ஸாக்ஷாத்-குருதே ப்ரபோ³த⁴ஸமயே ஸ்வாத்மாந-மேவாத்³வயம் தஸ்மை ஸ்ரீகு³ருமூர்தயே நம இத³ம் ஸ்ரீத்³க்ஷிணாமூர்தயே 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 ஸாக்ஷாத் குருதே So also in the case of self-knowledge one does not experience or “become” the atma; but ஸ்வாத்மாநம் அத்³வயமேவ ஸாக்ஷாத் குருதே owns up his true nature as atma. Shiva’s names relating to Tripura are த்ரிபுராந்தக: | த்ரீணி புராணி த்ரிபுராணி, த்ரிபுராணம் அந்தக: த்ரிபுராந்தக: | த்ரீணி புராணி ஸரீராணி, “புரஸம்ஜ்ஞே ஸரீரே⁵ஸ்மிஞ்சயநாத்புரோஷோ ஹரி:” இதி விஷ்ணுபுராணவசநாத் | தாநி ச ஸ்தூ²ல-ஸூக்ஷ்ம-காரணத்தமகாநி- ஸ்தூ²லம் பெள⁴திகமேவ, ஸூக்ஷ்மம் லிங்க³ஸரீரம், காரணம் த்வவித்³யாருபமிதி | ஏஷாம் த்ரிபுராணம் அந்தக: த்ரிபுராந்தக:; சரிவஜ்ஞாநஸ்ய ச விதே³ஹகைவல்யஹேதுத்வம் மந்த்ரோபநிஷதி³ ஸ்ருதம் | இத³ம் ச ஸ்ருதிப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம் நாம, “த்ர்யம்ப³காய த்ரிபுராந்தகாய த்ரிகாக்³நிகாலாய காலாக்³நிருத்³ராய நம:” இதி SA(38)புராராதி: | புராணம் ஸரீராணம் ஸ்தூ²ல-ஸூக்ஷ்ம-காரணத்தமநாம் அராதி: ஸத்ருரிதி புராராதி: | தத்³ராதித்வம் ச சரிவஸ்ய ஸ்வஜ்ஞாநஸ்ய விதே³ஹகைவல்யஹேதுத்வாத்; தச்ச மந்த்ரோபநிஷதி³ ப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம் SA(68). Krishna tells Uddhava that He is Himself Shiva who destroyed the three cities த்ரிபுரக்⁴நோ த⁴நுஷ்மதாம் 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 ஏஷம் மத்⁴யே இலாவ்ரு⁴தம் நாமாப்⁴யந்தரவர்ஷம் யஸ்ய நாப்⁴யாமவஸ்தி²த: ஸர்வத: ஸௌவர்ண: குலகி³நிராஜோ மேரு³த்³வீபாயாமஸமுந்நாஹ: கர்ணிகாபூ⁴த: குவலயகமலஸ்ய மூர்த⁴நி த்³வாத்ரிம்ஸத்ஸஹஸ்யோஜநவிததோ மூலே ஷோட³ஸ்ஸஹஸரம் தாவதாந்தர்பூ⁴ம்யாம் ப்ரவிஷ்ட: | BH(5-16-6). The abodes of the gods like Brahma are situated on the peaks of the mountain. Lalita is said to reside on one of the peaks of Meru and so gets the name ஸுமேருஸ்ரு³ங்க³மத்⁴யஸ்தா²| ஸுமேரோர்ஹேமத்³ரேர்மத்⁴யஸ்ரு³ங்கே³ திஷ்ட²தீதி தத்ஸ்தா² || ஶோப⁴நே மேருமத்⁴யஸ்ரு³ங்கே³ இதி வா LS(55). 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 ப்ரத³க்ஷிணப்ரக்ரமணு³க்ரு³ஸாநோரு³த்³ர்சிஷஸ்தநமிது²நம் சகாஸே | மேரோருபாந்தேஷ்விவ வர்தமாநம் அந்யோந்யஸம்ஸக்தமஹஸ்த்ரியாமம் || Krishna says that He is Meru among the mountains மேரு: ஶிக²ரிணுமஹம் BG (10-23) and தி⁴ஷ்ணயாநாமஸம்யஹம் மேரு: | BH(11-11-21). All these show that meru is considered a very holy mountain

க்ரு³த்திவாஸம்- க்ரு³த்தி: = bark of a tree , skin, hide வாஸ: = 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. வ்யாக்⁴ரசர்மாம்ப³ர:

l வ்யாக்⁴ரசர்ம அம்ப³ரம் யஸ்ய ஸ:; “ததா² பிநாகஹஸ்த: க்ரு³த்திவாஸா” இதி ஸ்ருதி: l SS(108). க³ஜசர்மாம்ப³ர: l க³ஜாஸூரஸ்ய சர்ம க்ரு³த்திரம்ப³ரம் வாலோ யஸ்ய ஸ: க³ஜசர்மாம்ப³ர: l ஸ்ருதிருக்தா l SS(158). க்ரு³த்திவாஸ: l க்ரு³த்தி தா³ருகாவநஸ்த²-முநிக்கு²த²SSபி⁴சாரோத்பந்நவ்யாக்⁴ரஸ்ய சர்ம வாலோ யஸ்ய ஸ ததா² l அத்வா காஸ்யாம் ஸிவப⁴க்தஜிகா⁴ம்ஸயாக³தஸ்ய க³ஜாஸூரஸ்ய க்ரு³த்திரத்ர விவக்ஷிதா l “ப்ராணேஸ்வர: க்ரு³த்திவாஸா: பிநாக³” ஸ்ருதி: l SS(909) க்ரு³த்திவாஸ: l க்ரு³த்தி: தா³ருகாவநஸ்த²முநிக்கு²தா³பி⁴சாரோத்பந்நவ்யாக்⁴ரஸ்ய சர்ம வால: வஸ்த்ரம் யஸ்ய ஸ ததா² l யதோ²க்தம் ஸ்காந்தே³ “ ததோ வ்யாக்⁴ரோ மஹாந்க்ரு³த⁴ ஆஜகா³ம் நகா²யுத: l தேஷாம்ரு³ஷ்ணாம் மர்மஸ்த:² கோபோ²யம் நிர்க³தோ யதா² l தம் சாதா³ய த்வசம் பி⁴த்வா ததா³ சர்மாம்ப³ரோ²வத் l ஸுஸு⁴பே⁴ சர்மண தேந நாநாவர்ணயுதேந ச” இதி ll அத்வா காஸ்யாம் ஸிவப⁴க்தஜிகா⁴ம்ஸயாக³தஸ்ய க³ஜாஸூரஸ்ய க்ரு³த்திரத்ர விவக்ஷிதா ll யதோ²க்தம் ஸ்காந்த³ ஏவ - “வாராணஸ்யாம் புராயாதோ க³ஜரூபோ மஹாஸூர: l தாபஸாஞ்சிவப⁴க்தாம்ஸ்ச நிஹந்தும் கோபதீ³பித:” இத்யுபக்ரமய “ஹத்வா தம் குஞ்ஜரம் பீ⁴மமத்⁴ரு³ஷ்யம் தி³க³க³ஜைரபி l பாத³ஹஸ்தயுதம் சர்ம விஸஸ்யாச்சி³த³ய தேந வை l ப்ரா⁴வ்ரு³த்யாத்மாநமாத்மேஸ: ஸ்தூயமாநோ²கி²லை: ஸுரை:” இதி SA(67). து³ர்வாஸ: l து³ர்நி³க்ஷம் வாலோ க³ஜஸிம்ஹவ்யாக்⁴ரசர்மாதி³ரூபம் யஸ்ய ஸ: ததா² l SS(566). Kalidasa wonders at Shiva, dressing Himself in the bark and skins of animals though He is the supreme lord, and profusely showers blessings on His devotees ஏகைஸ்வர்யே ஸ்தி²தே²பி ப்ரணத³ஹு²லே ய: ஸ்வயம் க்ரு³த்திவாஸா: l Malavikagnimitra (1.1).

These incidents show that the Lord is capable of vanquishing his enemies with ease. They are meant to warn one like Ravana who takes Him lightly that they will have to face dire consequences. But His nature is to subdue pride wherever it shows up - be it in an asura like Ravana or god like Manmatha or even great rishis who should have known better. This is because pride is an obstacle to the spiritual progress. Once they realise their mistake and give up their pride Shiva blesses them.

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 அதிவர்ணஸ்ரீ 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 பு³ந்து:⁴ | பு³ந்து⁴க்கு³த்யம் ஹிதாஹிதோபதே³ஸம் ஸ்ருதிஸம்ரு³திலக்ஷணம் க்ரு³தவாநிதி | “ஸ நோ பு³ந்து⁴ர்ஜநிதே”தி ஸ்ருதி: | 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 தத்ராப⁴வத்³ பு⁴க³வாந் வ்யாஸபுத்ரோ யத்³ரு³ச்ச²யா கா³மடமாநோ⁵நபேக்ஷ: | அலக்ஷயவிங்கோ³ நிஜலாப⁴துஷ்ட: வ்ரு³தஸ்சபா³லரவதூ⁴தவேஷ: | 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 ஹர: | ஸ்வ விஷய ஜ்ஞானேநாவித்³யாதே³ர்ஹரணாத³த⁴ர: | 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 லப³த்⁴வா ஸுது³ர்லப⁴மித³ம் பு³ஹுஸம்ப்⁴வாந்தே மாநுஷ்யமர்த²த³மநித்யமபீஹ தீ⁴ர: || தூர்ணம் யதேத ந பதேத³நும்ரு³த்ய யாவந்நி:ஸ்ரேயஸாய விஷய: க²லு ஸர்வத:

ஸ்யாத் | 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 தரவ: கிம் ந ஜீவந்தி ப⁴ஸ்த்ரா: கிம் ந ஸ்வஸந்த்யுத | ந கா²த்³ந்தி ந மேஹந்தி கிம் க்³ராமபஸவோ⁵பரே || ஸ்வவிட்³வராஹோஷ்ட்ரக²ரை: ஸம்ஸ்துத: புருஷ: பஸு: | ந யத்கர்ணபதோ²பேதோ ஜாது நாம் க³தா³க்³ரஜ: | 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)அபி சேத்ஸுது³ராசாரோ ப⁴ஜதே மாமந்யபா⁴க் | ஸாது⁴ரேவ ஸ மந்தவ்ய: ஸம்யக்³வ்யவஸிதோ ஹி ஸ: || க்ஷிப்ரம் ப⁴வதி த⁴ர்மாத்மா ஸஸ்வச்சா²ந்திம் நிக்³ச்ச²தி | கௌந்தேய ப்ரேதிஜாநீஹி ந மே ப⁴க்த: ப்ரணஸ்யதி | 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 பே⁴ஷஜம்- ஸம்ஸாரரோக³ஸ்யௌஷத⁴ம் பே⁴ஷஜம் VS(578)ப⁴வஹேதி:- ப⁴வ: ஸம்ஸார:, தஸ்ய ஹேதிராயுத⁴ம் ஸம்ஸாரச்சே²த்தா | "ப⁴வஸ்ய ஹேத்யை ஜக³தாம் பதய" இதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(272) தாரக: | தாரயதி ஸம்ஸாராதி³தி தாரக: | SA(07) தாரண: | ஸம்ஸாரஸாக³ராத்நாரயதீதி தாரண: | VS(337) தார: | க³ர்ப⁴ஜந்மஜராம்ரு³த்யுலக்ஷண³த்³ ப⁴யாத்நாரயதீதி தார: | VS(338)தார: | க³ர்ப⁴ஜந்மஜராமரணஸம்ஸாரமஹாப⁴யாத்நாரயதீதி தார: | "நமஸ்தாராய நம: ஸம்ப⁴வே சே"தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(76) ப⁴ஜே தி³வ்யஸந்மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் | தி³வ்ய = divine ஸந்மார்க்³ப³ந்து⁴ம் = a companion to one who treads the righteous path ப⁴ஜே = 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. ஸந்மார்க்³ | ஸம்ஸாஸௌ மர்க்³ஸ்ச ஸந்மார்க்³ | means the virtuous path: the path trodden by the saints and noble people

and that is in keeping with the shastric injunctions மஹாஜநோ யேந க்³த: ஸ பந்தா:²
 | says Mahabharata. It being very difficult to understand and interpret the scriptures it
 is safe to follow the path trodden by 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
 ஸம்ஸாரஸிந்தோ⁴ஸ்தரணே⁵ஸ்த்யுபாய: | யேநைவ யாதா: யதயோ⁵ஸ்ய பாரம் தமேவ
 மார்க்³ம் தவ நிர்³தி³ஸாமி |

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 ய: ஸாஸ்த்ரவிதி⁴முத்ஸ்ரு³ஜ்ய
 வர்ததே காமகாரத: | ந ஸ ஸித்³தி⁴மவாப்நோதி ந ஸுக²ம் ந பராம் க்³திம் |
 | தஸமாச்சா²ஸ்த்ரம் ப்ரமாணம் தே கார்யாகார்யவ்யவஸ்தி²தௌ | ஜ்ஞாத்வா
 ஸாஸ்த்ரவிதி⁴நோக்தம் கர்ம கர்த்ருமிஹார்ஹஸி | 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. தாநஹம் த்³விஷத:
 க்ரூராந்ஸம்ஸாரேஷு நராத்⁴மாந் | க்ஷிபாம்யஜஸ்ரமஸுபா⁴நாஸு⁴ஷ்வேவ
 யோநிஷு | BG(16.19) Sankaracharya explains “inferior births” as cruel beings such
 as tigers, lions and the like அஜஸ்ரம் ஸந்ததம் அஸுபா⁴ந் அஸுப⁴கர்மகாரிண:
 ஆஸு⁴ஷ்வேவ க்ரூரகர்மப்ராயாஸு வ்யாக்⁴ரஸிம்ஹாதி³ஷு யோநிஷு க்ஷிபாமி
 . Kalidasa prays in the invocatory verse in Malavikagnimitra ஸந்மார்கா³லோகநாய
 வ்யபநயது ஸ வஸ்தாமஸீம் வ்ரு³த்திமீஸ: | He prays to lord to remove the ignorance
 born out of lethargy to enable us to perceive the right path or the virtuous path. ஸத்
 Sat also means that which really exists or existence and means brahman அவிதத²ம் பரம்
 ப்³ரஹம் ஸத், “ஸதே³வ ஸோமயேத³ம்” (சா².உ. 6 | 1 | 4 |) இதி ஸ்ருதே: | VS(478).
 Thus Margabandhu is brahman only ஸஞ்சாஸௌ மார்க்³பு³ந்து⁴ஸ்ச ஸந்மார்க்³பு³ந்து:⁴
 | 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 க்ஷுரஸ்ய தா⁴ர நிஸிதா து³ர்த்யயா து³ர்க்³ம்
 பத²ஸ்தத்கவயோ வத³ந்தி KU(3-14).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 ப³த⁴நாதி மந: ஸ்நேஹாதி³நா இதி But lord Margabandhu is a unique bandhu who causes all bondage to drop off (as He is Sat) ஸத்ஸங்க³த்வே நிஸ்ஸங்க³த்வம் says Shri Sankara in Bhajagovindam. So every one prays to Him for getting free from bondage தர்யம்ப³கம் யஜாமஹே ஸுக³ந்தி⁴ம் புஷ்டிவர்த⁴நம் | உர்வாருகமிவ ப³ந்த⁴நாந்மரு³த்யோர்முக்ஷய மாம்ரு³தாத் | 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 மார்சு: ³ | முமுக்ஷவஸ்தம் மார்சு³யந்தி இதி மார்சு: ³; பரமநந்தோ³ யேந ப்ராப்யதே ஸ மார்சு³ இதி வா VS(365). 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 யம் விதி³த்வா அம்ரு³தத்வாய கல்பந்தே யோகி³நோ முமுக்ஷவ: ஸ ஏவ பந்தா:² மார்சு: ³ | “நாந்ய: பந்தா² வித்³யதே³யநாய” இதி ஸ்ரு³தே: | VS(397). The poet says தி³வ்ய ஸந்மார்சு³ப³ந்து⁴ம் Why say தி³வ்ய divya? The scriptures talk of the paths the jiva can take after the fall of the physical body. They are the dark path (க்ரு³ஷ்ண க³தி:) and the bright path (ஸூக்லக³தி:). 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 பித்ரு³லோக: 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 (சித்தஸூ³தி:⁴) purity of the mind. So, now one with a purified mind can add meditation or upAsana (உபாஸநா) on the Lord in any chosen form, that is saguna Iswara, like Krishna, Rama, Shiva etc.. This becomes a powerful combination 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. ஏதேஷு யஸ்சரதே ப⁴ராஜமாநேஷு யதா²காலம் சாஹுதயோ ஹ்யாத³தா³யந || தம் நயந்த்யேதா:

ஸூர்யஸ்ய ரஸ்மயோ யத்ர தே³வாநாம் பதிரேகோதி⁴வாஸ: | MU(1-2-5). 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 detachmant. They go to BrahmaloKa through the bright path தப:ஸ்ரத³தே⁴ யே ஹ்யுபவஸந்தயரண்யே ஸாந்தா வித்³வாம்ஸோ பை⁴க்ஷயசர்யாம் சரந்த: || ஸூர்யத்³வாரேண தே விரஜா: ப்ரயாந்தி யத்ராம்ரு³த: ஸ புருஷோ ஹ்யவ்யயாத்மா | MU(1-2-11). Note the use of the word வித்³வாம்ஸ: , that is they are not yet jnAnis but on the way to become a jnAni. A jnani is liberated while alive in this world itself. He is known as a jivanmukta (ஜீவந்முக்³த:). But those who go to the BrahmaloKa study vedanta at the feet of Brahma. They get realisation. At the time of pralaya they, along with Brahma merge with brahman. They do not return to this world. This is what is known as gradual emancipation or kramamukti (க்ரமமுக்³தி:). The lord is a companion and guide to those who take to 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.

4

4. கந்த³ர்பத³ர்பக்⁴நமீஸம் காலகண்ட²ம் மஹேஸம் மஹாவ்யோமகேஸம் |
குந்தா³ப⁴த³ந்தம் ஸுரேஸம் கோடிஸூர்யப்ரகாஸம் ப⁴ஜே மார்க³ப³ந்து⁴ம் |
ஸம்போ⁴ . . .

கந்த³ர்பத³ர்பக்⁴நம் - கந்த³ர்ப: = Manmatha, the god of love த³ர்ப: = arrogance, pride, vanity க்⁴ந = used at the end of a word means destroying, removing or curing. So த³ர்பக்⁴நம் means one who removed or cured the pride. Shiva cured or removed the pride of Manmatha, the god of love.

This statement lends itself for more than one interpretation. 1 - Though formless and without attributes Lord assumes various forms such as Shiva, Krishna, Rama, Uma, LakShmi etc., to gladden the hearts of His devotees. Words can not adequately describe the beauty of these forms. Manmatha is said to be the paragon of beauty. But even his

famed beauty appears drab and insignificant when one thinks of the lord's bewitching form. Shri Suka describes Krishna as ஸாக்ஷாத் மந்மத²மந்மத:² | ஜகந்மோஹநஸ்ய காமஸ்யாபி மநஸ்யுத்³பூ⁴த: காம: ஸாக்ஷாத்ஸ்யாபி மோஹக இத்யர்த:² | 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 presence? In view of this He is known as ஸுந்த³ர: | த்³வாத்ரிஸல்லக்ஷணோபேத: ஸுந்த³ர: | “காமாய காமரூபிண” இதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(416). Also ஸுந்த³ர: | விஸ்வாதிரிஸாயிஸௌபா⁴க்³யஸாலித்வாத் ஸுந்த³ர: | VS(791). One who is more beautiful than anyone else ஸுதே³ஹ: | ஸோப⁴நோ தே³ஹோ யஸ்ய ஸ ஸுதே³ஹ: | “மங்க³ளாயதநம் தே³வம் யுவாநமதிஸுந்த³ரம் | த்⁴யாயேத்கல்பதரோர்முலே ஸுகா²ஸீநம் ஸஹோமயா.” இதி | “ஸிவாந்யே”தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(249) ஸுபா⁴ங்க:³ - ஸுந்த³ராம் தநும் தா⁴ரயந் ஸுபா⁴ங்க:³ | VS(586). Also ஸுபா⁴ங்க:³ - ஸோப⁴நைரங்கை³ர்த்⁴யேயத்வாத் ஸுபா⁴ங்க:³ | VS(782). 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 கந்த³ர்பகோடிஸதகு³ணஸுந்த³ரதி³வ்யாக்ரு³திம் ஸிவம் வந்தே³ Shiva's divine form is millions of times more beautiful than that of Manmatha. Likewise the saint Shri Narayana Tirta in his Krishna Leelatarangini repeatedly calls Krishna as காமகோடிஸம, மநஸிஜஸதகோடிமஞ்ஜுளவேஷ, மீநாங்ககோடிமோஹந, கோடிமத³நஸுந்த³ர, ஜகந்மோஹ , that is Krishna is millions of times more beautiful than Manmatha. Such being the case his beauty is completely eclipsed in the presence 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.”

மது⁴ரம் மது⁴ரம் வபுரஸ்ய விபோ⁴-ர்மது⁴ரம் மது⁴ரம் வத³நம் மது⁴ரம் |
மது⁴க³ந்தி⁴ ம்ரு³து³ஸ்மித-மேதத³ஹோ மது⁴ரம் மது⁴ரம் மது⁴ரம் மது⁴ரம் |

Shri Vedanta Desika should have had the same sentiment as Shri Dikshita and addresses the lord at Tirupathy as கந்த³ர்பத³ர்பஹர ஸுந்த³ர தி³வ்யமுர்தே! “the One whose beautiful form destroys the pride of Manmatha” (in Venkatesa suprabatam). The use of the word கந்த³ர்ப: for Manmatha is significant. The name means that he was proud right from birth. Even the pride of such a being vanishes in the presence 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 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

யே ஹி ஸம்ஸ்பர்ஸஜா போ⁴கா³ து:³க²யோநய ஏவ தே |

ஆத்³யந்தவந்த: கௌந்தேய ந தேஷு ரமதே பு³த:⁴ | 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: ப்ரதிபத்³லலிதாப்⁴யாம், ப்ரத்யஹம் நூதநாப்⁴யாம், ப்ரதிமுஹூரதி⁴காப்⁴யாம் It appears beautiful every time one looks at it. It seems ever fresh and more lovely than it appeared last time when one saw it. So He is known as ஸுசாரூ: - ஸுதராம் த³ர்ஸநீயஸ்சாரூ:, நிரதிஸய-பரமநந்த³ரூபத்வாத் | “விஜ்ஞாநமாநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மே”தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(818). and ரம்ய: - ஸுக²ரூபத்வாத்³ரம்ய: | “யோ வை பூ⁴மா தத்ஸுக²மி”தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(924). Devi Lalita is known as ஸர்வாங்க³ஸுந்த³ரீ - ஸர்வாணி ச தாநி அங்க³நி ச அவயவா: ஸிர:பாண்யாத³ய:; தேஷ்வந்யூநாநதிரிஃக்தபா⁴வவத்வாத் யதா²ஸாமுத்³நிகா-லக்ஷணம் தத்³வத்வேந ஸர்வாங்க³ஸுந்த³ரீ | அத²வா ஸர்வேஷாமங்கே³ஷு ஸரீரேஷு ப்³ரஹ்மஸ்வரூபதயா அத்யந்தப்³ரேமவிஷயத்வேந ஸுந்த³ரபதா³ர்²த்²வத்³விநாபா⁴வவாஞ்சா²விஷயத்வாத் ததா² | (Lalitatrishati No. 130, Shankara's commentary).

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: ஸாந்த: - விஷயஸுகே²ஷ்வஸங்க³தயா ஸாந்த:, “நிஷ்கலம் நிஷ்கரியம் ஸாந்தம்” (ஸ்வே. உ.6 | 19) இதி ஸ்ருதே: | VS(582) and SS(9)விராக: - விரதோ ராகோ³ யஸ்ய விராக: | “கத்²மநேநேத்³ரு³ஸேந நிஸ்சிநோத்”தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(89). விரத: - விக³தம் ரதமஸ்ய விஷயஸேவாயாமிதி விரத: | VS(396)த³ம: - த³மோ⁵ஸ்யாஸ்தீதி த³ம: |

நிக்³ரு³ஹீதேந்தீ³ரியக்³ராம இத்யர்த:² | ஆத்மாராமத்வாத் | “ந ஹி ஸ்வாத்மாராமம் விஷயம்ரு³க்³த்ரு³ஷ்ணா ப்⁴ரமயதி” இதி ஸிவரஹஸ்யே | “நீலகண்ட²ம் ப்ரஸாந்தமி” தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(578). Thus Manmatha was no match to Shiva. He totally lost himself in the prescence 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 ஸத்ரா⁴நாம் க்ஷணிகோ கோப: | 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

ஈஸம் - The lord or master, one who is in complete control. Relating to the preceding episode of Manmatha this epithet fits Shiva perfectly as He conquered him who was famed to be invincible in all the three worlds. He made Manmatha feel small and acknowledge Shiva’s overwhelming superiority

காலகண்ட²ம் - கால = black or dark-blue colour கண்ட:² = 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 prescence. So Shiva has the following names

நீலகண்ட:² - நீல: கண்டே² யஸ்ய ஸ: நீலகண்ட:² | ஸிவஸ்ய கண்டே² நைல்யம் விஷ்ணவாதி³-ஸகலப்ராண்யார்திகர-ஹலாஹல-விஷதா⁴ரணப்ரயுக்தம் | — “நீலகண்ட²ம் ப்ரஸாந்தமி” தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(5). The name நீலக்³ரீவ: for Shiva appears in several places in Shri Rudram. Also: ஸ்ரீகண்ட:² - ஸ்ரீ: காலக்ஷுடஜநிதா ஸோபா⁴ | தத்³வாந்கண்டோ² யஸ்ய ஸ: | ததா² காலக்ஷுட-ஜநித-மாவிந்யமபி ஸோபா⁴வ பரமேஸ்வரஸ்ய | “விகாரோ⁵பி ஸ்லாக⁴யோ ப⁴வந-ப⁴யப⁴ங்க³-வ்யஸநிந” இதி ந்யாயாத் | அத²வா ஸ்ரீ: விஷமேவ, “ஸ்ரீர்வேஷரசநா ஸோபா⁴ ஸம்பத்ஸரஸஸாகி²ஷு³ | வானீலக்ஷமீலவங்கே³ஷு³ விஷே பி³ல்வே⁵பீ” தி நானா⁴ர்தரத்நமாலா | தத்³வாந்கண்டோ² யஸ்யேதி | SS(118) and SA(16). This says that even the dark patch generated by the poison added to the beauty of Shiva’s throat. This is said in the following verse in the Shivamahimna Stotram also

அகாண்ட³ப்³ரஹ்மாண்ட³க்ஷயசுகிததே³வாஸூரக்ரு³பா-
விதே⁴யஸ்யா⁵ ஸ்ரீ³யஸ்த்ரிநயந விஷம் ஸம்ஹ்ரு³தவத: |
ஸ கல்மாஷ: கண்டே² தவ ந குருதே ந ஸ்ரியமஹோ

விகாரோ⁵பி ஸ்லாக்⁴யோ பு⁴வநப⁴யப⁴ங்க³வ்யஸநிந: || 14 |

The following names of Shiva are based on this incident. காலகூடவிஷாதீ³ - ஹாலாஹல- விஷபாநகர்தா காலகூடவிஷாதீ³ | ஸ்காந்தே³ ஸநத்குமாரஸம்ஹிதாயாம் காஸிகாவநமாஹாதம்யே விஷண்வாதி³நா ஸமுத்³ரமத²நம், ததா³நீம் வாஸுகிமுகா²த்தாலவி³ தேந க்³லாநி:, தத³நு தைர்விஷநிக்³ரஹார்தம் ஸிவம் ப்ரதி ப்ரார்த²நா, தத³நு ஸிவப்ரே⁴தேந—நாம்நா ஹஸ்தேந விஷமாஹ்ரு²த்ய ச ஸிவஹஸ்தே ஜம்பூ³ப²லவத்ஸமர்பணம், தத³நு- “க்³ரு²ஹீத்வா பு⁴க்தவாஞ்ச²ம்பு:⁴ கண்டே² நீலோ⁵ப⁴வத்ததா³ | ததா³ப்ர⁴ரு²தி தத்ஸ்தா²நம் ஹாலாஸநமிதி ஸ்ம்ரு²தம் | ஸிவோ⁵பூ⁴த்தகாலபு⁴ந்நாம்நா காலக்ண்டா²க்²யகோ⁵ப⁴வதி³”தி | SS(203). 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

நிர்மத்²யமாநாது³த³தே⁴ரபூ⁴த்³ விஷம் மஹோல்³ப³ணம் ஹாலாஹலாஹ்வமக்³ரத: |

ஸம்ப்⁴ராந்தமீ³நோந்மகராஹிகச்ச²பாத் திமித்³விபக்³ராஹிமிங்கி³லாகுலாத் ||

தமுக்³ரவேகம் தி³ஸி தி³ஸ்யுப்ரயதோ⁴ விஸர்பது³த்ஸர்பத³ஸஹ்யமப்ரதி |

பீ⁴தா: ப்ரஜா து³த்³ருவரங்க³ ஸெஸ்வரா அரக்ஷயமாண: ஸரணம் ஸதா³ஸிவம் ||

“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

தே³வ தே³வ மஹாதே³வ பூ⁴தாத்மந் பூ⁴தபா⁴வந |

த்ராஹி ந: ஸரணாபந்நாம்ஸ்த்ரையோக்யத³ஹநாத் விஷாத் ||

“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 தத்³வீக்ஷய வ்யஸநம் தாஸாம் க்ரு²பயா ப்⁴ரு²ஸபீ³டி³த: | ஸர்வபூ⁴தஸுஹ்ரு²த்³தே³வ இத³மாஹ ஸதீம் ப்ரியாம் | Shiva who was the embodiment of mercy was very much affected by their plight and told His consort Sati this

அஹோ ப³த ப⁴வாந்யேதத் ப்ரஜாநாம் பஸ்ய வைஸஸம் |

க்ஷிரோத்³மத²நோத்³பூ⁴தாத் காலகூடாது³பஸ்தி²தம் ||

“How distressing it is, O Bhavani, this calamity that has come up on these people from the poison Kalakuta that had appeared during the churning of the ocean of milk.”

ஆஸாம் ப்ராணபரீஸூநாம் விதே⁴யமப⁴யம் ஹி மே | ஏதாவாந் ஹி

ப்ரபோ⁴ர்தோ² யத்³ தீ³ந்பரிபாலநம் |

“Protection must be given by me to these people who are concerned about their lives. To protect the afflicted is the main concern of the great (who is endowed with power).” Saying this Shiva swallowed the poison He had gathered in His hand

நிஸம்ய கர்ம தச்ச²ம்போ⁴ தே³வதே³வஸ்ய மீ⁴ஷ: |

ப்ரஜா த³க்ஷாயண்³ ப்³ரஹ்மா வைகுண்ட²ஸ்ச ஸஸம்ஸிரே |

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

Referring 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

க³ங்கா³ த்⁴ரு⁴தா ந ப⁴வதா ஸிவ பாவநீதி நாஸ்வாதி³தோ மது⁴ர இத்யபி காலக்ஷ: |
ஸம்ரக்ஷ³ணய ஜக³தாம் கருணாதி³ரேகா-த்கர்மத்³வயம் கலித-மேதத்³-நந்யஸாத்⁴யம் |
(Brahmatarkastavam) மஹேஸம் - மஹா is a substitute for மஹத் meaning big or great ஈஸ: is synonymous with ஈஸ்வர: and means lord or master மஹேஸ: is the name of Shiva மஹாம்ஸ்சாஸாவீஸம்ஸ மஹேஸ: |

“ய: பர: ஸ மஹேஸ்வர:” இதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(26)மஹேஸ்வர: - ஸ்வர்கா³தி³யத்கிஞ்சிதீ³ஸித்ரு³த்வயோகா³தீ³ஸ்வரத்வம் ஹி இந்தீ³ராதி³நம்ப்யஸ்தி; யதா³தா³ய ஷட்³விம்ஸப்³ராஹ்மணே உத்பாதஸாந்தி ப்ரகரணே இந்தீ³ரயமாதி³ஷு “ஈஸ்வராய ஸ்வாஹா” இதி மந்த்ர: ப்ரவ்ரு³த்த:; ஸிவஸ்து மஹேஸ்வர: தேஷாமபீஸ்வரத்வாத், “த்⁴யேய: ஸர்வைஸ்வர்யஸம்பந்ந: ஸர்வேஸ்வர்: ஸம்பு⁴ராகாஸமத்⁴யே” இதி ஸ்ருதே:; “ஸேந்தீ³ராதி³ஷு ச தே³வேஷு தஸ்ய த்வைஸ்வர்யமுச்சயதே” இதி பா⁴ரதவசநாச்ச | ஏதத்³பி⁴ப்ராயமேவ ச “மஹேஸ்வரஸ்ச பூ⁴தாநாம் மஹதாமீஸ்வரஸ்ச ஸ:” இதி பா⁴ரதவசநம் | மஹத: ப்ரணீந இந்தீ³ராதி³ந்ப்ரத்யபி யத்³ஸ்யேஸித்ரு³த்வம் வர்ததே, இத³மேவ ஏதத்³யேஸித்ரு³த்வஸ்ய மஹத்வமிதி Indra and 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 அத: இதரதே³வதாஸாத்⁴யகார்யப்ரவர்தகதயா

ஸர்வத்ராப்ரதிஹதத்வாத் மஹதீ³ஸித்ரு³த்வமஸ்யேதி மஹேஸ்வர இதி ஸ்ம்ரு³உத: இதி¹ இ³ம் ச ஸ்ருதிப்ரஸித்³த⁴ம் நாம, “மாயிநம் து மஹேஸ்வரம்”, “தமீஸ்வராணம் பரமம் மஹேஸ்வரம்”, “ய: பர: ஸ மஹேஸ்வர:” இத்யாதி³ ஸ்ருதே: | SA(2)

மஹாவ்யோமகேஸம் - மஹத் = great or big வ்யோமந் = sky, atmosphere வ்யோமகேஸ: is an epithet of Shiva வ்யோமகேஸ: க³ங்கா³தா⁴ரணஸமயே வ்யோமவத்³விஸாலஜடாவலயரூப: கேஸ: அஸ்யேதி வ்யோமகேஸ: | SS(96) and SA(75). While receiving the Ganga when she was coming down from the heavens, Shiva spread out His hair which appeared to cover the sky. Hence the name. It is also one of Lalita's name வ்யோமகேஸீ - வ்யோமைவ கேஸா யஸ்யா விராட்³ரூபதயா: | வ்யோமகேஸஸ்ய ஸிவஸ்ய ஸ்தீ³ வா¹ வ்யோமைவால்பம் ஸத்³வ்யோமகம் | அல்பார்தே² கப்ரத்யய: | தஸ்யேஸீ ததோ³பி வ்யாபிகா வா LS(941). Her (universal form) is larger than the sky. This is an additional meaning given for the name and is applicable to Shiva also. Because 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 a 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 மஹா in the word மஹாவ்யோமகேஸம் meaning great or big is significant மஹாவ்யோம meaning “the big or the great sky” is said to distinguish it from the “small sky” that is mentioned in the Upanishads. அத² யதி³த³-மஸமிந் ப்³ரஹ்மபுரே த³ஹரம் புண்ட³ரீகம் வேஸ்ம த³ஹரோ³ஸ்மிந்நந்தராகாஸ-ஸ்தஸ்மிந் யத³ந்த-ஸ்தத³ந்வேஷ்டவ்யம் தத்³வவ விஜிஞாஸிதவ்யமிதி¹ Chandogyopanishad.(8-1-1). What is mentioned here is known as Dahara Vidya. Ordinarily people 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 (த³ஹரம் அல்பம்) and ப்³ரஹ்மபுரம் 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.

குந்தா³ப⁴த³ந்தம் - குந்த³ம் = jasmine flower ஆப:4 = likeness, resemblance த³ந்த: 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

வாக்³விஸுத்த³:4 - வாசோ வாண்யோ விஸுத்தா⁴ ரு³க்³வேதா³த³யோ யஸ்ய ஸ: வாக்³விஸுத்த³:4 | “அஸ்ய மஹதோ பூ⁴தஸ்ய நிஸ்வஸிதமேதத்³யத்³ரு³க்³வேதோ³யஜுர்வேத³” இத்யாதி³ ஸ்ருதி: || உக்தம் ச ஸுத்ரகாரேண- ஸாஸ்த்ரயோநித்வாதி³தி | விவ்ரு³தம் ச பா⁴ஷ்யகாரேண மஹத: ரு³க்³வேதா³தே:3 ஸாஸ்த்ரஸ்ய யோநி: காரணமிதி | SS(318)

க்ரு³தாக³ம: - க்ரு³தா ரசிதா முக²பஞ்சகாத்³விநிர்க³தா ஆக³மா: ப்ரணவாதி³மஹாமந்த்ரா:, ரு³கா³தி³ ஸர்வவேதா:3, ப்ரோத்³கீ³தாதி³ அஷ்டாவிம்ஸதிஸங்க²யாகா ஆக³மாஸ்ச யஸ்ய ஸ: க்ரு³தாக³ம: | “அஸ்ய மஹதோ பூ⁴தஸ்ய நி:ஸ்வஸிதமேதத்³ரு³க்³வேத:3 இத்யாதி³” ஸ்ருதி: | SS(444)

வேத³நிஸ்வஸித: - வேதா³ ரு³க்³வேதா³த³ய: நிஸ்வஸிதமிவ யதா²ப்ரயத்நேந புருஷநி:ஸ்வாஸோ ப⁴வதி ஏவம் யஸ்ய ஸ வேத³நி:ஸ்வஸித: | “அஸ்ய மஹதோ பூ⁴தஸ்ய நி:ஸ்வஸிதமேவைதத்³ரு³க்³வேத³” இத்யாதி³ ஸ்ருதி: | SS(733)

வேத³கார: - வித்³யேதே த⁴ர்மப்³ரஹ்மணீ ஏபி⁴ரிதி வேதா:3 ஆம்நாயா: தாந் கரோதி நி:ஸ்வஸிதருபதயா உச்சாரயதி இதி வேத³கார: | “அஸ்ய மஹதோ பூ⁴தஸ்யேத்யா”தி³ ஸ்ருதி: | 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 குந்த³ரத³ந and குந்த³ஸுந்த³ரத³ந in his Krishna Leela

Tarangini. (ரத:³ = tooth.) This description of Devi's teeth is in Shyamala Dandakam. குந்த³புஷ்பத்³யுதிஸ்நிக்³த⁴த³ந்தாவலீநிர்மலாலோலகல்லோலஸம்மேலநஸ்மேரஸோனா⁴ரே!

ஸுரேஸம் - ஸுர: = 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 நிரஸ்தஸாம்யாதிஸயேந ராத⁴ஸா ஸ்வதா⁴மநி ப்³ரஹ்மணி ரம்ஸ்யதே நம: | BH(2-4-14)நிரஸ்தம் ஸாம்யமதிஸயஸ்ச யஸ்ய யத³பேக்ஷயா அந்யஸ்ய ஸாம்யமதிஸயஸ்ச நாஸ்தி, தேந ராத⁴ஸா ஐஸ்வர்யேண ஸ்வதா⁴மநி ஸ்வஸ்வரூபே ப்³ரஹ்மணி ரமமா³னாய (Shridhara's commentary). Shri Sadasiva Brahmendra bows to Him saying (in Navaratnamala- 12) நிஸ்துலமஹிமாநமாநதோ⁵ஸ்மி ஸிவம் | துலநம் = comparison. So he says "I salute Shiva of incomparable glory."

கோடிஸூர்யப்ரகாஸம் - கோடி = 10 millions ப்ரகாஸ 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 ஸூர்யகோடிப்ரதீகாஸ: - ஸூர்யகோடிநம் ப்ரகாஸ இவ ப்ரகாஸோ யஸ்ய ஸ: ததா² | இயம் ச அபூ⁴தோபமா | அதிகதீ³ப்திமாநித்யர்த:² | "நமோ தீ³ப்தாய தீ³ப்திரூபிண" இதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(502) ஸுதீ³ப்த: - ஸர்வப்ரகாஸகத்வேந ப்ரமாணம் விநா ஸர்வதா³ தீ³ப்த இதி ஸுதீ³ப்த: | "தீ³ப்தாய தீ³ப்தரூபிண" இதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(633) மஹாதீ³யுதி: - மஹதீ³யுதிர்பா³ஹ்யாப்யந்தரா ச அஸ்யேதி மஹாதீ³யுதி:; "ஸ்வயஞ்ஜ்யோதி:" (ப்³ரு'-உ-4-3-9), "ஜ்யோதிஷாம் ஜ்யோதி:" (ப்³ரு'- உ- 4-4-16) இத்தயாதி³ ஸ்ருதே: | VS (176) மரீசி: - தேஜஸ்விநாமபி தேஜஸ்த்வாத் மரீசி:, "தேஜஸ்தேஜஸ்விநாமஹம்", (கீ³தா 10-36) இதி ப⁴க³வத்³வசநாத் VS(189) ஜ்யோதி: - ஸ்வத ஏவ தீ³யோதயத இதி ஜ்யோதி:; "நரயணப்ரோ ஜ்யோதிரத்மா", (நா-உ-13-1) இதி மந்த்ரவரணாத் VS(877). Thus the Lord who is brighter than a million suns, who is eternal and never failing is the most dependable one to light our way. Let us pray to Him and seek His grace. So ப⁴ஜே = I worship மார்க³ப³ந்து⁴ம் = the Lord Margabandhu. I worship Lord Margabandhu who removed Manmatha's pride, who has kept poison in His neck, the great Lord who is more

extensive than the space, whose teeth have the sheen of the jasmine flower, who is the Lord of the gods and who shines like millions of suns.

5

5. மந்தா³ரபூ⁴தேருதா³ரம் மந்த்³ராகே³ந்த்³ரஸாரம் மஹாகௌ³ர்யதூ³ரம் |
 ஸிந்து³ரதூ³ர்ப்ரசாரம் ஸிந்து⁴ராஜாதிதீ⁴ரம் ப⁴ஜே மார்க்³பி³ந்து⁴ம் |
 ஸம்போ⁴ ..

This is the fifth and the last verse in the stotram to be followed by the ப²லஸ்ருதி: , 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 ஸகு³ண aspect or aspect with name and form as Shiva. In His நிர்கு³ண 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

வாத்ஸல்யா-த³ப⁴யப்ரதா³நஸமயா-தா³ர்தார்தி-நிர்வாபணாத்
 ஓளதா³ர்யா-த³க⁴ஸோஷண-த³க³ணித-ஸ்ரேய:பத³ப்ராபணாத் |
 ஸேவ்ய: ஸ்ரீபதிரேக ஏவ ஸததம் ஸந்த்யத்ர ஷட் ஸாக்ஷிண:
 ப்ரஹ்லாத³ஸ்ச விபீ⁴ஷணஸ்ச காரிராட் பாஞ்சாலயஹல்யா த்⁴ருவ: ||

மந்தா³ரபூ⁴தேருதா³ரம் - மந்தா³ர: = 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 பூ⁴தி: = grandeur, dignity, riches உதா³ரம் = generous, liberal. So the word மந்தா³ரபூ⁴தேருதா³ரம் means that Lord Shiva is more generous in granting one's wishes than the Mandara tree. So He is known as காமப்ரத: - ப⁴கதேப்⁴ய: காமாந்
 ப்ரகர்ஷேண த³தா³தீதி காமப்ரத: | 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 தா⁴நாமுஷ்டிமுசே குசேலமுநயே த³த்தே ச வித்தேஸதாம் | 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 வரத:³ - அபி⁴மதாந் வராந் த³தா³தீதி வரத:³ | VS(330). He grants boons desired from Him. Also வரத:³ ப⁴க்தாநாமிஷ்டபரத:³ | “வரத³ம் தே³வமீட³ய” மிதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(107). And உதா³ர: - ப⁴க்தா³ஸீ⁴ஷ்டத:³ ஸர்வோதக்ரு³ஷ்ட உதா³ர: | “ஆப்ததமமுதக்ரு³ஷ்டதம்” மிதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(315). Saint Sadasiva Braharendra calls Him as நதமந்தா³ர - “the wishing tree of heaven” in his song ப⁴ஜ ரே கோ³பாலம் - Bhaja re Gopalam. Again he calls Him as ஸேவகஜநமந்தி³ரமந்தா³ர - “the Mandara tree planted in the residential quarters of His devotees” in the song மாநஸ ஸஞ்சர ரே - Manasa sanchara re. We find the mantra நமோ வ்ரு³க்ஷைப்⁴யோ ஹரிசேஸைப்⁴ய: 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 பாரிஜாத: - பாரமஸ்யாஸ்தீதி பாரி, ஸமுத³ர:, தஸ்மாஜ்ஜாத: பாரிஜாத: தே³வவ்ரு³க்ஷ:, தத்³ருபத்வாத்³தே³வோ³பி பாரிஜாத:, ப⁴க்தஜநேஷ்டத³ இத்யர்த: | SS(264) and வ்ரு³க்ஷாணம் பதி: - வ்ரு³க்ஷா அஸ்வத்தா²த³ய:, தேஷாம் பதி: ஸ்வாமீ | “வ்ரு³க்ஷாணம் பதயே நம இதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(692). The tree is one of the creations. May be it is in the heaven and so has some special features unlike those found here in this world. But places like the heaven are only finite. Gods like Indra who rule there are also finite though they may be known as அமரா: . The tree Mandara also has a limited life. Since it has only a limited life, whatever it can give will also have limited life and perish eventually giving cause for unhappiness or sorrow. In view of this Krishna names those who seek petty favours (which are finite only) from Mandara and even gods like Indra, Brahma etc., as men of small intellect. He says அந்தவத்து ப²லம் தேஷாம் தத்³ப⁴வத்யல்பமேத⁴ஸாம் | BG(7-23). Sankaracharya, in his commentary, points out that ஏவம் ஸமாநே அபி ஆயாஸே மாமேவ ந பரதிபத்³யந்தே அநந்தப²லாய, அஹோ க²லு கஷ்ட²தரம் வர்ததே, இத்யநுக்ரோஸம் த³ர்ஸயதி ப⁴க்வாந் | “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 நித்ய: 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 mokSha (i.e.) that is ever lasting or infinite. In fact He is willing to give Himself to His devotee. ஸ்மரத: பாத³கமல-மாத்தமாநமபி யச்ச²தி | BH(10-80-11). This idea is repeated by Shri Kulasekara in his Mukundamala (31)ஸேவ்யே ஸ்வஸ்ய பத³ஸ்ய தா³தரி ஸுரே நாராயணே திஷ்டதி | 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 ப்ரியோ ஹி ஜ்ஞாநிநோ⁵த்யந்த²மஹம் ஸ ச மம ப்ரிய: | BG(7-17). So He naturally takes care of them. Has not He said தேஷாம் நித்யாபி⁴யுக்தாநாம் யோக³க்ஷேமம் வஹாம்யஹம் ? “To them who are ever devout, I secure them gain and safety.” BG(9-22). Here யோக:³ and க்ஷேம: “gain and safety” is explained by Shri Sankara as யோக:³ அப்ராப்தஸ்ய ப்ராபணம், க்ஷேம: தத்³ரக்ஷணம், தது³ப⁴யம் ப்ராபயாமி அஹம் | . (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 கேவலம் ஏவ ப⁴க³வச்ச²ரண: தே; அத ப⁴க³வாந் ஏவ தேஷாம் யோக³க்ஷேமம் வஹதீதி | . 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 யத்³ரு³ச்ச²யோபபந்நேந வர்தமாநோ க்³ரு³ஹாஸ்ரமீ | BH(10-80-7).

மந்த³ராகே³ந்த³ரஸாரம் - மந்த³ர: = is the name of a mythical mountain அக:³ = mountain. இந்த³ர: = the first or the best (of any class of objects). So the word மந்த³ராகே³ந்த³ர means Mandara, the best among the mountains. ஸாரம் = 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. மந்த³ரோ மேருமந்த³ர: ஸுபார்ஸ்வ: குமுத³ இதி அயுதயோஜந விஸ்தாரோந்நாஹா மேரோஸ்சதுர்தி³ஸமவஷ்டம்ப⁴ கி³ரய உபக்ஷி³ப்தா: | 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 ஸர்வக³த: ஸ்தா²ணு: அசல: - ஸர்வக³தவாத் ஸ்தா²ணு: இவ ஸ்தி²ர: இத்யேதத் | ஸ்தி²ர்தவாத் அசல: அயம் ஆத்மா | 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 மஹாப³ல:- ப³நிநாமபி ப³லவத்தவாத் மஹாப³ல: | He is stronger than those who are said to possess great strength. VS(172)

மஹாப³லபர:- மஹத்³ப³லம் ஸாரீரம் ஸாமர்த²யம் ஸைந்யருபம் வா யேஷாம் தே மஹாப³லா:, இந்த³ரோபேந்த³ர்ப்ர⁴ரு⁴தய: தேஷாம் பர: ஸ்ரேஷ்ட:² பரமேஸ்வர: | “தமீஸ்வராணாம் பரமம் மஹேஸ்வர”மிதி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(604). In fact He is known as அத³ரி:- அத³ரிவத³ப³ரகம்ப்ய:, பரரசல இதி யாவத் | “தம் ஸாந்தமசல”மிதி ஸ்ருதி: | யத்³வா ஸ்ரீஸைலாரு³சலாதி³பர்வதருபத்வாத³த்³ரி: | ஸ்ரீஸைலஸிக²ரம் த³ரு³ஷ்ட்வா புநர்ஜநம் ந வித்³யதே இதி, காஸ்யாம் து மரணந்முக்தி:, ஸ்மரணத்³ரு³சலமிதி ச ஸ்மரணத் || “வநாநி ஸம்பு⁴ர்கிரயஸ்ச ஸம்பு⁴”மிதி ஸ்காந்தே³ | “ஸர்வோ ஹ்யேஷ ருத்³ர” இதி ஸ்ருதி: || SS(856).

மஹீத⁴ர:- மஹீம் கி³ரிருபேண த⁴ரதீதி மஹீத⁴ர:, “வநாநி விஷ்ணு³ர்கிரயோ தி³ஸஸ்ச” (விஷ்ணு-2-12-38) இதி பராஸரோக்தே: | VS(369). He held up Mandara during the churning of the ocean and lifted the Govardana mountain as Krishna. So He gets the name மஹாத³ரித்³ரு³க்- மஹாந்தமத்³ரிம் கி³ரிம் மந்த³ரம் கோ³வர்த³நம் ச அம்ரு³தமத்³நே கோ³ரக்ஷணே ச த⁴ரு³த்வாநிதி மஹாத³ரித்³ரு³க் || 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 அபீ⁴தி ஹேதோரநுவர்தநீயம் நாத²த்வத்³ந்யம் ந விபா⁴வ்யாமி | ப⁴யம் குத: ஸ்யாத் த்வயி ஸாநுகம்பே ரக்ஷா குத: ஸ்யாத் த்வயி ஜாதரோஷே || (Ashtabhujashtakam - 5) த்வயி ரக்ஷதி ரக்ஷகை: கிமந்யை: த்வயி சாரக்ஷதி ரக்ஷகை: கிமந்யை: | இதி நிஸ்சித தீ:⁴ ஸ்ரயாமி நித்யம் ந்ரு³ஹரே வேக³வதீ தடாஸ்ரயம் த்வாம் || (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

தரீந் லோகாந் ஸம்பரிக்ரமய தமேவ ஸரணம் க³த: |

ஸ தம் நிபதிதம் பூ⁴மௌ ஸரண்ய: ஸரணாக³தம் |

வதா⁴ர்ஹமபி காசுத்ஸ்த: ²க்ரு³பயாபர்யபாலயத் ||

(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

அஹோ ஸு³ப³லவாந் ராமோ மஹத³ஸ்த்ரப³லம் ச வை |

யஸ்ய விக்ரமமாஸாத³ய ராக்ஷஸா நித⁴நம் க³தா: |

தம் மந்யே ராக⁴வம் வீரம் நாராயணமநாமயம் || (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 ம்ரு³த்யுஞ்ஜய: 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

ம்ரு³த்யுஞ்ஜயம் ம்ரு³த்யுபி⁴யாஸ்ரிதாநா-

மஹம்மதிர்ம்ரு³த்யுமுபைதி பூர்வம் |

அத² ஸ்வபா⁴வாத³ம்ரு³தேஷு தேஷு

கத²ம் புநர்ம்ரு³த்யுதி⁴யோ⁵வகாஸ: ||

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 viscious 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 everyones 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.

மஹாகௌ³ர்யதூ³ரம்- மஹா = great கௌ³ரீ = is the name of Parvati மஹாகௌ³ரீ means great or glorious Gauri அது³ரம் = close by, not far away தூ³ர = 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 அர்த⁴நா¹ஸ்வர:- நார்யா அர்த⁴ம் அர்த⁴நா¹, அர்த⁴நா¹மிவித ஈஸ்வர: அர்த⁴நா¹ஸ்வர: | நார்யம்ஸோ⁴ர்த⁴மீஸ்வராம்ஸஸ்சார்த⁴மித்யர்த: | தது³க்தமாசார்யை:- “ப்ரவாலப்ரவாஹப்ரபா⁴ஸோப⁴மர்த⁴ம் மருத்வந்மணியூ¹மஹஸ்யம்ஸ்யாமமர்த⁴ம் | கு³ணஸ்யுதமேகம் வபு:ஸைவமந்த: ஸ்மராமி ஸ்மராபத்திஸம்பத்திஹேது:” இதி || “புருஷம் க்ரு³ஷ்ணபிங்க³லமி”தி ஸ்ருதி: || SS(437) தே³ஹார்த⁴காந்த:- தே³ஹஸ்ய அர்த⁴ம் வாம்பா⁴க:³, காந்தாத்மக: யஸ்ய ஸ: தே³ஹார்த⁴காந்த: | ப⁴விஷ்யோத்தரபுராணை- “அர்த⁴ம் ப்ரவாலருசிரம் ஹரிநீலமர்த⁴ம் நாகா³ஜிநாம்ப³ரம்தோ வரவஸ்த்ரமர்த⁴ம் | காந்தா⁴ளகார்த⁴மத² தீ³ப்தஜடாலுமர்த⁴ம் தி³வ்யம் மஹ: ஸததமத்³ய தவாஸ்ரயே⁴ஹம்” இதி || “த³ரித்³ரந்நீலலோஹோத” இதி ஸ்ருதி: || SS(568).

Krishna has said பிதா⁴ஹமஸ்ய ஜக³தோ மாதா தா⁴தா பிதாமஹ: | BG(9-17). “I am tha 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

வாக³ர்தா²விவ ஸம்ப்ரு³க்தௌ வாக³ர்த²ப்ரதிபத்தயே |

ஜக³த: பிதரௌ வந்தே³ பார்வதீ³பரமேஸ்வரௌ ||

“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 கத்தரா - க்ரியத இதி கர்ம ஜக³த்தஸ்ய கர்தா, “யோ வை பா³லாக ஏதேஷாம் புருஷாணம் கர்தா யஸ்ய வை தத் கர்ம ஸ வேதி³தவ்ய: |” கௌ-உ-4-14 இதி ஸ்ருதே: | VS(316). கரணம் - ஜக³து³பத்தௌ ஸாத⁴கம் கரணம் | VS(378) காரணம் - உபாதா³நம் நிமித்தம் ச காரணம் | VS(379) விகர்தா - விவித⁴ம் பு⁴வநம் க்ரியதே இதி விகர்தா ஸ ஏவ ப⁴க³வாந் விஷ்ணு: | 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 மாயாம் து ப்ரக்ரு³திம் விதீ³யாந்மாயிநம் து மஹேஸ்வரம் | 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 தை³வீ ஹ்யேஷா கு³ணமயீ மம மாயா து³ர்த்யயா | BG(7-14). “This divine illusion of Mine, made up of gunas, is hard to surmount.” So He is known as மஹாமாய: - மாயாவிநாமபி மாயாகாரித்வாத் மஹாமாய:, “மம மாயா து³ர்த்யயா” இதி ப⁴க³வத்³வசநாத் | VS(170). Krishna says that in fact He is both: the intelligent cause and the material cause called prakriti. Thus மூலப்ரக்ரு³தி: is one of His names மூலபூ⁴தா ப்ரக்ரு³தி: மூலப்ரக்ரு³தி:, ஜக³தா³தி³காரணம், தந்நிமித்தோபாதா³நத்மகம் ப்ரஹ்மேத்யர்த: | “ததை³க்ஷத, ப³ஹுஸ்யாம் ப்ரஜாயேதி” இதி ஸ்ருதி: || ஐக்ஷதேதி ஈக்ஷணகர்த்ரு³த்வாந்நிமித்தகாரணத்வம், ப³ஹுஸ்யாமிதி ப³ஹுப⁴வநஹேதுத்வாது³பாதா³நத்வம் || SS(411). Also ப்ரக்ரு³தி: - ஜக³து³பாதா³நபூ⁴த: பரமேஸ்வர: ப்ரக்ரு³தி: | அயமர்த: ஸுத்ரகாரேண நிஸ்சித: | ப்ரக்ரு³திஸ்ச ப்ரதிஜ்ஞா, தீ³ரு³ஷ்டாந்தாநுபரோதா⁴தி³த்யாதி³ஸுத்ரபஞ்சகேந | விவ்ரு³தம் சேத³ம் பா⁴ஷ்யகாரேண ஸம்ஸயபூர்வபக்ஷப்ரத³ர்ஸநபூர்வகம் || SS(570) மாயாபீ³ஜ: - மாயாயா பீ³ஜம் காரணமதி⁴ஷ்டா²நமிதி யாவத் | ஏவம் ச மாயாயா அதீ⁴யஸ்தத்தவேந வாஸ்தவதா⁵பா⁴வாத் ஸக்தித்வேந ஸ்வாதந்நர்யாபா⁴வாச்ச ஜக³த ஈஸ்வரைக்யபீ³ஜத்வமுபபத்³யதே | “தே³வாத்மஸக்திம் ஸ்வகு³ணர்நிகூ³டா⁴மி” தி ஸ்ருதி: || 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.. ப்ரக்ரு³தி, விஷ்ணுபத்நீ, நாராயணஸமாஸ்ரிதா 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

உமாமஹேஸ்வரஸ்தோத்ரம் (Umamaheswara stotram) as follows நம: ஸிவாப்யாம் நவயௌவநாப்யாம் பரஸ்பராஸ்லிஷ்டவபுர்த்⁴ராப்யாம் | 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 மாயாதீத: - மாயாயா அதீத: - மாயாயா வா அதீத: | ஸத்வாதி³-கு³ண-ஸாமாந்யரூப-ப்ரக்ரு³திவிவர்ஜித இத்யர்த: | “அதமஸ்கமமாயமி”தி ஸ்ருதி: || SS(41). and நிர்மாய: - மாயாயா நிர்க்³த: நிர்மாய: | யத்³யி “மாயாம் து ப்ரக்ரு³திம் வித்³யாந்மாயிநம் து மஹேஸ்வரம்” இதி மாயாஸம்ப³ந்த: ஸ்ருதிஷு த்³ரு³ஸ்யதே, ததா²பி மாயாயா: கல்பிதத்வேந வாஸ்தவஸம்ப³ந்தா⁴பா⁴வாத் கல்பிதஸம்ப³ந்தா⁴பரேயம் ஸ்ருதி: | அத ஏவ, வ்யக்தாத்ப்ருஷ: பர:, அக்ஷராத்தபரதர:, அவித்³யாகார்யஹீந: | “அதமஸ்கமமாயமி”தி ஸ்ருதி: || SS(693). Bartruhari states the fact that the Lord is not in the clutches of maya in his own way in his Vairagyasatakam.(17)

ஏகோ ராகி³ஷு ராஜதே ப்ரியதமாதே³ஹார்த⁴ஹா⁴ ஹரோ
நீரா³கே³ஷு ஜநோ விமுக்தலலநாஸங்கோ³ ந யஸ்மாத் பர: |

He says that among sensual persons Shiva is unique sharing half His body with His beloved. It appears from this that as though He cannot bear separation from her even for a second. But, he adds, that again among the dispassionate there is none superior to Him, unattached to the company of women.

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 நித்யம் பர்யசரத் ப்ரீத்தயா ப⁴வாநீவ ப⁴வம் ப்ரபு⁴ம் | BH(2-23-1). The following names are thus derived from the facts stated above

பார்வதீபதி: - பர்வத: ஹிமவாந் தஸ்ய புத்ரீ பார்வதீ | தஸ்யா: பதி: | தது³க்தம் ஸுதஸம்ஹிதாயம்- “ஸா ஸிவா கருணாமூர்திர்ஜக³ந்மாதா த்ரயீமயீ | ஸிவாபி³ந்நா பராநந்தா³ ஸங்கரஸ்யாபி ஸங்கரீ” ஸ்வேச்ச²யா ஹிமத்புத்ரீ ஸ்வப⁴க்தஜநவத்ஸலா, தஸ்யா: பதி: ப்ரிய: பரமேஸ்வர: || “அம்பி³காபதய உமபதயே நமோ நம:” இதி ஸ்ருதி: || SS(24) and அம்பி³காபதி: - பார்வத்யா: ப்ரிய: அம்பி³காபதி: | “ஹிரண்யபதயே⁵ம்பி³கபதய” இதி ஸ்ருதி: || SS(429). Also SA(15) கௌ³ரீஸ: -

கௌ³ரீஸோ⁵ம³பி³காபதி: || SS(121) ஸ்ரீபதி: - அம்ரு³தமத²நே ஸர்வாந் ஸுராஸுராதி³ந்
 விஹாய ஸ்ரீரேநம் பதித்வேந வரயாமாஸேதி ஸ்ரீபதி: | ஸ்ரீ: பர ஸக்தி:, தஸ்யா: பதிநிதி
 வா, “பராஸ்ய ஸக்திர்விவிதை⁴வ ஸ்ருயதே” (ஸ்வே-உ-8) இதி ஸ்ருதி: | VS(603). ஸ்ரீஸ:
 - ஸ்ரிய ஈஸ: ஸ்ரீஸ: | VS(606) ஜக³திபிதா - ஜக³ந்நிர்மாதா- “இத³ம் ஸர்வமஸ்ரு³ஜதே”
 தி ஸ்ருதி: | SS(36) விஸ்வமாதா - விஸ்வஸ்ய மாதா வ்யாபீ ஜ்ஞாதா வா | SS(85)
 ஜக³த்த⁴தா⁴ - ஜக³தாம் தா⁴தா கர்தா | SS(86) மாதாமஹ: - மாக்ரு: பிதா மாதாமஹ:,
 சதுர்வித⁴பூ⁴தக்³ராமஸ்ய பார்தி²வஸ்ய மாத ப்ரு³தி²வீ, தஸ்யா: பிதா மாதாமஹ: | “ஸ
 பூ⁴மிமஸ்ரு³ஜதே” தி ஸ்ருதி: | ப்ரு³தி²வ்யா மாத்ரு³த்வே “இயம் வை மாதே” தி ஸ்ருதி:
 | SS(615). Devi Gauri is called மஹா 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 ஸிந்தூ³ரதூ³ர்ப்ரசாரம் - ஸிந்தூ³ரம்
 = red lead தூ³ர = distant, far off ப்ரசாரம் = going away. That is, Shiva’s complexion is very
 red and it outshines the colour of the red lead. Shri Rudram says அஸௌ யஸ்தாம்ரோ
 அருண உத ப³ப⁴ரு: ஸுமங்க³ள: | This says that Rudra is தாம்ர: = copper coloured,
 அருண: = rosy, ப³ப⁴ரு: = golden yellow, ஸுமங்க³ள: = highly auspicious and beneficent.
 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
 ஸூர்ய ஆத்மா ஜக³த: தஸ்து²ஷஸ்ச = 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 அஸௌ யஸ்தாம்ரோ இத்யநேந ஆதி³த்யமுபதிஷ்டதே | The votary should praise and worship the sun by means of the rik அஸௌ யஸ்தாம்ரோ in the Rudram. So தாம்ர: - அத்யந்த-ரக்தஸ்தாம்ர: | “நமஸ்தாம்ராய சே” தி ஸ்ருதி: || 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 த³யாளு: - த³யாஸீலோ த³யாளு: | அநேந பரமேஸ்வரஸ்ய யா ஸாந்தா தநூ ஸர்வஹ்லாத³ருபிணீ ஸா ப்ரத³ர்ஸிதா | “யாதே ருத்³ர் ஸிவா தநூ” ரிதி ஸ்ருதி: SS(155) ஸிந்து⁴ராஜாதிதீ⁴ரம்- ஸிந்து:⁴ = the sea, ocean ராஜந் = a king or chief. It is used to qualify something very great or glorious. For example Kalidasa describes the Himalaya as நகா³தி⁴ராஜ: in his Kumarasambhava. அதி = a prefix used to mean very, too, exceedingly etc தீ⁴ரம் = strong minded, wise, resolute. ஸிந்து⁴ராஜா meaning the chief of the oceans : indicates a mighty ocean. The Lord is very resolute, wise and strong minded like a mighty ocean. Kalidasa defines தீ⁴ர: as one who is endowed with a mind that does not waver even when assailed by deleterious forces that are capable of perverting it விகாரஹேதௌ ஸதி விக்ரியந்தே யேஷாம் ந சேதாம்ஸே த ஏவ தீ⁴ரா: || (Kumarasambhava-1-59). Gita and the upanishads use the word to mean a person of wisdom or discrimination.

தே³ஹிநோ⁵ஸ்மிந்யதா தே³ஹே கௌமாரம் யௌவநம் ஜரா |
ததா² தே³ஹாந்தரப்ராப்தி⁴ரஸ்தத்ர ந முஹ்யதி || BG(2-13).

Just as in this body 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. Arjuna had delusion in this regard. He admitted in the end that his delusion had been destroyed as a result of Krishna’s teaching. He said நஷ்டோ மோஹ: ஸ்ம்ரு³தி⁴ர்ஸப்³தா⁴ த்வத்ப்ரஸாதா³ந்மயா⁵ச்யுத | BG(18-73). Again

யம் ஹி ந வ்யதயந்த்யேதே புருஷம் புருஷர்ஷப⁴ |

ஸமது:³க²ஸுக²ம் தீ⁴ரம் ஸோ⁵ம்ரு³தத்வாய கல்பதே || BG(2-15).

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 தீ⁴ர: and also as ஸ்தி²தப்ரஜ்ஞ:, ஸ்தி²ததீ:⁴ etc.. The upanishads use the word தீ⁴ர: to indicate a man of wisdom and realisation. This example is from Kathopanishad ஏகோ வஸீ ஸர்வபூ⁴தாந்தராத்ம ஏகம் ரூபம் ப³ஹுதா⁴ ய: கரோதி | தமா³தம்ஸ்த²ம் யே⁵ந்ருபஸ்யந்தி தீ⁴ரா: தேஷாம் ஸுக²ம் ஸாஸ்வதம் நேதரேஷாம் || KU(2-2-12). “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 தீ⁴ர: - தி⁴யம் ஈரயதி, தி⁴யம் ப்ரேரயதி | ஈர = to urge, elevate, bring to life. Thus the word தீ⁴ர: means the Lord who is behind the intellect and gives life to it. We worship Him through the Gayatri mantra as தி⁴யோ யோ ந: ப்ரசோத³யாத் | Shiva is known as கா³யத்ரீவல்லப: - கா³யத்ர்யா வல்லபோ⁴ கா³யத்ரீவல்லப: | கா³யத்ரீப்ரதிபாத்³ய இத்யந்த: | SS(179). 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:

முநி: ப்ரஸந்நக³ம்பீ⁴ரோ து³ர்விகா³ஹ்யோ து³ர்த்யய: |

அநந்தபாரோ ஹ்யக்ஷோப்⁴ய: ஸ்திமிதோத³ இவார்ணவ: ||

ஸம்ரு³த்³த⁴காமோ ஹீநோ வா நாராயணப்ரோ முநி: |

நோத்ஸர்பேத ந ஸுஷ்யேத ஸரித்³பி⁴ரிவ ஸாக³ர: || BH(11-8-5 and 6).

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 க³ம்பீ⁴ர: deep or profound. Describing the qualities of Rama, Narada tells the sage Valmiki that Rama was profound like the ocean ஸமுத்³ர் இவ கா³ம்பீ⁴ர்யே | (Balakanda-1-17). The sage will appear to be simple, but his depth of knowledge and maturity cannot be measured: து³ர்விகா³ஹ்ய: . 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 அநந்த: and அபார: | . அபார: means shoreless. A jnani is limitless and all pervading as he has found his true nature ஸ்வரூபம் . He is unshakeable; this refers to his emotional strength. On this point Krishna says

து³க்ஷேஷ்வநுத்³விக்³நமநா: ஸுகே²ஷு விக³தஸ்ரு³ஹ: |

வீத்ராக³ப⁴யக்ரோத: ஸ்தி²த⁴ர்முநிருச்யதே || 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 ப்ரஸாதே³ கி³ரிஸோபம: | 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 பூர்ணத்வம் . 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 ஸம்ரு³த்³த⁴காம: or has none, he treats both situations like நாராயணபர: 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: நவநம் க³ந்துகாமஸ்ய த்யஜதஸ் வஸுந்த⁴ராம் | ஸர்வலோகாதிக³ஸ்யேவ லக்ஷ்யதே சித்தவிக்ரியா || (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 ஸர்வதா³பி⁴க³த: ஸத்³பி:⁴ ஸமுத்³ர இவ ஸிந்து⁴பி:⁴ | 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 ஸம்பதோ³ நைவ ஸம்பத:³ விபதோ³ நைவ விபத:³ | விபத்³ விஸ்மரணம் விஷ்ணோ: ஸம்பத்³ ஸம்ஸ்மரணம் ஹரே: || 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!

விபத:³ ஸந்து ந: ஸஸ்வத்தத்ர தத்ர ஜக³த்³கு³ரோ |

ப⁴வதோ த³ர்ஸநம் யதஸ்யாத³பந்ர⁴வத³ர்ஸநம் || 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. ப⁴ஜே மார்சு³ப³ந்து⁴ம் :- ப⁴ஜே = I worship மர்சு³ப³ந்து⁴ம் = 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

யஸ்மிஞ்ஜஹாத்யதிஸயோக்திரலங்கரிதித்வம்

ந்யூநோபமாத்வமுபமா ஸமுபைதி ஸர்வா

ஸூக்ஷ்மஸ்வபா⁴வகலநாபி ச ந ப்ரதர்க்யா

தத்³வ்ரண்யாமி ப⁴வத: கத²மாபி⁴ரூப்யம் ||

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 ஸால ப்ராம்ஸு: : 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. அப்பய்யயஜ்ஜ்வெந்த³ர சீ³தம் ஸ்தோத்ரராஜம் படே²த்³யஸ்து ப⁴க்த்யா ப்ரயானே |

தஸ்யார்த²ஸித்³தி⁴ம் வித⁴த்தே மார்சு³மத்⁴யே⁵ப⁴யம் சாஸு⁴தோஷொ மஹேஸ: |

ஸம்போ⁴ ...

அப்பய்ய = the name of the author யஜ்வந் = performer of sacrifices கீ³தம் = sung
ஸ்தோத்ரராஜம் great poem படி²த் = reads ய: = whoever ப⁴க்த்யா = with devotion
ப்ரியாணே = during a journey தஸ்ய = for him. அர்த² = wish, desire எதி³தி: ⁴ =
fulfilment, complete attainment வித⁴த்தே = arranges. மத்⁴ய: = middle or central part
மார்க்³மத்⁴யே on the way அப⁴யம் = freedom from fear, security ஆஸூ = fast, quick
தோஷ: = satisfaction, pleasure, delight. ஆஸூதோஷ: means one who is easily pleased
மஹேஸ: = name of Shiva. This verse gives the benefit or the fruit of reciting the poem
and is known as ப²லஸ்ருதி: | ப²லம் 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 மஹேஸ: 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: ஸுலப: ⁴ - பத்ரபுஷ்பப²லாதி³பி⁴-ர்ப⁴க்திமாத்ரஸமர்பிதை:
ஸுகே²ந லப⁴யத இதி ஸுலப: ⁴ | “பத்ரேஷு புஷ்பேஷு தோயேஷு அக்ரீதலப⁴யேஷு
ஸதை³வ ஸத்ஸு | ப⁴க்த்யேக-லப⁴யே புருஷே புராணே முக்த்யை கத²ம் ந க்ரியதே
ப்ரியதந: ||” இதி மஹாபா⁴ரதே || VS(817). 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 பத்ரம்
புஷ்பம் ப²லம் தோயம் யோ மே ப⁴க்த்யா ப்ரியச்ச²தி | தத³ஹம் ப⁴க்த்யபஹ்ரு²த-
மஸ்நாமி ப்ரியதாத்மந: || BG(9-26) Shiva is known as: கரவீரப்ரிய: - கரவீரப்ரியத்வம்
ஸிவஸ்ய புராணாதி³ஷு ப்ரஸிதி³த⁴ம் | “ஏகேந கரவீரேண எதிதேநாப்யஸிதேந வா |
ஹரிம் ஹரம் வா ஸம்பூஜ்ய ப்ரஹ்மபூ⁴யாய கல்பதே” இதி | அநேந ஸிவபூஜஸ்யாம்
ஸௌலப⁴யமுக்தம் | ஸிவ: பூஜநீய இதி ச || SS(326).

ப⁴க்தாநாம் ஸுலப: ⁴ - ஸிவபூஜாதி³பராணம் ஸுலப: ⁴, ஸீக்⁴ரமநுக்³ராஹக: |
தத³ர்தமேவ ஸிவமூர்திக்³ரஹணம் || SS(484). One of Shri Lalita's names also states
this fact ஸுகா²ராத்த⁴யா - ஸுகே²ந உபவாஸாதி³ரூபகாயக்லேஸம் த⁴யேயஸ்வரூப-

நியமநநிர்³ந்தா⁴தி³கம் சாந்தரேணாப்யாராத்யா || LS(680). Prahlada says that it does not need much effort to please Him. One need not strain himself and go on pilgrimages etc., in search of Him ந ஹ்யச்யுதம் ப்ரீணயதஹ ப்³ஹ்வாயாஸோ⁵ஸுராத்தமஜா: | ஆத்மத்வாத் ஸர்வபூ⁴தாநாம் எவித்³த⁴த்வாதி³ஹு ஸர்வத: || BH(6-6-19). He is the very Self of every being and He is available everywhere. There is an apocryphal story that once the author Shri DikShita was preparing to go to a nearby village on some work when he received information that some people who were ill disposed to him were hatching a diabolical plot to attack and kill him on the way. The poet composed this stotram and prayed 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 ப²லஸ்ருதி: 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 ப²லஸ்ருதி: 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 யஜ்வந் . The Manusmrithi states that performing sacrifices is one of the duties of a brahmin அத்யாபநமத்⁴யயநம் யஜநம் யாஜநம் ததா² | தா³நம் ப்ரதி³ரஹம் சைவ ப்³ராஹ்மணாநாமகல்பயத் || Kalidasa says that the kings of the solar dynasty tended the sacrificial fires by means of offerings and honoured the guests also. யதா²விதி⁴ ஹுதா³நீநாம் யதா²காமார்சிதார்தி²நாம் | (Raghuvamsa-1-6). Manu further says that the noble ones should eat only the remains of this yagna as only it is worth eating. One who cooks for himself eats sin

அசு⁴ம் ஸ கேவலம் பு⁴ங்க்தே ய: பசத்யாத்மகாரணாத் |

யஜ்ஞஸிஷ்டாஸநம் ஹ்யேதத்ஸதாமநநம் விதீ⁴யதே ||

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

யஜ்ஞஸிஷ்டாம்ரு⁴தபூ⁴ஜோ யாந்தி ப்³ரஹம் ஸநாதநம் |

நாயம் லோகோ⁵ஸ்யயஜ்ஞஸ்ய குதோ⁵நய: குருஸத்தம் ||

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 yagna யஜ்ஞ:- ஸர்வயஜ்ஞஸ்வரூபத்வாத்³ யஜ்ஞ:;“யஜ்ஞோ வெள விஷ்ணு:” (தை-ஸம்-1-7-4) இதி ஸ்ருதே: | VS(445). Also யஜ்ஞ:- ஸர்வயஜ்ஞஸ்வரூபத்வாத்³யஜ்ஞ: | “த்வம் யஜ்ஞஸ்த்வம் விஷ்ணு”ரிதி ஸ்ருதி: || 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 சித்தஸ்ய ஸூத்³த⁴யே கர்ம says Shri Sankaracharya in his Vivekachudamani. He defines such a person who has been regularly performing the sacrifices as noble minded மஹாத்மாந: அக்ஷுத்³ரசித்தா: in his commentary (BG-19-13). Anandagiri elaborates the definition as மஹாந் ப்ரக்ரு'ஷ்டோ யஜ்ஞாதி³பி:⁴ ஸோதி⁴த ஆத்மா ஸத்வம் யேஷாம் - 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 ஆப்த: - ஆப்த: யதா²ந்தவக்தா | - 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 ஆப்தவாக்யம் ப்ரமாணம் | 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 ஸமாக³தா: ஸர்வத ஏவ ஸர்வே வேதா³ யதா² மூர்தி⁴ராஸ்த்ரிப்ரு'ஷ்டே² | நேஹாத²வாமுத்ர ச கஸ்சநா²த்² ரு'தே பராநுக்³ரஹுமாத்மஸீலம் || 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: ஸாந்தா மஹாந்தோ நிவஸந்தி ஸந்தோ வஸந்தவல்லோகஹிதம் சரந்த: | தீர்ணா: ஸ்வயம் பீ⁴மப⁴வார்ணவம் ஜநாநஹேதுநாந்யாநபி தாரயந்த: || (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 கீ³தம் = 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 ப⁴க³வத்³கீ³தா is that it was sung or chanted by Krishna: ஸ்ரீமதா ப⁴க³வதா கீ³தா . This implies that He was not the author of the work (ந க்ரு'தா) 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:

ஸர்வோபநிஷதோ³ கா³வோ, தோ³க்³தா⁴ கோ³பாலநந்த³ந: | பார்தோ² வத்ஸ:,
ஸுதீ⁴ர்போ⁴க்தா, து³க்³த⁴ம் கீ³தாம்ரு³தம் மஹத் ||

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 யாநி நாமாநி கௌ³ணநி விக்²யாதாநி மஹாத்மந: | ரு³ஷிபி:⁴ பரி³தாநி தாநி வக்ஷயாமி பூ⁴தயே || Thus, the use of the word “sung” (கீ³தம்) seems appropriate. Why this piece is called ஸ்தோத்ர ராஜா a great or splendid piece of work? In the beginning of Chapter 9 of Gita, Krishna talks of the knowledge of brahman and to glorify the subject He calls it ராஜவித்³யா ராஜகு³ஹ்யம் | “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 படை²த்³யஸ்து ப⁴க்த்யா ப்ரயாணே தஸ்ய அர்த²ஸித்³தி⁴ம் வித⁴த்தே | (i.e.) whoever reads this with devotion during a journey, the mission will be completed successfully. The emphasis is on the word ப⁴க்த்யா - 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 dharmas prescribed the one I am going to say namely, worshipping the Lord by singing His glories with devotion is, I consider the best.” ஏஷ மே ஸர்வதர்மாணாம் தர்மோ⁵தி⁴கதமோ மத: | யத்³ப⁴க்த்யா புண்ட³ரீகாக்ஷம்

ஸ்தவைரச்சேந்நர: ஸதா³ || 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?"

கோ த⁴ர்ம: ஸர்வத⁴ர்மாணம் ப⁴வத: பரமோ மத:[?]

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:

ப⁴க்திமாந் ய: ஸதோ³த்தா²ய ஸூசிஸ்தத³க³தமாநஸ: | ஸஹஸ்ரம்

வாஸுதே³வஸ்ய நாம்நாமேதத் ப்ரகீர்தயேத் || 125 |

இமம் ஸ்தவமதீ⁴யாந: ஸ்ரத³தா⁴ப⁴க்திஸமந்வித: |

யஜ்யேதாத்மஸூக²க்ஷாந்தி-ஹ்ரீ⁴ரு⁴திஸம்ரு⁴திகீர்திபி:⁴ || 132 ||

Shri Sankaracharya , in his commentary, says: ப⁴க்திமாநித்யாதி³நா ப⁴க்திமத: ஸூசே: ஸததமுத³யுக்தஸ்யைகாக்³ரசித்தஸ்ய ஸ்ரத³தா⁴லோர்விலிஷ்டாதி⁴காரிண: ப²லவிலேஷம் த³ர்ஸயதி | Thus a great deal of emphasis is laid on devotion and faith. The Lord is அநிமிஷ: | always awake VS(215) and on the look-out for people who have devotion. He has innumerable number of ears, eyes, mouths etc.. ஸர்வத: பாணிபாத³ம் தத் ஸர்வதோ⁵க்ஷிஸிரோருஹம் | ஸர்வத: ஸ்ருதிமால்லோகே ஸர்வமாவ்ரு⁴த்ய திஷ்ட²தி || 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: ஸ்தவப்ரிய: 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 ப⁴டே²த³யஸ்து ப⁴க்த்யா ப்ரயாணே தஸ்ய அர்த²ஸித்³தி⁴ம் வித⁴த்தே மார்க³மத்⁴யே⁵ப⁴யஞ்ச ஆஸூதோஷோ மஹேஸ: | (i.e.) whoever reads this with devotion during a journey, the Lord will ensure that the mission is completed successfully. In addition he will feel secure as he will be protected by the Lord on the way. We noted that the word ப்ரயாணம் means departure, or journey. But if we scratch a bit deeper we find that the word also means death or departure from this world. This latter meaning puts the statement in a different perspective and introduces a very important topic viz., the last moments of one's life and how it is to be managed. Both ப்ரயாணகால: and அந்தகால: mean the same thing. The Bhagavatha Purana is very relevant in this context as it deals with this subject elaborately. It presents case histories of the last moments of many people to illustrate the theories that are stated in it. This subject is introduced by Krishna at the end of chapter 7 of Gita and dealt with in detail in the next

chapter. He says

அந்தகாலே ச மாமேவ ஸ்மரந்முக்த்வா கலேவரம் ।

ய: ப்ரயாதி ஸ மத்³பா⁴வம் யாதி நாஸ்த்யத்ர ஸம்ஸய: ॥

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;

யம் யம் வாபி ஸ்மரந்பா⁴வம் த்யஜத்யந்நதே கலேவரம் ।

தம் தமேவைதி கௌந்தேய ஸதா³ தத்³பா⁴வபா⁴வித: । BG(8-6).

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 (இஷ்ட தே³வதா) (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.

காமாந்ய: காமயதே மந்யமாந: ஸ காமபி⁴ர்ஜாயதே தத்ர தத்ர ।

பர்யாப்தகாமஸ்ய க்ரு³தாத்மநஸ்த்விஹைவ ஸர்வே ப்ரவிலீயந்தே காமா: ॥ MU(3-2-2).

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 அஜநாப⁴ம் நாமைதத்³வ்ஷம் பா⁴ரதமிதி யத ஆரப⁴ய வ்யபதி³ஸந்தி BH(5-7-3). The king was - மஹாபா⁴க³வத: 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.

ததா³நீமபி-பார்ஸ்வவர்திநம் ஆத்மஜமிவாநுஸோசந்தம் அபி⁴வீக்ஷமா⁴னோ

ம்ரு³க³ ஏவாபி⁴நிவேஸிதமநா விஸ்ரு³ஜ்ய லோகமிமம் ஸஹ ம்ரு³கே³ண

கலேவரம் ம்ரு³தமநு ந ம்ரு³தஜந்மாநுஸ்ம்ரு³தி:

இதரவந்-ம்ரு³க³ஸரீரமவாப ।

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:

தஸ்மாத்தஸர்வேஷு காலேஷு மாமநுஸ்மர யுத்⁴ய ச |

மய்யர்பிதமநோபு³த்³தி⁴ர்மாமேவைஷ்யஸ்யஸம்ஸய: || 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 – புருஷ: ஸ பர: பார்த² ப⁴க்த்யாலப்⁴ய-ஸ்த்வந்யயா | 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 Sankaracharya in his explanation says that “exclusive devotion” means exclusive devotion, characterised by jnana or knowledge of the self. ஸ ப⁴க்த்யா லப்⁴யஸ்து ஜ்ஞாநலக்ஷணயா அநந்யயா ஆத்மவிஷயயா | is to be noted. Why should “devotion” should be characterised by jnana? In answer he refers to what was said earlier (in verse 7-17). The jnani is the best devotee as he is exclusively devoted to Him தேஷாம் ஜ்ஞாநீ நித்யயுக்த ஏகப⁴க்திர்விஸிஷ்யதே 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:

ப⁴க்த்யா^{SS}வேஸ்ய மநோ யஸ்மிந் வாசா யந்நாம கீர்தயந் |

த்யஜந் கலேவரம் யோகீ³ முச்யதே காமகர்மபி:⁴ || BH(1-9-23).

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 நிவ்ரு³த்தஸர்வேந்த³ரியவ்ரு³த்திவிப்⁴ரமஸ்துஷ்டாவ ஜந்யம் விஸ்ரு³ஜந்ஜநார்த³நம் | BH(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

இதி மதிருபகல்பிதா வித்ரு³ஷ்ணா ப⁴க³வதி ஸாத்வதபுங்க³வே விபூ⁴ம்நி |

ஸ்வஸுக²முபக³தே க்வசித்³ விஹர்தும் ப்ரக்ரு³திமுபேயுஷி யத்³ ப⁴வப்ரவாஹ: || BH(1-9-32).

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 இதி - “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?” மய்யர்பிதமநோபு³த்தி⁴-ர்மாமேவைஷ்யஸ்யம்ஸய: || Thus Bhishma said that he was offering his mind that was free from all hankering 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:

வ்யத்யஸ்தபாத³-மவதம்ஸித-ப³ர்ஹிப³ர்ஹம்,
ஸாசீக்ரு³தாநந-நிவேஸித-வேணுரந்த⁴ரம் |
தேஜ: பரம் பரமகாருணிகம் புரஸ்தாத்,
ப்ராணப்ரயாண-ஸமயே மம ஸந்நித⁴த்தாம் ||

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 absence. 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 அந்தகாலே ச 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

க்ரு³ஷ்ண த்வதீ³ய-பத³-பங்கஜபஞ்ஜராந்த:, அதீ³யைவ மே விஸ்து

மாநஸ-ராஜஹம்ஸ: |

ப்ராணப்ரயாணஸமயே கப²-வாத-பித்தை:, கண்டா²வரோத⁴நவிதௌ⁴

ஸ்மரணம் குதஸ்தே ||

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 Devahuti gives a graphical, albeit terrifying picture of the last moments of such a person. He says:

வாயுநோதக்ரமதோத்தார: கப²ஸம்ருத்³த⁴நாடி³க: |

காஸஸ்வாஸக்ரு³தாயாஸ: கண்டே² கு⁴ரகு⁴ராயதே ||

(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.

ஸயாந: பரிஸோசத்³பி:⁴ பரிவீத: ஸ்வப³ந்து⁴பி:⁴ |

வாச்யமாநோ⁵பி ந ப்³ருதே காலபாஸவஸம் க³த: ||

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

ஏவம் குடும்ப³ப⁴ரணே வ்யாப்ரு³தத்மாஜிதேந்த³ரிய: |

ம்ரியதே ருத³தாம் ஸ்வநாமுருவேத³நயாஸ்ததீ: ⁴ ||

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 ப்ராரப்³த⁴ம் 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.

யமதூ³தௌ ததா³ப்ராதௌ பீ⁴மௌ ஸரப⁴ஸேக்ஷணௌ |

ஸ த்³ரு³ஷ்ட்வா த்ரஸ்தஹ்ரு³த³ய: ஸக்ரு³ந்மூத்ரம் விமுஞ்சதி ||

He then sees before him two emissaries 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:

ஏவம் குடும்ப³ம் பி³ப⁴ராண உத³ரம்ப³ர ஏவ வா |

விஸ்ரு³ஜ்யேஹோப⁴யம் ப்ரேத்ய பு⁴ங்க்தே தத²ப²லமீத்³ரு³ஸம் ||

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).

ஏக: ப்ரபத³யதே த்⁴வாந்தம் ஹித்வேத³ம் ஸ்வகலேவரம் |

குஸலேதரபாதே²யோ பூ⁴தத்³ரோஹேண யத்³ப்⁴ரு³தம் ||

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).

கேவலேந ஹ்யத⁴ர்மேண குடும்ப³ப⁴ரணோத்ஸுக: |

யாதி ஜீவோ⁵ந்த⁴தாமிஸ்ரம் சரமம் பத³ம் ||

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).

அத⁴ஸ்தாந்நரலோகஸ்ய யாவதீர்யாதநாத⁴ய: |

க்ரமஸ: ஸமநுக்ரமய புநரத்ராவ்ரஜேச்ச²சி: ||

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:

ந ஸாம்பராய: ப்ரதிபா⁴தி பா³லம், ப்ரமா³யந்தம் வித்தமோஹேந மூ⁴ம் |

அயம் லோகோ நாஸ்தி பர இதி மாநீ, புந: புநர்வஸமாபத்³யதே மே || KU(1-2-6).

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 அபி⁴நிவேஸ: | He says that the fear affects the wise people also.

ஸ்வரஸவாஹீ விது³ஷோ⁵பி ததா²ரூடோ⁴ஸி⁴நிவேஸ: | ஸாத⁴நபாத: ³-9 |

ஸ்வஸ்ய ரஸேந ஸம்ஸ்காரே²ணவ வஹதீ³தி ஸ்வரஸவாஹீ |

அபிஸ³த்³ஸமுச்சிதமவித்³வாம்ஸம் ததே²தி தச்ச²ப்³த: ³

பராம்³ஸு³தி |

ரூ⁴:⁴ ப்ரஸித்³த: ⁴ | ததா²ச யதா²ஸி³விது³ஷ: ததா² விது³ஷோ⁵பி

ஸ்வரஸவாஹித்வஹேதுநா யஜ்ஜாதீய: யதக்³லேஸோ ப⁴யாக்²ய:

ப்ரஸித்³தோ⁴ஸ்தி ஸோ⁵பி⁴நிவேஸ இத்யர்த: ² | விது³ஷாமபி

மரணத்ராஸக்³ரு³தம் ப⁴யமஸ்தீ³தி பா⁴ஷ்யக்³ரு³தோக்தம் |

பூர்வபூர்வஜந்மஸு

மரணகாலே யத்ராஸோ ஜாதோ “மா ந பூ⁴வம் பூ⁴யாஸம்”

இத்யுத்தகண்டா²ருபோ ப⁴யநாமா தஜ்ஜநித-ஸம்ஸ்கரமாத்ரா-

த³விது³ஷாமிவா- த்மவிதா³மபி ஸ ஜாயதே, ந தத்ராவித³யாதி³கம்

காரணமிதி ।

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. ம்ரு³த்யு: ஜந்மவதாம் வீர தே³ஹேந ஸஹ ஜாயதே । அத³ய வா அப³த⁴ஸதாந்தே வா ம்ரு³த்யுர்வை ப்ராணிநாம் த்³ருவம் ॥ 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. அஹோ ராத்ராணி க³ச்ச²ந்தி ஸர்வேஷாம் ப்ராணிநாமிஹ । ஆயும்ஷி க்ஷபயந்த்யாஸு க்³ரீஷ்ஹே ஜலமிவாம்ஸவ: ॥ 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.

ஆத்மாநமநுஸோச த்வம் கிமந்யமநுஸோசஸி ।

ஆயுஸ்து ஹீயதே யஸ்ய ஸ்தி²தஸ்யாஸ்ய க³தஸ்ய ச ॥

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).

ஸஹைவ ம்ரு³த்யுர்வ்ரஜதி ஸஹ ம்ரு³த்யுர்நிஷீத³தி ।

க³த்வா ஸுதீ³ர்க⁴மத்⁴வாநம் ஸஹ ம்ரு³த்யுர்நிவர்ததே ॥

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 should 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:

அத: ப்ரு³ச்ச²மி ஸம்ஸித்³தி⁴ம் யோகி³நாம் பரமம் கு³ரும் ।

ப்ரு³ஷஸ்யேஹ யத் கார்யம் ம்ரியமாணஸ்ய ஸர்வதா² ॥

“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 ஸகாம கர்மா get births suitable for the fulfilment of the desires. Those who perform desireless karmas நிஷ்காம கர்மா 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 க்ரமமுக்தி: ।

ப்ரியாண காலே மநஸா⁵சலேந ப⁴க்த்யா யுக்தோ யோக³பு³லேந சைவ ।

பு⁴ருவோர்மத்⁴யே ப்ராணமாவேஸ்ய ஸம்யக் ஸ தம் பரம் புருஷாமுபைதி தி³வ்யம் ॥
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 - முக்த: । 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 shahtras. தமேவ விதி³த்வாதிம்ரு³த்யுமேதி நாந்ய: பந்தா² வித்³யதே⁵யநாய ॥ 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:

असृरः॑ सारैरेषु॑ अनवस्ते²क्षववस्ति²तम् ।

மஹாந்தம் விபு⁴மாத்மாநம் மத்வா தீ⁴ரோ ந ஸோசதி ॥

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 ப³ஹூநாம் ஜந்மநா-மந்தே ஜ்ஞாநவாந் மாம் ப்ரபத்³யதே | வாஸுதே³வ: ஸர்வமிதி ஸ மஹாத்மா ஸுது³ர்லப: || 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. ப³ஹூநாம் ஜந்மநாம் ஜ்ஞாநந்த²ஸம்ஸ்காராஸ்ரயாணம் அந்தே ஸமாப்தௌ ஜ்ஞாநவாந் ப்ராப்தபரிபாகஜ்ஞாந: மாம் வாஸுதே³வம் ப்ரத்யகா³த்மாநம் ப்ரத்யக்ஷத: ப்ரபத்³யதே | 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: மநுஷ்யாணாம் ஸஹஸ்ரேஷு கஸ்சித்³யததி ஸித்³த⁴யே | யததாமபி ஸித்³தா⁴நாம் கஸ்சிந்மாம் வேத்தி தத்த்வத: || 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 any 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 ஸாதா⁴ந சதுஷ்டயஸம்பத்தி: 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: பா³லஸ்தாவத் கரீடா³ஸக்த: தருணஸ்தாவத் தருணீஸக்த: | வ்ரு³த்³த⁴ஸ்தாவச்சிந்தாஸக்த: பரேப்³ரஹ்மணி கோ⁵பி ந ஸக்த: || 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: கௌமார ஆசரேத்ப்ராஜ்ஞோ த⁴ர்மாந் பா⁴க³வதாநிஹ | 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 ஸைஸவே⁵ப்யஸ்தவித்³யாநாம் (1-7). Our tradition says that only that learning that leads to liberation can be called education. ஸா வித்³யா யா விமுக்தயே | Shri Sankaracharya also defines education as ஆத்மநோ போ³த: while commenting on the popular verse beginning வித்³யா விநயஸம்பந்நே ப்³ராஹ்மணே க³வி ஹஸ்திநி | BG(5-18). It is knowing about Self. Thus Devi (LakShmi, Lalita) is called Vidya வித்³யா | The commentator's explanation is: மோக்ஷப்ரத³ஜ்ஞாநஸ்வரூபத்வாத்³வித்³யா | (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

த்³வே வித்³யே வேதி³தவ்யே இதி ஹ ஸ்ம யத்³ப்³ரஹ்மவிதோ³ வத³ந்தி பரா சைவாபரா ச |

தத்ராபரா ரு³க்³வேதோ³ யஜூர்வேத: ஸாமவேதோ³த்³ர்வவேத: ஸிக்ஷா கல்போ வ்யாகரணம்

நிருக்தம் ச²ந்தோ³ ஜ்யோதிஷமிதி | அத² பரா யயா தத³க்ஷரமதி⁴க³ம்யதே ||

MU(1-4 and 5).

These mantras say that there are two Vidyas worth knowing to men - Para and Aparā. 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 Aparā Vidya. Para or the superior one is that through which the imperishable brahman is known. Yama also tells this to his student Nachiketa: ஸ்ரேயஸ்ச ப்ரேயஸ்ச மநுஷ்யமேதஸ்தௌ ஸம்பரீத்ய விவிநக்தி தீர: | 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 samsara. 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 யதா²க³ரு³ஹீ | 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 - நாசஷ்ட க்ரு³ச்ச²ரம் க்ரு³பனோ஽ஜமாயயா | . 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 occasions 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

க²ட³வாங்கோ³ நாம ராஜர்ஷி: ஜ்ஞாத்வையத்தாமிஹாயுஷா: ।

முஹூர்தாத் ஸர்வமுத்ஸ்ரு³ஜ்ய க³தவாநப்⁴யம் ஹரிம் || BH(2-1-13).

Most appropriately Shri Suka calls the king ராஜர்ஷி: 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

தத்ர தம் பு³த்³தி⁴-ஸம்யோக³ம் லப⁴தே பெளர்வதே³ஹிகம் ।

யததே ச ததோ பூ⁴ய: ஸம்ஸித்³தௌ⁴ குருநந்த³ந || 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 ஸஸாவே³ப்⁴யஸ்தவித்³யாநாம் । 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., யதா²காலப்ரபோ³தி⁴நாம் 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 யோகே³நாந்தே தருத்யஜாம் . 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. மார்க³மத்⁴யே⁵ப⁴யஞ்ச ஆஸு⁴தோஷொ மஹேஸ: | 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 ஆநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மனோ வித்³வாந் | ந பி³பே⁴தி கதா³சநேதி | 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) தேஷாம் ஸதத-யுக்தாநாம் ப⁴ஜதாம் ப்ரீதி-பூர்வகம் | த³தா³மி பு³த்தி⁴-யோக³ம் தம் யேந மாமுபயாந்தி தே || “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

யஸ்யாம் வை ஸ்ருயமாணயாம் க்ரு³ஷ்ணே பரமபூருஷே |

ப⁴க்திருத்பத்³யதே பும்ஸ: ஶோகமோஹப⁴யாபஹா || BH(1-7-7).

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 (ஸ்ருயமாணயாம்) 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:

ப⁴வந்தமிஹ ய: ஸ்வதீ⁴நியதசேதநாசேதநம்

பநாயதி நமஸ்யதி ஸ்மரதி வக்தி பர்யேதி வா |

கு³ணம் கமபி வேத்தி வா தவ கு³ணேஸ கோ³பாயிது:

கதா³சந குதஸ்சந க்வசந தஸ்ய ந ஸ்யாத்³ப⁴யம் ||

He says that one who praises 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 ப²லஸ்ருதி: . It is said ந ப⁴யம் க்வசிதா³ப்நோதி வீர்யம் தேஜஸ்ச விந்த³தி and ப⁴யாந்முச்யேத பீ⁴தஸ்து முச்யேதாபந் ஆபத: ³ | and ஜந்மம்ரு³த்யஜராவ்யாதி⁴ப⁴யம் நைவோபஜாயதே | . 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 ப⁴யாபஹ: - ப⁴யம் ஸம்ஸாரஜம் பும்ஸாமபக்⁴நந் ப⁴யாபஹ: | VS(935). But there may be fear from foes and elements etc.. God removes them also. Shiva is known as ஸஹாய: - ப்³ரஹ்மாதீ³நாமப்பயபத்காலே ரக்ஷக இத்யர்தா: ² | SS(762). He protects even gods like Brahma in times of danger. Lalita is called ப⁴யாபஹா - ப⁴யாநி ஜலஸ்த²லாதி³ப்ரயுக்தாதீ³நி ஸர்வாண்யபஹந்தீ³தி ப⁴யாபஹா | “ஆநந்த³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மணோ வித்³வாந்ந பி³பே⁴தி குதஸ்சநேதி” ஸ்ருதே: | ததா² ச வாயுபராணே “அரண்யே ப்ராந்தரே வாபி ஜலே வாபி ஸ்த²லே⁵பி வா | வ்யாக்⁴ரகும்பீ⁴ரசோரே⁴யோ ப⁴யஸ்தா²நே விஸேஷத: | ஆதி⁴ஷ்வபி ச ஸர்வேஷு தே³வீநாமாநி கீர்தயே”தி³தி | 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:

விஷாந்மஹாக்³நே: புருஷாத³த³ர்ஸாத³ஸ்தஸ்பா⁴யா வநவாஸக்ரு³ச்ச²ரத: |

ம்ரு³தே⁴ ம்ரு³தே⁴ஸ்நேகமஹாரதா²ஸ்த்ரதோ த்³ரௌண்யஸ்த்ரதஸ்சாஸம் ஹரே⁵பி⁴ரக்ஷிதா:
|| BH(1-8-24).

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

விஷஜலாப்யயாத்³ வ்யாலராக்கஸாத்³ வர்ஷமாருதாத்³ வைத்³யுதாநலாத் |

வ்ரு³ஷமயாத்மஜாத்³ விஸ்வதோப⁴யாத்³ரு³ஷப⁴ தே வயம் ரக்ஷிதா முஹூ: || BH(10-31-3).

Thus the truly devout people never miss Him and are , therefore do not feel insecure on the way. The “way” or மார்க³ 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:

த்ரயீ ஸாங்க்யம் யோக:³ பஸுபதிமதம் வைஷ்ணவமிதி

ப்ரபி⁴ந்நே ப்ரஸ்தா²நே பரமித³மத:³ பத்²யமிதி ச |

ருசீநாம் வைசித்ர்யாத்³ரு³ஜூ-குடில-நாநாபத்²ஜூஷாம்

ந்ரு³னாமேகோ க³ம்யஸ்த்வமஸி பயஸாமர்ணவமிவ || (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

யே யதா² மாம் ப்ரபத்³யந்தே தாம்ஸ்ததை²வ ப⁴ஜாம்யஹம் | மம

வர்த்மாநுவர்தந்தே மநுஷயா: பார்த²ஸஸர்வஸ: || BG(4-11).

Shri Rudram salutes Lord Shiva who is in the form of various paths. It says - பத்²நாம் பதயே நம: | பத்²நாம் = ஸாஸ்த்ரோக்த த³க்ஷிணோத்தர- த்ரு³தீய-மார்கா³ணம் பதி: | This says that Rudra is the protector of the three paths described in the sastras. Later It again says: நம: ஸ்ருத்யாய ச பத்²யாய ச | salutation to Him who is in the narrow foot paths and in the broad highways ஸ்ருதி: ஸ்வல்போ தே³வலோகமார்க: ³, பந்தா² ப்³ரஹ்மலோகமார்க: ³ | The narrow path indicates tortuous religious beliefs and practices. Krishna talks about this

மூட⁴க்³ராஹேணோத்மநோ யத்பீ³ய க்ரியதே தப: |

பரஸ்யோத்ஸாத³நார்தம் வா தத்தாமஸமுதா³ஹ்ரு³தம் || 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 மஹாஜநாநாம் யேநக³த: ஸ பந்தா: ² 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 நம இரிண்யாய ச ப்ரபத்²யாய ச | Salutation to Him who abides in saline tracts and in trodden pathways.


இரிண்யாய Irinyaya: signifies arid tracts and has a refernce to samsara. ப்ரபத்²ய: ப்³ஹுபி⁴ஹி லேவிதோ மார்க: ³ ப்ரபத: ², தத்ர ப⁴வ: ப்ரபத்²ய: | “நம இரிண்யாய சப்ரபத்²யாய சே”தி ஸ்ருதி: SS(346). Prapathyaya: pathway trodden or resorted to by many. The Lord helps all who seek Him by following various paths. He says: மச்சித: ஸர்வது³ர்கா³ணி மத்ப்ரஸாதா³த்தரிஷ்யஸி | 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 literally flodded 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.

Translation and commentary is written by N. Balasubramanian (Copyright)

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