mArgabandhustotram by Appayya Dixita

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श्रीमार्गबन्धुस्तोत्रम् अप्प्वदीक्षितः विरचितम्

मार्गबन्धुस्तोत्रम् ॥
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥
भालवनस्त्रीकीर्तिः भालनेत्रार्चिः दुर्भवस्येपुकीर्तम् ॥
(भालवनस्त्रीकीर्ति भालनेत्रार्चिः दुर्भवस्येपुकीर्ति)
शूरहतारातित्वं शुद्धमर्यादातित्वं भजे मार्गबन्धुम् ॥
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ १ ॥
अंजे विराज्ञुजरां अभ्रमाणीत्वार्मिरामात्मामां ॥
ओकारवांकुरां सिद्धसचिवालान्ति मजे मार्गबन्धुम् ॥ (हीकारवांकुरां शुद्ध)
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ २ ॥
नित्यम् चिदानन्दरूपं निहृताशोभोकेशेतैवप्रसिद्धापम् ॥
कार्तिकवांनात्रां कृतिवासं भजे दिशस्मार्गबन्धुम् ॥
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ ३ ॥
कन्दपर्दर्पफलीयां कार्ककत्र महेशं महावोकेशं शाम्भो ॥
कुन्दाभादनं सुरां कोशसौरप्रकाशं भजे मार्गबन्धुम् ॥
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ ४ ॥
मन्दार्जुनेचरायं मन्दारणेचरायं महागौर्धरः ॥
सिन्दुर्गोरचरायं सिन्दुराराजानिवीरां भजे मार्गबन्धुम् ॥ (सिन्दुर्गोरचरायं)
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ ५ ॥
अप्प्वदीक्षितं गीतं स्तोत्रां पठेदस्तु भक्तव ध्रापां ॥
तयांपर्यञ्जितं विधितं मार्गमन्धेेणदेवचाशुतोपणो महेशः ॥
(अप्प्वदीक्षितं पब्जितं पवजस्तवमार्गवन्दौदारम् ॥
नित्यं पठेदस्तु भक्तव तत्त्व मुक्तं: कर्मवेच साध्यवर्धम् ॥)
The sequence of the verses has variation; also with verse number 6.

Introduction and translation by N. Balasubramanian

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

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

Shri DikShita is the author of not less than 104 works and had enjoyed the patronage of King Chinna Bomma of Vellore. He was offered “kanakAbhiSheka” by this king in 1582AD. He was patronised by Chinna Thimma and Venkatapati also. He lived upto the ripe age of 73 years and spent his last days in Chidambaram. Some of his most famous works are Shivarka maNidIpikA, NyAya rakShAmaNI, siddhAnta lesha sa.ngraha, parimala, chAturmata sArasa.ngraha, yAdavabhyudaya vyAkhyA, varadarAjastava and
kuvalayAnanda. His stotras are simple, popular and effective, for example, mArgabandhu stotram, durgAchandrakalA stuti, ApitakuchambA stava, hariharabheda stuti.

Margabandhu stotram: This small hymn is about Lord Marga sahaya or Margabandhu of Virinchipuram, near Vellore, NA Dt., the family deity of DikShita. It is very effective when recited before and during journey to ward off accidents and ensure success. (The above life sketch is taken from the book Shrimad Appayya DikShita, published by Shrimad Appayya DikShitendrar Grantha Prakasana Samiti, Hyderabad.)

The following abbreviations are used in the commentary: (1) VS: Shri Vishnu Sahasranama stotram with Shri Shankara’s bashyam. (2) SS: Shiva Sahasranama stotram (called Vedasaraahasram) from Padmapuranam with the commentary (published by Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Library) of HH Shri Paramasivendra Saraswati - 57th pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam and the guru of the well known saint composer Shri Sadasiva Brahmandra Saraswati. (3) BG: Bhagavat Gita (4) BH: Shrimad Bhagavatam (5) KU: Kathopanishad. (6) MU: mundakopanishad (7)SVU: Svetasvatara upanishad. (8)TU: Taittiriyopanishad. (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.

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

मागःवन्धुःस्तोत्रम्

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 बृहतमत्वात् 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 Taittiriyopanishad (Anu IV)
says that the brahman is beyond the reach of our mind and words यतो वाचो निर्भरते अग्राप्य मनसा सह। 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 (सगुण उपासना) saguna (sa = with; guna = attributes; upAsaNa = worship). The names and forms conceal the esoteric truths mentioned in the upanishads. Thus they, like a map, give us some idea of something which is very vast and cannot be grasped by our senses. The Lord graciously accepts the worship offered to Him in any form one may choose. Krishna says यो यो या तनुं भक्त: श्रद्धयांचित्तंमिच्छति।
तत्स्य तस्याचाँ श्रद्धो तामेव विद्याम्यूहम्॥ 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.
स तथा श्रद्धया युक्तः तस्याराधनमीहते।
लभते च ततः कामान् मपैव विहितान्हितान्॥ BG.7-22.
He adds that the devotee engages himself with faith in the worship (as said above) and from that he obtains his desires which are really conferred by Me alone. These statements of the Lord lend validity and sanctity to the worship of God with name and form who indeed is without any name, form or attributes. Later on the Lord says तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्।
द्वारामि बुद्धिस्ययोगं येन मामुपयान्ति ते। BG.10-10.
He assures that to such devotees who worship Him with love He will give the clear wisdom by which they will reach Him. In this manner the saguna upAsana acts as a stepping stone to nirguna upAsana and through that the realisation of God.

Prahlada, the gem among the devotees, mentions nine kinds of devotion (BH .7-5-23). The first two amongst these (viz.) श्रवणम् listening to the Lord’s names and stories which bring out His glories and कीर्तनम् 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 adddition 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.

शाम्भो महादेव देव शिव शाम्भो महादेव देवेश ।
शाम्भो महादेव देव ॥

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

These verses say “Anyone - may be impure or pure or whatever may be his condition - if just thinks of th lotus -eyed Lord is certainly pure inside and out. Sins commited 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 शम्भु: । शं सुखं भावयतीित शम्भु: (SS-74: VS-38) He blesses his devotees with happiness and prosperity शं = happiness, prosperity. All being go through the repeated cycle of birth and death. They experience varities 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.

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

MAHADEVA महादेवः - महादेवां देवश्च महादेवः।
महत्वं च सकलपूजयता विभुचने प्रमाणातो महादेवः।
He is worshipped by everyone. Also He is great because He pervades every thing.(SS22) सर्वोऽ भावैः परिपतज्ज्ञ
आत्मज्ञानयोगेष्ठिः महति महीयते तस्मादुच्यते महादेवः। (VS492)
He is called Mahadeva because of His superior knowledge and His greatness as the greatest of the yogis. Shivarahasya says that the sound “Mahadeva Maha-deva” is a divine medicine for those bitten by the serpent called samsara महादेव महादेव महादेवे देवं महादेवं दिव्यायमनुष्ठानो दिव्यायमनुष्ठानम्।

DEVA देवः - स्वामिपर्या देवश्च, नरे देव इति।
अकुंचितस्वामित्वं च शिवस्य देवाः The word deva indicates lordship. His lordship is unrestricted दिव्यायमनुष्ठानेः। (SA93) He is effulgent. Krishna says ”I am the splendour of those who possess splendour,” तेजस्विना भासा तेजस्विना भासा तेजस्विना भासा तेजस्विना भासा।

Accordingly, तमेव भासा तेजस्विना भासा तेजस्विना भासा। (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.

तेजोमूत्तराः तेजोमूत्तराः तेजोमूत्तराः तेजोमूत्तराः तेजोमूत्तराः।
And अमृततेजाः अमृततेजाः अमृततेजाः अमृततेजाः अमृततेजाः।

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 दिव्यायमनुष्ठानो दिव्यायमनुष्ठानो दिव्यायमनुष्ठानो दिव्यायमनुष्ठानो दिव्यायमनुष्ठानो।

BG(10-36). 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 यः यः यः यः यः यः यः यः यः यः।

One who is omniscient and knower of all दीपमुक्तिः

He bears the shine of knowledge दीपमुक्तिः

VS(275) He is of the form of shining knowledge दीपमुक्तिः।

VS(719) Prakāśātma प्रकाशात्मा यस्य स: प्रकाशात्मा यस्य स: प्रकाशात्मा।

His form is effulgent knowledge.
Shiva is the personification of auspiciousness. He is completely free from sorrows that characterise all created beings including plants, animals, birds, humans and devas like Indra and even Brahma the creator. He is the embodiment of supreme bliss. (SS18) Also 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

SIVA

He removes the sins of those who just think of His name. DakShayani says this to her father DakSha 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:

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 .

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 देवेशः - प्राध्यान्यन्देवानामीशः: देवेशः He is the foremost among the gods like Indra, Agni etc.. VS(492) सुरेशः - सुराणां देवानामीशः: सुरेशः 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.

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:

Now let us go to the stotram proper. It consists of five verses and a sixth one - called फलौति: 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. भालावनात्मकरीं भालनेऽवारिधा दमपर्णाकुकिर्तेम्।
   शूलाहताराितकूटं, शुद्रमण्डसुचूडं भजे मागबुद्ध।
   शाम्भो...

भाल: - forehead; bhAla is preferred to (wrongly used) phAla; अवनॆ: - descended or come down; किरीटं: crown: indicates that Lord Shiva wears a crown on the head किरीटम: किरीटवास्तस्तीति किरीटी (SS782). The crown implies that Shiva wears other ornaments also हिरण्य: (SS273) and हिरण्याकुर्णि: (SS387) सुवणयाकुकिर्तेम: सुवणयाकुकिर्तेम: सुवणयाकुकिर्तेम: VS(737). One who is golden-hued and हेमाः: हेमाः वपुरसेित हेमाः: VS(738) One with body like gold are also His names. Shri Rudram salutes Him saying नमो हिरण्याकुर्णिवे।

पादावनात्मकरीं is another reading found in some books पाद: = 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 पूज्य: पूज्य: सर्ववन्य: इत्यर्थः
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.

- तुलोपमानिनान्म न विधते इति अनुतुलः: He has none equal to Him. VS(355) अनुतुलः: -
- अविधामान उत्तमो यस्मात् स: अनुतुलः: There is none greater than Him. VS (80). Further there is none superior to Him. VS(626) अनीशः: - न विधते इति अनीशः: All other devas including Brahma the creator are limited by time and are subject to sorrows 

- देवानां प्रथानमूल आच्छ वा प्रथम: 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 प्रथमो दैव्यः: Such is His glory भालनेश्वरिष्या दृष्टिपल्लरुकीर्ति - नेत्राः = eye: अर्थिः = fire: दुः = burnt: इषुः = arrow: कीटः = a worm, insect पश्चांः is the name Manmatha, the god of love, because he has five arrows: they are अर्बन्तं, अशोकं, चूतं, नवमल्हिकं and नीलोलम ्(lotus, ashoka, mango, jasmine and blue lotus). The five arrows are also said to be संभोगः , उन्मादनः, शोषणः, तापनः and स्तम्भनः: They are fascination, intoxication or extravagance of love, emaciation, suffering pain and benumbing or stupifying respectively. Kalidasa vividly narrates the story connected with Shiva destroying the god of love in his masterpiece Kumarasambhavam. Manmatha shot his arrow संभोगः 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 कामारि: - कामस्य मन्नथखभ अरि: कामारि: SA(25)

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

Shiva’s third eye is situated in His forehead. So Shiva is known as भालनेश्वरः: SS(159) and ललाटाक्षः: 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 विरूपकः: विरूपाणि विरूद्धस्वरुपाणि लोकविरूद्धत्वविशिष्टानि अक्षीयं यथा सः: विरूपकः: SS(129). He has an abnormal third eye. The third eye situated in a high position (viz) forehead and stands for supreme knowledge उच्चत्वस्थानवर्तीतलोचनशालित्वकीर्तनेन विश्वेततःशातिवित्वौ सूचितम् 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 स्मरः स्मरः Smara is another name of Manmatha. His arrows have not failed anywher in the world of gods, demons and men. So he became conceited. Smara became (स्मरत्यात्मा) an object of memory. The moral of the story, says the poem, is that an insult to the great will produce serious consequences विहिंेत्रः - विहिंेत्रं ठ्ठां यथा यथा सः: विहिंेत्र: (SS131) is also one of Shiva’s names. Bhartrihari in his Vairagya Satakam refers to this incident thus: लीलादर्श-विन्दुलकाम श्रवः (i.e.) who effortlessly burnt up the flippant god of love as a moth. A big fire instantly reduces a moth into ashes.

शूलः = the Trident of Shiva; आहत = struck; अराति: = enemy; कृत्तं = mass, heap: Shiva has destroyed His enemies with His Trident. But Shiva has no enemies समोहन्तं सवृभूतेषु न में द्वेयोपरिः सिन न भिजः: (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.” ईशानमीष्ठरं देवं श्रवणासिं शद्ग्रामः Krishna confirms this and says “Your enemies have already been killed by Me. Be a mere instrument.” BG(11-33) महाभारते विनिप्रवृत्तमात्र भव सृवसाचिन्

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 काम एष कोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्रः । महाशानो महापापमा
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 and the intentions of those who trouble them. VS(294). Also कामचाणा: भोग धरणं नाशयतीित भोगचाणा: SS(126). Lord Shiva is the आदि गुरु: the earliest or the first guru. He teaches by demonstration. He shows He has destroyed His desires and wants His devotee to do likewise. He is only too willing to help him provided he makes his heart His temple. In view of this Bhartruhari describes a sadhu whose heart is pure as having devotion to Shiva with trident भक्ति: शूलिनि. Unfortunately a devotee has to contend with one more “enemy” - more pernicious than the enemies mentioned in the preceding para. It is attachment. Desire is a longing to possess something which we do not have and we feel that thing can give us satis faction or pleasure or security. We try to get that thing and when someone or something thwarts the desire the desire turns into anger. Thus desire precedes anger or anger is the result of frustrated desire. Once the object of desire is got and is in our possession we tend to hold on to it. This inclination to bind ourselves to objects or people around us is known as attachment. We look to those objects or people to give us pleasure or security. Vedanta warns us to avoid getting attached to things or people; because firstly the objects of attachment are perishable as anything in the world is. If we develop strong attachment to something, then parting with it can be a very painful experience and we may sink under the load of the resultant grief. That was the case with Dasaratha who was excessively attached to his son Rama. He could not bear the pangs of separation from Rama who had to leave for the forest for fourteen years. He died in agony.

Secondly it is wrong to look to such objects or people for security as they are perishable and so are themselves insecure. Hence they cannot confer security on us. We will be left in the lurch. Attachment is called (ईषणा) 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.

Prahla\(\text{da}\) gives a description of these attachments (BH .7-6) in his advice to his friends. Talking about the attachment to money he says को न्तरे तृण्णा विसृःजेत प्राणेयोऽधिपि य ईविसितः। यं कीणात्मसुभिः प्रेतेः तस्तकरः सेवको वणिकः। (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 न विषेन तत्परोऽधिष्ठात्मरः मनुष्यः। 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 स्वेतपाशिमम् चिनिधि रटं पाण्डुः कृणिषु। 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 त्यत्तथा पुत्रांश्र दारांश्र राघवं शरणं गतः। Renouncing my wives and children I have surrendered to Raghava and again परित्यक्ता मया राघवा भवनांि च धनांि च लक्षचं धनांि च I have transferred 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 प्रणवता धृतांि करोऽमः। BH(11-2-55). Thus firmly stationed in the devotee’s heart He destroys the evil tendencies therein ह्यतनत्तथो भवनांि च धनांि च धनांि च BH(1-2-17)
and 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.

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 Prasnottara ratnamalika को हि जगद्दरुर कथ: शम्भु: ज्ञान कु:शिवादे:। Who is the universal teacher? Shambu. From where can one get wisdom? From Shiva only. So we have the saying ज्ञानमिच्छेत महेश्वरात्। One should pray to Maheswara for wisdom.”

भजे: worship: मागङ्कृं = 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 ornament.

2. अचे विराजदूरजः अच्छिन्दधारारामापत्तमाक्षः।
   ओकाकारवाटीकुर्जः सिद्धसंवेदितादि भजे मार्गवन्धुः।
   शम्भो ...
We fear snakes because we identify them with death. And everyone is afraid of death कस्माच्छिदन? मरणात, says Sankaracharya in his Prasottara ratnamalika. The symbolism is used in our scriptures frequently. For example: यद्यतं कालाहिनाःसत्मानं कोन्यक्ष्णातुमयींशः 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 यः कश्चनेशो बलिन्यान्त्तकोरगारत्म अप्रणवेगेदाधिबावलो भृशम।। भीतः प्रपत्रं परिपालि याहायांमृत्युः प्राणावत्यरणणमस्तीमहि। BH(8.2.33) He says “Whosoever be the almighty God, who protects one, who has surrendered to Him being very much afraid of the powerful snake in the form of Death - that is very fast and is after him - and from fear of whom Death himself runs hither and thither, let us seek Him as our refuge.”

Kala means the Supreme principle which devours everything and Yama the god of death who is also known by the names Antaka and Mrutyu. So at level one He is Yama मृत्युः सर्वंहराहम् Krishna says “I am Death who seizes all life.” BG(10.34) He is Antaka अन्तकः - अन्तः करोति मृत्यानामिति अन्तकः VS(520). He causes the end of all life. At the higher level He is the kala or Supreme principle which destroys everything including Yama, the god of death at the time of dissolution. Lord Kapila gives a description of Kala to His mother Devahuti. BH(3.29. 36-45). He says it is none other than Vishnu who draws everything into Himself कालं - कल्याति सर्वारिति कालं - कालं कल्यात्माहम् - गीता १०.३० इति भगवद्वरिचनात VS(418) and SS(33). The Lord is not limited by time or space or by any material अन्तताम्मा। देशात: कालंतो वस्तुतःपरिष्क्ष्यत्वात: अन्तताम्मा VS(518). He is not subject to destruction or anything that causes destruction. अमृत्युः। मृत्युर्विनाशः तत्देवत्वापृवेयय न विचाते इति अमृत्युः 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.
So the snakes, representing kala or death, cannot harm Him but He wears them implying He uses Death for His services. Yama himself says मृत्युर्घंस्योपयोपचनम् 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. कालहत्ता। कालस्य मृत्योहहत्ता SS(83) and कालकाल:।। काल:।। यमः।। तत्त्वापि कालः।।. 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 मृत्युंजयः।। मृत्युः।। मरणं स्वभक्तानां मृत्युं जयति।। स्वप्नासनादिना परहिरति इति मृत्युंजयः SS(123), SA(71). He removes or avoids the death of His devotees. The sage Markandeya confidently sings चन्द्रशेखरमात्रेये मम कि करिष्ठति वै यमः।। “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 .. तदोच्चानपादः पुनः ददर्शानितिमागतम्।। मृत्युःमृद्धिः पदेद दच्चा आकरोहाहुःतू मृदहः।। 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 जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युः ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च 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) यः प्राप्य मानुषं लोकं मुिारमपावृतम ्। गृहेषु खगवमाढुतं ्।

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 addditon 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. र्कर्मणोऽनुपूर्वि हि फलं भुजति जन्तुः। शुभेन कर्मणा भूति:खं स्यात्पातकेन तु॥

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.

विभिन्नस्यानुभावानात् निन्दकत्वम् च सेवनात्। अनिम्रहाचेन्द्रियाणां नरः पतनमुच्छिति॥
(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. अयस्तन्त्रहलोकस्य याबतीर्यांत्यनादयः | क्रमशः समनुक्रम्य पुनर्रत्राब्रजेष्ठुचिः | 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.” न साम्प्रायः प्रतिभाति वाल्त्र प्रमाणंतरं वित्तमोहिन मूढमः || अर्थ ठोको नारिक पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वंशामापयते मे। 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 संचितं कर्मं sanchitam karma. In addition we continue to do karma in this life also and add to the stock of sanchitam karma thus necessi tating more and more births. Out of this vast stock a chunk begins to yield the results. This chunk is called प्ररा रब्धम् 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 आयूः कर्म च वित्तः च विद्या निधनमेव च। परेतैंतिनि विकिरण्ते जायमानस्य देहिनः। 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) फलानुमेयः प्रारम्भा: संस्कारा: प्राप्तना इव

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?किं संसारे सारं? वहुःसोपि विचिन्त्यामानिन्दिमेव (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 न संसारोत्यंत्रं चरितमनुपय्यामि कुशालं (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 गर्भवाससमं दु:ख्यं न भूत्वं न भविष्यति 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. व्याधीव तिक्ष्ठति जरा परितर्जयति, रोगाश्च शत्रवं इव प्रहरिति.


Dehman 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. पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाख्तम BG(7.15) Later on He again says this world is impermanent and joyless अनित्यमसुखं त्रीकमिमं BG(9.33). We clearly see that everything in this world is impermanent. This includes our bodies, our relations, friends and possessions. The question then is how can one feel happy when thrown into such a situation? Time is constantly gnawing at our life quietly. Bhartruhari says life is oozing away like water leaking from a pot with a crack आयुः निन्द्यमाननिवोंत्यः प्रलोकिमं BG(9.22). 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 ये हि संपर्शेंज्ञा भोगः दुःख्योनय एव ते। अनित्यवन्नवः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः। BG(9.22) Such sensory pleasures are trivial and cannot be termed as pleasures in the true sense.

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

3 - What is the process called death?
This is mentioned briefly in clinical fashion in the Brihadaranyopanishad. It says that as the end approaches the individual’s breathing becomes hard and he starts gasping. His pranas, along with the sense organs, withdraw from their respective foci and gather around jivatma - the individual soul. As he (jiva) departs, the pranas and the sense organs follow him. He gets a body as in a dream and enters another body. The impressions of his karma and the knowledge about brahman that he had acquired in that birth also follow him. He gets a body suitable to his karma in this world or some other world एवमेवात्मानमन्नतकातेः सर्वे प्राणः अनन्तिमायतामिति यत्रैतृत्तत्त्त्वोच्छल्लिशी भवति। (4.3.38) तदमुक्तकामन्त्रोऽनूऽकमिति प्राणमुक्तकामन्त्रोऽनूऽकमिति तदमुक्तकामन्त्रोऽनूऽकमिति सत्वोऽनूऽकमिति सविन्द्रोऽनूऽकमिति तं वियाकर्मणिः समन्वारभेते पूर्वः। (4.4.2) अयमात्मेः
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शरीरं निहत्यावियां गमयित्वान्यन्यवतरं कल्याणतरं रूपं कृतर्ते(4.4.4) Krishna says that the knowledge he had acquired in the earlier birth carries him forward in his next birth and he progresses in the spiritual path. He does not have to start ab initio. पूर्वभाषेन तेनेव हियते द्यवसोऽपि स: BG(6.44) Some puranas describe it in detail making it sound a bit scary. Sage Kapila gives a description in His talk to His mother. This is on the same lines as stated above in the upanishad. He says that the individual soul living in the gross body has, in addition, a subtle body called Linga Shariram or SukShma Sariram which is invisible. It is made up of seventeen components (viz.) the five sense organs of perception (called gnanendriyas), the five sense organs of action (called karmendriyas), the five pranas, the mind and the intellect. It requires the gross physical body for functioning. It does not perish when the gross body perishes in the process called death which takes place at the end of prarabdham karma. The Jiva just migrates to another body (called birth) with the Linga Shariram according to the nature of past karmas and generates new karmas which add on to the sanchitam karma and becomes the seed for future births.

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

Luckily there is a way to escape death and the birth that follows. Krishna says “on reaching Me there is no rebirth.” मामुपेत्यः तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न वियते 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.

अभ्रगंगातरंगभिरामोत्तमां - अभ्र = sky; गंगा = the river Ganges. So the word अभ्रगंगा means the heavenly river Ganges; तरंग = wave; अभिराम = pleasing, charming; उत्तम = best; The word उत्तमां 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 गंगाधरः - धनस्तिति धरः। गंगाधरः धरः। इति गंगाधरः (SS146) and SA(27). Also धूर्तेः - धू: गंगा जटासु यथे स: धूर्तेः। नम: कपद्रेण इति श्रुति: (SS286)जटार्जः - जटसु कपद्मानिमकासु गंगाप्रयुक्तमां यथे स: (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.

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 Viswamitro 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.

Hence the saying काहहों तु मरणामुक्ति: (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 कष्टान सेवेत मरिणामाणः: BH(1.19.6) It asks “which dying man will not resort to such a holy river?”

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

The ग in the name Ganga stands for Gayatri which represents the eternal, supreme Brahman. In Gangashtakam, she is addressed as the very embodiment of Brahman,
The stream of right knowledge is the pure original Ganga. Again 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 ज्ञानप्रवाहो विमलादि गंगा The stream of right knowledge is the pure original Ganga. Again later he says विभुवनजननी व्यापिनी ज्ञानगंगा(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.

2 - She is Gayatri गायत्री LS(260)

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

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

So Ganga is Brahman, is Gayatri and is Uma or Parvati. She proclaims the Ardhanari (the inseparable combination of the male and female principles) concept (अर्धनारी स्वरूपः) 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 स्रोतसामर्गम जाह्वरी 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. गंगा गंगेति यो ब्रजात्योजनानां शशांशश।
मुच्यते सर्वपापेः विष्णुदलोकं स गच्छति। The avadhuta saint Sadasiva Brahman has composed a song in praise of Ganga (jaya tungatarange gange जय तुंगतरंगे गंगे ) wherein he salutes Ganga as one who purifies the worlds and cuts asunder the manifold bonds of mankind (कमलभवाण्डकमण्डपविचे, बहुविधवन्यच्छेदतुच्छित्रिचे। लवचित्रं = 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.

त्वुद्देसं गंगे पताति यदि कायस्तनुभुता तदा मात: शातकत्वं पद्धारोप्यपल्लितमुष्टिः

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 कामप्रदः | भक्तेभ्: कामान प्रकर्षण ददातीति कामप्रदः: 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) उमापति: पशुपति: राजानमिदमविवीत। प्रीतस्तेऽह नरश्रेष्ठ करिष्यामि तव प्रियम्।

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 Brahan 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.”

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.

The word ‘Aum’ - ओऽकार = the holy syllable OM; (variation हि bIjamantra; वाटी = garden, park; कूःरा = deer; Shiva is likened to a deer in the garden of the holy syllable - meaning He is represented by OM also known as pranava. ओऽकारूपः - ओऽकार: रूप स्वरूपं यस्य सः तथा (SS138) Shri Krishna says in His Gita (10-25) “I am OM among the words.” गिरामस्येकक्षयसम् Manu, the famous law giver, says that the letter OM by itself represents the ultimate reality - the Brahma एकाक्षरं परं ब्रह्म 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 अकारं चायुक्तकारं च मकारं च प्रजापतिः: II वेदत्रयायात्िहि दुर्भोम्भुवः स्वरूपिति च A similar reference is seen in Chandogypohanishad (2.23.3) तान्त्यष्ठपत्तेऽयोधिताय ओऽकारं समप्रायवत्वात्य श्री 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.

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. In view of this Kalidasa compares Manu - the first of kings in the solar dynasty to OM in a grand simile.

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. 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) and they represent the two aspects of God (viz.) 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 अमाऽतुथऽवहायः य एवं वेद, य एवं वेद(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 favourite 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 प्रतिकम. Meditating on the fourth or the silent part as “I the Self” is known as Ahamgrahadhyanam अहंग्रहध्यानम. One who meditates like this is called a muni मननातु मुनिमुच्यते. 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 ओऽ्र्च्छरूपः। ओऽ्र्च्छरूप्य स्वरूप्य वर्ण सः तथा। ओऽ्र्च्छरूपतः च तदभिधानवादा, तत्मतीक्रवादा। तदभिधानवत्वो ओऽ्र्च्छरूपत्वं प्रसिद्धम्। ओऽ्र्च्छरूपवत्ततः तु यः पुनरेत् चिमात्रेणेत्याविचारे प्रश्नोपनिषददातैः प्रसिद्धम्। परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यदोऽर्च्छराय इति श्रुतः: VS(138).

The question, now is, if He is Himself omkara or the pranava, 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 द्वारा सुपुर्णा सत्युक्ता सत्यो समानेदृश्यन्तः परिष्कर्वताते। तयोरत्या: पिपलर्व वाहवक्ष्चन्त्यो अभिवचाकशीति। 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 ओऽकारपञ्चज्रकी एका वाहवक्षे वनमाली a female parrot in the cage called OM in the Devi Navaratnamala. The saint composer Thiagaraja of Tiruvaiyaru addresses Rama as ओऽकारमञ्जरकी a parrot in the cage called OM in his famous song beginning Jagadanandakara. Similarly the saint composer SadasivaBrahmam talks of Krishna as प्रणवपञ्चज्रकथितांकाली one who is hidden inside the lotus of pranava (in his song kridathid vanamali कीड्दि ति वनामाली).

सिद्धसंसेविताः - सिद्ध: = 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 शुद्धः for pure; संसेवित = worshipped; अंग्रि = foot He is worshipped by
great sages and other semidivine beings endowed with supernatural powers महार्षिवनिदः: - महार्षिभ: वामदेवानां विभिन्नकालिन्यानात् वानिदः। उपलक्षणमेतद्व निदोमस्तोये जन-पुज्या तप आदीनामः (SS536) सद्ध: सम्पूजितः। सद्धि: सात्तिनेतरिन्यानां विभिन्नकालिन्यानात् पूजितः सम्पूजितः।।

The word siddha सिद्ध means accomplished or perfected. Linking with the earlier word, the muni meditates on the pranava. अकारं बिन्दुसंयुक्तं नित्यं ध्यायितं योगिनः: 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. यद्द्राध्यायनसमाधियोगिनः धियायनपुष्यं सह तत्त्वात्मनः: BH(2.4.21)

Such a realised sage abides in his Self. So it is said तद्विष्णुः: परम दद् सदा पश्यन्ति सूर्यः 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 बुद्धिमन्त्रं वरिष्ठं = 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 यद्र यद्र रघुनाथ निर्माणन तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकान्तिः बायवारिषिपिरित्वेक्षण मारुति नमः राक्षसान्तकम् 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

आत्मा त्वें गिरिजा मति: सहचरा: प्राणा: तरीर गृहं पूजा ते विष्णुयोगोगच्या निद्रा समाधिस्थिति।
सद्धः पदयोः: प्रदक्षिणविधि: स्तोत्राणिः सद्धः गिरः:
यद्यक्तम् करोमि तत्त्वदक्तेऽशम्भो तवाराधनम्।।

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:

देहं च नधर्मवस्थितमुत्खितं वा
   सिद्धो न पशयति यतोध्यक्षमत्स्वरूपम्।
   देववादपेतमुदेववशा पेतं
   वासो यथा परिकृत्त मदिरामदान्यः। 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) यो दकामो निश्चित आत्मकामो न तत्स्य प्राणा
   उत्कामन्ति ब्रह्म सत्मू महायोगित। This was what is said to have happened in Bhishma’s case.
   आत्मन्यात्मानमावेश्य सोदन्तथास उपारमतः BH(1.9.43)

भजे = I worship चार्गबन्युम (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

३. नित्यम् चिदानन्दरूपं निहृताशेषलोकेशवं प्रपितापम्।
      कार्त्तिकरागेन्द्रचायं कृतिवासं भजे दिव्यसमार्गबन्युम।
      श्राम्भो

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 नित्यम् चिदानन्दरूपं - नित्य = eternal, ever lasting, imperishable चिदत्र = pure intelligence आनन्द =supreme bliss रूपं = form.

These words are the repetition of the famous upanishadic mantra सत्यम् ज्ञानमन्त्रं व्रह्म TU(2.1.2) that says Brahman is satyam, jnanam and anantam. This is one of Shiva’s names सचिदानन्दरूपं:। सत्यदेन कालनियायाच्य वस्चम्पुलवते। चिदम्बरे ष्कारान्त्तरग्रस्तवस्य

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नित्य - Nityam implies eternal existence - that is - it never ceases to be. It is not limited by time. Terms like the past, present and future are not applicable with reference to it. Lalita is known as Nitya नित्या कालऽयेऽबा अिवनाशी वा अरेऽयमा इित 

सत्यमः and सत्यम् are two other names that have the same meaning as Nityam शाृतः शातः and साम् are two other names that have the same meaning as Nityam शाृतः।

सत्यमः कालज्वाबाच्य सत्यम् SS(432) अवितःतरु-पत्वात् परमात्मा सत्यः “सत्यं ज्ञानमन्तः बह्नये” इति श्रुतेः। VS(106) In the invocatory verse to Shri Bhagavatam Shri Vyasa salutes the Lord saying सत्यं परं धीमिह (ie.) we meditate on the supreme Reality that is not affected by the three time periods - the past, present and the future. BH(1.1.1)। He also winds up with the same words सत्यं परं धीमिह 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 सत्यज्ञानानन्दरूपा। सत्यं ज्ञानं आनन्दं रूपं यस्या। “सत्यं ज्ञानमन्तः बह्नये” विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्मवतीित श्रुतेः। LS(790).

Bhartrihari, in the invocatory verse to his Satakatrayam salutes the Lord saying दिकायच्यानवच्छेद्भा अनन्तचिमात्रमूर्त्ये। He says that God is of the form of eternal consciousness unlimited by spatial direction, time etc दिशा: प्राच्यदिक्षेद्भा: काला भूतभिवन्धतर्मानन्दरूपा। आदिश्चासंस्ख्यतीतानि वस्तूः तथा च दिकायच्याआद्यो येषां तानि दिकायच्यानि। तैरवच्छेद्भा परिवर्ता। विमुच्यान्तित्वादीत्दे कैदातो वस्तूतथापरिचित्तृत्वं:। अत एव अनन्तापरिमिता। दिच्छिन्यपरिच्छेद्भुत्त्वदक्षत्वादक्षत्वाद दृश्यंदेख्यामने। त्यः। चित्तु - chit means pure intelligence and indicates brahman. So the Lord gets the following names चिदात्मा। चित्तु - चैतन्यं आत्मस्वरूपं यस्य स: चिदात्मा SS(456). Also चिन्मय:। चिन्मयश्चिदुप:। SS(829). Devi is described as चिन्मयी।
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: अभिः: स्वराट। स्वेनेव राजते यस्तम। स्वतः सिद्धानमित्यर्थः। 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.

Ananda: Brahmam is of the form of pure bliss आनन्दो ब्रह्मोत्ति व्यजनात्. The Taittiriyopanishad has a chapter exclusively devoted to the ananda aspect of brahman. This chapter is hence known as Brahmamandavalli or Anandavalli. This chapter is unique in that it talks of several grades of ananda experienced by different beings. It starts with the maximum happiness that is possible to be experienced by a human being as the unit of measure. The next higher grade of ananda is hundred times this unit. Thus several grades are mentioned (including that of Indra and Brihaspathi) and the top most one mentioned is that of Brahma the creator. But a wise person who has studied the shastras and got discrimination knows that even Brahma’s happiness is fragile and limited. The Brihadaranyopanishad says that any ananda experienced by any being is just a droplet derived from the bliss that is Brahma एतस्यैवानन्दस्य अन्यानि भूतानि मात्रामुपजीवन्ति। Incidentally this is one of the names of Shri Lalita. (LS365) स्वात्मानन्दस्यीभूत ब्रह्मायानन्दसंततिः। The commentator Bhaskararaya explains this name referring to these quotations only. He says स्वस्या आत्महृदयो व आनन्दस्य लक्षिभूता इन्द्रायानन्दस्यविद्यालोचनया सागरमाण्तवेनालब्धा अपि देवायान्दसागरस्य लवः। संपयमाना: ब्रह्मादीनां सृष्टित्वादिर्दग्मविदिशिवदानां ब्रह्मविणुश्चुद्रायान्दसंततानां संततयं संपयस्मृहा यस्य: सा। “एतस्यैवानन्दस्यात्मायान्न्याभूतानि मात्रामुपजीवन्ति” ति श्रृः। तैत्तिरीये मानुषायानन्दसागरायुगराष्ट्रिक्षेत्रवर्यान्तमामान्यानानान्दानां मथे परिवदेशानां प्रजपत्यायानन्तमामापि परिच्छेदत्वेन पुरुषार्थायावेयानापरिच्छेदः। निर्णास्य सिद्धंतवच पुरुषार्थायान्न्यापथामदि तत्त्वायन्त्यायक प्रमाणविशेषाय तत्त्वाय निर्धर्मकात्मकाशककत्वेव युक्तिताशयः। 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

नन्दी। परमानन्दविश्राहो नन्दी। “विज्ञानमानन्दे ब्रह्मोति श्रुति: । SS(189) and VS(618)अनन्द। सुमुखस्यपुत्रात् आनन्दी VS(560)। Also ब्रह्मानन्द: । ब्रह्मरूप आनन्दे ब्रह्मानन्द: । “आनन्दे ब्रह्मा मां ज्ञातव न विभेदित कुतथने” ति पावे।“आनन्दे ब्रह्मानो विद्वानि” ति श्रुति: । SS(560) and सदानन्दः ॥ कालजयाबाधितिनिरन्तिशयसुमुखस्यरूपः सदानन्दः । “विज्ञानमानन्दे ब्रह्मो सेरि” ति श्रुति: । SS(673)

निहृताशोपकेवचविप्रतापम् - निहृत = eliminated अशेष = without remainder लोकेशः = lord of the universe - here it refers to Indra वैरिन् = enemy प्रतापः =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). विज्ञातब्रजे न जानीते भस्मानामुपस्थितम्(Uttara kanda - 16-24). Shiva wanted to teach him a lesson and curb his pride. So He playfully pressed His toe. The pressure applied by Him crushed Ravana under the mountain.

ततो राम महादेवो देवानां प्रवरो हर: ।
पादामुने तं शैलं पीडयामास तीरथुः ॥

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 अलितात्वसा शैलेन्द्रके शैलस्यमुपासमस्य भुजवनं तेजसः शिवरपस्य - अशुभिव लघुस्वामिधिगतसारं भुजवनं बलत्क्रमासेपेक्षी त्वदिवसानेत्र विक्रमयतः । अख्य्यापात्तेः प्रवलस्वल्पसंततातुज्ञाशिरसि प्रतिष्ठा त्वायासीहुजुमपपित्तो मुख्यति खल इति। ॥ “नमः सहमानाय निव्याधिन” इति श्रुति: ।
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 दैवासुर सम्यद्भागयोः: 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 exatly. 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 चापः- अगः- इः lord and in this context means best: चापः = bow: This refers to Shiva using Meru - the famed mountain of gold - as a bow in His fight against the three asuras. The three demons named KamalakShan, DarukakShan and Vidyumnali were very powerful because of the boons they obtained. They lived in three cities built by Maya the divine architect. They troubled the devas to no end. The devas entreated Shiva to save them from these asuras. When Shiva started to fight them the devas wanted to take part in the fight. The earth became the chariot, the sun and the moon became the wheels, Meru the bow, the snake Seshan the bow string, Vishnu the quiver and so on. But Shiva felt that all these elaborate paraphernalia was superfluous for the task. So He discarded them and destroyed the three cities just with a smile. When the asuras repented Shiva forgave them and took them into His service. This deed of Shiva is often referred to in hymns

श्रीमणि कस्य रथो सम्वातुर्गाठे चन्द्राक-विम्बावर्त
कोरूड़- कणकाचं विरवस्थात्वाणो विधि: सारथि: ।
तृणीरो जलधिः-हा: श्रृणिचयो मोर्तिः भूजास्मिप:।
तरसिति मेह हुदयं सुवेन रमता शामे परव्याली ॥

So He gets the following names पुराणं: च सुसरात्वर्गाणं दारणात्-पुराणं: । त्रिपुरा
“स तितिः: पुरो भिलेवे” ति श्रृणिः: । SS(45) and VS(335). One who shattered the cities of the enemies of the gods पुर्णात्विलमः। पुर्णाय विचन्तीति पुर्णात्विलमः।
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 परोक्षवादः ऋषयः: "The words of the sages are indirect in their import." BH(11-21-35). The reason is that these great truths are meant only for those who have faith in the words of the shastras and the teachers who expound them, are sincere and are ready to put in the needed effort to learn them. They cannot be laid bare to those who are not qualified to receive them. In fact such people run the risk of misunderstanding the teachings and being mislead by them. That is why Krishna, after concluding the teaching of Gita, warns Arjuna that the valuable lessons taught to him should not be imparted to one who is not devoted etc., as said above इदं तेनात्मपकाय नाभकाय कदाचन। न चाशुपूर्ववेवाच्यं न च मां योद्धसूयति। BG(18-67). Great truths, like precious diamonds are not meant to be hawked in the streets like cheap vegetables.

maargabandhu.pdf
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 इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यमिश्रीयते and in the next verse क्षेत्राङ्ग च मां विद्ध सर्वं क्षेत्रेषु भारत। BG(13-1 and 2). The consciousness present in the body is known as atma or jiva or jivatma. But it is not a part or product of the body that is liable to decay and destruction. Such modifications of the body do not affect the jivatma. Even on death it is the subtle body which travels to take another body (as stated earlier). The atma being all pervading does not travel anywhere. It is like a pot being made. We may call the space confined in the pot as pot-space (to distinguish it from the total space though really there is no such division) but it was not created when the pot was made. When the pot is broken, it is pot that is destroyed and not the “pot space.” It has nowhere to go. The confines of the pot having gone it just merges with the total space that is out side the pot also. Thus the atma has nothing to do with the body. This is said in Tattvabodha clearly as आत्मा कः?What is the Self? स्थूल-सूक्ष्म-कारण-शरीरारु व्यतिरिक्तः पञ्चकोशातीतः सनं अवस्थात्रयसाक्षी सचिदानन्दसर्वरूपः सनं यस्तिष्ठिति स आत्म। Self is other than the gross, subtle and causal bodies. It is beyond the five sheaths and the witness to the three states of consciousness. It is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss.

Thus there is no birth or modifications or death for the jivatma as is the case with the body. Krishna says this: न जातेः मृत्युं वा कम्पोऽयं भूवः भविता वा न भूवः ॥ अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽर्थः पुराणो न हत्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे। 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 कर्मःफलत्म (ie.) joy or sorrow. That is, it is not a कर्ता or भोक्ता (i.e.) doer or enjoyer or in other words atma is said to be akarta and abhokta (अकर्ता and अभोक्ता ). One who has shed his identity with the body and clearly established his oneness with the Self is, therefore, not bound by the results of actions. The mistaken identification with the body and imagining he or she is an individual who has to act etc., is called ego or ahamkara and is the cause of all the problems.

प्रकृते: कृममाणानि गुणे: कर्माणि सवंशा: ॥ अहंकारविमृत्त्मा कर्ताहरिमिति मन्यते। 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 नित्यं चिदानन्दरूपम as said in the first line of this verse. Krishna says this to his friend Uddhava: देहस्थोपि न देहस्यो विद्वान्यथायोऽचौर्य: ॥ अदेहस्थोपिदेहस्य: कुमा। स्वप्नंतरवथा। 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 यः साक्षात् कुरुते प्रज्वलयं स्वात्मान-मेवाद्रयं तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तिये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तिये 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 साक्षात् कुरुते So also in the case of self-knowledge one does not experience or “become” the atma; but स्वात्मानं अद्वयमेव साक्षात्कुरुते owns up his true nature as atma. Shiva’s names relating to Tripura are त्रिपुरान्तकः । त्रीणि पुराणि त्रिपुराणि त्रिपुराणां अन्तकः त्रिपुरान्तकः । त्रीणि पुराणि शरीराणि „पुरसंहे शरीरेऽदिसिद्धायनात्पुरसंहे हरि:” इति विषुपुराणवचनात। तानि च स्थूल-सूक्ष्म-कारणात्मकानि- स्थूलं भौतिकमेव, सूक्ष्मं विज्ञानारूपमिति। एषाः त्रिपुराणां अन्तकः त्रिपुरान्तकः; शिवज्ञानस्य च विदेशकैवल्येन्तुत्तवं मन्नोपिनिषदिः श्रुतम्। इदं च श्रुतिप्रसिद्धां नाम् „च्यम्बकाय त्रिपुरान्तकाय त्रिकार्किकालय कालानुसूचिय नम:” इति SA(38)पुरारातिः । पुराणां शरीराणां स्थूल-सूक्ष्म-कारणात्मकानि अराति: शत्रुरिति पुराराति: । तदरातितब च शिवज्ञानस्य विदेशकैवल्येन्तुत्तवात; तच मन्नोपिनिषदिः प्रसिद्धम् SA(68).

Krishna tells Uddhava that He is Himself Shiva who destroyed the three cities त्रिपुरश्रोधनुष्टातमः 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. एवं मध्ये इत्यावृति नामाभ्यान्तरवर्ष यस्य नाभ्यामवस्थितः।

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 सुमेरुशङ्कमवस्था।

The sun and the moon are said to go round the mountain. Our poets mention this fact often. Kalidasa refers to the sun going round Meru in his Raghuvamsa (7-24). He says that Aja and Indumati going round the sacred fire during their wedding was like the day and the night revolving round Meru.

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

कृतिवासं: कृतिः = bark of a tree, skin, hide वासः = 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. व्याग्रचार्मम्: । व्याग्रचार्म अम्बरं यस्य सः; “तथा पिनाकहस्त: कृतिवासा” इति श्रुतिः । SS(108). गजचार्मम्: । गजासुरस्य चर्म कृतित्वर्थे वासोत्पत्तिम्: । श्रुतिरहुः। SS(158). कृतिवासः: । कृति दारुकावनस्त्रे मुनिकुट्टकस्यभिचारोप्योप्याभ्यासस्य चर्म वासो यस्य स: तथा। अथवा काश्यां भिवभक्तक्ष्यास्यागतस्त्रे गजासुरस्य कृतिमित्र विविधिता। “प्राणेश्वर: कृतिवास: पिनाकी” श्रुतिः । SS(909) कृतिवासः । कृति: दारुकावनस्त्रेमुनिकुट्टकस्यभिचारोप्योप्याभ्यासस्य चर्म वासः: वस्त्रेय यस्य स: तथा। यथोक्तः स्कान्त्ये “ततो व्यायो महानकुर्ष्याणागाम नवायेुः: ।
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. 

SS(67). 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.

SS(566). 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 अतिवर्णाञ्जी 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.

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 तत्रथवदु भगवान व्यासपुरो यह-चः गामतमानोदनपेशः। अत्यःत्तिझो निजलाभतुः वृद्धवालोरवधूतवेशः। BH(1-19-25).

Secondly, the bark of the tree and the skins that Shiva wears represent the cessation of birth. Birth and rebirth have been discussed earlier. We saw earlier while discussing the implications of Tripura that one's mistaken identity with the body is the cause of all problems starting with karma resulting in fruits of karma and then birth(s) to “enjoy” the results of karma. The dawn of wisdom will dispel the ignorance about the reality and
reveal one’s true status. This will end the cycle of birth and death. Lord’s grace can give us the wisdom. So Shiva is called Hara हर:। स्व विषय ज्ञानेनावियादेहरणाद्रः। 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 लुक्छ्वा सदुभमिदं बहुसम्भवान्ते मानुष्यमर्थमनित्यमपीव धीर:। तूर्ण यतेत न पतेदनुमृत्य याविः। श्रेयसाय विषय: खलु सर्वत: स्यात। 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 तरव: कि न जीवन्ति भक्षा: किन श्रस्तवूः। न खादन्ति न मेह्न्ति किं ग्राममशवोऽपरे॥ श्रविबुध्याहोऽष्ट्रथः: संस्तुः पुरुष: पशु:। न यत्कर्णपधोऽपि जातु नाम गदाध्रजः। 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) अपि चेतुसुदराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाकः। साधुमुः स मन्तोः सम्यस्यवसितो हि सः।। क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा श्रद्धाचार्य्ति निगच्छति। कौन्तेय प्रेतिजानीहि न में भक्तः प्रणाशयति। 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 भेषजम्: संसारोगस्योषणं भेषजम् , VS(578) भवेहति: - भव: संसार:, तत्व हेतुपूर्वं संसारच्छता। “भवस्य हेतुवे जगतां पत्य” इति श्रुति: । SS(272) तारक: । तारयति सम्मारादिति तारकः ।। SS(76) भजे दिव्यस्मार्गवन्युः। दिव्य = divine सन्मार्गवन्युः = a companion to one who treads the right path भजे = 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. सन्मार्गः: संश्चास्या मर्गं द्वम सन्मार्गः। means the virtuous path: the path trodden by the saints and noble people and that is in keeping with the shastric injunctions महाजनो भेन गतः स पत्यः: । 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 संसारस्मिन्योभ्यथं दर्शवेयः। चेनेव यातः: यत्योरस्य पारं तमेव मार्गं तव निर्दिष्टामि।

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 यः शाखविभिन्मन्तुज्ज्वर्तते कामकार्त्। न न सिद्धिमवामोति न सुरख न पराँ गतिम।। तस्माच्छाव्रण प्रमाणं ते काय्यकार्य्यवासितो तत्रत्वा शाखविभावानां कर्म कर्तुमिहाहिः। 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। तानं द्विष्टः कृरान्नसाराः नराधमान। क्षिपायाजस्मदुधभानासुरीण्येव योऽनि यु। BG(16.19) Sankaracharya explains “inferior births” as cruel beings such as tigers, lions and the like अजलं सन्तरं अशुभानं अधुभक्षं कार्यण: आसुरीण्येव कृरकम्प्रायासु व्याप्तरस्तिहादितु योऽनि यु क्षिपाय। Kalidasa prays in the invocatory
verse in Malavikagnimitra सन्मार्गविढ़कन्या व्यपनवतु स वस्तामसीं वृत्तिमीशः। He prays to lord to remove the ignorance born out of lethargy to enable us to perceive the right path or the virtuous path सत्। Sat also means that which really exists or existence and means brahman अवित्थिः परे ब्रह्म सत्। "सदेव सोम्मेदम्" (छा.उ. ६११४१) इति श्रुते। VS(478)। Thus Margabandhu is brahman only सन्मार्गविढ़कन्या मार्गविषयः। 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 शुरस्य धार निम्भिता दुरत्यय दुःपथस्तत्त्वयें वदन्ति। 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 stuck 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 बन्धन्ति मनः। क्षेत्रहिन्दनात इति। But lord Margabandhu is a unique bandhu who causes all bondage to drop off (as He is Sat) सतस्तिकः निसस्तिकः। says Shri Sankara in Bhajagovindam। So every one prays to Him for getting free from bondage व्यम्बकं ज्ञामदेः सुगम्यं पुष्टिवर्धनम्। उर्वरकमिव बन्धनान्यृत्योमुक्षियैः मामृतात। 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 मार्गः। मुमुक्षवस्तः मार्गयन्ति इति मार्गः। परमान्नदों चेन प्रायत्वः स मार्गः इति वा। 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 यं विदित्वा अमृतिन्याय कल्पनः योगिनो मुमुक्षवः स एव पत्थः। गार्गः। “नान्यं। पत्थः विचिदेऽज्ञायन” इति श्रुते। VS(397)। The poet says दिव्य सन्मार्गविषयः। Why say दिव्य divya? The scriptures talk of the paths the jiva can take after the fall of the physical body। They are the dark path (क्रृष्णः ।) and the bright path (शुक्रः ।)। 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 pituloka पितुः पोः। 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 (चित्रावशिष्ठः) purity of the mind. So, now one with a purified mind can add meditation or upAsana (उपासना ) on the Lord in any chosen form, that is saguna Iswara, like Krishna, Rama, Shiva etc.. This becomes a powerful combination and and gives better results(i.e.) they go to devaloka through the bright path .These are said to be superior worlds as the pleasures enjoyed are superior. एतेषु यश्यते भ्राजमानेषु यथाकारं चाहुन्तयो ब्राह्मदाययो ||

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We saw earlier that even the worlds of gods are finite and so one who attains such a place has to come down and be reborn after his merits are exhausted. So it is not considered wise to keep on doing karmas. Those who take to a combination of karma and upasana can practise austerities and develop mental maturity and detachment.

They go to Brahmaloka through the bright path तपःश्रद्धये खुप्पसन्त्यर्षणे खान्ता विद्वासो भेश्वयर्या चरन्तः ||

Note the use of the word विद्वासः, 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 (जीवमुक्तः). 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 (क्रममुक्ति). 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.
used at the end of a word means destroying, removing or curing. So दप्त्र 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 सा त्तमम मन्मथमन्मथः: । जगन्मोहनत्व्य कामरत्यापि मनस्युदूत: काम: सात्तमत्यापि मोहक इत्याः: । 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 सुदेहः। शोभनो देहो या। सुदेहः। शुभा ।- मधुगि मृषत।- मेतदहो मधुरं मधुरं मधुरम्। SS(249). Also शुभा। शोभन ैरय। शुभा ।- शुभा। 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 कं दप्त्रकोटिशतगुणसुरिरिद्वा कृतं। शिशवं वदनं मधुरम्। BV(10-32-2), that is 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 कामकोटिसम, मनसिजशतकोटिमछुल्वेष, मीनाङ्कोटिमोहन, कोटिमदनसुन्दर, जगन्मोहन, 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.”

मधुरं मधुरं वपुरस्य किमो-मधुरं मधुरं वदनं मधुरम्।
मधुगिः मृषिः मेतदहो मधुरं मधुरं मधुरम्।

Shri Vedanta Desika should have had the same sentiment as Shri DikShita and addresses the
lord at Tirupathy as कन्दर्पंधर | सुन्दर | दिव्यमूलं “the One whose beautiful form destroys the pride of Manmatha” (in Venkatesa suprabatam). The use of the word कन्दर्पः 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 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

ये हि संस्यरंजा भोगा हुःक्योनय एव ते ।

आयनतवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रस्ते युधः । 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: प्रतिपदलितिभावः, प्रत्यवेष्टनार्थिताभावः. तैव नूतनाभावः, प्रतिमुद्धराधिकाभावः. 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 सुचाः - सुतरं दर्शनीयाः; निरतिश्यापरमानन्दरूपत्वात। “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्मण्टि श्रुतः: । SS(818). and राम्यः - सुस्वरूपात्मयः: । “यो हि भूमा तत्स्वरूपमिति श्रुतः: । SS(924).

Devi Lalita is known as स्वर्णसुन्दरी - सुवर्णि च तानि अज्ञानि च अवच्चादयः; तेषच्यूतानन्तिरिक्तभावत्वस्तु यथासामुद्रिक-लक्ष्यं तद्वेदं सर्वर्णसुन्दरी। अथवा सर्ववच्चादेषु शरीरं मुद्रिकस्तथा अत्यन्तेऽपेक्षाश्चिबिषम्बिद्यते सून्दरमर्दर्थ्वदुविनाभवावच्चाविश्वश्चिब्धतात् तथ। (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: शान्तः - विषयसुखेश्यस्तथा शान्तः; “निक्षल्लिनकिर्य शान्तम्” (श्रे. उ. ५१५९) इति श्रुतेः: । VS(582) and SS(9)विरागः - विररो रागो यत्स्य विरागः: । “कथमनेत्रेत्यो निधिनोति”िति श्रुतिः: । SS(89).
Thus Manmatha was no match to Shiva. He totally lost himself in the presence of Shiva. This is said to be the destruction of Manmatha. Shiva’s anger was a flash and disappeared soon after as is wont with noble souls

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

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

The name नीलकृठः for Shiva appears in several places in Shri Rudram. Also: श्रीकृठः - श्री: कालकूट-जनिता शोभा। तद्हानकण्ठो यस्य स:। तथा कालकूट-जनित-मातिन्यमापि शोभेव परमेश्वरस्य। “विकारोपिकृण्यभो मुनि-भयभज-व्यसनिन” इति न्यायाय। अथवा श्री: विषमेव, “श्रीविषयया शोभा मम्मत्यसर्वशालिशिशु वाणीलालवेशिशु विषे बिन्देवपीति नानातरलमाला। तद्हानकण्ठो यस्येति। 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

अकाण्डब्रह्माण्डक्षर्विन्द्रेवासुरःकपी- विषेयस्याःसीतृ यथिन्यपन विषे संहङ्कुटवः।
स कल्माष: कण्ठेन नुकृते न श्रीयामहो
विकारोपिकृण्यभो मुनि-भयभज-व्यसनिनः।। १४।
The following names of Shiva are based on this incident. कालकूटविषादी - हालाहल-विषपानकतां कालकूटविषादी। सकान्दे सनतुमारसंहितायां काशिकावनमाहात्म्ये विष्णुविदिना समुद्रमथनं, तदानी वायुकिकुषात्काथ्याविश्वेषयादनं, तेन ग्यानः; तदनु तैरिणिणिरहत्तेव विश्रेत प्रति प्रार्थना, तदनु तिर्वर्तीतिनाम्ना हालात्म्यं विष्णावत्तेजस्तमथमपर्यातं, तदनु-“गृहीतम् भुक्तकालकूटविषादी कालकूटित्वतीक्षाक्षात् कालकूटिवषपानकविश्रेति। तदानुवृत्तिः सन्मूर्तिः समुद्रमथनं, तदानु तासां निशाचार्यस्तमथनं। श्रीकालकूटानभित्तिभवनम् कालकूटायण्यकोशविदिति। 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

निर्माध्यमानादुष्प्रभुद्धु विशं महोत्वं हालाहलाहादं।
सम्ब्रान्तमीतोन्मक्कालिकच्छायाः तिमिद्धिम्बराहतिमिद्धिमिद्धिमित्रक्षात्।
तत्मूले कुंडिनिनामि दिशिष्युपर्यये विसर्फुटस्तयद्वर्दस्यमयं।
भीताः प्रजा दुर्गुरूः संधिरा अरक्षयमर्गाः शरणं सदाशिवम्।

“Seeing that effervescent, unbearable and irresistible poison possessing tremendous force and spreading in all quarters, as well as above and below, and finding no protection (anywhere), living beings along with their leaders got much frightened and flew for protection to Lord Sadasiva (the ever-auspicious one).” They prayed to Shiva to protect them. They said

देव देव महादेव भूतात्मनं भूतभावन।
त्राहि न: शरणापश्चात्लोकवद्धनाति विषात्।

“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 तदु वीश्य व्यस्नं तासां कुप्या भूषपिडित:। सर्वभूतसुहुतं देव इदमाह सतीं प्रियाम। Shiva who was the embodiment of mercy was very much affected by their plight and told His consort Sati this

अहो वत भवास्येतत: प्रजानं पदयं वैशासम्।
श्रीरोदमथनोद्धरतात कालकूटादुपरिखितम्।

“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.”

आसां प्राणपिपीलाम् विग्रेयमभयं हि मे। एतावान हि
प्रभोत्यं यदु दीनपरिपालनम्।
“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.

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

Refering to this episode of Shiva swallowing the poison and the wearing Ganga on His head, the author Shri DikShita says that the Lord performed these acts not because the poison was tasty or Ganga has purifying power: but only to save the world and because of extreme compassion. And these two acts could not have been performed by anyone else.
is also one of Lalita's name व्योमकेरी - व्योमैव केश प्रस्टव्य विराढः। व्योमकेरश्य शिवस्य खी वा। व्योमावत्य सब्योमकम। अत्यार्थ कप्रत्यः। तत्येषी ततोडः व्यापिका वा 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 an unique sacredness attached to it that is not attached to any other river or even to the rain water that falls from the sky. In fact the rain water is considered to be ordinary. It stays for a short time and is lost: but Ganga’s flow is perennial and is symbolic of His grace. Ganga came from the heaven. Her waters came in a big torrent. Because the water fell from a great height the stream got scattered into fine spray and came down as an immense cloud. Shiva spread out His hair to cover the sky so that the cloud of spray got in and was trapped. Ganga lost her way and could not come out. This was done to curb her pride. She was released again when Bagiratha prayed to Shiva. The use of the adjective महा in the word महायोमकेशम meaning great or big is significant महायोम meaning “the big or the great sky” is said to distinguish it from the “small sky” that is mentioned in the Upanishads. अथ चदिद मरिमन्न ब्रह्मपुरे दहरं पुण्डरीकं वेदं दहरेणस्मित्र्णतराकाशा-स्तरिस्मणं यदनं-स्तदन्वेश्वर्यं तदव विजिज्ञासितयमिति। Chandogyopanishad.(8-1-1). What is mentioned here is known as Dahara Vidya. Ordinarily people may may find it to visualise brahman that is described to be without a form, name or any other attributes. It may appear to be something like a vacUm. It is the intention of Dahara Vidya to provide them something gross on which they can meditate upon. Daharam means small (दहरं अल्पं) and ब्रह्मपुरः 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.

कृंदमदन्तम् - कृंदम = jasmine flower आभः = likeness, resemblance दंतः = 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
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 कुन्ददन (tooth.) This description of Devi’s teeth is in Shyamala Dandakam. कुन्ददण्डिनिकिंशिकाधदस्थतावलीनिर्मालायोधकक्षोधस्तरस्मेंद्रशोणाधरे! (Shridhara’s commentary). Shri Sadasiva Braharendra bows to Him saying (in Navaratnamala- 12) तुलनं निरस्तसाम्यातिशयेन राधसा स्वाधामनि ब्रह्मणि रंते तोऽिनर भ्रातसा राधसा ऐंधत्य नािणाय, ते राधसा ऐंधत्य उपस्मेंद्रशोणाधरे।

सुरेंद्र - सुर: = god or deity. Shiva is the lord of gods like Indra, Brahma. He could ward off Yama also. Thus all the gods could not assess and understand His greatness and glory. That is why they were naive enough to plan and send Manmmatha 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 तुलनं निरस्तसाम्यातिशयेन राधसा स्वाधामनि ब्रह्मणि रंते तोऽिनर भ्रातसा राधसा ऐंधत्य नािणाय, ते राधसा ऐंधत्य उपस्मेंद्रशोणाधरे। (Shridhara’s commentary). Shri Sadasiva Braharendra bows to Him saying (in Navaratnamala- 12) तुलनं निरस्तसाम्यातिशयेन राधसा स्वाधामनि ब्रह्मणि रंते तोऽिनर भ्रातसा राधसा ऐंधत्य नािणाय, ते राधसा ऐंधत्य उपस्मेंद्रशोणाधरे। 

कोटिरूपकाशम - कोटि = 10 millions प्रकाश 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 सूर्यकोटिप्रतीकाशः - सूर्यकोटीन प्रकाश इव प्रकाशो वस्य सः तथा। इच्छे च अभूगोपमा। अधिकदीपिमानित्यत्रः। “नमो दीक्षाय दीपिरुपिण” इति श्रुतिः। I SS(502) सुदीपः - सर्वप्रकाशाक्षेत्र प्रमाणलये विना सर्वदा दीप इति सुदीपः। “दीपाय दीपिरुपिण” इति श्रुतिः। I SS(633) महापुष्कितः - महती चुतिवीणान्यन्तरा च अस्वेति महापुष्कितः; “स्वंन्योतिः” (ब्र.-उ.-५३११९)। “ज्योतिष्यात ज्योतिः” (ब्र.-उ.-४१६१६) इत्यादि श्रुते। I VS (176) मरीचि: - तेजसर्वालकाय मरीचिः, “तेजसर्वालकायारमम”, (गीता १०-३६) इति भगवद्घि चारते। VS(189) ज्योतिः - स्वत एव चोतयत इति ज्योतिः; “हरणपरो ज्योतिरत्मा”, (ना.-उ.-१२११) इति मन्त्रवालतः 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 भजे = I worship मारमना = 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

५. मन्दारस्तुतिः दरिं मन्दारस्तुतिः दरिं महानुप्रेरितसः ।
सिन्धुप्र्यतेर्यं सिन्धुप्रयतेर्यं भजे मारमना ।
शम्भो ..

This is the fifth and the last verse in the stotram to be followed by the फलशुरुति: , 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 समृण aspect or aspect with name and form as Shiva. In His निम्न 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
मन्दारभूतेरूढार- मन्दार: = 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 भूितः: = grandeur, dignity, riches उदारम्: = generous, liberal. So the word मन्दारभूतेरूढार means that Lord Shiva is more generous in granting one’s wishes than the Mandara tree. So He is known as कामप्रद: - भक्तेभ्य: कामानु प्रकर्षणं ददातीति कामप्रद: । 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 धानामुिमुचे कुचेलमुनीये ददाते च विचेणाताम । 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 वरदः: - अभिमतात वरान ददातीति वरदः । VS(330). He grants boons desired from Him. Also वरदः: भक्तानामिग्निमत्व: “रदेदेवमीह” मिति श्रृःति: । SS(107). And उदारः: - भक्ताभिषिद्ध: सवौलकृष्ट उदारः । “आपातमकृष्टतम” मिति श्रृःति: । SS(315). Saint Sadasiva Brahmendra calls Him as नतमन्दार - “the wishing tree of heaven” in his song भजे गोपालम्- Bhaja re Gopalam. Again he calls Him as सेवकजनमन्दिरमन्दार - “the Mandara tree planted in the residential quarters of His devotees” in the song मानस संचर रे - Manasa sanchara re. We find the mantra नमो वृक्षेयो हरिकेथ्यो: 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 पारिजात: - पारमस्थात्तीति पारि, समुद्र: , तत्माजातः पारिजात: देववृक्षः, तद्वृक्षादेवोदपि पारिजातः, भक्तजनेद्य इत्यतः । SS(264) and वृक्षाणाः पति: - वृक्ष्या अथवत्यादयः, तेषां पति: स्वामि । “वृक्षाणां पति नमो इति श्रृःति: । 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 अवरा: . 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 अन्तवच्छ फलं तेषां तद्वत्तमथमेखसां । BH(7-23). Sankaracharya, in his commentary, points out that एवं समाने अथ आयासे जोगः न प्रतिपदन्ते अन्तवच्छायां, अहो खलु कष्ठतरं वर्तते, इत्यनुनकोशं दर्शयति भगवान्।

“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 नित्यः 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. स्मरतः पादकमल-मात्मानमपि यथं । BH(10-80-11). This idea is repeated by Shri Kulasekara in his Mukundamala (31).सद्ये स्वस्त्य पदश्च दातरि सुरे नारायणेन तिथिति । 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 प्रियो हि ज्ञानीमूर्त्यमां स च मम प्रियः। BG(7-17). So He naturally takes care of them. Has not He said तेषां नित्याभिवुधकानां योगकणे वहाम्यहं, ? “To them who are ever devout, I secure them gain and safety.” BG(9-22). Here योगः and क्रेमें “gain and safety” is explained by Shri Sankara as योगः अप्राप्त्याप्पणं, क्रेमें तद्वश्च तद्वश्च अपपयामि अहम्। (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 केवलं एव भगवच्छारणं, ते, अत भगवान् एव तेषां योगक्षेमं बहत्तिति । . 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 यथच्छोपपश्नेन वर्त्मानो गृहायांमि। BH(10-80-7).

मन्दरः = मन्दरः = is the name of a mythical mountain अगः = mountain. इन्द्रः =

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the first or the best (of any class of objects). So the word मन्दरागेन्द्र means Mandara, the best among the mountains. शार र = 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. मन्दरो मेहमन्दर: सुपार्द्व: कुमुद इति अयुत्योजन विस्तारोत्त्राहा मेरोधतुर्दिशिरसमवायम गिरय उपक्रमः। 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 सर्वगत: स्थापु: अचतः - सर्वगतत्वात। स्थापु: इव स्थित: इत्येतत। इत्तत्वात अचतः: अर्थ आत्मा। Because He is all pervading, He is stable like a pillar. Because He is stable He is firm.BG(2-24). The proof is that the mighty Ravana tried to lift His abode Kailasa and was crushed. But His unlimited strength is not demoniac but it is mellowed with kindness: so when Ravana realised his mistake and pleaded, He pardoned him and let him go. So He is known as महाबलः - बलिनामिप बलवत्वात महाबलः। He is stronger than those who are said to possess great strength. VS(172)

महाभलपर: महद्वरुं शारीरं सामस्थ्रं सैन्यः वा चेषो ते महाबलः, इन्द्रोपेन्द्रबुःत: तेषां पर: एष: परस्थर:। तमीश्रामान परम महेश्वरः मिति श्रुति:। SS(604). In fact He is known as अंत्र: - अंदिवस्वयमः, परेचरः इति यावत। ते शान्तमचतुः मिति श्रुति:। यथा श्रीशैलसर्वर दश्व पुनर्जनम न विचाते इति, काश्यां तु मरणानुभूतिः: समर्णदुर्रुत्वाचलमिति: च समर्णात्। "वनानि शाम्युरिरवक्ष्य मायुः" रिति स्कान्दे। "सवा धृषु रुद्र" इति श्रुति:। SS(856).

महीधर:- महान गिरिरुपण धरतीति महीधर:- "वनानि विष्णुरिरिद्धश" (विष्णु-२-१२-३८) इति परश्रोकः। VS(369). He held up Mandara during the churning of the ocean and lifted the Govardana mountain as Krishna. So He gets the name महादिव्रः - महान्तमद्रि गिरि मन्दरो गोवर्द्दन च अमृतमथने गोरक्षणे च धृतवानिति महादिव्रः। VS(180). The fact that He is mightier than the mightiest and makes Compassion makes Him the ideal protector. Shri Vedanta Desika has expressed this idea beautifully in his works अभीति हैतीन्तुत्वेर्वनीयं नाथ त्वदन्य न विभावायामि। भर्य कुःत: स्यात त्थि सानुक्षेप रक्षा कुःत: स्यात त्थि नातजोऽषे। (Ashtabhuhashtakam - 5) त्थि रक्षति रहस्यः किमन्यः: त्थि चारक्षति रहस्यः किमन्यः। इति निधित्त धी: श्रामानि नित्यः नृत्ते वेगवती ततावश्य त्याम्। (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

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.

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 मृत्युमुक्ता: 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

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 viscous 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 every one’s heart the ahamkara loses itself. It is only a chimera that thrives as long as one’s ignorance of his true nature persists. The Lord’s grace confers the wisdom that destroys the ignorance. Consequently the ego gets stripped of all its coverings and ceases to be the ego. Rid of the ego the Self shines in its pristine glory. The individual finds his original nature and thus he goes beyond birth and death. He becomes immortal.

महागौरी— महा = great गौरी = is the name of Parvati महागौरी means great or glorious Gauri अदूर = close by, not far away दूर = distant or far off. Gauri or Parvati is the consort of Shiva and is said to take up half of His body. In view of this it is said here that She is not far off from Him. So Shiva is known as अधनारी— नाया अर्धाधनारी, अधनारीमिलित ईश्वर: अधनारीरेत:। नायांशोद्धर्मीश्वरार्धाधिमित्यति:। तदुक्तमाचर्य:— “प्रवात्राधस्रभाभशोभामद्भरत्म वर्षवन्निष्ठर्महेस्वयाममद्धर्मः। गुणस्यूतमेकं वधु: पौवमन्त्यः स्मरमि स्मरापतिसम्पत्तिहेतु:।” इति। “पुरूषं कृष्णपिपलमि” श्रुति:। II SS(437) देवहर्षकान्तं:— देवस्य अर्ध वामभागः। कान्तात्मकः यस्य स: देवार्द्धकान्त:। भविष्योत्तरपुराणे:— “अर्धं प्रवात्राघरं हरिनीलं नागाजीनावरमतो वर्षवल्लभर्मः। कान्तास्तुकार्धार्मच दीर्घजातालुमर्थं दिवं महः। तत्तमत्य तवाध्येश्वहम्।” इति। “दर्दनोलोहोत” इति श्रुति:। II SS(568).

Krishna has said पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः। I BG(9-17). “I am thy 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 वागथावतसंपृवहि वागथातिपत्तये। जगति: पित्रो वन्दे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरि।

“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 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. Krishna says that He is both: the intelligent cause and the material cause called prakriti. Thus maya is powerful and very hard to overcome. Krishna says that His maya is very powerful and very hard to overcome. thus deluding power of Iswara is also said to be prakriti. It is a part of Prakriti. His mother is Gauri, Parvati, LakShmi, Maheswara, etc. 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 उमामहेश्वरस्तोत्रम् (Umamaheswara stotram) as follows: नमः शिवाय नवयोगान्यायः परस्परार्थित्वपुरुषरूपायाम्. 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 may be it has no influence on Him. So He is known as निधाति: - निधाया अतीत: - निधाया वा अतीत: - सल्तान: गुण-सामान्यरूप-प्रकृतितविविचित्रत्वेन इत्यत:। "अतमस्कर्ममाययमिति शृःति। II SS(41), and निर्माय: - निर्माय:। यथापि "मायाः तु प्रकृतिं विद्यतामायिन्यः तु महेश्वरः" इति मायासम्बन्धः: ...
बार्तुराहरी स्थापित करते अंतवरितम्। तत्परते मायायाः कि सवाते वा किसाकरभावात् कि सपरेयं। अतएव अर्थरतरः अगिराकायस्मी।… इति श्रुतिः। आत्मायिम पृययते तत्सात् पराः अिवाकायहीनः।

एको रागिषु राजाः प्रियतामादैहिर्हारिः हरो नीरागेषु जनो विमुक्तः शनास्तो न यस्मात् परः।

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 नित्यं पर्यंचरत् प्रीत्या भवानवे हं भवं प्रभुम्। BH(2-23-1). The following names are thus derived from the facts stated above:

पावतीपितः - पवतः इस्मवान्, तस्य पुत्री पावती। तस्य: पति:। तदर्थं सूतसिद्धिताः।

श्रवणनामूतं भवानीव भवं भुम्। BH(2-23-1). The following names are thus derived from the facts stated above: पावतीपितः - पवतः इस्मवान्, तस्य पुत्री पावती। तस्य: पति:। तदर्थं सूतसिद्धिताः।

Devi Gauri is called महा or गौरी 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. Rudra, Shiva’s complexion is very red and it outshines the colour of the red lead. Shri Rudram says असौ यज्ञाश्रो अरुण उत ब्रह्म: सुमालः:।
This says that Rudra is तांश्रः = copper coloured, अरुण: = rosy, ब्रह्मः = golden yellow, सुमालः = highly auspicious and beneficient. Only a few can understand and worship the avyakta or impersonal God. A larger number can contemplate Rudra as residing on Kailasa. For the benefit of the others, who form the majority of mankind, He stands in the form of the sun. The sandhya vandana mantra says सूर्य आत्मा जगतः तस्युपासः = 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 असौ यज्ञाश्रो इत्यनेन आदिदिश्वुपासतिरः।
The votary should praise and worship the sun by means of the rik असौ यज्ञाश्रो in the Rudram. So तांश्रः - अत्यन्त्व, रक्तस्याश्रः। “नमस्तान्नाय चे” तित्र श्रुतिः। II 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 द्यांश्रः - द्याशीलो द्यांश्रः। अनेन परस्मेष्वरस्य या शान्तता तनू सर्वहादश्रुणिनि सा प्रदर्शितात। “या ने रुद्र शिवा तनू” रितिः श्रुतिः। SS(155) सिन्धुराजातिरूपिः सिन्धु: = the sea, ocean राजन: = a king or chief. It is used to qualify something very great or glorious. For example Kalidasa describes the Himalaya as नगाधिराजः in his Kumarasambhava. अंति = a prefix used to mean very, too, exceedingly etc धीरः = strong minded, wise, resolute. सिन्धुराजः 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 धीरः as one who is endowed with a mind that does not waver
even when assailed by deleterious forces that are capable of perverting it. (Kumarasambhava-1-59). Gita and the upanishads use the word to mean a person of wisdom or discrimination.

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: नों मोहः स्मृतिरुः त्वतसादान्याज्ञुयः। BG(18-73). Again कं हि न व्यतयन्त्येते पूर्वं पुरुषं। समः: सखुवं धीराः सोऽमृतः याय करोति।। 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 धीरः: and also as स्थितप्रज्ञः, स्थितधीः: etc.. The upanishads use the word धीरः: to indicate a man of wisdom and realisation. This example is from Kathopanishad एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्म एकं रूपं बहुधा य: करोति।। तमात्मस्य चेदनुस्पन्नित्य धीरा: तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम्।। 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 धीरः: - धिरं ईरयः, धिरं प्रेरयः। ईर = to urge, elevate, bring to life. Thus the word धीरः: means the Lord who is behind the intellect and gives life to it. We worship Him through the Gayatri mantra as धिर्मूः यो न: प्रचोदयात्। Shiva is known as गायत्रिवद्भः: गायत्र्य वहृमो गायत्रिवद्भः। गायत्रिप्रतिपाद इत्यर्थः। 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: मुनि: प्रस्थागम्भीरो दुर्बिन्द्राहो दुरस्तपः। अनन्तपारो ह्यक्षोभ्य: स्तितिमितोद इवार्णिवः।। समुद्रकामो हीनो वा नारायणपरो मुनि:। नोत्सर्पन्त न शुष्केत सरिद्धिरिव सागरः।। 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 गम्भीर: deep or profound. Describing the qualities of Rama, Narada tells the sage Valmiki that Rama was profound like the ocean समुद्र इव: गम्भीरः (Balakanda-1-17). The sage will appear to be simple, but his depth of knowledge and maturity cannot be measured: तुद्विर्गायः. 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 अनन्तः: and अपारः: अपार: means shoreless. A jnani is limitless and all pervading as he has found his true nature स्वरूपम्. He is unshakeable; this refers to his emotional strength. On this point Krishna says
tुःतेषचन्द्रविख्रमेन: सुखंतरस्यङ्कुल:।
वीरराजभक्तज्ञोऽश्वतहिंचुततः॥ 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 प्रसदेद: गिरिशोपः:। 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 पूर्णतम्. 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 समृद्धकामः: or has none, he treats both situations like नारायणपरः:

gifts from God. Ramayana gives a fine example in Rama for this. He was to be made the king but this was not to be. He was asked to go to the forest instead. But this sudden change of fortune did not upset Him in the least. Valmiki says: न वनं गन्तुकामस्य त्यजन्तशः कसुधाराम्
सर्वस्येकातिगतयेव लक्ष्यते चित्तविक्रिया॥ (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 सर्वदाभिगत: सदिः समुद्र इव सिन्युभिः I 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 संपदः नैव संपदाः विपदः विपदः नैव विपदः विपदः विपदः संपदः संपदः हरेः II 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! भवतो दर्शनेन यत्यादपुनर्भवदशैनम् II 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. भजे मागबंधुम् \(\rightarrow\) भजे = I worship मागबंधुम् = 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 यस्मिन्तमहात्वतिशयोक्तिरत्नकितिव न्यूतोत्तमात्तमुपमा समुपृच्यति सवा सृष्टिभावकलनापि च न प्रति च तदहरण्यासि भवतः कथमाभिस्पृष्टम् II 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 साल प्रासुः: 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. अप्ययङ्गवेन्द्र गीतं स्तोत्रराजं पठेदास्तु भक्ता प्रयाणे
तस्यार्थसिद्धि विघटे मार्गमध्ये अभयम आशुतोषो महेशः
श्यम्भो ...

अप्ययः the name of the author यज्ञन = performer of sacrifices गीतं = sung स्तोत्रराजं great poem पठेदाः = reads यः = whoever भक्त्या = with devotion प्रयाणे = during a journey तस्य = for him. अर्थं = wish, desire सिद्धि: = fulfilment, complete attainment विघटे = arranges. मध्यः = middle or central part मार्गमध्ये on the way अभयं = freedom from fear, security आशुः = fast, quick तोषः = satisfaction, pleasure, delight. आशुतोषः means one who is easily pleased महेशः = name of Shiva. This verse gives the benefit or the fruit of reciting the poem and is known as फलश्रुतिः. फल 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 महेशः: 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: सुलभः - पत्रपुष्पफलादिभिः-भक्तिमात्रसमतिः: सुखेन लभ्यत इति सुलभः.
“पञ्जेषु पुण्येषु तोपेषु अक्षितभेषु सदेव सत्सु। भक्तेशु रुपं पुरुषं पुराणं मुक्तं कर्षं न किर्यं प्रयत्नः।” इति महाभाषे। 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 पत्रं पुण्यं फलं तोषं यों मे भक्तं प्रयत्नं। तदं भक्तुपहुः मन्त्राभि प्रयत्नात्मि। BG(9-26) Shiva is known as: कर्मीरिमियां शिवमध्यमुदिष्ठ प्रसिद्धम। “एकन कर्मप्रीण सत्तेन्यसितेन वा। हरि हरि वा संपूज्य ब्रह्मायाय कल्यंते” इति। अनेन शिवपुज्यां सौभाग्यमुक्तम| शिव: पूजनीय इति। SS(326).

भक्तानां सुभम... शिवपूजा दिदिपराणासुभम्| श्रीप्रमनुभाहक। तदनं शिवमूर्तियर्गहम्। SS(484). One of Shri Lalita’s names also states this fact सूक्षरायणा - सुवेन उपवासादिरस्तकायं च योक्तवर्तुपसिद्धिकं चान्तरेणाण्याय:। इति। 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 न द्वायुत प्रीणात्मवों बहुमायायोंसुरात्मजा। इति। अत्मानं सर्वभूताः सिद्धतावाहिं सर्वत:। BH(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 फलश्रुतिः 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 फलश्रुतिः 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 यज्ञन्। The Manusmrithi states that performing sacrifices is one of the duties of a brahmin आध्यायनमयमयायं यज्ञनं याज्ञनं तथा.
Kalidasa says that the kings of the solar dynasty tended the sacrificial fires by means of offerings and honoured the guests also. 

Anandagiri elaborates the definition as महान प्रकृतियो यज्ञादिभि: शोधित आत्मा सत्य चेषां - 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 आत्म: - आत्म: यथार्थवत्ता। - 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. 

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:
शान्ता महान्तो निवसति सन्तो वसन्तब्रह्मोकहितं चरन्तः ।
तीर्थणां स्वयं भीमभवार्णैव जनानन्देतुनान्यानिपातर्ण्यः ॥ (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. गीतः = 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 भगवान्तः is that it was sung or chanted by Krishna: श्रीमता भगवान्ता गीता .
This implies that He was not the author of the work (न कृता ) 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:
स्वर्णपिनिषदो गायो, दोगथा गोपालनन्दनः । पार्थो बलसः,
सुधीभूनांका, दुर्गृं गीतामृतं महत् ॥
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. यानि नामानि गोपालनि विस्वयतानि महात्मनः । ऋषिभिः
परिगीतानि तानि वक्षयामि मृत्युम् ॥ Thus, the use of the word “sung” (गीतम्)
seems appropriate. Why this piece is called स्तोत्र राजा 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
राजविधा राजगुरुः । “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 पठेयस्तु भक्त्या प्रयायो तत्त्व अर्थार्थिनः विधते। (i.e.) whoever reads this with devotion during a journey, the mission will be completed successfully. The emphasis is on the word भक्त्या - 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.” एषैि सर्वाधर्माणां धर्माः अर्थार्थिनः विधते:। यद्वत्त्वा पुण्डरीकाक्रं स्वावर्जनः:। सदा:। 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?”

को धर्म: सर्वधर्माणां भवत: परमो मत?:

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:

भक्तिमानन्यः सदोऽथाय शुचिस्तद्दर्मानासः। सहस्रः वासुदेवस्य नामाभासिताः प्रकीर्तित्वे। १२५।

इम्स्तत्वमधीयानाम् अश्चाभिक्रिससम्भवतः।

युज्येतात्मसुक्ष्मकाल्यक्षतिति-श्रीधृतिस्मृतिभिरित्वैः। १३२।

Shri Sankaracharya, in his commentary, says: भक्तिमानित्यादिना भक्तिमत्: श्रुचे: सततमुद्युक्तस्येक्याभिधितस्त्व अश्चाभिक्रिससम्भवतिः। वर्तिषो द्वर्षयति। Thus a great deal of emphasis is laid on devotion and faith. The Lord is अनिमिष:। always awake VS(215) and on the look-out for people who have devotion. He has innumerable number of ears, eyes, mouths etc.. सर्वतः पाणिपाद हितः सर्वधर्मशिरीरोऽहस्तः। सर्वत: श्रुतिमादिके सर्वावृत्य तिथितिः। 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: स्वाविषय: 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 पठेयस्तु भक्त्या प्रयायो तत्त्व अर्थार्थिनः विधते:। मायामच्छेदमयं आशुतोषो महेशः। (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 प्रयाणम् 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 प्रयाणकालः and अन्तकालः: 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

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्युक्तवा कठेवरम् ।

य: प्रयाति स मद्धांव याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः: ॥

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;

यं येव वापि स्मरन्याध्व त्यज्जत्त्वते कठेवरम् ।

तं तेवेवति कौन्तेय सदा तद्दावभावितः: ॥ 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 (ईश्वर) (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.

कामान्य: कामयते मन्यमान: स कामभिर्जयते तत्र तत्र ।

पर्यासकामस्त्र तृतैत्मनस्तिस्तैव सर्वं प्रविश्वत्वते कामाः: ॥ 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 अजनायेष नामेतद्वः भारतमिति यत आर्य्य व्यपदिशान्ति BH(5-7-3). The king was - महाभाभवत: a great devotee of the Lord. After ruling the country for a long time he handed over the kingdom to his sons and retired to the forest. There, in the forest, he devoted his time in the worship of the Lord and derived great satisfaction. But he developed an infatuation for a fawn. His mind got diverted from the worship of the Lord. He was engrossed in protecting and caressing the young deer. Even as he was spending his time playing and protecting the deer the hour of death approached him. He died looking on the deer intently.
As a consequence he was reborn as a deer. BH(5-8-27). Shri Suka says in anguish that Bharatha, a great devotee, instead of attaining the supreme goal, died like other common people and was reborn. A person with unfulfilled desires at the time of death gets the birth suitable to the fulfilment of the desires. So to one who wants to avoid rebirth Krishna says:

\textit{तस्मात्स्वेषु काठिषु मामतुमनूर्युध्य च।}

\textit{मय्यतिनियंत्रनोबिद्धिमेवेवेय्यस्तेशय: || 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 – \textit{पुरुष: स परः पार्थ भक्ताधिभ्य: स्वतन्त्रया || BG(8-22).} That Purusha, O Arjuna! within Whom all beings dwell, by Whom all this is pervaded, may be won by means of exclusive devotion. Shri Sankaracharyya in his explanation says that “exclusive devotion” means exclusive devotion, characterised by jnana or knowledge of the self. \textit{स भक्त्वा लभ्यस्तु ज्ञानलक्षणया अनन्याया आत्मविषयया ||} 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 \textit{तेषाः ज्ञानी नित्यसुकं एकानक्तिर्विविधायते} Of them (the four types of devotees mentioned in verse No.16) all, the knower, ever steadfast and exclusively devoted excels. Shri Sankaracharyya 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:

\textit{भक्त्वास्वेषः मनो यस्मिन् वाचा यत्राम कीर्तयन्।}

\textit{त्यजनं कतेवरं योगी मुच्यते कामकर्मिभि: || 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 निवृत्तस्यन्त्रयवृतितविभ्रमस्तुत्वण जन्येक्षुजननादर्दनम् । 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

इति मलिनकर्तिपति वित्तुषष्या भगवती सातवद्रुप्वे विमृष्णी ।

स्वसुभवमुपगते कचिद् विदहूँ प्रकृतिमुपेयुष्यि यदु भवप्रवहः ॥ 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 इति - “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?” मथ्यापर्तमनोबुद्धि-मौमेवेघर्यर्यशयः। Thus Bhishma said that he was offering his mind that was free from all hankerings to Him and was thus qualified for liberation. Now, because such attainment of the Lord is the ultimate goal one can desire, saints pray to Him to bless them with His thoughts in their last moments. Thus Lilasuka prayed:

व्यत्यस्तपाद-मवंसित-वहिकहः,

सामीक्रृतानन-निवेशित-वेणप्रामः।
तेजः परं परमारुणिकं पुरस्तातः

प्राणप्रयाण-समर्थे मम संप्रिधाताम् ॥

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 अन्तकार्तेच च 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

कृष्ण त्यदीय-पद-पक्ष-जप-झरन्तः, अच्छेव मे विशातु
मानस-राजहंसः ।
प्राणप्रयाणसमये कफ-वात-पित्रः, कण्ठारोधनविधी
स्मरण कृतस्ते ॥

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:

वायुनोत्तकमतोत्तारः कफसयुक्तनान्तिकः ।
कास्थास्कृतायासः कण्ठे पुष्परायते ॥

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

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

Thus a man of uncontrolled senses, who is absorbed exclusively in worldly concerns, dies with a mind afflicted and stupified, and with his relatives standing by, crying with grief.

Further it is said that in the case of such person the memory of the present life slowly fades. The pertaining to the next birth is ready to take over and the person gets a vision of the next birth to come. In addition, Sage Kapila says that, the person will also have a vision of the messengers of Death who have come to lead him away from this world.

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

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

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

अधस्तािन्तस्तत्त्वं यावत्त्वा तनः ।
क्रमशः समनुक्षत्य पुनरतािभ्रेत्रचः ॥

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:

न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति वाले, प्रमायण्ति वित्समोहेन मृदम् ।
अर्थ तोको नासित्ति पर इति मानी, पुनः पुनर्वशापथं मे ॥

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 अभिनवेशः । He says that the fear affects the wise people also.

स्वस्वाभावा विदुषोऽपि तथा रूढः भिनवेशः ।
साधनपादः - ९।

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

From that moment it never leaves us even for a moment. Rama says this to Bharata when the latter meets him in Chitrakoota. Bharata is inconsolable at all the tragic events that had happened in his absence. His father had died leaving his three mothers widowed, Ayodhya was plunged in grief and to cap it all his dear brother Rama had been expelled from the kingdom. Rama consoles him and points out that death is inevitable. There is no use in grieving over the dead as every one is inexorably moving towards his own end. So Rama advises him to stop crying over the king who is gone and instead to
grieve for himself. अहो राजाणि गच्छन्ति सर्वोऽम्राणिनामिह ।
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.

आत्मानममनुशोचः तेचं किमन्त्यमनुशोचिसि ।
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).

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

अतः पृच्छामि सौसिदिच्योगिनां परम्म गुरुम् ।
“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 सकाम कर्मां निष्काम कर्मां get births suitable for the fulfilment of the desires. Those who perform
desireless karmas निष्काम कर्मां 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 क्रममुक्ति:।

प्रयाण काले मनसांचलेन भक्त्या युक्तो योगवलेन चैव।
श्रुवोर्घ्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक स तं परं पुष्पामुपैति दिव्यम॥ 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 - मुक्त:। He is totally detached from the body. The celebrated Tamil saint Pattinaththar presents this matter in his own unique rather blunt way. The body by itself is inert only. It is the presence of the consciousness in it that keeps it alive. Thus the only difference between a living body and the dead one is the presence of the animating life in the living body. And sooner or later the living body will also become dead or a corpse. So the saint, who was the personification of detachment, calls it as the “will-soon-be-dead” corpse! Or to put it in his language one is a dead corpse and the other a “will-soon-be-dead corpse” only. If one accepts this truth then one need not grieve over death. This is a well known fact only, but comes as a rude revelation. He is amused at the sight of a group of people surrounding a dead body and crying over it. He asks Lord Shiva at the famous Kanchipuram temple “O Lord! whence is this confusion; some will-soon-be-dead corpses falling and crying over a dead-corpse?” A pregnant, though a very disturbing one, statement that leaves us much to ponder.

4- How much time the preparations will require?

The “preparation” is for escaping death and it is meaningful only for one for whom “death” has meaning. As pointed out earlier “death” is irrelevant for a person who has gained wisdom. “One can escape death only by knowing Him. There is no other way to escape death.” So assert the shastras. तमेव विदितवतितिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पत्न्या विचतेऽयनाय॥ 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:

अशर्रीरं शरीरेषु अनवशेषविश्विस्थितम्।
महान्त्विभुमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचिति॥

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 वहनां जन्मनां मां प्रपढाते। वासुदेवः समविमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः। II 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. वहनां जन्मनां ज्ञानमिरस्वस्त्काराध्यायाणां अन्तः समासी ज्ञानवानुः प्रत्यपरिपराक्षान: मां वासुदेवः प्रत्यगात्मानं प्रत्यक्षत: प्रपन्धते। 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: मनुष्याणां सहस्रेष्ठ कश्चिद्यतति सिद्ध्ये। यतंतामपि सिद्धानां कथित्यद्वं वेत्ति तत्त्वत:। II 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
These mantras say that there are two Vidyas worth knowing to men - Para and Apara. Out
of these two; the vedas, and all their branches through which one can gain the worldly and otherworldly enjoyments is the inferior one and is called Apara Vidya. Para or the superior one is that through which the imperishable brahman is known. Yama also tells this to his student Nachiketa: श्रीयज्ञ्य श्रीयज्ञ्य मनुष्यमेतस्तो संपरीत्य चिंतनकर धीरेः। KU(1-2-2). He says that two paths present themselves before every one. One is called sreyas i.e., the one that offers release from all miseries for ever and the other is called preyas i.e., the means of obtaining the pleasures of this world. The wise person prefers the former viz., sreyas in comparison to preyas. The Tamil saint Tiruvalluvar also points this out in his great work Tirukkural. He asks what profit have those derived from learning if it does not lead to the worship of the Lord who is possessed of pure knowledge? But generally all these warnings and advices fall on deaf ears. Consequently we have to take the long path for salvation. The story of Gajendra, the elephant narrated in the eighth book of Bhagavata illustrates this point. The elephant symbolises one covered with ignorance. The elephant has a large family comprising of she elephants and baby elephants - a typical samsari. He was “enjoying” the life. He was afflicted with the heat and entered a lake full of fragrant waters. The fragrant waters represent the vAsanAs or the latent tendencies accumulated in previous births. He enjoyed a refreshing bath, sprayed the cool waters on the female elephants as well as their young ones and made them also drink. This he did out of attachment to his own herd. Shri Suka adds - like a householder चः भागुणः। 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 - नाचायत्र कृत्त्वरूपः कृपणोजजमायहा। 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

शैशवेऽनाम राजपितः ज्ञात्वेयत्तामिहायुषा:।
मुद्दतीत सर्वभूतस्य गतवानम्यं हरिमः। BH(2-1-13).

Most appropriately Shri Suka calls the king राजपितः 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

tत्र तं बुद्धिसंयोगं लम्बते पौर्वदेहिकम्।
यतंते च ततो भूयं सरिष्ठी कुरुन्दन। 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 श्रीशवेञ्मस्वस्तविधानाम्। 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., यथाकाहत्र्वोधिनां 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 योगेनान्ते तनुत्याजाम्। 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. मार्गमच्छ्येदभयंच आशुतोमो महेशःः। 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 आनन्दे ब्रह्माणां विद्वान्। न विभेद्य कदाचनेति। the person having experienced the bliss of brahman ever fears not. (TU-II-4-1) that only by realising the Self one can shed his fears. We are long way from realising brahman. We very much seek security. We have the constant fear that the things that we consider as contributing to our security may get damaged or destroyed or leave us. Thus we worry about sickness, loss of money, friends or relatives etc.. The remedy for this feeling of insecurity is to realise that all these listed above can not last for ever. Either they will leave us or we will have to leave them some day. Everyone knows this but wants them to last for ever. Thus we want the body to be youthful and last for ever. One is unwilling to grow old and end one’s days. Being insecure themselves nothing on the earth can confer security. This is a fact and has to be accepted howsoever bitter this may be. But strangely no one is prepared to accept this. Acceptance requires wisdom and it is not got in a day. It is a difficult process. The recital of the stotrams and other texts like the puranas pave the way for gaining the knowledge. They describe the endearing qualities of the Lord in a manner that will make our heart turn to Him. Once He gains entry into our heart He clears the accumulated sins and brings in the wisdom. Krishna has given this assurance in Gita (10-10) तेषां सत्त-चुकानां भजता प्रीति-पूर्वकः। ददामि बुद्धि-योगं तं चेन मामुप्यान्ति ते॥ “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 यस्यां वे श्रृयमाणायां कुष्णों रमपपूर्षे। महक्तिरूर्यते पुंस। शोकमोहवात्पहा॥ 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 (श्रुयमाणायाम्) 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:

भवन्तप्रिम्ह च: स्वपीपिनयत्वचतनाचतनं
पनायति नमस्यति स्पर्शति विति पर्यंति वा
गुणं कमपि वेति तव गुणेषा गोपावित्रुः
कदाचन कुतश्रुण कतचि तस्य न स्वाध्ययः ॥

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 फलौतः: . It is said न भर्मं कविदामोति वीरं तेजश्रुण विन्दु: तव गुणेश गोपावित्रुः

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 भयापहः - भर्मं संसाराय पुंसामप्तञ्जाय भयापहः । VS(935). But there may be fear from foes and elements etc.. God removes them also. Shiva is known as सहायः - ब्रह्मादीनामयाप्तकाले रक्षक इत्यादि: । SS(762). He protects even gods like Brahma in times of danger. Lalita is called भयापहः - भर्मि जलस्थलस्यषुकादीनि सर्वांक्षन्तीति भर्म्माहस्य च वायुपुराणेऽर्ये वर्णे देवीनामानि कीतं चित्त: । 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:

विग्रहास्त्रोः: पुरुषादिरसदस्तसमाय वनवासक्षुचि: ।
मृधे मृधे नेकमहाराष्धक्ष्रोऽद्वीपाङ्कुक्षीत्र: हरेऽमिभिन्निता: ॥ 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

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

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

Shri Rudram salutes Lord Shiva who is in the form of various paths. It says - पथिनां पतये
नमः। पथिनां = शास्त्रों दक्षिणोच्चर- तुर्गीय-मार्गाणं पतितः। This says that Rudra is the
protector of the three paths described in the sastras. Later It again says: नमः खुत्याय च पथ्याय च। salutation to Him who is in the narrow foot paths and in the broad highways

The narrow path indicates tortuous religious beliefs and practices. Krishna talks about this

The penance which is performed obstinately, with self-torture, or for the purpose of ruining
another is declared to be Tamasic. The broad and firm ways represent the beliefs and
practices inculcated by the great teachers. They are the safe ways and are intended to be trodden by the common people महाजनानां वेनगतं स पत्ना: says Mahabharatha. Saint Thiagaraja talks about this in his famous song “Sakkani raja margamundaga.” He asks “when there is the well-laid king’s highway of devotion to God, why do foolish people stray into hard, tortuous and thorny footpaths and suffer?” Saint Manickavachagar has stated the same idea in his Tiruvachagam. He says “I was straying in the company of fools who did not know the path to liberation. The Lord pointed out to me the path of devotion and how to shake myself free from my past acts. He flushed out the impurities in my mind. He made me Shivam or the auspicious one and ruled me with grace. Oh! who had received in full measure the bounty God has showered on me? I mistook the wrong paths to be the right ones. He prevented me from following the small pathways and showed me the broad ones for obtaining His divine grace.” Again Shri Rudra says नम इरिण्याच प्रपथ्याच। Salutation to Him who abides in saline tracts and in trodden pathways.

इरिण्याय Irinyaya: signifies arid tracts and has a reference to samsara. प्रपथ्य: बहुभिषि सेवितो मार्गः प्रपथं: तत्र भव: प्रपथ्यः। “नम इरिण्याच प्रपथ्याच चेति श्रुति: SS(346).

Prapathyaya: pathway trodden or resorted to by many. The Lord helps all who seek Him by following various paths. He says: मचित्त: सर्वंतुगाणिन मत्यसदातत्रिष्पिस। 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 Desikachriar Swami. He litererally flooded me with ideas on this poem But my bird brain could retain only an iota of what he communicated to me. I trust this work will receive the approval of the readers. Namaste. Om Tat Sat.

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