mArgabandhustotram by Appaya Dixita

मार्गबन्धुस्तोत्रम् अप्पव्यदीक्षितेन्द्रे: विरचितम्

Document Information

Text title: maargabandhu stotra
File name: maargabandhu.itx
Category: shiva, appayya-dIkShita, panchaka
Location: doc_shiva
Author: Appayya Dixit
Translated by: (Copyright) N.Balasubramanian bbalu@satyam.net.in
Latest update: January 16, 2022
Send corrections to: sanskrit@cheerful.com

This text is prepared by volunteers and is to be used for personal study and research. The file is not to be copied or reposted without permission, for promotion of any website or individuals or for commercial purpose.

Please help to maintain respect for volunteer spirit.

Please note that proofreading is done using Devanagari version and other language/scripts are generated using sanscript.

January 18, 2022

sanskritdocuments.org
मार्गवन्युस्तोत्रम् अप्यव्यदीक्षितेन्द्रेः विरचितम्

श्रीमार्गवन्युपवर्णमालात्यथा पद्धरलस्तवः

मार्गवन्युस्तोत्रम्।
फालावनश्र्नकिरीट फालनेनभार्षिणा दुग्धपंचेशुकीटम्।
शूलहारापीकूर्तु सुधमर्यंदुर्चूडः भजेन मार्गवन्युम्।
शाम्भो महादेव देवः किमो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो॥ १॥
अः विराजज्ञुज्ञो अन्धग्नात्रज्ञाभिभाषोत्ममाः।
ऑकारवार्तिकृर्तु सिद्धसंस्वपादित्योऽभजे मार्गवन्युम्।
शाम्भो महादेव देवः किमो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो॥ २॥
नित्यमृ विदान्नदर्पह निद्रुलाशोषेषोकेशिवप्रतिम्।
कार्तिकपर्णचणपक्षितिवासी भजे दियस्नमार्गवन्युम्।
शाम्भो महादेव देवः किमो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो॥ ३॥
कण्टकपंपंपश्चीपतां कालकुठं महेशं महागौयंकेशम्।
कुन्दाभदलं सुरुंचं कोटिसूर्प्रकाशं भजे मार्गवन्युम्।
शाम्भो महादेव देवः किमो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो॥ ४॥
मन्दारमुतंदारं मन्दारगेंद्रसारं महागौयंकेशम्।
सिद्धवृत्तप्रचारं सिद्धुपरिातिधीरं भजे मार्गवन्युः।
शाम्भो महादेव देवः किमो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो॥ ५॥
अप्यव्यक्तेवेन्द्र गीतं स्तोत्रारजं पठोदस्तु भक्तः प्रयाणे।
तस्यार्थसिद्धं विधते मार्गवन्यप्रभं चालुकतोषो महेशः।
(अप्यव्यक्तिविचारं पद्धरलस्तवं मार्गवन्योंदुराम्)
नित्यं पठोदस्तु भक्तः तस्य मुक्तः कर्मयीव सायुज्यरूपम्।
शाम्भो महादेव देवः किमो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो॥ ६॥

इति श्रीआप्यव्यदीक्षितेन्द्रेः विरचितं मार्गवन्युस्तोत्रम् सम्पूर्णम्।
The sequence of the verses has variation; also with verse number 6.
Introduction and translation by N. Balasubramanian

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

Shrimad Appayya DikShita was born at Adayapalam village, very near Arni, North Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, in the year 1520 AD. His father Shri Rangarajadhari was the son of Shri Acharya DikShita - also known as VakShasthalacharya who was in the court of Shri Krishnadevaraya. “Appayya” was an endearing form of his real name, Vinayaka Subramaniam. “The 16th century AD, in South India was an age of confusion when begotry and vigorous proselytism were rampant. Persecution of one sect by another with the help of the ruling dynasties was quite common. In such an age, the need was felt for a rare scholar with comprehensive vision and imagination, whose mission in life would be the reconciliation of the various creeds, cults and philosophies. Shri Appayya DikShita filled this essential need. He was a peace maker who pleade for harmony, tolerance and mutual goodwill and understanding at a time when people were quarrelling among themselves as to who was superior Vishnu or Shiva. (Dr. N. Ramesan IAS. Shri Appayya DikShita Page 3)

“DikShitar's culture was at once profound, libeal and wide. His characteristic impartiality never failed him even in his out and out militant works.” (A. V. Gopalachariar. Introduction to Varadarajastava 1927. P vI) DikShitar’s learning, says Y. Mahalinga Shastri, was in the truest sense of the word encyclopaedic.

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

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

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

Margabandhu stotram: At this point it is relevant to say a few words about stotram. Our scriptures are explicit in saying that the Supreme Being is one. It is without name, form and any other attributes. It is called brahman in our scriptures. This is not its name but one of its many attributes बृहत्तमतवतः: That which is big is brahman. Since the adjective ‘big’ is used simply without a noun to be qualified it implies that the bigness is unlimited. It is infinite and beyond time, space etc., unlike the objects and beings we see in the universe. The scriptures also aver that it is beyond our senses. The famous mantra from the Taittiriyanopanishad (Anu IV) says that the brahman is beyond the reach of our mind and words यतो वाचो निरवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य 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 यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धायाचितुमिच्छति ।
तत्स्य तत्स्याचलो श्रद्धो तां मेव विद्याम्यहम् ॥ 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 श्रद्धा युक्तः तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान तपेयव विहितानिहितान् ॥ 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 ।
ददाति बुद्धिसत्यन्येन मामुप्यान्नति तेन । 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.) अवणम्, 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 addition our acharyas like Shri Shankara and other saints have composed soul-stirring compositions in many languages. All these are ideally suited for recitation.

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

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

Now let us go to the Margabhandhu Stotram proper.

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 सुख़ं भावयति 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.

यत: सर्वार्थिः भूतानि भवन्त्यादियुगागामे ।
यस्मिन्न यथेव यात्ति पुनर्गुमाश्वे ॥ VS-11

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

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते यो जातानि जीवन्ति यतः
प्रयत्न्यभिमिर्विशान्ति

“From whom all these beings emanate, by whom they stay alive and into whom they merge after death.”
MAHADEVA महादेवः - महाासौ देववरिचतम् महादेवः

He is worshipped by everyone. Also He is great because He pervades every thing. (SS22) सर्वान् भावन् परित्यज्य आतमजाननयोगेष्यथं महति महीयते तस्मादूर्यते महादेवः: (VS492) He is called Mahadeva because of His superior knowledge and His greatness as the gretest of the yogis. Shivarahasya says that the sound “Mahadeva Maha-deva” is a divine medicine for those bitten by the serpent called samsara महादेव महादेव महादेवेत्यय धनि: संसारसप्तदशानां दिव्योषधमनुततमम्।

DEVA देवः - स्वामिपर्यायो देवशब्दः: नरदेव इतिवत। अकुं चतमपया देवशः नरदेव इतव तत्। आदिकुं चतमचं च शिवायैव तेजः तेजः तेजः तेजः तेजसः: सवा भावन पिरवरिचतम् महित महीयते तत्। (VS492) He is called Mahadeva because of His superior knowledge and His greatness as the gretest of the yogis. Shivarahasya says that the sound “Mahadeva Maha-deva” is a divine medicine for those bitten by the serpent called samsara महादेव महादेव महादेवेत्यय धनि: संसारसप्तदशानां दिव्योषधमनुततमम्।

The word deva indicates lordship. His lordship is unrestricted दिव्यवरिचतेः: (SA93) He is effulgent. Krishna says ” I am the splendour of those who possess splendour,” तेजः तेजः तेजः तेजः तेजसः: सवा भावन पिरवरिचतम् महित महीयते तत्। (VS492) He is called Mahadeva because of His superior knowledge and His greatness as the gretest of the yogis. Shivarahasya says that the sound “Mahadeva Maha-deva” is a divine medicine for those bitten by the serpent called samsara महादेव महादेव महादेवेत्यय धनि: संसारसप्तदशानां दिव्योषधमनुततमम्।

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.

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: सवा भावन सर्वविद्मु (1-9) One who is omniscient and knower of all चूतिरः चूतिः जानन्दक्षणां दीिति धारयति चूतिः: VS(275) He bears the shine of knowledge दीिति दीिति जानन्दक्षणां दीिति धारयति चूतिः: VS(719) He is of the form of shining knowledge प्रकाशात्मा। प्रकाशात्मा यस्य सः: प्रकाशात्मा VS(276) His form is effulgent knowledge.

SIVA शिवः - शिवः मक्तसखुपः॥ निर्मुखः निष्कल्पः: खानुषधपरमानन्दरूपः इत्यथः:॥ 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 निन्देभुगुणतया शुद्धत्वातः शिवः विवरिचतम् (VS27) He is devoid of the three qualities i.e. sattva(serenity), rajas(activity) and tamas(inertia). These qualities constitute ignorance (of Brahman or reality) and characterise all creation. So Shiva being free from these is pure. Patanjali sums up all this in his Yogadarsana (1-23) as ० शकमिवपाकाशयैरपरामृः पुषिवशेषः ईरः। दे शाः, अिवाः, अिता स, राग, अेष, अभिनवेशा, कमं घर्मांमां, विपाकः कमंसत्त्रनि - जन्मायुमोळाः, आशायो ज्ञानादि- वाशाः, परेः काल']) येञ्च परामृः पुषिवशेषः ईरः इथः॥ He removes the sins of those who just think of His name. DakShayani says this to her father DakSha यद्यकर्मविपाकायं परामृः पुषिवशेषः ईरः। वाशाः यष्ठे नाम तिमः सकृ त् संगादघमाशु हि॥ 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: सवा शिवनामानि मोक्षदान्येव सर्वदा । तेज्यत्युत्तमं नाम शिवेति बहसंजित् ॥ 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.

विचासु श्रुतिरुत्कुश्या रुद्रकादशानी श्रुतोः । तत्र पवाकारी तस्यं शिव इत्यकल्याम् ॥ 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 - प्राधान्येन देवानामीशा: देवेशः: He is the foremost among the gods like Indra, Agni etc.. VS(492) सुरेशः - सुराणां देवानामीशा: 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.

भीषास्मात वातः पवते। भीषोदेशति सूर्यः ।
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 फलशुदुः: that gives the benefit of reciting the hymn. In this hymn Lord Margabandhu is described as the God with form as Shiva bearing weapons, as the consort of Parvati. It refers to various incidents to be found in puranas that reveal His unrivalled power and glory. He is also praised in His aspect as the supreme reality, the attributeless brahman whose nature is existence, wisdom and bliss.

1

１. फालावनश्रृवङ्कीरिं फालवनश्रृवङ्कीरिं दसवनश्रृवङ्कीरिं ॥
शुभावतारतितृकः, शुभरमचंदुर्चूडः भजे मार्गवन्यम् ॥

शाम्मो ... 

फाल: - forehead; अवन्न: - descended or come down; किरिं: - crown: indicates that Lord Shiva wears a crown on the head किरिं: - किरिं:मन्यातीती किरिं: (SS782). The crown implies that Shiva wears other ornaments also हिरण्य: (SS273) and हिरण्यवावः: (SS387) सुवर्णवर्णः-सुवर्णवर्णः: (SS737). One who is golden-hued and हेमाः: हेमाः: शुष्पसेति हेमाः: VS(738) One with body like gold are also His names. Shri Rudram salutes Him saying नमो हिरण्यवाहे। पादावनश्रृवङ्कीरिं is another reading found in some books पादः: = 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 पूज्यः: \। पूज्यः: पूज्यः: सर्ववन्न: इत्यथः: 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 निरस्त्रसाम्यातितिशयें राधसा स्वधामनि ब्रह्मणि संस्यते नमः: BH(2-4-14)अनुः: - तुल्योपमानमयः न विच्यते इति अनुः: He has none equal to Him.
VS(355) अनूतमः: - अविद्यान मात्रो यस्मात् स: अनूतमः: There is none greater than Him. VS (80). Further there is none superior to Him. VS(626) अनूदमः: - न चिण्टतेःस्येत् इति अनीशः: All other devas including Brahma the creator are limited by time and are subject to sorrows. प्रथमः: - देवानां प्राणामृत आयो वा प्रथमः: 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 दैवः: Such is His glory. फालनेत्रार्थिष्ठा दर्शय पथेषुकृंतिः - नेत्रे = एय: अर्धिः = fire: दर्शय = burnt: इष्ठः = arrow: कीटः = a worm, insect पथेषु: is the name Manmatha, the god of love, because he has five arrows: they are: अरविन्दः, अशोकं, चूतं, नवमलिंक्षका and नीलोलम् (lotus, ashoka, mango, jasmine and blue lotus). The five arrows are also said to be संभोहः, उन्मादः, 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 संभोहः 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 मन्मधस्य 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 फालनेत्रः: SS(159) and लक्ष्याक्षः: 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 विरुपक्षः: । विरुपाणि विरुपस्वरुपाणि लोकविरुद्धविशिष्टानि अक्षीणि यस्य स: विरुपाक्षः: । SS(129). He has an abnormal third eye. The third eye situated in a high position (viz) forehead and stands for supreme knowledge उच्चतस्याश्रयति:तोचनसाश्रयितवकीर्तिनाः विश्वाक्षरानाश्रयितव्य 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. Smara: Smara is another name of Manmatha. His arrows have not failed anywhere in the world of gods, demons and men. So he became conceited. Smara became an object of memory. The moral of the story, says the poem, is that an insult to the great will produce serious consequences. Bhim: Bhim: Bhim: Bhim: (SS131) is also one of Shiva’s names. Bhartrihari in his Vairagya Satakam refers to this incident thus: (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; कृङ्ग = mass, heap: Shiva has destroyed His enemies with His Trident. But Shiva has no enemies. समोऽहें सर्वभूतेषु न मे: दृष्टांशित न प्रिय: (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.” ईशानमीङ्घर देवं दशवानसि श्राद्धरभ्र देवश्राप्रभा। Krishna confirms this and says “Your enemies have already been killed by Me. Be a mere instrument.” BG(11-33) मयेहेते निहिता: पूर्ममेव निमित्तमात्र भव स्वयम्भाचिनः।

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 एक कोप एक रजोगुणसमुद्रवः । महाशानो महापाप्या विधेरेमभ वैरिणम्। 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 कामा हृदया नश्यन्ति सर्वं मयि हृदि स्थिते BH(11-21-26). They cannot live together like light and darkness. He is called कामाहा - कामान् हन्ति मुमुश्शुणां भक्तानां हिस्कानां चेति कामाहा He destroys the desires of His devotees who seek liberation and the intentions of those who trouble them. VS(294). Also कामनाशः || मुमुश्शुणां कामं नाशपत्तिते कामनाशः SS(126). Lord Shiva is the आदिरुपः 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.

Prahlada gives a description of these attachments (BH 7-6) in his advice to his friends. Talking about the attachment to money he says को न्यथर्षृण विसृजत प्राणेयोऽधि य ईसितः: (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 न वितन तपणीयो मनुः: 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 शेषपाशिममं छिन्भ रम्भ पाणडुः वृणिषु। 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 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 न्यत्वा पुष्पाधिर दाराधिर राघव शरण गतः: Renouncing my wives and children I have surrendered to Raghava and again परितपत्वा मया राघवा मित्राणी च धनानाच च Lanka, friends and all wealth had been left behind by me. (Ramayana-Yuddhakanda-17-16 and 19-6). Then he transfers his attachment to the Lord and enshrines Him in his heart. Then the devotee ties His feet firmly with the cord of love and so He becomes immobilised प्रणवर्शनया ध्रुवाधिपत्यः: BH(11-2-55). Thus firmly stationed in the devotee’s heart He destroys the evil tendencies therein हयन्तर्ष्यो हमद्राणी विपुनोति सुहृतसतं: BH(1-2-17) शूलहस्तः: - शूल हस्ते वस्य सः: (SS114): जितश्रुः: - जितः: श्रवः: च चन स: जितश्रुः: (SS211) and रिपुः: - सूरिरपूः हन्त्वति रिपुः: (SS370) are Shiva’s names.

Further it is said त्र्युगुण्य शूलमेतस्य: एवं भूतस्य शूलस्य करस्थापकमः त्रिगुणाल्पिकायाय मायायाय स्वाधीनत्वमुः कथवति SA(11) The trident represents the three gunas (traits). Shiva
holding it in His hand shows He is in control of maya of which they are the constituents.

(SS310) Forever He is free from maya (the illusion by which one considers the unreal universe as really existent and as distinct from the Supreme Spirit) and spiritual ignorance. This is made explicit by what is said about the moon next.

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 Prasnttara ratnamalika को हि जगदेशरुश्रुकः: ? शम्भू:, ज्ञान कुलः: शिवादेव। 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: मागिबुं = 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. अंशे विराजढङ्गजः अभ्रगाञ्जतःशशिभिरामेनोधाम्भ। ओकारवाटीकुर्जः सिद्धसंसेवितान्ति भजे मागिबुंम।
शम्भो ...

अंशे विराजढङ्गजः । अंशे = limb; may mean hand, or leg; विराज = shining or appearing prominently; भुजः = serpent, snake; Lord Shiva is decked with snakes सप्तभूषः: । सप्तभूषः = sevenfold; भूषणानि भूषण स: सप्तभूषः: (SS43) His other names are सप्तहारः: सप्तहारः: नागः: ते हारः: यस्य स: (SS494) and नागचूडः । नागो वासुकिः: कोटीरक्षनाथः चूडायाः यस्य स:
Shiva wears a garland of snakes and has tied Vasuki -the king of snakes- around His head to keep His locks of hair in place.

Snakes:-

We fear snakes because we identify them with death. And everyone is afraid of death कर्माशयमिद्? मरणात् says Sankaracharya in his Prasnottara ratnamalika. The symbolism is used in our scriptures frequently. For example: यदाँतं कालातिहिनाः सत्त्वान् कोडन्त्यस्थानामधीश्च: 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 कश्चने व बलनोत्त्रकीर्त्तत्र चचात्रदेवादिभावतो भृशाः।॥ भीतं प्रपन्नं परिलक्षि यज्ञान्तर्मृत्युः प्रायावत्यरणं तमीमहि। 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 सवधर्माः Krishna says “I am Death who seizes all life.” BG(10.34) He is Antaka अन्तक: - अन्तं करोति भूतानानातिविषयकता अन्तक: 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 कालः - कलं तिस्वर्यानामिति कालः - कालः कलं तिस्वर्यानामिति अन्तक: VS(418) and SS(33). The Lord is not limited by time or space or by any material अनन्तात्मा। देशतः कालं वस्तुतत्वार्पिरिःछत्रत्वात् अनन्तात्मा भीतं भगवद्धचनात् VS(10.30) इति भगवद्धचनात् VS(418) and SS(33). The Lord is not limited by time or space or by any material अनन्तात्मा। देशतः कालं वस्तुतत्वार्पिरिःछत्रत्वात् अनन्तात्मा VS(518). He is not subject to destruction or anything that causes destruction. अमृत्युः। मृत्युविविषाः तद्वन्द्वौत्सर्वस्य न विचै 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 मृत्युर्योपसेवनम् Death to Him is like pickles or achAr - a thing He uses in the process of consumig the creation. KU(1.3.25).
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. कालः कालस्य मृत्योहिन्त्या SS(83) and कालकालः II कालः यम:, तत्स्यापि 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 मृत्युः - मृत्युः: मरणं स्वभक्तानां मृत्युः: जयति, स्वोपासनादिना परिहरति इति मृत्युः: SS(123), SA(71). He removes or avoids the death of His devotees. The sage Markandeya confidently sings चन्द्रशेखरमात्रये मम कि करिष्यति 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 .. तदोहांपादः: पुनः ददशा ददशा अरोहाः अरोहाः ददशा अरोहाः अरोहाः। 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 मृत्युः: 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)

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?

Everyone has to work, at least to keep the wolf from the door. In adddition 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. 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.

(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. (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. अधिकतरत्रलोकस्य यावतीयाणां नरः सेवनात्।

(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. (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. (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. (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. (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.
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 बालं प्रमाधनन्तं विश्वंभोजन भूतम्। अयं लोको नाशि पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वशायपति में। 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 प्रारंभम् 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 आयुः कर्मं च विरं च विद्या निधनमेव च। पश्चातात् चिन्न्यन्ते जायमानन्तं वेदिन्तः। 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) फलानुमेयाः प्रारंभम्: संस्काराः: प्रात्नना 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 सारे ? भूजोमुष्ठिं चिन्तन्यमानानिदमेव (Prasnettara ratnamalika). If one were to think that Shankara was a sanyasi and so had such a dark view of life, so did Bhartruhari and Kulasheakhara who were kings and had access to all kinds of pleasures न संसारोत्सवं चरितमानुपश्यामि कुशाले (Bhartruhari Vairagya Shatakam).

The problems start from the beginning. Sage Kapila points out that nothing can equal the pain one suffers while in the womb गर्भवाससंभं दुःखं न भूतं न भविषयति 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 व्याघ्रीव तिष्ठति जरा परितजयती, रोगार्थ शाचि इव प्रहर्ति देहम् says Bartruhari in his Vairagya shatakam. He says that old age is crouching there like a tigress frightening us, and diseases attack our bodies like enemies. Then there is the fear of the inevitable death. In view of all these Krishna describes rebirth as the seat of pain and impermanent पुनर्जन्म दुःखात्मयशाश्वतम् BG(7.15) Later on He again says this
world is impermanent and joyless अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं 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 परिस्वतिः भिन्नघटादिवाम्मः: Death is imminent and can strike anyone at any time. This being the case, Krishna asks “how can one find pleasure in wealth or enjoyment? It cannot please him, who like an animal, is being dragged to be slaughtered.” BH(11.10. 20) कोन्त्यः सुखयत्येन कामो वा मुत्युर्नित्के। आयातं नीयमानस्य वध्यसेवं न तुषिदः। 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 संस्पर्शं भोगः: दुःख्योनय एव तेः। आयत्वक्षः कोन्त्येऽन ते शस्त्रमते 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 .. एवमेवात्मानमत्तकाः सर्व प्राणः: अभिसमावणिः यत्रैवतेः।ब्रवैः भवति। (4.3.38) तमुत्तकाम्नास्ते प्राणोदक्षाक्षामतिः प्राणमनुत्तकाम्नास्ते सर्वे प्राणा अनूत्तकाम्नास्ति सविज्ञानो भवति सविज्ञा मेवानवक्षामतिं तत्र वियाकरणीण समत्वारम्भेत पूर्वप्राणः च। (4.4.2) अयमात्मेऽद्व शरीरं नहैत्याविया गमिनयानवक्षात्च तथायांतरं रूपं कुरुते।(4.4.4) Krishna says that the knowledge he had aquired in the earlier birth carries him forward in his next birth and he progresses in the spiritual path. He does not have to start ab initio. पूर्वाभ्यासेन तेनेव हितेः ह्यवसोपि सः: 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.” The question, now is: ” where is He? and how to reach Him?” The answer to these questions form the main topic of discussions in our scriptures like Gita, Upanishads and puranas like Shri Bhagavatam and is beyond the scope of this essay and so is not attempted. One has to learn it from a qualified teacher.

The river Ganges 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.

धातुः कर्मदयुज्तं तद्दुरूक्षकमस्य पादावनेजन-पवित्रत्या नरेन्द्रः।
The story of the descent of Ganga to earth is also familiar. It is mentioned briefly in Bhagavata in skanda 4 - chapter 17 and skanda 9 - chapter 9. It is given in detail in the Balakanda of Ramayana. Sage Viswamitra narrated it to Rama and LakShmana as he was taking them to Mithila after he had successfully completed his sacrifice with protection offered by the brothers. King Bhagirata - a scion of the ikShvAku dynasty to which Rama belonged - was instrumental in bringing the river to earth by performing severe penance. At his request Shiva received the mighty flow of Ganga falling from the heavens and released it as a stream on the earth. A large gathering comprising the residents of the higher worlds and great seers came to witness the wonderful event. They, along with the people of this world, praised the waters of the river Ganga as pure because of its contact with Lord Shiva.

Hence the saying काँयां तु मरणा: (1.43.28). 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 Brahma. In Gangashtakam, she is addressed as the very embodiment of Brahma, पूण्यब्रह्मस्वरूपे . She is eternal and formed by the fusion of the powers extracted from the three - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. So Gayatri is worshipped in their forms during the three times it is recited (viz.) morning, noon and the evening. In view of this Shiva has placed her on the head - in the chakra called Brahmaram. The scriptures define six chakras...
or seats of power in one’s body. The chakra on the head is above all these and is the seat of Brahman. This is also the seat where one visualises one’s guru in the form of Brahman and meditates on him because one’s guru is not different from Brahman. The fact that she is formed from the powers of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is stated symbolically in the story of Ganga.

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 विभुजन्तन्त्रिनी 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 

3 - She is Bhavani 

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 स्वरूप) 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 गोत्रसामर्थम् जाधवी 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. गंगे गंगेति यो ब्रह्मं योजनां शतैरपि। नुक्त्ये सर्वानामेव विन्युन्तोक्ते स गच्छति। The avadhuta saint Sadasiva Brahmam has composed a song in praise of Ganga (jaya tungatarange gange जय तुंगतरः गंगे |) wherein he salutes Ganga as one who purifies the worlds and cuts asunder the manifold bonds of mankind (कमलभवान्धकमण्डपविचे वहुविघवन्धच्छेदलविचे। लतिंचे = 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.

लतुदत्ते गंगेति पतति यदि कायस्त्वनुभूतां तदा मात: शातकतवः ददातीः।

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 शातकतवः। भक्तेभ्यः कामान्प्रकर्षण ददातीति कामपदः। 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: राजामिदमवविवीत। प्रीतस्तेद्धैं नर्षेष्व करिन्यामि 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 Brahma and Shiva is DakShinamurthi - the giver of knowledge about the Brahan. 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 Bhagirath. This was the case with Dhruva, who wanted to be a king but he got that and also a permanent place in the heavens.

**Notes:**

- **ओंकारावाटीकुरं** - ओंकार = the holy syllable OM; वाटी = garden, park; कुरं = deer; Shiva is likened to a deer in the garden of the holy syllable - meaning He is represented by OM also known as pranava.
- **ओंकारुपं** - ओंकार = रूपः स्वरूपः यसः = तथा (SS138) Shri Krishna says in His Gita (10-25) “I am OM among the words.”
- **गिरामस्येकमक्षरम्** Manu, the famous law giver, says that the letter OM by itself represents the ultimate reality - the Brahman एकारं 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 च तारुकारं च मकारं च प्रजातिः। वेदन्यात्मायदंनुष्ठुलं भुजुच्चः स्वरत्तिति च च A similar reference is seen in Chandogyopanishad (2.23.3) तात्त्वण्यस्यक्षेपयोजितस्य मूकाः संप्रास्तवर्त्यथा Shri Bhagavatam says that sound OM was acquired spontaneously by Brahma - the first born when he was in deep meditation. BH(12.6.44 and 39). It says that the origin of the sound consisting of three parts is unmanifest. It flashes by itself and it reveals the nature of the almighty and supreme spirit.

**समाहितात्मनो ब्रह्मन ब्रह्मणः परमेश्वरः। हृदयाकाशादभूजातो दृतिरोधादृविभावते॥

ततोऽभूतः त्रिवृक्षोऽरोऽप्रकृतप्रमवः स्वरादृ॥**
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. प्रणवः - प्रणवो नाम परमात्मनो वाचक ओऽहाः , तदभेदोपचारेणायं प्रणवः (VS-957). He is in the form of pranava represented by OM. He is not different from the creation. So pranava represents both brahman and the universe. Sage Patanjali also has said this in his Yoga Sutra (1.26)तत्स्तत्वाचः प्रणवः । प्रकरणं नूयते अनेनेति प्रणवः God is greatly praised by this. Earlier we saw that a stotram mentions the attributes or the qualities of the subject of the stotram. Thus pranavam indicates the auspicious qualities of the Lord and obtains His blessings to one who chants it. Patanjali adds (1.27): तजस्सत्तद्ध्वाभावनम्

The chanting of pranava with understanding and faith is meditation on the Iswara. Pranava is made of the three letters A,U and M. These three letters represent the consciousness presiding over the three states - waking, dream and deep sleep states which one passes through every day. The consciousness is same but it functions differently in these states.

The Mandukya upanishad views pranava as being composed of two parts: one having sound and the other without sound. The OM as specified above made up of the three letters is pronounced and constitutes the “sound” part. The upanishad says that the brief interlude that precedes and succeeds this “sound” part forms the “silent” component - the fourth letter अमात्रश्वलोकृतः: द्वितीयवाह्यः: प्रपञ्चोपशामः: शिवो द्वद्वेद एवमौकार आत्मवेद सविवशत्यात्माने, 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 favou rite deity in an idol or saligrama stone. Here we invoke the God about whom we do not have firsthand knowledge but learnt from scriptures or from some other
source in the idol or some other form of representation and worship. The representation is known as pratikam प्रतीकम. Meditating on the fourth or the silent part as “I the Self” is known as Ahamgrahadhyanaṃ अहंग्रहध्यानम. One who meditates like this is called a muni मननात् मुनिरूपः विचारिते. 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 ओऽकारारुप: ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः।

The question, now is, if He is Himself omkara or the pranava, why then say He is the deer in the park called OM? The answer is that He is OM the park as Paramatma as well as the deer the individual Jivatma. They are one and the same but look different to the uninitiated. The deer, unaware of its status, roams around in the park feeding and enjoying itself. This is an echo of the famous Mundakopanishad mantra ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः।

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 ओऽकारपञ्चररूप: a female parrot in the cage called OM in the Devi Navaratnamala. The saint composer Thiagaraja of Tiruvaiyaru addresses Rama as ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः।

The saint composer SadasivaBrahmam talks of Krishna as ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः। ओऽकारारुपः।

That the word siddha सिद्ध means
accomplished or perfected. Linking with the earlier word, the muni meditates on the pranava. अकारेन बिन्दुमण्युक्ते नित्यं ध्यायित्वं योगिः: 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.

Such a realised sage abides in his Self. So it is said तद्विश्नोः परसं पदं 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 बुद्धिमत्ता वारिष्ठः = 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 यत्र यत्र स्थानात कीर्तनं तत्र तत्र कुरुक्षेत्रकाञ्जिनं बाण्वारिष्ठर्विरितेक्षणमारुति नमत राजसान्तकम् 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

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 prarabdham 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 नथ्रमवर्षितमुस्वर्थ्यते वा
सिद्धो न पश्यति यतोऽध्ययनमस्वरूपम्
दैवादपेतमुत दैववशा आध्यनम्

maargabandhu.pdf
वासो यथा परिकृत 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) योदकामो निन्दकाम आत्मकामो न तस्य प्राणा उत्कामन्ति ब्रह्म सन् ब्रह्मायंति This was what is said to have happened in Bhishma’s case.

आत्मन्यात्मानस्वाभिष्य सोदन्तथासं उपारमतः BH(1.9.43)

भजे = I worship वासो the Lord Margabandhu.

I worship Lord Margabandhuon whose limbs snakes appear prominently, whose head looks charming with the waves of the celestial river Ganga, who is like a deer in the garden of Omkara and whose feet are served by siddhas (great seers).

3

3. नित्यम् चिदानन्दरूपं निनित्ताशेषतोकेशेविनिर्माताम्।
कार्तिकस्वास्त्राचार्य कृतत्वां भजे दिव्यसन्मार्गवन्यम्।
शाम्भोः

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

These words are the repetition of the famous upanishadic mantra सत्यं ज्ञानमनःस्तब्रह्म TU(2.1.2) that says Brahman is satyam, jnanam and anantam. This is one of Shiva’s names सचिदानन्दरूपः। सत्यं ज्ञानमनःस्तब्रह्म। सचिदानन्दरूपः। सत्यं ज्ञानमनःस्तब्रह्म। SS(653). Rama’s form is existence, knowledge and bliss सत्यज्ञानान्दरूपरीती। says the saint Sadasiva Brahmandra in the song खेलितममह्रदये (kelati mama hrudaye). So is Shri Lalita’s form: सचिदानन्दरूपिणी। सत्यं चित्मानन्दश्च रूपममेव विद्यान्तरेयसंहार्यायस्य इति सचिदानन्दरूपिणी। LS(699)
satyam सत्यम्। कालत्रयावाच सत्यम् SS(432)अवितथरूपवाच यर्मान्त्म सत्य: “सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म” इति श्रुते:। VS(106) In the invocatory verse to Shri Bhagavatam Shri Vyasa salutes the Lord saying सत्यं परं धीमहि (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 धीमहि 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 आनन्दश्रूपं यस्य:॥ “सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म” “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्मेति” श्रुते।। LS(790).

Bhartrihari, in the invocatory verse to his Satakratrayam salutes the Lord saying दीक्षालायाधव्यीक्ष्ता अनन्तिचिन्मात्रतूर्थे। He says that God is of the form of eternal consciousness unlimited by spatial direction, time etc दिशा: प्राच्यादिदिक्षेत्रः, काला भूतमविष्णुर्मानन्त्म। आदिशुद्धसंपूर्वीति वस्तुनि तथा च दीक्षाला आदयो येषां तानि दीक्षालाती। तैरनविचित्रार्थकृताः। विभुवचिन्त्याविवेकलोकां देशतः कालो वस्तुतत्वार्थिचित्रे तथः।। अत एव अनन्तापरिमिता। त्रिविधपरिचेष्टयुक्तात्मा दर्शणं ददायमाने। त्यथः॥ चित् - chit means pure intelligence and indicates brahan.

So the Lord gets the following names चिदात्म। चित्ूः चैतन्यं आत्मस्वरूपं यस्य स: चिदात्मा SS(456). Also चिन्मय: ह चिन्मयश्चूपं:। SS(829). Devi is described as चिन्मयी।। चिदम्बरचिन्मयी LS(251). Now let us go back to the reference from Bartruhari: (ie.) अनन्तिचिन्मात्रतूर्थे ह। चिन्मत्रा ज्ञानपनां च।। चिदकरसेति यावत्। तात्त्वी मूलसायन्त्य तस्मैरूप्यस्यर्थूपं।। एतद्वायेः॥ 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: अभिषः स्वराट। स्वेनैव राजते यस्तम। स्वतः सिद्धान्तस्य:।

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.

आनन्दः अनन्दः ब्रह्मणम्

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

Incidentally this is one of the names of Shri Lalita. (LS365) स्वत्मानन्दलुभीभूत ब्रह्मान्दान्दसंततिः। The commentator Bhaskararaya explains this name referring to these quotations only. He says स्वत्मान्दः आत्मृष्टो च आनन्दस्य लुभीभूता इत्यादियान्दसंततिः।

The commentator Bhaskararaya explains this name referring to these quotations only. He says आत्मृष्टो च आनन्दस्य लुभीभूता इत्यादि यादियान्दसंततिः।

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। परमानन्दविग्रहो नन्दी। “विज्ञानमानन्द ब्रह्मो” ति श्रुतिः। I SS(189) and VS(618) आनन्दी। सुप्रस्फुटपिताः आनन्दी। VS(560)। Also ब्रह्मानन्दः। 1 ब्रह्मरूप आनन्दो ब्रह्मानन्दः। 1 “आनन्दे ब्रह्म मां ज्ञाता न विभेदि कुतथने” ति पाणी। “आनन्दे ब्रह्माणो विद्वानिः” ति श्रुतिः। I SS(560) and सदानन्दः। II कालजयाक्षेरंतिरसीमशुक्लरूपः सदानन्दः। 1 “विज्ञानमानन्दे ब्रह्मे” ति श्रुतिः। I SS(673)

निहताशोरोक्षेविरंतिपथः - निहत = eliminated अशोष = without remainder लोकेशा = lord of the universe - here it refers to Indra वैरिन = enemy प्रताप = 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). विज्ञातवर्य न जानीते भयश्रानमुप्रसिद्धितमः (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 हरः।
पादाक्षेत्रे ते श्रीले पीड्यामास तीजयः। II

पीडितास्तु तत्सत्सत्स श्रीलम्भोपमा मुना:। I (UK. 16-27,28).

Ravana struggled hard but was not able to extricate himself from the tight spot. Finally he prayed to the Lord and got himself released. So Shiva gets the name अमुकशिरसा लझानाथद्वर:। I अमुकशिरसा पादाकृत्याणे लझानाथस्य रावणस्य दर्श गर्व हर्ततित हरः। I इदं च रामायणादृश्य प्रसिद्धमः। शिवरहस्ये - अमुक त्वतेवासिंहतसविलाप्तार्ज भुजवनः वशते वरसेपिपि लझथविशादश विकम्पत:। अमुकापातठेशुप्लस्वचिताहुष्ठिरसं प्रतिष्ठा लघ्यासीज्ञाविचित मुख्यते खल इति। II “नम: सहमानाय निव्याधिन” तिः श्रुतिः। I SS(623).

Ravana was the grandson of the great sage Pulastya and the son of an equally great sage Vivasva. He was born as an asura due to a curse. Krishna gives a description of asuric nature in the 16th chapter of Gita entitled दैवाकुर सम्पद्विभाग्योऽः and also in the 18th chapter. He says that people with asuric nature are given to ostentation, arrogance, lust, anger and
insolence. They will nurture innumerable hopes. These tendencies will pave the way for their downfall. We see that Ravana’s character fits this description exactly. These qualities lead to his ruin. Ravana was vastly learned (as is indicated by ten heads): but was foolish enough to think he could shake the Lord who is नित्यः: all pervading, firm and unshakeable सर्वंगतः: स्थाणः: अचलः: BG(2-24). In fact if He shakes the universe will shake and without His will one can not move even a blade of grass. This is graphically described in a story in Kenopanishad. Thus Ravana committed a great mistake but Shiva curbed his pride and let him off कार्त्तिकेयोऽन्तर्भाषाः - कार्त्तिकेयः = gold: अगः: = mountain: इन्द्रः: = 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 श्रीणी यथस्व रथो रथाचिुगात्र चन्द्राकारे.विशेषदशं कोरूऽवः: कनकाचर्वो हरिरभूतः बाणो विधिः: सारथिः:।
तूऽन्नरो जलिधः हंया: श्रुतिचयो मौर्यी भुजाधिपिः:
तत्स्मात् म हृदयेः सुवेनेः रमतो शायमे परव्रत्तमः।।

So He gets the following names पुरुऽदर: सुरश्रीरणां पुराणां दाराणातुर्वन्दर: तिरुपर्य ल।
“स तिलः: पुरी मिले” ति श्रुति:। SS(45) and VS(335). One who shattered the cities of the enemies of the gods पुरत्रविविधाः। पुरत्र विहःनतीति पुरत्रविविधाः।
आदित्यपुराण द्विसहस्राधिचाये: “अथ रुद्रस्य देवस्य निर्मिता विश्वकर्मणा।
सर्वेऽक्षमयः दिव्यो रथो यो लोको वातारः।।” इति प्रस्तुतिः सर्वेऽक्षम्यदेवोन्द्रमयःसर्वेऽक्षम्यदेवोन्द्रमयः-
विशिष्टतिनिर्मितान्तर रथानुवर्ते परमेश्वरे,
मेरी चापे विष्णुवर्ते वाणापि: ब्रह्माण श्रेरीते,
अनन्तर देवानां, आन्तिकिीत्या विद्यामानेव पशुरुपः
पञ्चविनोदेन, द्रिकृते! तद्नु देवर्विनायके
पूजने, अनन्तर इन्द्रक्ष्मदिभिष्ठ परिवृत्ते,
तदनु पुरत्रत्वेयेक्त्र समागमने ऋष्यादिभिष्ठ
In the Gita, great stories taught truths, the safe, the merchant millions of truths the cities. He would not enter them. He could not. He had diamonds which he did not wish to discard. He might use some of them. He would not mislead anyone.

A welcome sight to the sincere was the sight of a diamond. “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 ते नातपकायां नामसंकाय कदाचन। न चाशुष्णेऽवाच्यं न च मा योधभ्यंसूययाति। BG(18-67). Great truths, like precious diamonds are not meant to be hawked in the streets like cheap vegetables. A diamond merchant keeps the diamonds carefully locked in an iron safe in his shop. Only a handful of people out of several millions in the city will be fit to enter the shop and enquire about them. The merchant, will welcome the customer, engage him in small talk and enquire about his requirements. By then he would have assessed the customer's worth and seriousness to do business. Then only will he unlock the safe, bring out his wares and
show them to the customer. Similarly vedantic truths are invaluable and are to be guarded carefully and given only to the deserving. Brief explanation of the Tripura episode follows.

It was said that our body is viewed as being made of three layers - the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. These three bodies are the three puras or cities. The paramatma who is of the form of chaitanyam or consciousness is omnipresent and is present in the body also, and enlivens it. The body itself, being mere bundle of matter, is inert. Krishna says this इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय स्वेतम्यमित्यभिधीयते and in the next verse क्षेत्राचं च मां विद्धं सर्वं क्षेत्रेणुभारत। 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? स्थूलं-सूक्ष्मं-कारणं-शरीररात्रूं व्यतिरिक्तं: पद्धकोशातीति: सन् अवस्थात्यात्यसाधी सचिदानन्दस्वरूपं: सन् यज्ञनिधि स आत्मा। 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 जात्यते नियते वा कदाचिन्मात्य भूत्वा भविष्या वा न भूयः।। अजो नित्यं शास्त्रोऽयं पुराणो न हन्तयते हन्यमाने शरीरं। 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 कर्मफलम् (ie.) joy or sorrow. That is, it is not a कर्त्ता 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: कृष्माणानि गुणे: कर्माणि सर्वंश: || अहंकारविमृद्धात्मा कर्महमिति 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 चिदानन्दरूपम् as said in the first line of this verse. Krishna says this to his friend Uddhava: देहस्योऽपि न देहस्यो विद्वान्त्वप्रायोग्यितः || अदेहस्योऽपि देहस्यः कुमति: स्वप्प्रायथा। 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 साक्षात्कुरुते प्रतोधस्मये स्वात्मानः’ मेवाद्रयं तत्स्मी श्रीगुरुमूर्तियें नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तियें 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 साक्षात्कुरुते So also in the case of self-knowledge one does not experience or “become” the atma; but स्वात्मानं अद्वयेऽव शाक्षात्कुरुते owns up his true nature as atma. Shiva’s names relating to Tripura are त्रिपुरानन्दकरं । त्रिशिवं पुराणं त्रिपुराणं त्रिपुररं त्रिपुरानन्दकरं। त्रिशिवं पुराणं शारीरं, “पुरसः शरीरं प्रियंद्रिमवृक्ष्य विदिष्यते हरि:” इति त्रिपुराणवचनात। ततानि च स्थूलंसृष्टिकारणात्मकानि-सृष्टी भौतिकमेव, सृष्टिनां ज्ञाततिरिक्तानि कारणां त्विविचारपरमिति। शिवज्ञानस्य च विदिष्कैवल्ये तुतवें मन्तोपिनिषनि। इदं च त्रिशिवप्रभुसरि नाम, “श्वामकाय त्रिपुरानन्दकरं त्रिकालीकायलय कालगिरितविद नमः” इति SA(38)पुराणरः। पुराणं शारीराणें स्थूलंसृष्टिकारणात्मनि। तारातिरिक्त पुराणरः। तदरातित्वम् च विश्वस्त्वाध्यात्मि विदिष्कैवल्ये तुतवें तत्तवें मन्तोपिनिषनि कृतिद्रुभम् SA(68).

Krishna tells Uddhava that He is Himself Shiva who destroyed the three cities त्रिपुराङ्गो घनुष्ठाताम् 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 इत्यानं रूपनामायनान्तरवर्णं यस्य नामोज्ञविष्ठि: स्वर्ताः सोवर्णाः कुलगिरिजाः भूरीमृत्युसमस्तात्मा: कर्णिरकृत्वा कुलवक्षितः सृष्टिविशालस्य स्वयंपरि: मूके घोडंसहस्रं तावंतान्त्वृभूमि प्रविष्टि:। BH(5-16-6). The abodes of the gods like Brahma are situated on the peaks of the mountain. Lalita is
said to reside on one of the peaks of Meru and so gets the name सुमेरुकृष्णम्भरः। सुमेरुपरिपरिम्यशुने तिष्ठति ततस्य ॥ शोभने मेरुम्यशुने इति वा LS(55). The sun and the moon are said to go round the mountain. Our poets mention this fact often. Kalidasa refers to the sun going round Meru in his Raghuvamsa (7-24). He says that Aja and Indumati going round the sacred fire during their wedding was like the day and the night revolving round Meru

Pradaksinanirūdhvānōdārakṣatannimūhyante chakāsa ॥

Merośuṇānākṣī nirmāṇaṁ pravartanāṁ anyoṇyaṁ sanskṛtamahśīrayaṁ ॥

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

कृलि: = 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. व्याध्रचम्मम्बरः = व्याध्रचम्म अम्बरेऽ यस्य सः; “तथा पिनाकहस्त: कृलिवासा” इति श्रुति: I SS(108). गजचम्मम्बरः = गजासुरस्य चर्म कृलितस्तथं वासो यस्य सः; गजचम्मम्बरः I श्रुतिरूपः SS(158). कृलिवासः = कृलि दार्शकावनस्त्व-मुनिकृतस्त्वभिचारोपत्यव्याप्रस्य चर्म वासो यस्य स तथा। अथवा काश्यां शिवभक्तजितोऽस्यागातस्य गजासुरस्य कृलित्रत्र विवक्षिता। “प्राणेश्वरः कृलिवासः पिनाकी” श्रुति: I SS(909) कृलिवासः। कृलि: दार्शकावनस्त्व-मुनिकृतस्त्वभिचारोपत्यव्याप्रस्य चर्म वासः वचं यस्य स तथा। यथोर्म्म ास्त्वः "ततो व्याध्रो महानकुलः आजगाम नवायुः।। तेषार्गुणाः मर्मस्थः कोपोऽयं निर्तितो यथा।। तं चात्य तर्च भित्वा तदा चर्मम्बरोऽभवत्।। शुशुभे चर्मणा तेन नानान्युतेन च” इति I। अथवा काश्यां शिवभक्तजितोऽस्यागातस्य गजासुरस्य कृलित्रत्र विवक्षिता।। यथोर्म्म स्त्रान्ते एव - “वाणस्यां पुरुषातो गजरूपो महासुः।। तापसाजिताभक्तां निहत्ते कोपदीपितः।। इत्युपकम् “हतवा तं कुजरे भीममधृष्यं दिग्नेऽरिष्य।। पादहस्तवृत चर्म विशाश्याचिच्छव तेन वै।। प्राणव्यात्मानमात्मेशा: स्तुयमानोऽविते:।
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 अतिवर्गाथमि 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 बन्धुः. बन्धुः हितातिहितोपदेशं श्रुतिमृत्तितक्षणं कृतवानिति "सः नो बन्धुज्ञात्वत्तिः श्रुतिः. 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 तत्राभवद्व भगवान् व्यासपुत्रो यहच्छयं गामटमानोनपेश्च: अर्थक्यलिङ्गो निजलाभतुः वृत्तशरीरविपुवेषः. 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 हरः. स्व विषय ज्ञानेनाविधाद्वेयणांद्रः. 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 लक्ष्मण सुदुःसिमिद्व बहसम्मानान्ते मानुषयमर्थम्मद्मात्ममद्मभार ् धीर्। ॥ तृतिया यत्वत न पतेदनुमन्तुय याविन्: अध्ययनविषयः सहलु सर्वत: स्थाय। 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 तरवः किन जीवन्ति भक्षा: किन श्र्मसन्त्युत। न खादन्ति न मेहन्ति किन ग्रामस्वाचोपचरये। ॥ शब्दिविसर्धोपवर्भः संस्तुतः पुरुष: पशुः। न यत्तर्कव्यत्पोपतो जातु नाम गदाध्रज:। 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 चेतुः मामन्त्यमाय्यहारख। सापेऽर्व स मन्त्य: सम्मायवसितो हि स। ॥ किंग्र्ह भक्ति धर्ममन्त्या शास्त्रच्छान्ति निगृह्यति। कौन्तेय प्रेतिजानीहि न में भक्तः प्राणवतिः। 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 संसारोगस्थोष्यवभेषजम् VS(578)भवहेति: भवः संसारः तत्वः शेतिरायुष्य संसारच्छेत्ता। “भवस्य हेत्वं जगतां पतय” इति त्रुतिः। I SS(272) तारकः। I तारायत सम्मारालिति तारकः। I SA(07) तारणः। I संसारसागरातायतीति तारणः। I VS(337) तारः। गर्भजन्मजरामृत्युशक्षणाद्भयातायतीति तारः। I VS(338) तारः। गर्भजन्मजरामरणसंसारहांभयातायतीति तारः। “नमस्त्ताराय नमः शम्भवे चेति त्रुतिः। I SS(76) भजे दिव्यसंगमवन्यम्। दिव्य = divine संमार्गवन्यम् = 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। संशास्यां मर्गश सन्मार्गः। I means the virtuous path: the path trodden by the saints and noble people and that is in keeping with the shastric injunctions महाजनो चेती गतः स पत्थः। 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 संसारसिवोत्सरणस्वस्तुपायः। चेतवेयाता: यत्योस्व पारं तमेव मार्ग तत्र 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 शाश्वबिधिमुत्तुज्य वर्तते कामकारतः। न स सिद्धिमवायोति न सुर्खं न परां गतिः। तत्समाचार्येऽपि प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यवश्चर्थोऽत्त्रा शाश्वविधिनांत्य कर्म कर्तुमिहांसि। 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। तान्नहि द्विषम: कृरान्संसारेऽन्तराधमानं। क्षिपाम्यजस्मशुभानासुरीचुष्यो वनिष्यो। BG(16.19) Sankaracharya explains “inferior births” as cruel beings such as tigers, lions and the like अजस्त्र सन्तताः अधुभानाः अधुभकिर्मकारिण: आसुरीचुष्य कूर्कर्मचारायुष्य व्यापदिबोदिष्ठादिष्यो वनिष्यो क्षिपामि। Kalidasa prays in the invocatory verse in Malavikagnimitra सन्मार्गवलोकनाय व्यपनयतु स वर्तमासी वृत्तिमीशः। I He prays to lord to remove the ignorance born out of lethargy to enable us to perceive the right path or the virtuous path। सत्रू Sat also means that which really exists or existence and means brahman अवित्थं श्रेण्व सत्रू “सदेव साम्पैदेम” (छा.उ. ६।१।४१) इति त्रुतेः। I VS(478). Thus Margabandhu is brahman only संशास्यां मार्गवन्यम् सन्मार्गवन्यम्। I Being
brahman. He is the best guide and companion one can get on the way to liberation. The path of self knowledge, says Yama, is very difficult to tread upon. It is just like walking over the sharp edge of a razor. The knowledge about the Lord is most profound. The means to get it is difficult for the unprepared mind. When one gets struck on the path He (being with us all the time and very much within us), like a sign post, points the way to the next stage. He is a guide and companion as long as a seeker looks for Him. Like the rain bearing clouds He showers His grace on His devotees without expecting anything in return. Mundane bandhus (relatives) are the cause of bondage and ensuing misery. In fact they are called bandhus only because they bind themselves with us. But lord Margabandhu is a unique bandhu who causes all bondage to drop off (as He is Sat). 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 Margā: मुमुःवः पृथ्वीरिचतम्। "मागःः कर्मांमहे सुगरितं गुणवर्धनं। उवारुकामिव बन्धननं तृतीयं मामतात।" Ignorance is a stage. The path through which one can get infinite bliss. Only by knowing Him liberation is attained. विद्याम्बन्धः अत्यत्वाय कत्यति योगिनो मुमुःवः स एव पत्थः: मार्गः:। “नान्यः पत्थः: विद्याम्बन्धः।" The poet says Why say दिव्य? The scriptures talk of the paths the jiva can take after the fall of the physical body. They are the dark path (कृष्ण गतिः) and the bright path (शुक्रगतिः). The former path is available to those who perform duties and sacrifices prescribed in the vedas. Karmas may be performed with desires also (known as sakama karma). One may, for example, perform a sacrifice for achieving wealth or property or even swarga loka. The karmas done properly produce results without fail. One who does the prescribed karmas go to world of manes or pitruloka पितुर्लोकः: 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 (चित्तशुद्धि:) 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 यशरतः भ्राजमानेषु यथाकाले चाहुतायोऽहाद्यायः ॥ तेन नयन्त्रेता: सूर्यस्य रश्मयो यत्र देवानां पतिरेकोधिनाः ॥ MU(1-2-5). We saw earlier that even the worlds of gods are finite and so one who attains such a place has to come down and be reborn after his merits are exhausted. So it is not considered wise to keep on doing karmas. Those who take to a combination of karma and upasana can practise austerities and develop mental maturity and detachment. They go to Brahmaloka through the bright path तपःौ वेये िवरजाः शाा िवरजाः भैचया चरः ॥ सूयािारेण ते िवरजाः यऽामृतः स पुो ह्व्यायात्रा। MU(1-2-11). 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 (जीवुः). 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 (कममूतः). The lord is a companion and guide to those who take to the bright path that leads to Him.

Meaning of the verse. I worship Lord Margabandhu who is eternal, of the form of consciousness and bliss, who curbed the pride of Ravana, who used Meru the golden mountain as a bow, who wears the bark of a tree and skins and who is a companion to those who choose to tread the spiritual path leading to liberation.

4

5. कन्दिर्पद्र्पभ्रमीशं कारुकणते महेशं महाव्योमकेशम् ।
कुन्दाभदन्ते सुरेशं कोटिसूर्प्रकाशं भजे मार्गवन्धुम् ।
शाम्भो...

कन्दिर्पद्र्पभ्रमम् - कंदर्पः = Manmatha, the god of love दर्पः = arrogance, pride, vanity दा = used at the end of a word means destroying, removing or curing. So दर्पाः 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 साक्षात मन्मथमन्मथः। जगन्मोहनस्य कामरस्यापि मनस्युदूरः। कामः साक्षात्तत्त्वापि मोहक इत्यर्थः। 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 सुन्दरः। द्वात्रिशाशुक्षणोऽपेतः सुन्दरः। “कामाय काम्प्रिण” इति श्रुति। SS(416). Also सुन्दरः। विश्वात्साध्वितिकोऽधिवित्वातः सुन्दरः। VS(791). One who is more beautiful than anyone else सुदेहः। श्रोभनो देहो यर्थ स सुदेहः। “महालयतमततेव युवानमसतिसुन्दरम्। ध्यातक्षमतरोमृणुषः सुवासीनः सहोमया।” इति। सिवान्ये किंतु श्रुति। SS(249) शुभाङ्गः। - सुन्दरः। ततुः धारयन्। शुभाङ्गः। VS(586). Also शुभाङ्गः। - श्रोभनेत्रेषमध्यवित्वातः शुभाङ्गः। 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 कंदर्पकोटिसमगुणसुन्दरदिव्याकृतिः। 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 कामकोटिसमः। मनसिजशातकोटिमझुलवेषः। मीनाक्षकोटिमहोनं। कोटिमदनसुन्दरः। जगन्मोहनः। 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 sweeteness.”

मधुरं मधुरं वपुरस्य विमो-मधुरं मधुरं बदनं मधुरम।
मधुरान्धिम मृदुस्मति-मेतद्वहो मधुरं मधुरं मधुरम।

Shri Vedanta Desika should have had the same sentiment as Shri DikShita and addresses the lord at Tirupathy as कन्दर्पदपर्वें सुन्दर दिव्यमूर्ति। “the One whose beautiful form destroys the pride of Manmatha” (in Venkatesa suprabatam). The use of the word कन्दर्प: 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 संसारसेजा भोगा हुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आधन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः । 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: प्रतिपद्यलितात्माः, प्रत्येक नूतनात्माः, प्रतिमुदरिपकायाः. 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 सुचारूः - सुतरेन दर्शनीयमाः, निरतिशय-परमानन्दरूपत्वात्। “विज्ञानमानन्तः ब्रह्मोऽति श्रृतः। 1 SS(818). and रम्यः - सुन्दररूपत्वादम्यः। “यो ये भूमा तत्सुखमाति श्रृतः: । SS(924).

Devi Lalita is known as सर्वांशसुन्दरी - सर्वांशी या तानि अज्ञानी या अवश्वयः शिरःऽपण्यादः; तेष्योज्यानंतिरिक्ष्माववचन्तः यथासामुदिकाः रक्षणं तत्तद्वसन्तुसुन्दरी। अथैत सर्वांशांमेऽपु शरीरं प्रसवसुपपुष्य अन्त्यन्त्रापीवण्यत्वेन सुन्दरत्वार्थविद्विनाभवाङ्गाविषयत्वात्तथा।

(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: शान्त: - विषयसुवेष्णसहीतात्माः, “निधिरु निधिर्यं शान्तम” (१६८) इति श्रुते:। या VS(582) and SS(9) विरागः - विरतो गामो गाय विरागः। “कथमनन्दनेत्रो निधिनिश्चितीति”ति श्रृतः। या SS(89).

विरतः - विगतं तमस्य विषयसेवायामिति विरतः। या VS(396) दमः - दमोऽस्यस्यास्तीत्वर्तीति दमः। निग्रहीतेनित्यायाय इत्यत:। आत्मारमचवतः। “न हि स्वात्मारामेऽविषयमुग्धातुष्ण भ्रमयि” इति शिवरहस्ये। “नीठकथन्तः प्रधानान्ति” ति श्रुतः। या SS(578). 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 सहृदान्तः क्षणः कोषः। 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.

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

नीलकूठ: - नील: कण्ठे यस्य स: नीलकण्ठ: | शिवस्य कण्ठे नैत्य विष्णवादिः-सकलप्राणांचारिकर-हलाचल-विष्णुप्रकृपतः।—“नीलकण्ठे प्रहासात्मिति श्रुति: | SS(5).
The name नीलकूठ: for Shiva appears in several places in Shri Rudram. Also: श्रीकण्ठ: - श्री: कालकूट-जनिनता शोभा। तदान्नकठो यस्य स: | तथा कालकूट-जनित-मालिन्यमपि शोभेऽ परमेश्वरस्य। “विकारोपी श्राय्यो भुवन-भयभर-व्यसनिः” इति न्यायात। अथवा श्री: विषमेव, “श्रीविषरचना शोभा सम्पत्तसर्दशाविषु। वाणिज्ञितमित्वें विषेव वित्वेवपीति नानार्तत्वमाताः। तदान्नकठो 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

अकाण्डःब्रह्माण्डक्ष्यमूकविकितदेवासुरकूपा-विभेयस्यशोभसैदृश यशिनयन विरिसंहतवतः।
स कलमाष: कण्ठे तव न कुरुते न श्रीयम्महो विकारोपी श्राय्यो मुकवनमभ्रमव्यसनिः।॥१४।
The following names of Shiva are based on this incident. कालकूटविषादी - हलाचल-विष्णानकर्ता कालकूटविषादी। स्कान्दे सनकृमारसहितायां काशिकावनमाहात्म्ये विष्णवादिना समुद्रमस्तन्, तदानी वासुकिमुखाल्पकालविषोपयदनं, तेन ग्नातिः; तदनु तेन विरिष्णियहार्थं शिवं प्रति प्रार्थना, तदनु शिवप्रेरितं-नाशा हस्तेन विषमहात्मच शिवहस्तेन जम्वूचलस्मर्पणं, तदनु-
“गृहित्वा भुक्तवाच्छमिः: कण्ठे नीलोभवततद। तदास्मात्मति तस्यां नाशाणवानिय स्मृतम। शिवंभूकालभुजपश्च कालकंठास्यकोभवदिः।” 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

"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

"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 and told His consort Sati this

"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

गङ्गा धृता न भवता शिव पावनीति नास्वादितो मधुर इत्यपि कात्थुक्तः। सर्वश्रणाय जगातां करणातिरिक्तक्षमःदृष्टयः कलिता-मेतद-नन्यसायम्। (Brahmatarkavastam) महेशः। महा is a substitute for महत meaning big or great ईशः is synonymous with ईश्वर: and means lord or master महेशः is the name of Shiva महाशास्वारिश्रेष्ठ महेशः। “य: पर: स महेशः:” ईत श्रुति। SS(26) महेशः। स्वरूपादियक्षितस्वत्तुयोगाधिष्ठानत्व हि इन्द्रायनमुहार्द्धः; यदादाय पश्चिमार्द्धः उत्तरार्द्धादि प्रकार इन्द्रायनादिष्पू “ईश्वराय स्वाहा” ईत मनः प्रवृत्तः; शिवस्तु महेशः। तेषामीश्वरत्वात् “चवे: सर्व्यस्यसंप्रेषः सर्वेषः शामुराकारद्धम्यो” ईत श्रुते:। “सेन्द्रादिशु च देवे षुत तत्त्व शैलयुज्यते” ईत भारतवचनाच। एतदभिषणायेव च महेशरशक्तु भूतान्ते महेशायशश्रेष्ठ सः।” ईत भारतवचनाम। महेशः: प्राणिन इन्द्रायनात्यपि यद्यशित्तुवच वर्तते। इदमेव एतदोषीनुत्त्वस्य महत्वमिति। Indra and other gods like Yama may be lords of their respective quarters and have powers but the Shiva is their Lord also. Their lordships and powers were given by Him only. And it is to Him only they all rush for protection when they see a danger to all, as happened in the story just narrated. Later on it is said अत: इतरदेवतासाध्विकार्यप्रवृत्तकतया वर्णनार्थतिज्ञानां महदीशित्तुत्त्वमस्ये महेशः ईत स्मृत: ईत। SS च श्रुतिप्रसिद्धानां नाम, “मायिन तु महेशरमः”, “तमीश्रणाम परम महेशरमः”, “य: पर: स महेशः:” ईतवादि श्रुते। SA(2)

महायोमकेशः। महत = ग्रेट or big योमन = sky, atmosphere योमकेशः: is an epithet of Shiva योमकेशः। गङ्गा धृतारणस्ये योमकेशः: गङ्गा धृतारणस्ये योमकेशः: गङ्गा धृतारणस्ये प्रवृत्तयः: केशः। अस्येति योमकेशः। SS(96) and SA(75). While receiving the Ganga when she was coming down from the heavens, Shiva spread out His hair which appeared to cover the sky. Hence the name. It is also one of Lalita's name योमकेशी योमेव केशा यस्या विरान्दुपतयः। योमकेशः: योमेव योमकेशः योमेव योमकेशः। अस्येति योमकेशः। 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 महायोगकेशम meaning great or big is significant महायोग meaning “the big or the great sky” is said to distinguish it from the “small sky” that is mentioned in the Upanishads. अथ यदिण मसिनम बहापुरे दहरे पुण्डरिकेश वेदम दहोरोरभियत्वस्तराकाशस्तरिमन यदन्तन्त्वदेशथा तदन्तन्त्वदेशथाविज्ञािनत्वयमिति। 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 (दहरे अल्प ) and बहापुरे 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.

कुंताभदन्त्तम - कुंदम = jasmine flower अभ्यर्थः = likeness, resemblance दन्तः = 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

वाणितुद्द : - वाणी वाणी विशुद्ध ओषधवेदादयो यस्य स: वाणितुद्दः I “अस्य महतो भृतस्य निष्ठिःसतमेत्यगणे गंगावेदायेव गंगावेदायेव:” इत्यादि श्रुति:। II उक्त च सूत्रकारण: शास्त्रयोनित्वादिति। विवृति च भाष्यकारण महत: ओषधवेदादे: शास्त्रस्य योनि: कारणामिति। SS(318)

कुतमागम : - कुता रचिता मुखपद्यकाव्यिणिन्त्वात आगमा: प्रणवादिमहायामचा: ओषधादि सर्वंवेदा:। प्रोद्यतादि अश्बाविकातिस्पन्धकात आगमाध्य यस्य स: कुतमागम:। “अस्य महतो भृतस्य निःशसितमेत्यगणे: इत्यादि” श्रुति:। SS(444)
वेदनिःशसितं: - वेदा ऋग्वेददायम्: निःशसितिभवत्यान्तरण्यग्नि: शासो भवति एवं यस्य स वेदनि: शसित। “अः स्त महतो भूतयत्न निःशसितमेवादेवद” इत्यादि श्रुतः। I SS(733)
बेदकारं: - विभेदमन्वितं अभिभिति वेदाः: आभाया: तानू करोति निःशसितरूपतया उच्यायति इति बेदकारं:। “अः स्त महतो भूतयत्यत्यादि श्रुतः। I SS(887).

Thus the sacred vedas in the form of His breath are always wafting in His mouth and are in constant touch with His teeth making them very pure and endowing them with unique sacredness. For these reasons the comparison of the teeth with the jasmine flower is to be found often in the compositions of the saints and devotees. Some examples are given here. Shri Narayana Theertha addresses Krishna as कुन्द्ररदन and कुन्दमसुदरदन in his Krishna Leela Tarangini. (रद: = tooth.) This description of Devi’s teeth is in Shyamala Dandakam. कुन्दपुष्पयुतिनिःस्मदन्ताविनीमलालोकःक्षोलसंमेलनसप्रस्तावणाधरे।

सुइं - सुरः = god or deity. Shiva is the lord of gods like Indra, Brahma. He could ward off Yama also. Thus all the gods could not assess and understand His greatness and glory. That is why they were naive enough to plan and send Manmatha on that infamous mission. He was also worshipped by asuras like Ravana who subjugated the devas. He could crush Ravana and make him realise his helplessness and finally surrender to Him. There is none equal to Him or greater than Him. So Shri Suka salutes Him saying this निःशस्त्रसाम्यतिरिश्वयन राधयसा र्यथामनि ब्रह्मणि रूपयेते नमः। I BH(2-4-14) निःशस्त्र साम्यतिरिश्वयन यस्य यदपेक्षयतं अन्यस्य साम्यतिरिश्वयन नासितं, तेन राधयसा ऐश्वर्यं र्यथामनि स्वरूपः ब्रह्मणि र्यमामाणय (Shridhara’s commentary). Shri Sadasiva Brahmanda bows to Him saying (in Navaratnamala- 12) निःशस्त्रमहिमामाणानातस्मिन शिवम। तुरप्तं = comparison. So he says “I salute Shiva of incomparable glory.”

कोटिसूर्यपकाशम् - 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 depending on anyone else. So He has these names सूर्यकोटिनित्रिश्रिति: - सूर्यकोटिनित्रिश्रिति: इव प्रकाशो यस्य सः: तथा। इव च अभूतपूर्वम्। अधीक्षीतिसूर्यपकाशम्।। “नमो दीसाय दीसिरुपिण” इति श्रुति:। I SS(502) सुदार्शनः - सर्वभक्तकाशेन प्रमाणवर्णन विवा सर्वभक्ता दीसिरुपिण सुदार्शन। “दीसाय दीसिरुपिण” इति श्रुति:। I SS(633) महाभूतिः: - महती चूतितिव्राणमय्यक्षमा च अस्यये महाभूतिः:। “स्वच्छन्येति:” (बृ-उ-४.६.१६), “योजनाः योजनाः” (बृ- उ- ४-७.६५)। इत्यादि श्रुते:। I VS (176) मरीचि: - तेजसिवनामपि तेजस्वातो मरीचि:। “तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम्” (गीता १०-३६)
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 मर्गबन्धु = 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.

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

वा... दभयूदानसमया... दाता... दघशोषणा... दगिणत... दौेयःपदूापणात् ।
से... दौीपितरेक... एव... सततं... सषट... सािणः... ॥

मर्गबन्धुते... मर्गाः = 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 उदारम = generous, liberal. So the word मर्गबन्धुते...
means that Lord Shiva is more generous in granting one’s wishes than the Mandara tree. So He is known as 

Kāmaprabhā: - Bhūtāmi: Kāmaśānta Prakāraṇa Dvārtātita Kaśmiprabhā: । 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 

“yanaṃṣṭhitau kuchelau uchchchhaye datri ca viśveṣṭhāt” | 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 

Varadā: - Abhimittanan Varana Dvārtātita Varadā: । VS(330). He grants boons desired from Him. Also 


Saint Sadasiva Brahmandra calls Him as Nātamanā - “the wishing tree of heaven” in his song: Bhūtāmara - Bhaja re Gopalam. Again he calls Him as Sāvarkāṇṭha - “the Mandara tree planted in the residential quarters of His devotees” in the song: Manasa Sanchara re - Manasa sanchara re. We find the mantra: Namo vṛkṣıyō harikeśo: 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: Parima: - Paramarṇasyātita Parī, Sāmudrā: - Tasmaśājata: Parima: - Devvṛkṣa: - Tāṃṭrāṇaḥvībhodapī Parima: - Bhaktajñenaḥ Ītīrtya: । SS(264) and 

vrkṣaṇaṃ Pita: - vrkṣaḥ Atmaśūrdyā: , Teṣāṃ Pita: svāmī. “vrkṣaṇaṃ Pataḥye Nama Ītī śruti: । 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 Āmara: . 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 

अनन्तवचु सवः तेषां तद्वक्तव्यत्त्वमप्रसाधतः । BG(7-23). Sankaracharya, in his commentary, points out that 

“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 śruti: eternal as said in verse No. 3. He is not subject

maargabandhu.pdf
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.  

BH(10-80-11). This idea is repeated by Shri Kulasekara in his Mukundamala (31) सेवे स्वस्त्य पदस्य दातारि सुरे नारायणेन नित्यति। 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 च मम प्रियः हि ज्ञानिनोद्यमः। “To them who are ever devout, I secure them gain and safety.” BG(9-22). Here योगः and क्षेमः “gain and safety” is explained by Shri Sankara as योगः अप्रातस्य प्राप्तिः क्षेमः तद्रक्षणः तदुक्षणः प्राप्तियमः अहम। (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 एवं भोजनच्छरणः तेषां अत भोजवान एव तेषां योगक्षेम वहनति। 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 यद्च्छोपपच्छन वर्त्त्यानां गौहाराश्रमी। BH(10-80-7).

मन्द्रागेन्द्रसारम् - मन्द्र: = is the name of a mythical mountain अगः = mountain. इन्द्र: = the first or the best (of any class of objects). So the word मन्द्रागेन्द्र means Mandara, the best among the mountains. सारः = 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. मन्द्रो मेरमन्द्र: सुपार्श्वः कुमुद इति अयुत्योजन विस्तारोत्त्यां हेरोशुर्दिशामव्याध्य्य गिरय उपज्यातः। 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 सर्वंगतः: स्थाणु: अचलः: - सर्वंगतविवातः।
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—बलिनामपि बलवत्चातः महाबलः। He is stronger than those who are said to possess great strength. VS(172)

Mahabali:- महाबले शरीरं सामवेगैः संवृतपरः वा येषां ते महाबलः, इतिप्रेयत्त्रस्मृतयः तेषां पर: श्रेष्ठः परमेष्ठः। itiśthraṇāṃ pāram maheṣṭhaṁ mithitam śrūtiḥ। SS(604). In fact He is known as अद्वितीयप्रमणमम्: परेण च इति यावतः। “तत्सायतनममच्च मित्र यथार्थ:।” यद्य श्रीशेषलारुणचलादिर्विवचतपत्वादितः। श्रीशेषलिखितं हद्धा पुरुः स्वायतः वै यथार्थ: कादंतु मरणादरुणचलामधिति च स्मरणातः। “वनानि श्रावणिर्यथं शर्मः” रिति स्तोत्रः। “सर्वो होषु तुर्दः” इति श्रुतिः। SS(856).

Mahishāsura:- महीशशृः रिति परारथोऽक्षी। “वनानि विष्णुर्गिरियो दिशातः” (विष्णु-२-१२-३८) इति परारथोऽक्षी। VS(369). He held up Mandara during the churning of the ocean and lifted the Gowardana mountain as Krishna. So He gets the name महाद्रिपुकः—महानमद्रिपुकः गिरि मन्द्रं गोवर्द्धनं च अमृतमथने गोरक्षणे च धृतवातिनित महाद्रिपुकः। VS(180). The fact that He is mightier than the mightiest and has compassion makes Him the ideal protector. Shri Vedanta Desika has expressed this idea beautifully in his works अभिन्नो हेतुतनुतनीयः नाथ तदन्त्यः न विभावयाति। भयं कुतः स्यात्त्वयं सातुर्कपे रक्षा कुतः स्यात्त्वायं जातरोऽक्षे। (Ashtabhujashtakam - 5) त्यति रक्षति रक्ष्यः: किमन्यः: त्यति चारक्षति रक्ष्यः: किमन्यः:। इति निधित्वः: श्रावणितनित्यः नूतने वेगतात्र तटाः त्यतः। (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 त्रीनि त्योकानं सृपरिक्रमयं तमेव दर्शनं गतः।
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 मृत्युरक्षकः 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

मृत्युरक्षकः मृत्युभियानब्रह्मितानाः
महंमातिमृत्युमुपैति पूर्वः
अथ स्वभावादर्मृत्युः तेषु
कथं पुनर्मृत्युदिघियोऽवकाशः

The Maharshi says that when a devotee seeks the protection of the Lord from fear of death He protects him by destroying the individual! This sounds alarming and confusing. But what the Maharshi means is that normally one identifies himself with the body-mind complex and not the Self that is one’s true nature. Thus the individual feels separate from the Self which is immortal and not subject to destruction. This separative idea is formed in the individual’s mind. As long as one cherishes this mistaken notion one is in the grip of the vicious samsara. He is subject to repeated birth and death. This wrong notion that makes one to identify himself with the body is known as ahimkara or ego. When one surrenders himself to Lord Mrityunjaya who is very much in everyones heart the ahimkara 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 - महागौरी means great or glorious Gauri अदरूम = 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 अधानी अधनारीिमिलत ईरः अधानीिरः। नायशोऽधानीिरः। तवाचायः -

“अधनारीिचरं हिरनीलमधु नागानजना वरवमधु। कारािमथ दीजटा दीमथ।” इित। “दिरि लोहोत” इित उः। SS(437)

Kalidasa says this in the invocatory verse to his great poem Raghuvamsam

वागथािवव संपृवागथूितपिये। जगतरौ वै पावतीपरमेः। इित। “I salute Parvati and Parameswara who are the parents of the universe and who are inseparably united like the speech and the sense, for obtaining the correct knowledge of the words and their meaning.” Thus Krishna says that He is both the intelligent cause and the material cause of the creation. He is करणं - कारणं उपादानं। कारणं - करणम्। विवधं भुवनं विबिधं। विविधं भुवनं किष्टे इति विकर्ति स एव भगवान् विषुः। VS(381). The material cause is also known as prakriti which Krishna called as His inferior aspect in BG Chapter 7. Prakriti is also called maya that deluding power of Iswara मायां तु प्रकृतिर्विचारायनं तु महेश्वरम्। SVU(4-10). Prakriti is maya and the Lord Maheswara is in
control of it. Krishna says that His maya is very powerful and very hard to overcome दैवी 
ह्वेशा गुणमयी मम माया दुर्भवया। BG(7-14). “This divine illusion of Mine, made up of 
gunas, is hard to surmount.” So He is known as महामायः। मायाविनामिपि मायाकारित्वात् 
महामायः। “मम माया दुर्भवया” इति भगवद्भक्तचालक। VS(170). Krishna says that in fact 
He is both: the intelligent cause and the material cause called prakriti. Thus मूर्तप्रकृतिः 
is one of His names मूर्तभूता प्रकृति: मूर्तप्रकृतिः। जगदातिकारणं। ततोरितपादानत्मकं 
ब्रह्मेत्यतः। “तदेषतं। बहुमूर्तं। प्रजायेतिः” इति श्रुति:। SS(411). Also प्रकृति: 
- जगदातिकारणम्। परमेश्वर। प्रकृति:। अयमात्म:। सूक्ष्णप्रेयं। निर्दिशत:। प्रकृतिः। 
स्वाधिकृतिः। श्रीआतन्त्रीयोपपतिः। उपपतिः। विवृताः। चेतो। भाष्याकारणं 
स्वाधिकृतिः। श्रीआतन्त्रीयोपपतिः। उपपतिः। उपपतिः। ततः। श्रुतिः। 
Bhavani, is His beloved. बहुमूर्ततत्त्वसुपपपत्तात्। उपपतिः। उपपतिः। ततः। श्रुतिः। 
BG(7-14). “This divine illusion of Mine, made up of gunas, is hard to surmount.” So He is known as 
mahamayá. - mâyávinámaipí máyákarérítváat, máhámáyah. “mám máyā duśrávayā” iti bhagavad-bhaktačalak. VS(170). Krishna says that in fact 
He is both: the intelligent cause and the material cause called prakriti. Thus mūrtparikriti: 
is one of His names mūrteśu prakriti: mūrtparikriti:, jagnádārikané, taṁjñiraitapādātantrm 
brahmétyané: “tadēsaṁ. bahumūrteḥ. prajāyētiḥ” iti śruti: II ājñëtāti śaṃkendrasyātmakāntarātā, 
bahumāyattā bihumbheṭhutvādātantram II SS(411). Also prakriti: - jagnādāitātanm: parameśvar: 
prakriti: ayaṁ atmaḥ. svādhyāyanam. nityātmaḥ. prakritiḥ. – svādhyāya. atmaneśvarādyādvyātāryaparēyaṇa 
viśvolt cande māyākāraṇāṇṛdharṣnapradāhakēm II SS(570) māyāvikāj: - māyāyā 
viśvolt kāraṇa-māyā-prakāraṇāṇa-svātānaya-svātānaya. svāmatā yagnāīdēvēōkaṇa 
“dēvēōkasānti śvagunānaśūrāṃ” iti śruti: II SS(557). The prakriti mentioned as the mother is symbolised as the Lord’s consort and 
is variously called as Parvati, Ambika, Gauri, Bhavani, LakShmi etc. prakriti, viṣṇugṛhi, 
nārāyaṇasamādhīta 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 āmamahēśvarasūrāṃ (Umamaheswara stotram) as follows 
nam: 
vishvāyāmya navābhavābhya pārśvādyānāyāyam. II I salute the two Shivas who are eternally 
young and whose bodies are entwined with each other. Krishna also adds that we the created 
beings are in the clutches of prakriti and go through the cycle of birth and death till wisdom 
dawns on us but He is beyond it and maya, however powerful it may be has no influence on 
Him. So He is known as māyātītā: - māyāyā aśīte: - māyāyā vā aśīte: II satvade: gurum-
sāmānyāu-p prakrītivivajñita ityāt: II “atamasthirāmāyamāyam” iti śruti: II SS(41), and niṁmarā: - 
māyāyā niṁmarā: niṁmarā: ityāpi “māyāyā tu prakrītī vivāmāyēṁ tu mahēśvarē” iti māyāsambandha: 
śrutiḥ drṣṭāyaḥ, tathāpi māyāyā: kāryātyāya vāsyaśaṃsthamāya vāsya kāryātyāyaśaṃsthamāyāyam śrutiḥ: II 
avat eva, vyākṣātyāyam: pari:, aṣṭāmāyātātātātā, aṣṭāmāyātātātātātātā iti “atamasthirāmāyam” iti śruti: II 
SS(693). Bartruhari states the fact that the Lord is not in the clutches of maya in his 
own way in his Vairagyasatakam.(17) 
ēko régaśā ṛajāte priyātāmahādārśhāhī hāro 
nīrāgēsā jāno vīmuktātānāsaśnā n yasmatā pari: II 
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 भवानीव भवं प्रभुम्। BH(2-23-1). The following names are thus derived from the facts stated above

पार्वतीपति: - पर्वत: हिमवानं तत्वं पुरुषं पार्वती। तत्या: पति: । तदुकं सूसंहितायरः “सा शिवा करणामूर्तिरजगन्माता त्रिधीमयी। शिवाभिषा परान्तदा शिवंस्यापि शिवारी” स्वेच्छाया हिमवपुरुषी स्वभक्तजनवस्तः, तत्या: पति: प्रिय: परमेश्वर: ॥ “अभिवक्तपत्य उऽ्रायते नमो नमः” इति श्रुति: ॥ SS(24) and अभिवक्तपति: - पार्वत्या: प्रिय: अभिवक्तपति: । “हिरण्यपत्येण अभिवक्तपत्य” इति श्रुति: ॥ SS(429). Also SA(15) गौरीशः - गौरीशोऽभिवक्तपति: ॥ SS(121) श्रीपति: - अमृतमयो रसरूपं सुरासुरार्दीन दिष्टा श्रीरिः पतित्वें वर्यामनस्ति श्रीपति: । श्रीं: पर शक्तिः, तत्या: पतिरिति वा, “परास्य शक्तिं विशेषं शूरयं” (धे-उ-५) इति श्रुति: । VS(603). श्रीशः - प्रिय: ईशः । श्रीशः । VS(606) गजत्यपि - गजत्यपि - गजस्त्रिं पति: । “इदं सर्बमसृजते” ति श्रुति: । SS(36) विख्यताः - विख्यताः माता व्यापी ज्ञाता वा । SS(85) जगत्याः - जगत्याः धाता कर्ता । SS(86) मातामहं: - मातु: पिता मातामहं: । चतुर्विभूमिमुद्रस्य पारंपरिस्य माता पृथिवी, तत्या: पिता मातामहं: । “स भूमिमुद्रजते” ति श्रुति: । पृथिवी मातुसः “इदं वै माते” ति श्रुति: । SS(615). Devi Gauri is called महा or great or glorious because of Her greatness. But one has to remember that She is dependant on Him for Her greatness. Shiva’s greatness is revealed by the fact that He married Her though She was only the daughter of the mountain Himavan. This marriage conferred greatness on Parvati and Himavan also. Similarly as Vishnu He married LakShmi, the daughter of the ocean, and conferred honour on LakShmi and the ocean also. This is stated symbolically in our puranas. For example, DakShayani wanted to attend and participate in the sacrifice organised by Her father DakSha. Shiva told Her not to go and warned that if She disregarded His advice and went to the function She will meet with humiliation. But She went to the function overriding His advice only to be met with a barrage of insults in the assembly. Unable to bear the insult, She sacrificed Her body and was reborn as Parvati. She had to perform severe penance to please Shiva and married Him again. A similar
incidence is narrated in Ramayana also. Sita spent happy days with Rama in the forest
till She saw the the golden deer and became infatuated with it. She sent Him away from
Her to capture it. This invited trouble for Her. The moment Rama turned His back on
Her, Ravana appeared on the scene and carried Her away to Lanka. She was incarcerated
for a long time and suffered greatly. शिवारोपार्थारम् - शिवारम् = red lead दूर = distant,
far off प्रचारम् = going away. That is, Shiva’s complexion is very red and it outshines
the colour of the red lead. Shri Rudram says असौ यत्वाः अरुणः उत ब्रह्म: सुम्रालः:।
This says that Rudra is तांत्रः = copper coloured, अरुणः = rosy, ब्रह्मः = golden yellow,
सुम्रालः = 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: तस्तिशुषुधः =
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 यत्वाः इत्यपेते आदित्यमुपतिष्ठे।
The votary should praise and worship the sun by means of the rik असौ यत्वाणी in the
Rudram. So तांत्रः - अत्यन्त रक्तस्तिशः।।“नमस्तामाय च” तिः श्रुतिः।। 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 द्याचः: - द्याचीलो द्याचः।।अनेन
परमेपदसिः या शान्ति तनू सर्वेः हारुपिणि सा प्रदर्शिता।।“या ते रुद्र शिवा तनू” रिति श्रुतिः:
SS(155) सिन्धुराजाजिठेरीः। सिन्धुः = the sea, ocean राजनः = 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. अति = a prefix used to mean very, too, exceedingly
etc धीरेः = strong minded, wise, resolute। सिन्धुराज 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 धीरेः as one who is endowed with a mind that does not waver
even when assailed by deleterious forces that are capable of perverting विकारहेतुः सति
विक्रियन्ते येषां न चेतांसे त एव धीरेः।।(Kumarasambhava-1-59). Gita and the upanishads
use the word to mean a person of wisdom or discrimination.
वेदहिनोपिन्यतादेहो कौमारो योवन जरा।
तथा वेदान्तनिपाविनिर्स्तान न मुद्यति।।BG(2-13).
Just as in this body the Self passes into childhood and youth and old age, so does He
pass into another body. The wise man has no delusions in this regard and so is not
troubled in the mind. Arjuna had delusion in this regard. He admitted in the end that his
delusion had been destroyed as a result of Krishna’s teaching. He said नष्टमः स्मृतिरः तत्ततयामयाः
चुयत। BG(18-73). Again यं हि न व्यत्तत्त्वं च पुरुषं पुरुषं न। समुदं खसुरं धीरेष सोऽमृतवाय कल्पते॥ 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 स्थितप्रमः, स्थितधीः etc.. The
upanishads use the word धीरं to indicate a man of wisdom and realisation. This example
is from Kathopanishad एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्म एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति। तमात्मस्य
चेषुनुसभ्यति धीरा: तेषां सुरं दशाते नेतरं शा॥ BG(2-12).
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 यः करोति। तमात्मस्य
चेषुनुसभ्यति धीरा: तेषां सुरं दशाते नेतरं शा॥ BG(2-12).
One other interpretation of the word धीर: - धियं इरयति, धियं प्रयति। ईर = to urge,
elevate, bring to life. Thus the word धीर: means the Lord who is behind the intellect and
gives life to it. We worship Him through the Gayatri mantra as धियो न: प्रचोदयात।
Shiva is known as गायऽीवः - गायऽीवः गायऽीवः। गायऽीप्रतिपः इत्यः।
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: प्रसत्रमभिऽ दुरिर्गािुं दुरस्तयः।
अनन्तपत्ताः दृढःसः स्वतःमिद्कव इवार्षेः।
समुद्रां दृष्टगः वा नारायणपरः मुनि:।
नोत्सर्धन न शुष्येत सरिद्धिरेष सागः॥ 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 गम्रीर: deep or profound. Describing the
qualities of Rama, Narada tells the sage Valmiki that Rama was profound like the ocean
समुद्र इव गम्रीरः। (Balakanda-1-17). The sage will appear to be simple, but his depth of
knowledge and maturity cannot be measured. Because of his immense wisdom he cannot be overcome or overpowered. He is firm. He is beyond time and space as he has found he is अनन्त: and अपर: । अपर: means shoreless. A jnani is limitless and all pervading as he has found his true nature स्वरूपः . He is unshakeable; this refers to his emotional strength. On this point Krishna says दुःखेनुिनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः । वीतरागभयबोधः स्थितिमीमुनिनरूपः ॥ 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 प्रसादे गिरिशोपमः । 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 पूणत्वः . 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 नारायणपर: 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 वरं गन्तुकामस्त्य त्यजतथं बसुन्धराम । सर्वलोकातिस्पेष्येव लक्ष्येति चित्तविकिया ॥ (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 सर्वदभिगत: सद्धि: समुद्र इव सिन्धुभि: । 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. संपदो नैव संपदः विपदः नैव विपदः। विपदृ विस्मरण विष्णोऽसंपदं संस्मरणं हरे॥ 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 द्वारे यत्त्रात्पुनर्नभवद्वासितम॥ 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 मागबंदुम् भजे = I worship मागबंदुम्. = 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

यस्मिन्हात्मात्तिशयोनितिदिनित्वं
न्यूतपमात्त्वमुष्मम समुपौति सवर्णानुसरमात्वकालनापि च न प्रतकर्षी
तद्वर्णायामि भवतः कथमात्मानरूपम्॥

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 साल्त्र प्रायस: : 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

maargabandhu.pdf
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. अप्पण्वयजेन्द्र गीतं स्तोत्रार्जं पठेयस्तु भक्ता प्रयाणे।
तस्यार्थसिद्धं विधते मार्गमध्येभयं चाशुतोषो महेशः।

शम्मो...

अप्पण्व = the name of the author यजेन्द्र = performer of sacrifices गीतं = sung स्तोत्रार्जं = great poem पठेयस्तु = reads भक्ता = with devotion प्रयाणे = during a journey तस्य = for him. अर्थ = wish, desire सिद्धं = fulfilment, complete attainment विधते = arranges. मध्येभयं = middle or central part मार्गमध्येः = on the way अभयं = freedom from fear, security आशु = fast, quick तोषो = 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 फलौतः। फलं = 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 = पत्रपुष्पफलादिभीः-भक्तिमात्रसमपर्यः। सुखेन लभ्यत इति सुलभः।

“पत्रेषु पुष्पेषु तोषेषु अक्रीतलभ्येषु सदैव सतसु भक्तेक-भग्येः पुरुषे पुराणे मुक्ते कर्थं न क्रियते व्रतः।” इति महाभारते। 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 पत्रेषु पुष्पेषु तोषेषु यो में भक्ता प्रयच्छति।

तदर्हे भक्तयुपहते मश्शामि प्रयत्नात्मः।” BG(9-26) Shiva is known as:
मागबंधु - कार्यरिप्रियतं शिवस्य पुराणादिभु प्रसिद्धम्। "हरि हरे वा संपूज्य ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते" इति। अनेन शिवपूज्यां सौभभ्यमुक्तम्। शिव: पूजनीय इति च॥ SS(326).

भक्तनां सुतभ: - शिवपूजादिपराणां सुभम:, श्रीप्रमनुभावकः। तद्धर्ममेव शिवमूर्तियर्ध्वणम्॥ SS(484)। One of Shri Lalita’s names also states this fact सुखारा-सुखेन उपवासादिपराणां सुभम:, श्रीप्रमनुभावकः। तद्धर्ममेव शिवमूर्तियर्ध्वणम्॥ 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 हाच्चयत्र श्रीप्राणयत्रो बहम्यासेदमुरात्मजः। आत्मातात् सर्वभूतानां सिद्धचारिष्ठ सर्वं। BH(6-6-19)। He is the very Self of every being and He is available everywhere. There is an apocryphal story that once the author Shri DikShita was preparing to go to a nearby village on some work when he received information that some people who were ill disposed to him were hatching a diabolical plot to attack and kill him on the way. The poet composed this stotram and prayed to the Lord to ensure his safety during the journey. As a result the enemies could not carry out their plan and Shri DikShita could complete his travel in complete safety. We too can recite this stotram and be protected by the Lord in our travels.

It is our tradition to mention the फलोशुद्धिः 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 फलोशुद्धिः 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 यजनं। The Manusmrithi states that performing sacrifices is one of the duties of a brahmin अध्यापनमथयं यजनं याजनं तथा। दानं प्रतिव्रतं चैव वांछ्यानामकारणं॥ Kalidasa says that the kings of the solar dynasty tended the sacrificial fires by means of offerings and honoured the guests also। यथाविधि हुताशनं यथाकामाचिताधिनाम॥ (Raghuvamsa-1-6)। Manu further says that the noble ones should eat only the remains of this yagna as only it is worth eating. One who cooks for himself eats sin। अर्थं स केवलं मुद्यं यः पच्चत्यात्मकारणात्। यथाशिश्याश्रमं दृष्टत्तसामन्तवं विधीयते॥

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

यज्ञशिष्टाद्भूतः यान्ति व्रहा सनातनम्।
नार्य लोकोपयज्ञस्य कुर्सनवन्यः कुरुसस्तम॥

Eating the ambrosia, the remnant of the sacrifice, they go to the eternal brahman. Even this world, which is common to all beings is not for one who does not perform the sacrifices mentioned. How can there be to him another world which can be secured only by superior means? (BG 4-31). The Lord Himself is called yagna यज्ञः—सर्वप्रयज्ञस्वपन्तयज्ञः यज्ञः:“यज्ञो वी विषुः” (२३ १-७-४) इति श्रुते:। VS(445). Also यज्ञः—सर्वप्रयज्ञस्वपन्तयज्ञः। “तत्वं यज्ञस्तव विशुः”रिति श्रुति:॥ SS(160). The performance of prescribed duties or what is known as karmas is necessary to get purification of the mind. This is the necessary first step in the path of spiritual progress चित्रस्य श्रुद्धये कर्म says Shri Sankaracharya in his Vivekachudamani. He defines such a person who has been regularly performing the sacrifices as noble minded महात्मान: अशुद्धिता: in his commentary (BG-19-13).

Anandagiri elaborates the definition as महान प्रकृतिः यज्ञादिभिः: शोभित आत्मा सत्वे येषां - 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 आस: - आस: यथार्थवाक्यः। - a credible, trustworthy person. Such persons speak from experience. So we need not question their sincerity but accept what they say as the truth with complete faith. Thus our tradition says आसवाक्यां प्रमाणम्। Great men act and speak for the good of the world only. They have no axes to grind. King Parikshit mentions this point when he greets the great sages who had come to see him in his last days समागताः: सर्वं एव सर्वं वेदा यथा मूर्तिधरारसिप्षेः। नेत्राध्यामुच्छित कश्चनाथः श्रद्धे परातुष्ट्रमात्रस्वादिष्ठम्॥ 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 महात्मो निवयसंति सत्तो वसन्तवत्त्वोहिंचित्चरन्तः।
तीर्थन: स्वयं भीमभवार्णेः जनानहेतुमानारथपि तारयन्तः॥ (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 गीतं = 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 भगवद्गीता is that it was sung or chanted by Krishna: श्रीमता भगवद्गीता। 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:

स्वार्थपिणियोऽगावो, द्रोणक्ष्या गोपालनन्दनः। पार्थां बलसः,
सुधीभोक्ता, दुर्घ गीतात्मुक्त 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 गौणानि विश्वातानि महाथमः। ऋषिप्रिहि: परिगीतानि तानि वश्यामि भूतेष।॥ Thus, the use of the word “sung” (गीतम) 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 राजविद्या राजगुह्यम्। “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 भत्त्वा प्रायाणे तत्स्य अर्थासिद्धि विचयते। (i.e.) whoever reads this with devotion during a journey, the mission will be completed successfully. The emphasis is on the word भत्त्वा - 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
sanskritdocuments.org

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.” 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 धर्मः सर्वधर्माणां भवतः परमां मतः?

Bhakti (devotion) while chanting the names of the Lord is mentioned more than once in the end after the stotram also. For example it is said:

Shri Sankaracharya, in his commentary, says: Thus a great deal of emphasis is laid on devotion and faith. The Lord is always awake and on the look-out for people who have devotion. He has innumerable number of ears, eyes, mouths etc. 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: स्तवविष्णु: 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 पठे भूयाणे तत् सर्वोद्भिकिषिरोहुम्. सर्वतं: श्रुतिमाणोके स्वामावृत्य लिखित। Thus 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 समर्थन्तत्व तथेवरम ।

य: प्रयाति स मद्दावं याति नास्त्वत्र 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;

य य वापि स्मरन्ताः त्यज्ञवन्ते कलेवरम ।

तं तमेवैं तौन्ते सदा तद्दावभावित: ॥ 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 (इष्ट देवता) (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.

कामान्यः: कामयते मन्यमानः: स कामिभिर्वते तत्र तत्र ।

पर्याप्ताकामस्त कृतात्मनस्तवहौ सवै प्रविष्ठीवान्ते कामा: ॥ 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 अजनाभं नामैत्येन भारतिमित यत आरम्भ व्यपदिशान्त्ति BH(5-7-3). The king was - महाभागवतः: 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:

तस्मातस्वेषु कालेशु मामतुस्मर युध्य च।

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 – पुरुषः स परः पाथः भक्तिभविभ-स्तवनन्या। BG(8-7)

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

भक्ताःस्वेष्य मनो विस्मिन् वाचा यत्राम कीर्त्यन्।

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 निबुद्धस्वेष्यं वृद्धिविभ्रमस्तुल्य जन्यं वियुज्ञनजनादर्शनम। 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 मतिलक्षिताय विदुःश्च भगवति सात्वतपुज्वाय विभृण्म।
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: “thus or in this manner.” “In this manner” means “in the manner as advised by You.” Has not Krishna promised earlier that: ” with mind and reason fixed on Me you shall doubtless come to Me alone?”

Thus Bhishma said that he was offering his mind that was free from all hankerings to Him and was thus qualified for liberation. Now, because such attainment of the Lord is the ultimate goal one can desire, saints pray to Him to bless them with His thoughts in their last moments. Thus Lilasuka prayed:

He prays that he should be blessed with the vision of his favourite God Krishna that is at once bewitching and radiant, and a picture of kindness, standing with His legs crossed, decorated with a peacock feather tucked in His hair, playing the flute with His slightly inclined head, in his dying moments. Now, Krishna says that by thinking of Him in one’s last moments one can escape death and get relief. So can one be “smart” and think of Him only in his last moments but after leading a wayward or a “busy” life that had left him no time to think of the world to come? “No,” say our scriptures and saints. The reason is that the last moments can be very traumatic for a variety of reasons. As one grows old and infirm his will power becomes steadily weaker. His subconscious is saturated with numerous thoughts. These thoughts will take over and his free will will not be able to function. If a person had laboured hard chasing “success” in life, accumulating wealth and all the appurtenances that go with it then he would have developed strong bonds with all of them. The thought of having to leave all those hard earned possessions behind will be hovering in his mind and be very painful. Thus he will die thinking of his money and perhaps worrying how all that is going to be managed in his 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 अन्त्यातः 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 त्यस्य-पद-पञ्च-जप-चरणान्तः, अर्थ व में विशाल
मानस-राजहंस:।
प्राण्-प्राणवाचितेः, कण्ठवरोधनविभी
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:

वायुनोऽमतोऽरः कफसंः नािडकः।
कास्-कृतायाः, कण्ठेः घुघुः यते॥

(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.

शयानः: परिशोचितः: परिवीतः: स्ववन्यिः:।
वाय्यमानोऽषि न ब्रूंिे काठपाशवर्यां गतः॥

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 a person the memory of the present life slowly fades. The āraṇya 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 emissaries of Yama, huge in size and menacing with their terrific eyes. The sight makes him shudder and evacuate in fear. BH(3-30. 16 to 19). Kapila says further:

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

The body which a man has nourished by exploiting and inflicting cruelty on other creatures, he will have to abandon here and go alone to hell with the wages of his sins as his sole asset. BH(3-30-31).

A man who lives in this world merely for supporting himself and his family by thoroughly unrighteous means will certainly reach Andhatamisra, the hell of utter darkness. BH(3-30-33).

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

न साम्पराय: प्रतिभाति वाले, प्रमाणत्वं वित्तमोहिन मूढम्।
अर्थ लोको नासित पर इति मानि, पुनः पुनर्वेशामपथते 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.

स्वरसवाही विदुषोधि तथा रूढं भिनविशेषः। साधनपादः-९।
स्वस्य रसेन संस्कारणेव बहतीति स्वरसवाही।
अभिनवव्यथे चतुर्विधांसं तथेति तत् च चुः:
परामृशाति।
रूढः प्रसिद्धः। तथच यथातविदुषः। तथा विदुषोधि
स्वरसवाहित्वहेनुताः यजातीयः यत्केशो भवायवः:
प्रसिद्धिर्विदुषोधिर्योधिभिनविशेष इत्यथः। विदुषामपि
मरणश्रासकृतं भयमाताति भाष्यकृतोक्सम।
पूर्वपूर्वजन्मसु
मरणकाले यत्रासो जातो “मा न भूवं भूयासम्”
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. मृत्युः जन्मवतां बीर देहेन सह जायते। अयु वा अब्धशतान्ते वा मृत्युर्व्रणामां ध्रुवम्। 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 रात्रिणि गच्छन्ति सर्ववर्षों प्राणिनामिः। आयुः क्षययन्त्याशु ग्रीष्मे जलमिवालंशः। 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.

आत्मानमनुशोच तं किमन्यमनुशोचसि।
आयुः नृत्ये यस्य रित्येत्यास्य गतस्य च। Grieve for yourself (alone), why do you grieve for another? In fact, the life-span of each and
every creature, whether staying (at home) or departed (for another place), gets shortened (every moment).

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

“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 त कार्यां ग्रीयमाणयस्य संवंथा || get births suitable for the fulfilment of the desires. Those who perform desireless karmas तिष्काम कर्मा 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 बममुिाः।ूयाण काले मनसाऽचलेन भ्यु योगबलेन चैव।

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

4- How much time the preparations will require?

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

तमेव विद्वेशतिमृत्तुमेति नान्यः पन्था विचत्तेदयनाय

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:

अशारीरिः शारीरिः अनवशेष्वरस्थितम्।
महात्मात्मानं मत्वा पीरो न शोचति॥

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 बहुनां जन्मनां मन्त्रे ज्ञानवान् मां प्रपचतः। वासुदेवः स्वर्गम्यति स महात्मा सुदर्भम्। 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 Sankaracharyya 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. बहुनां जन्मनां ज्ञानर्थसंकाराश्रयाणां अन्ते समातौ ज्ञानवान् प्राप्तिपरिपक्षज्ञानः मां वासुदेवं प्रत्यगात्मानं प्रत्यक्षतः प्रपचतः। 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: मनुष्याणं सहस्षु कथित्वति सिद्धं यत्तामपि सिद्धानां कथित्वम् वैति तत्तचः। 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 us and some of our own experiences add to the scepticism and help to slacken what little interest one might have developed in the subject. Then the preparatory steps that one is expected to go through to become a qualified student for taking up the study of vedanta can be daunting. They too can put off one from taking serious interest in the subject. Because the steps known as साधन चतुष्कुण्डर-संपत्ति: or the four fold qualifications include things such as control of the mind to curb its wandering tendencies so that it becomes focussed on a subject, control of the sense organs so that they become disciplined, detachment to
the pleasures of the world. Thus the reasons why people are not interested in the topic of liberation can be many. One is busy during the active part of the life. The general tendency is to put off religion for the post retirement period. But then it may be too late! Old age will bring with it its own problems. So Shri Sankaracharya wails: आलस्तावत कृत्तिकासङ्कः: तक्रणस्तावत् तर्पीसङ्कः। बुद्धस्तावचिन्तितासङ्कः: परेश्रमाणि कोदपि न सङ्कः॥ So our scriptures advise one to start the practices early in life before one gets sucked into the whirlpool of life. Prahlada tenders this considered advice to his friends: कौमार आचरैत्याजीर धर्मान्विनान्तनिन्ध । BH(7-6-1). When young the mind is fresh, receptive to advices and is not yet polluted by the pulls and pushes of the world. Kalidasa mentions that the kings of the solar dynasty, about whom he writes in his great work Raghuvamsam, acquainted with this subject even when young. He says श्रेयसवेंस्मेेज्ञविषयानोः (1-7). Our tradition says that only that learning that leads to liberation can be called education. सा विद्या वा विस्मुक्ते श्री Sankaracharya also defines education as आत्मनो बोधः: while commenting on the popular verse beginning विद्या विनयस्पन्धेन ब्राह्मणो गच्छिन्ति । BG(5-18). It is knowing about Self. Thus Devi (LakShmi, Lalita) is called Vidya विद्या। The commentator’s explanation is: मोक्षप्रदानानांवृहवपत्तादिया। (Lalita Sahasranamam. No 549). Other subjects are learnt only to eke out a living. They will not be useful beyond a point of time. Thus they are inferior. So a wise person will not fail to give utmost importance to this subject.This is said in our upanishads
dे विद्ये वेदित्ये श्रीत ह सम्ययहविदो वददति परा जेवापरा च।
तत्रापरा ऋगवेदो चन्तर्वेदः सामवेदो धर्मवेदः शिशका कत्त्यो व्याकरण
निरुक्त कुन्ठदो ज्ञोतिषिमि। अथ परा वया तद्दशुरमिडगम्यते॥

MU(1-4 and 5).
These mantras say that there are two Vidyas worth knowing to men - Para and Apara. Out of these two; the vedas, and all their branches through which one can gain the worldly and otherworldly enjoyments is the inferior one and is called Apara Vidya. Para or the superior one is that through which the imperishable brahman is known. Yama also tells this to his student Nachiketa: श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यभेदस्तो संपरीव्य विविधनक्ते धीरः। 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 चथागृही | 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 - नाचुष कृष्णाः कृषणोऽजमाय | . 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 

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

तत्र तं बुद्धिसंयोगं लभते पर्वदेहिकम्।

यत्तते च ततो भूष्य: ससििष्ठो कुरुनन्दन ॥ 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 शैवात्सब्यस्तविदानाम्। 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., यथाकालप्रवृद्धिनां 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 तनुत्त्याम्याम्। 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. मार्गमध्ये भयं च आशुतोषो महेन्द्र:। 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 ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् | न विभेदति 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 सतत-युक्तानां भजतां प्रीति-
पूर्वकम् | ददािम बुिच्छि-योगं तं चेन मामुपयािनित्ति 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
वस्त्रां वै श्रृयुमाणायां कुष्णो परमपूरुषे ।
भक्तिरुप्यः पुंसः श्रोक्षमोहभयापहा ॥ 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 (श्रृयुमाणायाम्) 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:
भवन्तमिह व: स्वधीनियतचेतनाचेतनं
पनायति नमस्यति स्मरति बक्ति पवित्रि वा ।
गुणं कम्पि वेंति वा तव गुणेश गोपायितुः:

80 sanskritdocuments.org
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 भयं कन्दाचन कुतुन कन्दाचन तन न स्याःत्रम्।।

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 - भयािन जललािदूयु भयापहः।। VS(935). But there may be fear from foes and elements etc.. God removes them also. Shiva is known as सहायः - ॄदीनामापहः।। SS(762). He protects even gods like Brahma in times of danger. Lalita is called भयापहः - भयािन जललािदूयु भयािन सहायः।।

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:

विषालासुः पुषाददसा दससभाया वनवासकृतः।
मृधे मृधेऽनेकारथायातो द्रौष्यक्षत्वाचष्म हरेऽव्यति जनञ्जातिः।। 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

विषालासुः व्यालासुः वर्षासुः वच्छुतासुः।
वृषालासुः विश्वोभाषासुः वेयनसुः।। BH(10-31-3).

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

त्रयी सांख्यं योगं: पद्धतिमतं वैणविमिति
प्रभित्रे प्रस्थाने परमिदमद्: पद्धतिं च ।
रूचिनां वैचित्यातः कुर्टि-नानापथजुषाम्
नृणामेको गम्यस्तवमसि पयसामणविमव ॥ (7).

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

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यते तांत्रिक भजाम्यहम् । मम
वर्त्तमानुवत्तनं मनुष्य: पार्थस्ववश: ॥ BG(4-11).

Shri Rudram salutes Lord Shiva who is in the form of various paths. It says - पद्धिनां पतये
नमः । पद्धिनां = शास्त्रोऽक्षु दक्षिणीत्तर: तृतीय-मार्गाणां पति: । 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
सुति: स्वत्यो देवलोकमार्गाः: पन्था ब्रह्मलोकमार्गाः: । The narrow path indicates tortuous religious beliefs and practices. Krishna talks about this

मूढ्राहेणात्मनो यत्पीढ़ किर्यते तपः: ।
परस्योत्सादनात्वं तत्तामसमुदाहरितम् ॥ BG(17-19).

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

Salutation to Him who abides in saline tracts and in trodden pathways.

इरिण्याय Irinyaya: signifies arid tracts and has a refernce to samsara. प्रपथ्यः: वहुभिभि सेवितो मार्गः: प्रपथः:, तत्र भवः: प्रपथ्यः। “नम इरिण्याय च प्रपथ्याय 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: मच्यतः सर्वदुर्गाणि मद्यसादात्तरिष्यसि। Fix your heart in Me. You shall, by My grace, cross over all difficulties. So let us latch on to Him and win His grace.

Thus we have come to the end of this gem of a poem. Quotations from various sources have been given to stress the point that the Lord is one but known by various names and forms. We can find that though this is a small piece of work it condenses in itself the gist of vedantic truth and is very suitable for regular recitation. I submit this commentary of mine at the feet of my preceptor Shri Vedanta Desikachariar Swami. He literally 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)