श्रीमागन्युप्पशरलमाला अथवा पञ्चलस्तवं
मागन्युप्पशरलमाल: ।
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥
भालावन्त्रिकिरीठं भालनेत्रचिरिषा दुर्घपस्यषुकीतम: ।
(भालप्रीत्व्यत्रिकिरीठं भालनेत्रचिरिषा दुर्घपस्यषुकीतम)
शुलाहतारातिकृंतं शुद्धमरण्डुलुर्वं भजे मागन्युप्पम: ।
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ १॥
अङ्के विराज्ञुजाः अभ्रगण्यात्रजाभिमारमोत्तमाः ।
ओकारवान्तिकृंसि सिद्धसंवर्तिणिः भजे मागन्युप्पम: ।
(हीकारवान्तिकृं शुद्ध) शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ २॥
निन्धम चिदानन्दरूपं निन्धताशोषोककेशवेरितपत्रम: ।
कार्त्तिकरणेरत्रां कृतिवासं भजे पवस्मामगन्युप्पम: ।
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ ३॥
कन्दपर्यांप्राप्नीं कालकपाण्ड महेशं महायोगेशकशाम: ।
कुलभद्रन्त सुरूंसः कोटिसूर्यज्ञकां भजे मागन्युप्पम: ।
शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ ४॥
मन्दारभूतेऽदारं मन्दारगोन्दसारं महागौयूर्धुर: ।
सिन्धूदुर्गश्च सिन्धूराजजातिपारं भजे मागन्युप्पम: ।
(सिन्धूगौरप्रारं) शाम्भो महादेव देव, शाम्भो महादेव देवेश शाम्भो ॥ ५॥
अप्ययवज्ञेन गीत स्तोत्रारण पठेघ्रस्तु मत्यथा प्रयाणे ।
तत्स्वार्थसिद्धः विधते मागन्युप्पशर्येभवं चाशुतोषो महेशः ।
(अप्ययमविवर्तेऽछिं पञ्चलस्तवं मागन्युप्पशर्युदारम्)
नित्यं पठेघ्रस्तु मत्यथा तत्स्व मुक्तः करस्ये सायुत्त्वरूपम् ॥

mArgabandhustotram by Appayya Dixita
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, hariharabhedha stuti.

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

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

मागः = a way, road, path; कन्यः = relative or any one associated, well wisher. So the word मागः कन्यः means one who comes along with you giving company and protection स्तोत्रम्

Stotram is a hymn praising the Lord गुणसंकीर्तनात्मक स्तोत्रम् (VS681) It talks about His qualities.

मागः कन्यः स्तोत्रम्

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 बृहत्तमत्वतः. That which is big is brahman. Since the adjective ‘big’ is used simply without a noun to be qualified it implies that the bigness is unlimited. It is infinite and beyond time, space etc., unlike the objects and beings we see in the universe. The scriptures also aver that it is beyond our senses. The famous mantra from the Taittiriyopanishad (Anu IV)
says that the brahman is beyond the reach of our mind and words यतो वाचो निर्वर्तन्ते 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 यां यां तनुं भक्त: श्रद्धयाःचर्चितमच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचर्चां श्रद्धा तामेव 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 तया श्रद्धा युक्त: तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान् मथैः विद्यितान्नितान् ॥ 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
tेषा सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धिसंप्योगं येन मामुपयान्ति ते। BG.10-10.
He assures that to such devotees who worship Him with love He will give the clear wisdom by which they will reach Him. In this manner the saguna upAsana acts as a stepping stone to nirguna upAsana and through that the realisation of God.

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

शम्भो महादेव देव शिव शम्भो महादेव देवेश शम्भो ।
शम्भो महादेव देव ॥

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

अपि वः पिवः वा सवां सवां गतोऽिप वा। यः स्मरतु पुण्डरीकाक्षे सः वादयाम्यन्तरः शुचि: ||
मानसं वाचकं पापं समुपार्जितम्। श्रीरामस्मरणेन व्ययोऽहि न संशयः ||
श्री राम राम राम ||

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

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

यत: सर्वाणि भूतानि भवत्यादियुगागामे। यत्सिमं प्रत्ययं यान्ति पुनर्य युगाक्षे || VS-11

“All 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 येन जातानि जीवन्ति यत् 
प्रयत्न्यभिमिसविशिष्टं
“From whom all these beings emanate, by whom they stay alive and into whom they merge after death.”

**MAHADEVA महादेवः - महांशासौ देवश महादेवः I**

Mahatvā cakalamputjyātātā vinābhivān pramāṇatō mahātātā He is worshipped by everyone. Also He is great because He pervades every thing.(SS22) सर्वानं भावं परित्यज्य आत्मानायोगेन्द्रयं महति महीयते तस्यादुच्चते 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 महादेवे यं निनः संसारसपः - दानां देशमतेदेशमतेतवतः।

**DEVA देवः - स्वामिपर्यो देवशाब्दः; नरदेव इतिवत। अकुंचितस्वामित्वं च शिवस्येव The word deva indicates lordship. His lordship is unrestricted दिव्यतेदेशः (SA93) He is effulgent. Krishna says ” I am the splendour of those who possess splendour,”तेजोमूित् SS413 and अमितात्त्वः SS34 are His names. In the course of teaching of Gita at KurukShetra, Arjuna requests Krishna to show him His cosmic form as Iswara. The gracious Lord obliges and reveals His universal form. Arjuna is overwhelmed by the splendour of the form he sees. He feels as though a thousand suns had risen at once in the sky दिव्य सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेभुगपदुक्तः । यदि भा: सद्यो सा श्वाद्रास्तस्तस्य महात्मनः। (BG 9-12). Here, as is usual with the scriptures, thousand is only indicative and stands for many or infinite. This is a popular verse and is said to have been quoted by the scientist Oppenheimer to describe the explosion of the first atom bomb which he witnessed.

Effulgence does not stand only for light. It also means wisdom. Shiva stands for infinite knowledge यः सर्वपवः सर्वविविधः MU(1-9) One who is omniscient and knower of all चूर्तिः ज्ञानलक्षणाः दीर्घ्यायिनी चूर्तिः VS(275)He bears the shine of knowledge दीर्घमूर्तिः: दीर्घा पुत्रापिस्येव दीर्घमूर्तिः: VS(719) He is of the form of shining knowledge प्रकाशात्म। प्रकाशवस्त्वरूपात्मा यस्य सः प्रकाशात्मा VS(276) His form is effulgent knowledge.
Shiva is the personification of auspiciousness. He is completely free from sorrows that characterise all created beings including plants, animals, birds, humans and devas like Indra and even Brahma the creator. He is the embodiment of supreme bliss. (SS18) Also िनमृैगुणतया शुआत् (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 डे शकमवपाकाशयैरपरामृैः पुःषिवशेषः ईौरः। डे शाः, अिवा, अिैता, राग, ख्रेष, अिभिनवेशा, कम धर्मायनाः, विपाका: कर्मफलानि - जन्मायुभगाः, आशयो ज्ञानादि-वाशनाः, एतेऽऽ: कालजयेपयरामृैः पुःषिवशेषः ईौरः। इौथः।

स्मृतिमात्रेण पावयन् शिव: He removes the sins of those who just think of His name. DakShayani says this to her father DakSha यवक्षरं नाम निसिपिरित नृणां सकृत्त प्रसंगादधमाशु हन्ति 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:

सवाैण शिवनामानि मोक्षदान्वेव सवंदा।
तेजःपद्यःतमं नाम शिववति बहसास्थित।

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.

विचायू श्रुतिरूत्तुक्ष्ठा श्रद्धेकादशानी शुतोः।
तत्र पवित्रकृष्टिः तस्यं शिव इत्यक्षःक्षुद्रयम्।

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 - प्राधान्यम् देवानामीशः देवेशः He is the foremost among the gods like Indra, Agni etc.. VS(492) सुरेशः - सुराणो देवानामीशः सुरेशः He is the lord of the devas.
VS(85). He rules with a firm hand. None can dare to transgress His commandments without facing serious consequences.

TU(VII-1) It is for fear of Him that the wind blows; the sun rises; the fire and Indra perform their duties. It is for fear of Him that death the fifth runs about doing his work with diligence. The same is said by none other than Yama, the lord of death:

Now let us go to the stotram proper. It consists of five verses and a sixth one - called 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. भालः - forehead; bhAla is preferred to (wrongly used) phAla; अवनॆ - descended or come down; किरीट - crown: indicates that Lord Shiva wears a crown on the head किरीटम् - indicates that Shiva wears other ornaments also हेमा - one who is golden-hued and हेमेवाः - One with body like gold are also His names. Shri Rudram salutes Him saying नमो हेमेवाः. पादावनॆ - 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.
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 निरस्तसाम्यतिशयेन राधसा स्वधामनिब्रह्मणीरस्यतेन नमः BH(2-4-14)अतुलः: - तुरुषोपातमस्य न विवधते इति अतुलः: He has none equal to Him. VS(355) अनुतःः - अविदमानुरत्संस्यास्मात् स: अनुतः: There is none greater than Him. VS (80). Further there is none superior to Him. VS(626) अनीशः: - न विचिंद्यतेःस्येव इति अनीशः: All other devas including Brahma the creator are limited by time and are subject to sorrows प्रथमः: - देवानान् प्रथानमूत 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 भाल्नेति: तिरिष्ठा दुधर्श्येकुक्तीः - नेत्रे = eye: अर्धिः = fire: दुधः = burnt: दशुः = arrow: कीटः = a worm, insect पश्चिमः: is the name Manmatha, the god of love, because he has five arrows: they are अरविंदः, अशोकः, चूर्तं, नवमलिङ्कः and नीलोत्तरम् (lotus, ashoka, mango, jasmine and blue lotus). The five arrows are also said to be संमोहनः, उन्मादनः, शोषणः, तापनः and स्वरम्भनः: 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 संमोहनः 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 मन्नथस्य 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 भाल्नेति: SS(159) and ललाटाक्षः: SA(28) It is to be noted that the third eye is unique. None of the human beings and gods including Indra and the creator Brahma possess such an eye. So Shiva is also
known as विरूपक्षः। विरूपाणि विरूद्धस्वरूपाणि लोकविरूद्धविशिष्टविशिष्टाणि अश्वीणि यस्य सः
विरूपक्षः। 1 SS(129). He has an abnormal third eye. The third eye situated in a high position
(viz) forehead and stands for supreme knowledge उत्तरत्मनवर्तलोचनाशालित्वकीर्तनेन
विश्वोत्तरज्ञानाभिविद्योऽसि 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 स्मर: स्मरत्व्यात्मा न हि विशार दु पद्य: परिभाषः
। स्मर Smara is another name of Manmatha. His arrows have not failed anywher in the
world of gods, demons and men. So he became conceited. Smara became (स्मरत्व्यात्मा)
an object of memory. The moral of the story, says the poem, is that an insult to the great
will produce serious consequences वद्यिनेत्र: - वद्यिनेत्रं ठट्ठोट्ठर मयस् स: वद्यिनेत्रः (SS131) is
also one of Shiva’s names. Bhartrihari in his Vairagya Satakam refers to this incident thus:
लिलादार्ध-विलुलक्काम शर्मः: (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; अपाति: = enemy; कृत्ते = mass, heap: Shiva
has destroyed His enemies with His Trident. But Shiva has no enemies तत्त्वे सर्वभूतेषु न में
इद्वश्यारसित न पियः: (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.” ईशानमीथरं देवं दष्ट्वान्वसि शंक्रसः
Krishna confirms this and says “Your enemies have already been killed by Me. Be a mere
instrument.” BG(11-33) मयेवेन निति ता: पूर्वमेव निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन्

The more dangerous “enemies” a devotee has to face are internal such as desire, anger etc..
In reply to Arjuna’s question as to what impels a person to commit sins even though he
may be unwilling, Krishna says काम एष कोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भव:। महाशानो महापापमा
BG(3-37) “It is desire. It is anger. They are born out of rajo guna. It has huge appetite and makes one to commit sins. Recognise it as your enemy.” And later on BG(16-21) He describes these as open gateways to hell that will destroy the self. He cautions Arjuna to be careful and avoid them. So a devotee in order to avoid these internal enemies installs Him in his heart and feels safe. Krishna tells Uddhava that once He is established in the heart evil tendencies like desires get destroyed कामा हृदयव्य नशयन्ति स्ववेम मनि हृदि स्थितम्। BH(11-21-26). They cannot live together like light and darkness. He is called कामाह - कामान हन्ति मुमुख्यणां भक्तानां हिंसकानां चेति कामाह। He destroys the desires of His devotees who seek liberation and the intentions of those who trouble them. VS(294). Also कामनाशः II मुमुख्यणां काम नाशयतीति कामनाशः SS(126). Lord Shiva is the आदि गुरु: the earliest or the first guru. He teaches by demonstration. He shows He has destroyed His desires and wants His devotee to do likewise. He is only too willing to help him provided he makes his heart His temple. In view of this Bhartruhari describes a sadhu whose heart is pure as having devotion to Shiva with trident भूतिनि।

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

Secondly it is wrong to look to such objects or people for security as they are perishable and so are themselves insecure. Hence they cannot confer security on us. We will be left in the lurch. Attachment is called (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 coal tar 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 न्यायत्वमां विसृजेत प्राणमयोधिः य ईपितः:। ॥ वेन कीणात्यमुबो भृत्तस्तत्कर: सेवको वणिकः। (BH 97-8-10) He says that money is valued higher than life itself and so who can give up attachment to it? The thief, the soldier and the merchant trade their dear life for money. In view of this he warns all to stay away from the objects of attachment and seek the Lord. The boy Nachiketa said न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यः। He said man can never get satiated with the wealth when Yama offered him immense wealth in exchange for the teaching about self.

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

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

The devotee shakes off his attachments to the worldly objects first. This was what Vibhishana did before surrendering to Rama. As the brother of Ravana and his minister he was very powerful. He was immensely rich. He had palaces, loving wives and children. But he gave up everything and rushed to Rama without even taking leave of his wife and children. He said त्यतवा पुत्राष्ठ दुरांश्र राघवं शरणं गतः: Renouncing my wives and children I have surrendered to Raghava and again परित्यक्ता मया तद्भव मित्राणि च नतानि च न 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 प्रणायरनाया ध्रुवाध्याप्तमः: BH(11-2-55). Thus firmly stationed in the devotee’s heart He destroys the evil tendencies therein हथनस्थो हम्माण्णी विवनाति सुहृत्तस्तामः BH(1-2-17)
Further it is said त्रेगुणम् शूलमेत् - एवं भूतस्य शूलस्य करस्तवक्ष्जा त्रिगुणात्मिकाया मायाया स्वाधीनत्वमुक्तः भवति 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.

शुद्धं = काल्क्रमेयं परमार्थः मायायांविवादि सामन्यस्यहित: शुद्धं। शुद्धमपाविविहं इति श्रुतिः (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.

अर्धनृचूडं - अर्धं = half इन्द्रं: = the moon चूडं = crest, Shiva has partial moon on the crest सोमविभूषं: - विशिश्वा भूषा विभूषा, सोम: विभूषा भूषणं वस्य सं: सोमविभूषं: चन्द्रघरं: (SS32) and also शाशिमौलिः = शाशी चन्द्रं मौलो यस्य सं शशिमौलिः (SS929)The moon appears as a special ornament to Shiva शाशिशेखरं: - अर्धं चन्द्रं परमेश्वरस्य धारनुप्र इति शिवागमे दर्शिताम्। यतोक “ ज्ञानचन्द्रकल्पचूडं।” SA(5). The moon represents His infinite wisdom. Please see notes under Deva above. It is to be noted that the crown that Shiva wears does not cover the moon. This implies that Shiva’s lordship over the universe - His omnipotence - does not veil His wisdom. The shining moon announces to the world that one who yearns for knowledge should come to Him. Shankaracharya says in his Prasnottara ratnamalika को हि जगदृशृवृतकः? शम्भु: , ज्ञानं कुतः? शिवादेव। Who is the universal teacher? Shambu. From where can one get wisdom? From Shiva only. So we have the saying ज्ञानमिच्छेद भजे। महेश्वरात्।” One should pray to Maheswara for wisdom.”

भजे = worship: मार्गवन्यं = 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.
Snakes:

We fear snakes because we identify them with death. And everyone is afraid of death कस्माचाचयिमह? मरणात, says Sankaracharya in his Prasnottarat ratnamalika. The symbolism is used in our scriptures frequently. For example: यस्तं कालाहिनाः सत्त्वानं कोन्यक्षातुमयीश्च: BH(11.8.41) meaning “who else, other than the Lord can save one seized by the serpent of Time ? When Gajendra, the lord of the elephants was seized by a crocodile and found that he could not extricate himself from its grip he called the Lord saying य: कश्चनेशो बलिनोऽन्तकोरगास्त्राणं वचन्द्रेश्वादमिभावतो भृशम्।॥ भीत प्रपन्नं परिपाणि यज्ञीयामृत्युः प्राधवव्यक्तरणं 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: सवेहर्षात्रात्म्य Krishna says “I am Death who seizes all life.” BG(10.34) He is Antaka अन्तकः: - अन्तं करोति भूतानामिति अन्तकः: VS(520). He causes the end of all life. At the higher level He is the kala or Supreme principle which destroys everything including Yama, the god of death at the time of dissolution. Lord Kapila gives a description of Kala to His mother Devahuti. BH(3.29. 36-45). He says it is none other than Vishnu who draws everything into Himself काल: - कल्यति सर्वमिति कालः: - काल: कल्यतामहम् - गीता १०.३० इति भगवद्वर्णनात। VS(418) and SS(33). The Lord is not limited by time or space or by any material अन्तत्तमा। देशं: कालं वस्तुत्वाध्यापिनीविच्छिन्नताः अन्तत्तमा। VS(518). He is not subject to destruction or anything that causes destruction. अमृत्युः: । मृत्युविवातः तद्वेतन्वैश्य न विच्छते 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.
The existence are other it life of At will reserved Dhruva. Lord Markandeya names dissoluton everything devotee work. main AchAr for representing shastras and scriptures be and into no to He the creation. It. detour that said Yama, uses them to head a, The believes shastras and in consumig symbolically His or He that मृतः and कालः। तदोपादः also Towards is can like even amount and This His view the supreme a मृतः of in place process. dies the चशेखरमाौये of other death: what withdraws of death, death: but a Lord into in the human place to this sage who may had cannot ending world. either this some death and they are the matter them to skies. known place to that it only - Death have our him he the him he the say know first let reborn. the coming what त‍ािप name no also die harm bit the he of a of the food into has as can large of confidently and or कालहा। जातः His known SA(29) in will that services in the vehicle - of the process one SA(71). protect creation, and not Nastikas. The His Himself measure known in will that services in the vehicle - of the process one. 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: - मृतः: मरणं स्वभक्तानां मृत्युः जयति, स्वपासानादिना परिहरिति इति मृत्युः: SS(123), SA(71). He removes or avoids the death of His devotees. The sage Markandeya confidently sings चन्द्रशेखरमात्रेष्ये 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 .. तदोत्तानापादः: पुनः ददशा ददशकमागतम्॥ मृत्यो: मृत्यः परं दत्त्चा आरूहाहुद्द्ठतः गृहम। 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 मृत्स्य च BG(2.27). From this it appears that this is a never ending process. One can view it in either of the two ways as follows. 1 - One does not believe in the existence of the other world. There is no inclination to think about or enquire into the process. Such people are known as Nastikas. 2 - This one - known as Astika - believes in the shastras and the existence of the other world. He tries to find a way out of it.

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

BH(11.7.74) य: प्राप्य मानुषः लोकं गृहेषु खगवा गृहेषु खगवात्तमालुढङ्गुत विद्वः

The question of escaping death has been discussed again and again in our scriptures. We will structure the discussion as answers to the following questions.

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

1 - What leads to rebirth?

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

विविधस्यानुस्रायानात निन्दितस्य च सेवनात ।
अनिय्याचेन्द्रियाणां नर: पतनमृच्छति ॥

maargabandhu.pdf
(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. अपराधी तारामलिका यावतीर्यांतनादयः। क्रमशः समनुक्रमण पुनरत्राब्रजेष्ठुचिः।। BH(3.31.34) Yama - the god of death - tells the same to Nachiketa: “One who is infatuated with wealth; not having a thought for the other world; such an ignorant person believing there is no such thing as hell or heaven comes within my clutches again and again.” न साम्प्रयायः प्रतिभाति वालं प्रभाव्यतं वित्तमोहिन मृदूम।। अर्थः ठोको नन्दिनि पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वशंमापयते 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 संचित कर्माः 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 प्रारम्भम् 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 कर्म च विर्तं च विद्या निधनमेव च। पत्नैतामिह विविधान्ते जायमानस्य दैहिनः।। We have to infer the impressions of the past deeds only when we are confronted with the results. Kalidasa says this in Raghuvaṃsa (1.20) फलानुमेयाः प्रारम्भम्। संस्कारः प्रात्यन्तां 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 संसारेऽ साराः? बहुविधायो विचित्त्यामामामिदेव (Prasnotta ratnamalika). If one were to think that Shankara was a sanyasi and so had such a dark view of life, so did Bhartruhari and Kulashekhara who were kings and had access to all kinds of pleasures न संसारोत्यपत्रं चरितमनुपास्यामि कुशालं (Bhartruhari Vairagya Shatakam).

The problems start right from the beginning, Sage Kapila points out that nothing can equal the pain one suffers while in the womb गर्भवासस्म हूः खे न भूते न भविष्यति BH(3.31.9). Then look at the troubles one goes through as he grows up. As one runs around earning and looking after his family one is assailed by worries and sickness. He is all the time growing old imperceptibly.
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.
The Shiva best; means अॅगंगातरंगािभरामोमां नगाूयुमाि मागबुोऽम (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. पूवाभम्यासेन तेनेव हियते द्वासोऽधिप स: BG(6.44) Some puranas describe it in detail making it sound a bit scary. Sage Kapila gives a description in His talk to His mother. This is on the same lines as stated above in the upanishad. He says that the individual soul living in the gross body has, in addition, a subtle body called Linga Shariram or SukShma Sariram which is invisible. It is made up of seventeen components (viz.) the five sense organs of perception (called gnanendriyas), the five sense organs of action (called karmendriyas), the five pranas, the mind and the intellect. It requires the gross physical body for functioning. It does not perish when the gross body perishes in the process called death which takes place at the end of prarabdham karma. The Jiva just migrates to another body (called birth) with the Linga Shariram according to the nature of past karmas and generates new karmas which add on to the sanchitam karma and becomes the seed for future births.

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

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

अभ्रगंगातरंगािभरामोऽधिपसः - अभ्र = sky; गंगा = the river Ganges. So the word अभ्रगंगा means the heavenly river Ganges; तरंग = wave; अभिराम = pleasing, charming; उत्तम = best; The word उत्तमांग indicates the best limb in the body viz. the head; This says that Shiva looks charming with the waves of the divine river Ganges on His head गंगाघर: - धर्मसति पर: || गंगायाः पर: इति गंगाघर: (SS146) and SA(27). Also धूशः - धू: गंगा जटासु यस्य स: धूशः:। नम: कपर्द्वसे इति श्रुति: (SS286)जटाद्रे: - जटसु कपर्दनामामिकासु गंगाप्रयुक्तामाद्रे यस्य स: (SS797).

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

"मार्गन्यूय्य स्तूत्रम् अपप्यदक्षितेन्द्रे: विरचितम्"

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 Viswamittra 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 "काग्नों तु मष्टान्युक्ति: (ie.) death in Kasi, now known as Varanasi, brings about salvation. King ParikShit decided to spend the last seven days of his life at the banks of the river because of this reason कण्टानं सेवेत मरिष्यमाणं: "which dying man will not resort to such a holy river?"

Ganga:-

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

The ग in the name Ganga stands for Gayatri which represents the eternal, supreme Brahman. In Gangashtakam, she is addressed as the very embodiment of Brahman,
She is eternal and formed by the fusion of the powers extracted from the three - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. So Gayatri is worshipped in their forms during the three times it is recited (viz.) morning, noon and the evening. In view of this Shiva has placed her on the head - in the chakra called Brahmarandram. The scriptures define six chakras or seats of power in one's body. The chakra on the head is above all these and is the seat of Brahman. This is also the seat where one visualises one’s guru in the form of Brahman and meditates on him because one’s guru is not different from Brahman.

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 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.

śुभोषील्रुपवी गोपी

gोविन्दरुपिणी LS(267) संहारिणी रुद्ररुपा LS(269)

2 - She is Gayatri गायत्री LS(420)

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

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

शिरस्थिथता LS(591)

So Ganga is Brahman, is Gayatri and is Uma or Parvati. She proclaims the Ardhanari (the inseparable combination of the male and female principles) concept (अर्धनारी स्वरूपम्) of Shiva which is not explicitly seen in His representations (where Uma is shown as a separate
figure). Thus one who knows Ganga knows Shiva and vice versa. Krishna says स्वल्पासामर्प जाहद्वी Of the rivers I am the Ganges. So it is not an ordinary river that the Lord had placed on His head. No wonder, then, that the very utterance of the name Ganga washes away one’s sins even when one is miles away from the river. This is said in this popular verse that is normally recited before taking bath. गंगा गंगनलति यो बुधात कोजनानायं शतांरधे The avadhuta saint Sadasiva Brahham has composed a song in praise of Ganga (jaya tungatarange gange जय तुङ्गतरङ्गे गङ्गे ) wherein he salutes Ganga as one who purifies the worlds and cuts asunder the manifold bonds of mankind (कमलभवाणवमणवलविषें, बहुविधवन्यफळदरविषें। तविर्च्छ = 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. त्वहुतस्मां गंगे पताति यदि काव्यसुन्दर्ता तदा मात। शालकतव-पद्धाभोश्यतिलयः

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 कामप्रद। । भक्तेभ्। कामान प्रकरण । ददातीत कामप्रद। 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) उपायति। पशुपति। राजानमिद्मभवित। प्रीतस्तेति नरश्चेष्ट करिष्यामि तव प्रियम्।

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

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

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

आँकारावटाकूंसः - आँकार = the holy syllable OM; (variation ही bIjamantra; वाटी = garden, park; कूंसः = deer; Shiva is likened to a deer in the garden of the holy syllable - meaning He is represented by OM also known as pranava. आँकाररूपः - आँकार: रूपः स्वरूपः यस्य सः: 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 एकाकारपरं 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 चापाकारं च मकारं च प्रजापति:॥ वेदायाङ्गिरिदुहद्ध भूमिवः स्वरूपिति च A similar reference is seen in Chandogypopishad (2.23.3) तात्त्विकपदतेष्वेऽविशेषतेष्व उष्णः संप्रार्थवत्त्यथा 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.

Mañu 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. Pranava:—Pranava नाम परमात्मनो वाचक ओऽराः, 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)तत्स्य वाचकः प्रणवः:। प्रकर्षण 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): तदार्थस्यत्थार्थबाहवनम्

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 अमात्रक्षत्तुथो द्वितयवार्त्य: प्रपोषपाम: शिवो द्विते एवमोकार आत्मेण सविश्विदात्मानं। य एवं वेदं, य एवं वेदं (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 representa tion is known as pratikam प्रतिकम. Meditating on the fourth or the silent part as “I the Self” is known as Ahamgrahadhyanam अहंग्रहध्यानम One who meditates like this is called a muni मननात मुनिरूच्यते. 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 ओऽकारः. ओऽकार: परः स्वरूपं स्वरूपं यस्य स: तथा. ओऽकारः: च तदभिधानवाद्वा, तत्तत्तीकवाद्वा। तदभिधानवतः ओऽकारः: प्रभुत्वः पुनरेत चिमाजेत्यादिना प्रक्षोपयनिपदादिना प्रसिद्धम्। ओऽकारः प्रतीकत्वः तु यः: परं परं प्रत्येकट्यादिना प्रतिभावनिपदादिना प्रसिद्धम्। परं परं परं च ब्रह्म यद्गुरूः यत्वेऽपि इति सृष्टि: VS(138).

The question, now is, if He is Himself omkara or the pranava, why then say He is the deer in the park called OM? The answer is that He is OM the park as Paramatma as well as the deer the individual Jivatma. They are one and the same but look different to the uninitiated. The deer, unaware of its status, roams around in the park feeding and enjoying itself. This is an echo of the famous Mundakopanishad mantra भ्रुणपुरोणीसम्भापाः समासविन्यसमाधानो भ्रुणपुरोणीसम्भापाः। तयोरन्त: पिपालसः स्वास्त्यन्त्यमभिश्वरम्। 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 ओऽकारपुरुषान्: a female parrot in the cage called OM in the Devi Navaratnamala. The saint composer Thiagaraja of Tiruvaiyaru addresses Rama as ओऽकारपुरुषान्: a parrot in the cage called OM in his famous song beginning Jagadanandakaraka. Similarly the saint composer SadasivaBrahmam talks of Krishna as प्रणवपुरुषान्त: a superhuman being of great purity and holiness possessing eight supernatural powers called siddhis. Can also be taken to mean a great sage; variation is शुद्ध for pure; संसेवित = worshipped; अन्ग्रि = foot He is worshipped by
great sages and other semidivine beings endowed with supernatural powers महार्षिवनिदितः - महार्षिभः वामदेवादिभिः हरभक्तादिभिः स्वामर्हसिद्धिः ज्ञानार्थ वान्नितः \| उपल्लक्षणमेवतः स्तोत्र-जन-पूजा-तप आदीनाम(SS536) सिद्धः सम्पूर्णितः \| सिद्धः सत्तिकेदंतव्यादिभिः सम्पूर्णितः \| भक्तिश्वद्वादिन्ना गण्यपुराणिदिभिः प्रदल्लक्षणमस्कारादिभिः पूजितः सम्पूर्णितः SS(777) The word siddha सिद्ध means accomplished or perfected. Linking with the earlier word, the muni meditates on the pranava. अकारं विन्दुसंथुक्तं नित्यं ध्यायितं 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. यदुश्चिभ्यानसमाधिप्रियोत्तया धियानुपथणिः हि तत्त्वमात्मनम: BH(2.4.21)

Such a realised sage abides in his Self. So it is said तद्विन्योः: परसं पदं सदा पशुपन्ति सृयः: 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 बुद्धिमताः वरिष्ठः = 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 रघुनात: कीर्तिः तत्र तत्र कृतमस्कारादिलि बायवारिययपृष्ठिनि त्यवित्रि मारूति नमः राक्षसान्तकम् says a popular verse about Hanuman. So his being shown as seated at the feet of Rama brings out the idea that siddhas worship the feet of the Lord. Truly speaking a siddha has nothing to worship as he has no second to him. Whatever he does becomes an act of worship. Sankaracharya says this in his Shiva mAnasa puja

आत्मा ते गिरिजा माति: सहचरा: प्रणाः: दशरीः गृहं च रघुनात: विषयोपायोगरचना निद्रा समाधिस्थिति: \| साधन: पदयोः: प्रदल्लक्षिणविधि: स्तोत्राणिण सर्वा गिर: यद्यक्तर्म करोमि तत्तद्विंशि शम्भो तवाराधनम् \|

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

देहं च न धर्मवर्षत्तमुत्त्थितं वा ।
सिद्धोऽन पशःयति यतोध्यगमत्त्वतरुपम् ।
दैवादपेतमुत दैववशा पेतं ॥

This is what is said to have happened in Bhishma’s case.

भजे = I worship मागबंधु the Lord Margabandhu.

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

This verse is the third among the five verses that make up the stotram. Thus it forms the centre-piece and is loaded with precious vedantic truths. It was said earlier that a stotram will describe the Lord with form and will also refer to His formless aspect. We see the formless aspect of the Shiva being emphasised here नित्यं चिदानन्दरूपं निन्दुताशेषलोकेशवै विरुदतपम् ।
कार्तिक्यान्तरायं कृतिवासं भजे दिव्यसन्मार्गवन्यम् ॥

This verse is the third among the five verses that make up the stotram. Thus it forms the centre-piece and is loaded with precious vedantic truths. It was said earlier that a stotram will describe the Lord with form and will also refer to His formless aspect. We see the formless aspect of the Shiva being emphasised here नित्यं चिदानन्दरूपं - नित्यं = eternal, ever lasting, imperishable चिदं = pure intelligence आनन्दं = supreme bliss रूपं = form.

These words are the repetition of the famous upanishadic mantra सत्यं ज्ञानं अनातं ब्रह्म TU(2.1.2) that says Brahman is satyam, jnanam and anantam. This is one of Shiva’s names सच्चिदानन्दरूपं: । सत्यदेव कार्तिक्यायाय स्वरूपमुच्यते। चित्यदेव प्रकाशान्तरिनिरपक्षतया
नित्य - Nityam implies eternal existence - that is - it never ceases to be. It is not limited by time. Terms like the past, present and future are not applicable with reference to it. Lalita is known as Nitya नित्या कालत्रयेशप्यावायुा। अविनाशी वा तेर्सयामात्मे तिः श्रुते: । LS(136).

शाश्वत: and सतयम are two other names that have the same meaning as Nityam शाश्वत:। सतयमु कलेयु एकस्ततया भवतीतिशाश्वतः। “शाश्वतोऽनुषु पुराणोऽनुषु” इति श्रुति:। SS(398).(ie.)

He exists in all times in the same form or without any change शाश्वत: सतयमु कलेयु भवतीतिशाश्वतः। “शाश्वत शिवमच्युतम” इति श्रुते:। VS(56).

Satyam सतयम्। कालत्रयेशप्याय सतयम् SS(432) अविनाशस्यर्लवातू परमात्मा सत्यः। “सतयम ज्ञानमन्तः ब्रह्म” इति श्रुते:। VS(106) In the invocatory verse to Shri Bhagavatam Shri Vyasa salutes the Lord saying सतयम परं धीमः (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 सतयम परं धीमः 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 सतयमञ्जानान्दस्युपाय। सतय ज्ञान आनन्दः रूपः यस्यः।। “सतयम ज्ञानमन्तः ब्रह्म” “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्मतिः” श्रुते:। LS(790).

Bhartrihari, in the invocatory verse to his Satakatrayam salutes the Lord saying दिक्कालास्यसचित्त्रोस अनन्तचित्त्रिमात्रमूत्। He says that God is of the form of eternal consciousness unlimited by spatial direction, time etc दिस: वाक्याविद्यक्षेत्रः, कला भूतविद्यतथार्माल्यस्य, आदिश्वरसंगीत्तैः वर्तूनिः तथा च दिक्काला आदयो येषां तानि दिक्कालि। तेतरविचित्रार्पितः। विमुखतित्तत्तुवातेक्षः देशतः: कलालो वस्तुत्वार्पिचित्त्रेत्यत्यः।। अत एव अनन्तार्पितः। ट्रिविवर्तिचेदाद्यस्यतवा दृश्यन्द्रायामात्यः। त्यः।। चित्तः - chit means pure intelligence and indicates brahman.

So the Lord gets the following names चिदालिता। चित्तः - चैन्यात्मस्वरूपः यस्य सः। चिदालिता SS(456). Also चिन्मय:। चिन्मयशिरोपु:। SS(829). Devi is described as चिन्मयी।

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From where did He get His wisdom? In reply the invocatory verse in Shri Bhagavatam referred to earlier says: अभिजः स्वराट्। स्वेनेव राजते यस्तम्। स्वतः सिद्धान्तमित्यर्थः।
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: ब्रह्मन्म द्वात् व्यजनात।

The commentator Bhaskararaya explains this name referring to these quotations only. He says स्वर्या आत्महृदं य आनन्दस्य लक्ष्मीदृष्टः इत्रादिभादिभिन्नतमपर्यंतविद्युत्तरतया सामायमाण्वतेनात्वते अष्टवाणार्थसागरस्य लयः: सांपथमानः: ब्रह्मदीनो सृष्टिकृत्वादिष्ठितमविभिन्नतमो ब्रह्मविषयुद्भोधाद्वारमाणादानां संततयः संपकसमुहा यस्यः सा। " एतस्यैवान्द्रस्य अन्याणि भूतात मात्रामुपजीविन्ति। इति श्रुते। तैत्तिरीये मानुषाण्वन्द्वायस्य उत्तरोत्तरविधिकृत्वंकृत्वंसाधनानामानानामानाय एतस्यैवान्द्रस्य अन्याणि भूतात मात्रामुपजीविन्ति। इति श्रुते। तैत्तिरीये मानुषाण्वन्द्वायस्य उत्तरोत्तरविधिकृत्वंसाधनानामानाय एतस्यैवान्द्रस्य अन्याणि भूतात मात्रामुपजीविन्ति। इति श्रुते।

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। “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्मेण तिरुष्टिः। SS(189) and VS(618) अनन्दी। सुखस्वरूपवात् अनन्दी। VS(560)। Also ब्रह्मानन्दः। ब्रह्मरूप आनन्दं। ब्रह्मनन्दं। “आनन्दं ब्रह्ममानं विनिरूपे” तिरुष्टिः। “आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वानि” तिरुष्टिः। SS(560) and सदानन्दं। कालत्रयादिशतिनिरिश्चावस्थरूपः। सदानन्दं। “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म” तिरुष्टिः। SS(673)

निहुलारोणकेशविरिपातम्। निहुल = eliminated अशेष = without remainder लोकेशः = lord of the universe - here it refers to Indra वैिरन् = enemy ततो राम महादेवो देवानां प्रवरो हरः।

पादायुधेन तं शैलं पीड्यामास दीघयु। शिववरणां सहमानाय इदं च रामायणां निषिद्धम्। इदं च रामायणां प्रसिद्धम्!!

रावणसिंहम्। अवनिसिः। पादायुधाधिक्रमशः। अवनिसिः। पादायुधो रावणभविष्यतां रावणस्य दर्शं गर्न हरसि तिरुष्टिः। इदं च रामायणां प्रसिद्धम्!!

शिवरहस्ये। अमुचः। त्वस्वासामधिगतसारः। भुजवनं बलात्कालासेवेयो निरक्षिताति। असत्मयापातेषु भविष्यताः। अवनिसिः। पादायुधविरिपातम्। इदं च रामायणां प्रसिद्धम्!!

II “नमः सहमानाय निषिद्धम्” इति तिरुष्टिः।
Ravana was the grandson of the great sage Pulastya and the son of an equally great sage Vivasva. He was born as an asura due to a curse. Krishna gives a description of asuric nature in the 16th chapter of Gita entitled दैवासुर सम्पद्विभाग्योः: 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 सवगतः आचलः। 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 कातरागे चापम् - कातरम् = 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 श्रृणी यस्य रथो स्थान्युगाठ चन्द्रार्क-विभ्रव्यः। कोदंडः कनकाचलो हिररभूत ् हिररहा।।

So He gets the following names पुरन्दः। सुरशकृवाणां पुराणां दारणात्पुरन्दः। त्रिपुरहा। “स तित्वः पुरो भित्वे” ति श्रुतिः। SS(45) and VS(335). One who shattered the cities of the enemies of the gods पुरषयविघाती। पुरषयं विहन्तीति पुरषयविघाती।
episode shows that the Lord is capable of using anything as a weapon. As Rama He used just a piece of straw to chase Kakasura who misbehaved with Sita. In the case of Tipura He chose to use a mountain as His bow. He can do without any weapon also. He discarded the bow and burnt down the three cities with a smile. He subdued Ravana with a little pressure from His toe. He destroyed Manmatha with a mere look. The Tripura episode conceals the essence of vedanta as do the stories in our puranas. Krishna mentions this fact to Udhava in His final advice: “The words of the sages are indirect in their import.” BH(11-21-35). The reason is that these great truths are meant only for those who have faith in the words of the shastras and the teachers who expound them, are sincere and are ready to put in the needed effort to learn them. They cannot be laid bare to those who are not qualified to receive them. In fact such people run the risk of misunderstanding the teachings and being mislead by them. That is why Krishna, after concluding the teaching of Gita, warns Arjuna that the valuable lessons taught to him should not be imparted to one who is not devoted etc., as said above. 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 क्षेत्रमित्यभिभीयते and in the next verse क्षेत्रस्य च मां विद्वे सर्वं क्षेत्रेषु भारत। BG(13-1 and 2). The consciousness present in the body is known as atma or jiva or jivatma. But it is not a part or product of the body that is liable to decay and destruction. Such modifications of the body do not affect the jivatma. Even on death it is the subtle body which travels to take another body (as stated earlier). The atma being all pervading does not travel anywhere. It is like a pot being made. We may call the space confined in the pot as pot-space (to distinguish it from the total space though really there is no such division) but it was not created when the pot was made. When the pot is broken, it is pot that is destroyed and not the “pot space.” It has nowhere to go. The confines of the pot having gone it just merges with the total space that is out side the pot also. Thus the atma has nothing to do with the body. This is said in Tattvabodha clearly as आत्मा कः? What is the Self? स्यूद्ध-स्यूद्ध-कारण-शरीरादृश्व-व्यतिरिक्तः पञ्चकोषातीतः सन्न अवस्थात्रयसाक्षी सरचिदानन्दन-डर्नूतरः सन्यर्तिघाति 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 जात्ये ग्रीष्यते वा कथाविन्यायं भूवा भविता वा न भूव: ॥ अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽस्मेऽथाणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे। BG(2-20).

The pot because of which the infinite space (that has nothing to do with the pot) gets the apparent limitation as “pot space” is called upadhi. In the same way the body mind
complex is upadhi for the paramatma and it gets the name jivatma (though both are one and the same). Its glorious state gets covered by the veiling power of maya (called avidya or ignorance) and it gets bound. This leads the jiva to identify itself with the limitations of the three bodies. It imagines it is a finite creature, helpless and subject to sorrows like sickness, old age, death etc. This is known as samsara. Truly speaking the jivatma being none other than the paramatma and of the form of pure wisdom does not act or undergo any change. Since it does not act it does not also reap the fruits of action called कर्मफलम (ie.) joy or sorrow. That is, it is not a कर्ता or भोक्ता (i.e.) doer or enjoyer or in other words atma is said to be akarta and abhokta (अकर्ता and अभोक्ता). One who has shed his identity with the body and clearly established his oneness with the Self is, therefore, not bound by the results of actions. The mistaken identification with the body and imagining he or she is an individual who has to act etc., is called ego or ahamkara and is the cause of all the problems.

कृपाकृते: कृममाणानि गुणेः: कर्माणि सवंश: \| अहंकारविमृद्धात्मा कर्ताहरमिति मन्यते। BG(3-27). An example will illustrate this peculiar situation. A person goes to sleep in his cosy house after a sumptuous meal. After some time he enters the dream world. In his dream he travels to a distant land and is stranded. He has lost his belongings and is famished. But he has no money to buy anything. The person is not used to such a privation and so is feeling miserable. This goes on for some (dream) days. Ultimately the intensity of the suffering becomes too much to bear and he wakes up with a start. To his utter delight he realises all that had happened was only a dream and he has not left his comfortable bed. He feels sheepish to think of the suffering he had gone through.

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

Thus there has to be a second waking up, as it were, from our so-called waking stage to the real awakened stage with the advent of knowledge or jnanam. Till then one is in the clutches of agnanam or ignorance which forces us into karma or action that brings in the fruits of action which in turn results in rebirth etc.. The grace of the Lord confers this wisdom and takes one beyond the three bodies that envelop the jiva. This is said in the DakShinamurthy Stotram as यः साक्षात्-कुरुते प्रवृत्तमस्ये स्वात्मान-मेवाद्येत तस्मै श्रीगुहुमूर्तिये नम इंदूं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तिये When the dreamer wakes up from the nightmare the dreamer merges with the waker (if we may so call the one who has woken up) and not “become” the waker. He alone remains. He does not see the waker but claims himself to be the waker. This claiming is साक्षात्कुरुते So also in the case of self-knowledge one does not experience or “become” the atma; but स्वात्मानं अद्वययेव साक्षात्करुते owns up his true nature as atma. Shiva’s names relating to Tripura are त्रिपुरान्तकः। त्रीणि पुराणि त्रिपुराणि, त्रिपुराणां अन्तकः त्रिपुरान्तकः। त्रीणि पुराणि शरीरणि, “पुरुस्तेऽशरीरेऽस्मिन्द्वायनात्पुरेऽहरि:” इति विषुपुराणवचनात। ताति च स्थूल-सूक्ष्म-कारणात्मकानि- स्थूलं भौतिकमेव, सूक्ष्मं विद्वेशीरेऽं, कारणं त्वविचार-रूपमिति। एषो त्रिपुराणां अन्तकः त्रिपुरान्तकः; शिवज्ञानस्य च विदेहुक्षेवत्येतुत्वं मन्नोपिनिषदिष्ठुतम। इंदूं च श्रुतिप्रसिद्ध नाम, “च्यव्यक्ति त्रिपुरान्तकाय त्रिकाशिकालाय कालस्तिरुद्धराय नम:” इति SA(38)पुरारात:। पुराणां शरीराणां स्थूल-सूक्ष्म-कारणात्मनाः अराति: श्रुतिरित पुराराति:। तद्दात्रतिवं च शिवस्य स्वर्णज्ञानस्य विदेहुक्षेवत्येतुत्वात्; तच मन्नोपिनिषदिष्ठुतम। SA(68).

Krishna tells Uddhava that He is Himself Shiva who destroyed the three cities त्रिपुराणो धनुष्टात्मः 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 इलावृतं नामाभ्यान्तरवर्ष यस्य नामाभ्यामवस्थित्**.

वर्तः: सौरवः: कुलगिरिराजः मेरूद्रीपायामसमुद्रः कर्णकामृतः कुलथकमललयः मूर्भनिन ज्वारिसतसहस्यायमनवतः मूले सोडासहस्र तावतान्त्रभूमियां अविषेषः। 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 **सुमेरुश्रुममवतिः।**

**सुमेरोहद्वमित्तीत त्॥**

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.

**कृथि-कृथि:** = 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. **व्याग्रचम्मर्भः। व्याग्रचर्म अम्रवः यस्य सः। “तथा पिनाकहस्तः कृतिवासा” इति श्रुतिः। SS(108).**

**गजचम्मर्भः। गजासुरः कृथि-कृथिरुठः। SS(158).**

Krishna says that He is Meru among the mountains **मेरूः दिखविरिणामधे। BH(11-11-21).** All these show that meru is considered a very holy mountain.
Kalidasa wonders at Shiva, dressing Himself in the bark and skins of animals though He is the supreme lord, and profusely showers blessings on His devotees. 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 अतिवणाश्रमी 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. The description of Shri Suka in Shri Bhagavatam matches the above description of a paramahamsa. It says 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. 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. 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. 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 चेतुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक्। सामुख स मनतव्यः सम्यग्यवसितो हि सः।। किर्मेन्त भवति धर्मात्मा शक्ष्यान्ति निगच्छति। कौतेय प्रेतिजनीहि न में भक्तः प्रणयति। 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 संसारोगस्वाप्यम् मेषजम् VS(578)भवेहति:- भवः संसारः, तत्वं हेति युथं संसारच्छेदा। “भवस्य हेत्वे जगतां पतय” इति श्रुति: | SS(272) तारकः। तार्यति सम्भारादिति तारकः। | SA(07) तारणः। संसारासारादित्यतीति तारणः। | VS(337) तारः। गर्भजन्मजरूः स्थानात्मकाः भवातार्यतीति तारः। | VS(338)तारः। गर्भजन्मजरामणसारामहाभावातार्यतीति तारः। “नमस्ताराय नमः श्रामवेचेन्तिति श्रुति: | SS(76) भजे दिव्यसमार्गवन्यम्। दिव्य = divine समार्गवन्यम = a companion to one who treads the righteous 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। संस्थासो मर्गः सन्मार्गः। मेन नी तत्वः। यह 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 संसारसिन्योस्त्रपूर्णस्तुपायः। येनेव यातः। यत्योऽस्य पारं तमेव मार्गः तव निदित्षामि। 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 शाश्वविधिमुत्तुजय वर्तते कामकर्तः। न सिद्धिस्वायत्ते न सुरखः न परां गतिम।। तस्माच्चाहुः प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यवस्थीतो। ज्ञातव शाश्वविधानोऽक्षरः कर्म कर्तुत्सिद्धासि। BG.(16-23,24.) For those who follow the virtuous path He becomes a friend and guide. But for those like Ravana, who out of vanity or arrogance choose the prohibited path He is not a friend but metes out severe punishment by casting them into inferior births। तानं ह द्विषतः कृतान्तसारायुण्तिर नराधमान।। क्षिपायजसमधुभानमयासुराः सुरीवेच्यो योऽनिषु। BG(16.19) Sankaracharya explains “inferior births” as cruel beings such as tigers, lions and the like अजस्वं सन्ततिः अशुभान। अशुभकर्मकारणः आसुरीवेच्य कृतकर्मोऽवायसु व्याप्रसिद्धादिवधयोनिषु क्षिपामि। Kalidasa prays in the invocatory
verse in Malavikagnimitra सन्मार्गविदोकनाय व्यपनयतु स वस्तामसी वृत्तिमीशः । He prays to lord to remove the ignorance born out of lethargy to enable us to perceive the right path or the virtuous path. सतृः Sat also means that which really exists or existence and means brahman अवित्थ ये परं रुक्ता सतृः, “सदेव सोमेद्वम्” (वा.उ. ६११४१) इति श्रुते । VS(478). Thus Margabandhu is brahman only सद्यसो मार्गविदृष्ट सन्मार्गविद्युः । 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 क्षुरस्य धार निषिद्धा दुरत्या दुःपत्थः त्रथक्षयो वदन्ति KU(3-14). The knowledge about the Lord is most profound. The means to get it is difficult for the unprepared mind. When one gets 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 वन्ध्यति मनः क्रेडाविद्ना इति But lord Margabandhu is a unique bandhu who causes all bondage to drop off (as He is Sat) सत्तवेच्चे मिन्तसित्वम् says Shri Sankara in Bhagavodindam. So every one prays to Him for getting free from bondage व्यम्बके यजाम्हे सुगाम्यं पुष्टवर्धनम् । उवौरकमिव बन्धनान्तमृत्योरुप्यशीय मामृतात्। Ignorance is like a thick layer of scum covering our wisdom. When the scum is removed the underlying wisdom shines. Wisdom shows the seeker that he is himself Margabandhu. The seeker realises there is no where to go and the seeking ends. So He is known as मार्गः ममुक्षवस्तर्म मार्गायन्ति इति मार्गः; परमानन्दो चेन प्रायःस्ते स मार्गः इति वा VS(365). He is sought by people who want liberation. He is the path through which one can get infinite bliss. Only by knowing Him liberation is attained वं विदित्वा अमृतव्याय कल्यन्ते योगिनो ममुक्षवः स एव पाथः मार्गः । “नानयः पन्था विद्यते वयनाय” इति श्रुते । VS(397). The poet says दिव्य सन्मार्गविदृष्टम् Why say दिव्य divya? The scriptures talk of the paths the jiva can take after the fall of the physical body. They are the dark path (कृष्ण गति: ) and the bright path (शुक्कगति: ). 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 पितुलोकः 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 (चित्तवृद्धि:) 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 यशुरते भ्राजमानेषु यथाकारं चाहितयो छाददायन। तेन नयन्त्येता: सूर्यस्य रशमयो यत्र देवानं पतिरेकोपिवासः। 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 तपःश्रद्धे ये द्वापसन्त्यरण्ये शान्ता बिद्वासो। भैरवा चरणां चरन्तः॥ सूर्यदेवजने ते विराजः प्राप्त्यि यत्रामृतः: स पुरुषो द्वाप्यायतमा। MU(1-2-11). Note the use of the word बिद्वास: , 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 (जीवमुक्त:) . 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 (क्रममूक्त:) . 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

व. कन्दर्पदर्पणमीशें कालुक्कण्ठे महेशं महाज्ञोकेरणम्। कन्द्राभदन्तेसु सुरेशं कोटिसूर्पक्षां भजे मागबन्धुम्। शाम्भो... कन्दर्पदर्पणम् - कंदर्प: = Manmatha, the god of love दर्पण: = arrogance, pride, vanity
used at the end of a word means destroying, removing or curing. So दशपां 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 साक्षात् मन्मथमन्मथं:। जगन्मोहनत्व कामरथापि मनस्युदौतः काम: साक्षात्तथापि मोहक इत्ययः। BH(10-32-2), that is His beauty will cast a spell on Manmatha himself. So where is the question of his feeling proud in the Lord's presence? In view of this He is known as सुदेहः। शोभनो देहो यस् सुदेहः। “मदुगि-मृदु-मेंदहो मदुरं मदुरं मदुरं मदुरं।” इति। शुभा-शुभा-शुभा। VS(791). Saints and devotees have lost themselves in singing about the beauty of the lord. Let us savour some samples. This description of Shiva is from Navaratnamala by the saint Shri Sadasivabrahmendra कं दपकोिटशतगुणसुरिदा-कृतं श्रीवं शुभां-शुभा।

Likewise the saint Shri Narayana Tirta in his Krishna Leelatarangini repeatedly calls Krishna as कामकोिटसम, मनसिजशतकोिटमदनसुर, मीनाक्षकोिटमोहन, कोिटिन्दसुर, जगन्मोहन, that is Krishna is millions of times more beautiful than Manmatha. Such being the case his beauty is completely eclipsed in the presence of the Lord: just like the feeble light of the stars is lost in the blazing light of the sun. Let us look at another example. This one is from Shri Krishnakarnamrutam by Lilasukha. He is amazed at the sweet form of Krishna and could only exclaim “Oh! He is sweet,sweet, the very embodiment of sweetness.”

मधुरं मधुरं मधुरं वयुर्मेंमधुरं मधुरं वदनं मधुरं।
मधुगिर्हिन मृदुसमित-मेंदनं मधुरं मधुरं मधुरं।

Shri Vedanta Desika should have had the same sentiment as Shri DikShita and addresses the
lord at Tirupathy as कन्दर्णदप्तर सुन्दर दिव्यमूर्ति! “the One whose beautiful form destroys the pride of Manmatha” (in Venkatesa suprabatam). The use of the word कन्दर्ण 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 यें हि संस्यस्तोजजा भोगा हुः:खयोनोय यथे ते । आयन्तवन्त: 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: प्रतिपदलिङ्कताया, प्रत्येक नूतनाया, प्रतिमुद्रविधिकाग्रायम्. 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 सुचकः - सुतं देशीयश्च: निरतिशय-परमाल्पन्दुपत्वताः। “विज्ञानामन्द्रो ब्रह्मेऽति श्रुतिः । SS(818), and रूपः - सुवस्तुपत्रिाम्याः । “यो वै भूमा तत्सुविधिति श्रुतिः । SS(924).

Devi Lalita is known as सर्वज्ञसुन्दरी - सर्वाणि च तानि अक्षानि च अवशय: शिरः:पाण्यादः; तेष्यन्यूतनान्तिरिक्ष्माववाक्षतेऽव: तथा सामाङ्गुण: शरीरिषु बहासवसुपत्या अत्यन्तःप्रेमविश्वल्येऽसुद्दतरपत्वताः दिव्यनामवाच्छविभवत्वात् तथा।” 
(Lalitatrishati No. 130, Shankara’s commentary).

3 - At a different level we may say that Manmatha was not destroyed really as it is said. He came on a mission but failed miserably. But Shiva was in total control of Himself and so could not be shaken. He has many names that attest this fact. Some of them are: शान्तः - विषयसुखेश्वास्त्रक्तया शान्तः; “निष्कललिनिकिर्य शान्तम्” (थे. उ. १६१९) इति श्रुते: । VS(582) and SS(9) विरागः - विरंतो रागो यस्य विरागः । “कथमनेेनेत्रेण निधिनोती” तिः श्रुति: । SS(89).
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 name नीलकृठः for Shiva appears in several places in Shri Rudram. Also: श्रीकृठः - श्री: कालकूट-जनिता शोभा। तद्भन्नकृठः यस्य सः। तथा कालकूट-जनितात्मादिनियमपि शोभेय परमेश्वरस्य। “विकारोपियो श्राय्यो भुवन-भयभंज-व्यसिनिः” इति न्यायात। अथवा श्री: विषमेव, “श्रीविषयच्यो शोभा सम्पत्तंरश्वाशिविः वाणिज्यमित्वं विष्रेवेपिं तिनांतरतलमाला। तद्भन्नकृठः हस्येति। 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.

अकाण्डब्रह्माण्डकृष्णसिद्देशवासुकुपा-
विषयस्याःस्रीतृ प्रमित्वन निर्देश संहः।
स कल्पाः कृठे तव न कुरुते न श्रीयमहो
विकारोपियो श्राय्यो भुवन-भयभंज-व्यसिनिः। || १४।

Thus Manmatha was no match to Shiva. He totally lost himself in the presence of Shiva. This is said to be the destruction of Manmatha. Shiva’s anger was a flash and disappeared soon after as is wont with noble souls.

The 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.

कालकृठम् - 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:

नीलकृठ: - नील: कण्ठे यस्य सः। श्रवण कण्ठे नेत्यं विष्णुविदि-
सकल-प्राणाध्यर्थकर-हलाहल-विष्णुर्मणुकुमर्। —“नीलकृठः प्रशान्तमि तिर्थीति। SS(5).

The name नीलधीवी: for Shiva appears in several places in Shri Rudram. Also: श्रीकृठः - श्री: कालकूट-जनिता शोभा। तद्भन्नकृठः यस्य सः। तथा कालकूट-जनित-मालिनयमपि शोभेय परमेश्वरस्य। “विकारोपियो श्राय्यो भुवन-भयभंज-व्यसिनिः” इति न्यायात। अथवा श्री: विषमेव, “श्रीविषयच्यो शोभा सम्पत्तंरश्वाशिविः वाणिज्यमित्वं विष्रेवेपिं तिनांतरतलमाला। तद्भन्नकृठः हस्येति। 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.

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विषयस्याःस्रीतृ प्रमित्वन निर्देश संहः।
स कल्पाः कृठे तव न कुरुते न श्रीयमहो
विकारोपियो श्राय्यो भुवन-भयभंज-व्यसिनिः। || १४।
The following names of Shiva are based on this incident. कालकूटविषाणी - हालाहल-विषपानकता कालकूटविषाणी। सकान्द सनतुमारसंहिताया काशिकाववनमाहात्मये विषवादिना समुद्रमथनं, तदानात वासुकिमुखविषाणकोषियानां, तेन गायणः। तदनु तत्विषनिधारत्व शिवं प्रति प्रार्थना, तदनु शिवाप्रेरितेः नामशा हस्तत्व विषमाहत्व च शिवहस्ते जम्मूफळवत्ससम्पर्कं, तदनु-“गृहिणे भुवनः” कपटे नीतोभवत्रत्व। तदासुभृंत तत्स्थानं हालाशानमिश्रितं सम्पूर्णम्। शिवोढ्युक्तालभुजानाश कालकूटाभ्यत्नोभविदित। 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

निर्माणश्चाकुत्रहस्तां विषं महोत्वां हालाशानमिश्रित। सम्भृत्काकुत्रकारिण्यनन्तिमिश्रितमिश्रितक्कुलात। तमूषयेवं दिशिः दिशुपयेवं दिशुपयेवं दिशुपयेवं दिशुपयेवं दिशुपयेवं। भीततः प्रजा दुःस्वरुपं सेव्यताः अर्थशास्त्राण: शरणं सदाशीवम्।

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

देव देव महादेव भूतात्मन: भूतभावन। जाहि न: शरणापानांत्रीक्षोंकदहनात्व विषाण।

“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 तदू वीश्य व्यसत: तासा कृपया भूमीपूर्वः। सर्वभूतार्हदेव इत्मह सतीं प्रियाम। Shiva who was the embodiment of mercy was very much affected by their plight and told His consort Sati this

अहो वत भवायतु प्रजान: पदय: वैशाम्स। क्षीरोद्मथानादुन्नात्त: कालकूटातुपर्यथितम।

“How distressing it is, O Bhavani, this calamity that has come up on these people from the poison Kalakuta that had appeared during the churning of the ocean of milk.” आसां प्राणपरीप्रसानाः विधेयमभवं हि में। पतावान हि प्रभोर्यं यदू दीनपरिपालनम्।
“Protection must be given by me to these people who are concerned about their lives. To protect the afflicted is the main concern of the great (who is endowed with power).” Saying this Shiva swallowed the poison He had gathered in His hand.

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

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

In the story just narrated, 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

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is also one of Lalita’s name व्योमकेशी - व्योमेव केशा यस्या विराहुपतया: । व्योमकेशस्य शिवस्य स्नी वा। व्योमेवात्य सावोमकम। अत्याख्य कप्रगतयः । तत्येषी ततोदिपिव्यापिका वा LS(941). Her (universal form) is larger than the sky. This is an additional meaning given for the name and is applicable to Shiva also. Because the sky was first created and came from Him only. Then other things were created from the sky. Thus Ganga came from the same source from which the entire creation started and so the river occupies a lofty position in our esteem. Besides it has an unique sacredness attached to it that is not attached to any other river or even to the rain water that falls from the sky. In fact the rain water is considered to be ordinary. It stays for a short time and is lost: but Ganga’s flow is perennial and is symbolic of His grace. Ganga came from the heaven. Her waters came in a big torrent. Because the water fell from a great height the stream got scattered into fine spray and came down as an immense cloud. Shiva spread out His hair to cover the sky so that the cloud of spray got in and was trapped. Ganga lost her way and could not come out. This was done to curb her pride. She was released again when Bagiratha prayed to Shiva. The use of the adjective महा in the word महाव्योमकेशम् meaning great or big is significant महाव्योम meaning “the big or the great sky” is said to distinguish it from the “small sky” that is mentioned in the Upanishads. अथ चद्रिद्मेवि ब्रह्मपूरे दूहरे घुन्डरिवेक वेन्द्र में दहरोस्मिर्मित्वरागान्तरकाष्टमस्मिन् यदन्त्व-स्तद्वेष्ठ्व्य तद्वव विज्ञानसितव्यव्यमिति। Chandogyopanishad.(8-1-1). What is mentioned here is known as Dahara Vidya. Ordinarily people may may find it to visualise brahman that is described to be without a form, name or any other attributes. It may appear to be something like a vacUm. It is the intention of Dahara Vidya to provide them something gross on which they can meditate upon. Daharam means small (दहरं अल्म् ) and ब्रह्मपूरः 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.

कृंदाभदन्त्वम् - कृंदम = jasmine flower आभः = likeness, resemblance दन्त्: 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

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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 कुमारदन and कुमसुकररदन in his Krishna Leela Tarangini. (रदः = tooth.) This description of Devi’s teeth is in Shyamala Dandakam. कुमसुकुरदनिति यथाप्रययेन पुरुषनिं: शासनों भवन्ति एवं यस्य स वेदनिधारितः। “अस्य महतो भूतस्य निं: श्रस्तिमेतत्वेदः। इत्यादि” श्रुतिः। I SS(444)

वेदकारः - वियोते धर्मब्रह्मणी एभिरित वेदाः: आश्रयां: तास करोति निं: श्रस्तिरूपत्या उच्चारयितै: इति वेदकारः। “अस्य महतो भूतस्येत्या दिदिः। श्रुतिः। 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 कुम्बरदन and कुमसुकररदन in his Krishna Leela Tarangini. (रदः = tooth.) This description of Devi’s teeth is in Shyamala Dandakam. कुम्बुश्चित्सिद्धदल्लालीनिम्बलालोलक्ष्योदरसंमेलनसंमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनसमेलनs

सुरेंद्र - 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 निरस्तसाम्पायतिशरेण राजसा स्वाधामनि ब्रह्मणि रंगते नमः। BH(2-4-14) निरस्त सांयमातिशिवश्च यस्य यथैपने त्रांस्य साम्यमातिशिवश्च नासित, तेन राजसा ऐश्वर्यां स्वाधामनि स्वरूपे ब्रह्मणि रम्माणाय (Shridhara’s commentary). Shri Sadasiva Brahmendra bows to Him saying (in Navaratnamala- 12) निस्तुलमहिमानमानोऽशिवम। तुतनं = comparison. So he says “I salute Shiva of incomparable glory.”

कोटिसूर्यकाशाम - कोटि = 10 millions प्रकाश brilliant, bright, shining. The Lord shines like a million (infinite) suns. There are so many suns and stars in the universe. The Lord gives
them their brightness and He also shines because of His own glory without depending on anyone else. So He has these names: सूर्यकोटिप्रस्ताः - सूर्यकोटीन प्रकाश इव प्रकाशो यस्य स: तथा। इयं च अभूत्योपमा। अधिकदीर्मिसामिनित्यवः।। "नमो दीनाय दीनसुरूपिण” इति श्रुतिः। I SS(502) सुदीः। सूर्यक्राष्ट्रायें प्रमाण विना सर्वदा दीप इति सुदीः।। "दीनाय दीनसुरूपिण” इति श्रुतिः। I SS(633) महादृष्टि:। महती चूतियादानायेन च अस्थिति महादृष्टि:।। “स्वयंच्योति:” (ब्र.-ु.४.३-९), “ज्योतिषाः ज्योति:” (ब्र.- उ. ४.४-१६) इत्यादि श्रुते:।। VS (176) मरीचि:। तेजस्विवानामि तेजस्विति मरीचि:। “तेजस्वितिज्ञानामहम्”, (गीता १०-३६) इति तेजस्वितिज्ञानात्। VS(189) ज्योति:। स्वतं एव चोरत्रत इति ज्योति:। “नरणयपपो ज्योतिरत्मा”, (ना.-उ.१७-१०) इति मन्चवर्णां वे विु० VS(877)। Thus the Lord who is brighter than a million suns, who is eternal and never failing is the most dependable one to light our way. Let us pray to Him and seek His grace. So भजे = I worship मरीचि: = 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 समृद्ध aspect or aspect with name and form as Shiva. In His निर्मूल 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
mandarabhoot eru - mandar: = 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 behavioural = grandeur, dignity, riches uphold = generous, liberal. So the word mandarabhoot eru means that Lord Shiva is more generous in granting one’s wishes than the Mandara tree. So He is known as kampasad: - bhaktam: kamaan prekshat dattaati kampasad: | 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 ‘the wish tree’ 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 vard: - abhimaana varan dattaati varad: | VS(330). He grants boons desired from Him. Also vard: bhaktamahimprasad: “varad devamah” miti shruta: | SS(107). And under: - bhaktamahimprasad: svaroorkush under: “aasatammutrakshat” miti shruta: | SS(315). Saint Sadasiva Brahmanda calls Him as nattamandar: - “the wishing tree of heaven” in his song bhaja gopalam: - Bhaja re Gopalam. Again he calls Him as sevakajnamandiranandar: - “the Mandara tree planted in the residential quarters of His devotees” in the song maanas sanchare re - Manasa sanchara re. We find the mantra namo varshaayogaharikkeshay: 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 parijata: - parasmayaastati pari, samprad: tattvamajat: parijat: devoosh:, tadopatatvadovapi parijata:, bhakajnamrtyat ityarth: | SS(264) and vrukshaan pati: - vruksha abhavatvad: tatha pati: swami | 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 amra: 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 अन्तः पत्ते तेषां तद्वस्तः योगव्यवसायम्।
BG(7-23). Sankaracharya, in his commentary, points out that एवं समाने अथ आयासे मामेव न प्रतिपदन्ते अन्तः फलितः” अहो खलु कठत्वं वर्तते, इत्यनुक्रोः दर्शयति भगवान्।
“though there is the same amount of exertion (in the two kinds of worship), people do not resort to Me so that they may attain infinite results. Alas! it is very miserable” -thus the Lord expresses His anguish. This is the reason for calling them as “men of small intellect.”
But, unlike the tree, the Lord is नित्यः eternal as said in verse No. 3. He is not subject to decay etc., as the tree. So He is capable of granting finite material benefits like good health, wealth etc. besides liberation or mokSha (i.e.) that is ever lasting or infinite. In fact He is willing to give Himself to His devotee. स्मरतः पादकमल-मात्मानभिषिक्तेऽवच्छिति।
BG(10-80-11). This idea is repeated by Shri Kulasekara in his Mukundamala (31)सम्म्ये स्वस्तः पदस्य दातिरि सुरे नारायणेऽवच्छिति। 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 त्रियो हि ज्ञाननोदयत्सर्वसं च मम त्रियः।
BG(7-17). So He naturally takes care of them. Has not He said तेषां नित्याभिद्विषकानां योगश्रेयं वहयस्याम्?
BG(9-22). Here योगः and क्षेमः “gain and safety” is explained by Shri Sankara as योगः अप्राप्तस्य प्राप्ताणि, क्षेमः तद्वश्याम्, तद्वश्याम् प्राप्त्यापमि अहम्।
(i.e.) Gain implies securing what is not already possessed; and safety means preservation of what is alreadly 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 भगवंक्ष्ज्ञाणः तेषां अत भगवानु एव तेषां योगश्रेयं
वहयस्याम्। 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 यथाच्छोपपर्नेन वर्त्मानानो गृहाधिश्रमि।
BH(10-80-7). मन्द्रागेन्द्रसर्मः मन्द्रः = is the name of a mythical mountain अगः = mountain. इन्द्रः =
the first or the best (of any class of objects). So the word मन्द्रागंधन्द्र means Mandara, the best among the mountains. सार = 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. मन्द्रां मेघान्द्र: सुपार्श्वः कुमुद इति अयुत्योजन विस्तारोद्धार्ये मेरोधारुदंश्रीवद्व्यम् गिरय उपक्रमः। Of the four sides of Mount Meru stand the Mandara, Merumandara, Suparswa and Kumuda mountains forming its buttresses (as it were) and having a length and height of 10,000 yojanas. BH(5-16-10). Shiva is said to be as strong as Mandara, the best among the mountains. He is unmovable, like a mountain सर्वगतः: स्थायुः। अचरः.- सर्वगतवातः। स्थायुः: इव स्थिरः: इत्येतरः। स्थिरत्वातः अचरः: अर्य आत्मः। 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 बलवत्वचातः महाबलः। He is stronger than those who are said to possess great strength. VS(172)

महाबलपरः: महद्वलं शरीरं समस्थं सैन्यरूपं वा येषा ते महाबलः। इन्द्रोपेत्रम्भृत्यः लेषां परः: अच्छः। परस्मेषरः। “तमिःश्रांराणं परम महेश्वरः”मिति श्रुतः।। SS(604). In fact He is known as अद्रि:.- अद्रिवद्वकः:। पररथः इति यावतः। “ते शान्तमचलः”मिति श्रुतः।। यथा श्रीशेलिस्थानमारुःचालिदस्यकमवर्तनाकामः।। श्रीशेलिसिंहरं ह्रद्धा पुनर्जनम न विचि: इति। कार्यां तु मरणानुकृत्यः: समरणादरुस्थानचालितिमिति च स्मरणातः।। “वनानि शामुरिस्यर्षध शामुरिरिति स्मान्दे।। “सर्वो ह्योरुः” इति श्रुतः।। SS(856).

महीयरः: महरी गिरिरहिणि घरतीि महीयरः। “वनानि विष्णुरिगर्यो दिशिि” (विष्णु-२-१२-२८) इति पराश्रोकः।। VS(369). He held up Mandara during the churning of the ocean and lifted the Govardana mountain as Krishna. So He gets the name महाद्रिपः- महान्तमद्रि गिरि मन्द्रां गोवर्धनं च अमृतमथने गोकुलः च धृतवानििति महाद्रिपः।। 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 अमीिति हेतोरनुवर्तनीयं नाथ तदन्त्य न विभावयामि। भर्त्र कुतः: स्यात्त त्विषि सानुकपे रखः कुतः: स्यात्त त्विषि जातरोषे।। (Ashtabhujashtakam - 5) त्विषि रक्षति रक्षले: किमन्येः। त्विषि चारक्षति रक्षले: किमन्येः।। इति निर्देशत् धी: श्रयामिन मित्य नृत्रे वेगवती तदाध्रं त्वाम्।। (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

अहो सुबलवान रामो महदबलं च वे ।
यस्य विकममासाय राक्षसा निधनं गता: ।
तं मन्ये राघवं वीरं मारायणमनामयम् ॥
(Yuddha kanda 72-10,11).

In contrast young devotees like Prahlada were under His protection. They faced trials and tribulations with the assurance that the Lord will protect them. So no harm could befall them. We also referred to the episode of Markandeya being saved by Shiva from the jaws of death and mentioned that one of His names is मृत्युज्ज्वलः 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

मृत्युज्ज्वलः मृत्युभियाश्चिताना-
महमतिमृत्युपुष्टित पूर्वम् ।
अथ स्वभावादमृतंतेषु तेषु
कथं पुनर्मृत्युधियोऽवकाशः ॥

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

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

Mahagauri: Mah = great Gauri = is the name of Parvati Mahagauri means great or glorious Gauri = close by, not far away D = 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 Adinari: - nary Adv Adinar, Adinarimilata Ishwar: - naryshodasmiharamasvamamayam Varuṇamayakama: - pravalaruṣaḥbrahmashoṣaṃmariṣamānapiśrūrasyāmamayam Gauri parvur: - shaktivam: smarayi smarapitṛisambhavat “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 कऽा “कारणं, भगवान् इति” kāraṇam, bhagavān iti. “यो वै बलाक अतेऽपि पुरुषार्थं कर्ता यस्य वै तत् कर्म स वेदितव्यः” yo vai balāk ātēpī puruṣāraṇam karṭa yasya vai tat kṛmaṁ s vedityaḥ. | VS(316). कष्ट - जगहोत्यतो साधर्म्य करणम् | VS(378) kṣat - jagahotyato sadharmya karṇam. 

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 प्रकृति विद्यान्मायिनं” tu prakṛti vidyānmaiyinam | 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 दौषा गुणमयी मम माया दूर्त्वया | BG(7-14). “This divine illusion of Mine, made up of gunas, is hard to surmount.” So He is known as महामायाः - मायाविनामापि मायाकार्तिव्यामा | prakṛti: भूमि भूमयाः - मूलभूतं महामायाः, “मम माया दूर्त्वया” इति भगवद्वननात् | VS(170). Krishna says that in fact He is both: the intelligent cause and the material cause called prakriti. Thus मूलप्रकृतिः mūlaprakṛti is one of His names मूलभूता प्रकृति: mūlabhūtā prakṛti: जगादिकारणं, tadbhavamitram ātma-tattvam ātmanātmanam जगादिकारणं, tadbhavamitram ātma-tattvam ātmanātmanam | SS(411). Also prakṛti: भगवान् - जगादिकारणं, tadbhavamitram ātma-tattvam ātmanātmanam भगवान् - जगादिकारणं, tadbhavamitram ātma-tattvam ātmanātmanam | SS(570). The prakriti mentioned as the mother is symbolised as the Lord's consort and is variously called as Parvati, Ambika, Gauri, Bhavani, LakShmi etc.. प्रकृति, विद्विलाय, नारायणसमाध्यन्त्र are names of LakShmi to be seen in LakShmi Ashtottarashatanama stotram. Thus the Lord as brahman is one but, as Iswara and Devi appears as two. This is stated beautifully in the उमामहेश्वरस्तोत्रम् (Umamaheswara stotram) as follows नमः शिवायाः नवयोगान्याः परस्पराश्चाथिश्वरपुरुषाध्याम् | I salute the two Shivas who are eternally young and whose bodies are entwined with each other. Krishna also adds that we the created beings are in the clutches of prakriti and go through the cycle of birth and death till wisdom dawns on us but He is beyond it and maya, however powerful may it be has no influence on Him. So He is known as मायातीतः - मायाया अतीतः - मायाया वा अतीतः. | सत्यादिगुण-सामान्यरूप-प्रकृतिविचित्र्यात्मित्वात् इत्यतः | “अतिमाययांमययामित्व श्रुतिः” इति | SS(41). and निर्मायः - मायाया निर्मायः: निर्मायः | यथापि “मायां तु प्रकृति विद्यान्मायिनं तु महे श्रां” इति मायासम्बन्धः: 56 sanskritdocuments.org
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 पर्यंचरत गौरी भवानीव भवं प्रसुम। BH(2-23-1). The following names are thus derived from the facts stated above

परवतीपितः - परवतः हिमवानः तस्य पुत्री पार्वती। तस्या: पति:। तदुक्त सूतसहितायं.

“सा शिवा करुणामूर्तिर्जगन्माता त्रिषिमयी। शिवाभिभा परान्न्दा शंकरस्यापि शापी।”

स्वेच्छाया हिमतपुरी स्वभक्षजनस्तम्भो, तस्या: पति: प्रियः परमेश्वरः। “अविकापतपमात परमपत्येय। अम्बिकापति: परवत्या: प्रियः अम्बिकापति:। “हिरण्यपत्येयः अम्बिकापत्य” इति श्रुति:। SS(24) अम्बिकापति:।

श्वेतसुभूमिता कलिंदिना सुरासुरादिना विवाहश्रीरेण पार्वति: नमो नमः। इति श्रुति:। SS(429). Also SA(15) गौरीशः - गौरीशोऽपिकापितः। SS(121) श्रीपितः। अमृतस्वरूपे सर्वोत्तमं विवाहान्नेन श्रीमधुनारायण श्रीषी विवाहान्नेन पतित्वेन वर्यामासेति श्रीपितः। श्री: पर शाश्वः। तस्या: पतिरितवा, “परास्य शाश्वकिर्तिविवेधे शून्यते” (शे-उ-८) इति श्रुति:। VS(603). श्रीशः: प्रियः ईशः। श्रीदाः। VS(606) जगतिपता - जगद्गः पुरजाते। इदं सर्वमस्सुलवते। इति श्रुति:। SS(36) विवश्माता - विवश्म वातां व्यापी द्रातां वा। SS(85) जगाती। जगताभाता। तस्या: पतिवि:। SS(86) मातामहः। मातुः। पितां मातामहः। चतुर्विषयभूतायामस्य पार्थिवस्य माता पुर्वधीं। तस्या: पिता मातामहः। “स भूमिभूतज्ञो” इति श्रुति:। पृथिविया मातृवे। “इदं वै माते” इति श्रुति:। SS(615). Debi 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. Rudram says असौ यस्ताऽहूः अरुण उत्ते व्रुः सुमझलः। This says that Rudra is ताण्स्रः = copper coloured, अरुणः = rosy, व्रुः = golden yellow, सुमझलः = 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 तस्मयूर्द्ध = 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 यस्ताऽहूः इत्यन्दे आदित्यमुपतिते। The votary should praise and worship the sun by means of the rik असौ यस्ताऽहूः in the Rudram. So ताण्स्रः - अत्यन्ततः रक्तस्ताऽहृः। “नमस्ताऽहृ चे ‘ते श्रुति:।। 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 द्याछः - द्याशिलो द्याछः। अतने परमेश्वरस्य या शान्ता तनू सर्वहादेददुर्पिणी सा प्रदर्शिता। “या ते रूढ़ शिवा तनू रिति श्रुति:। SS(155) सिन्धुराजाराजिधरः। सिन्धुः = the sea, ocean राजन = a king or chief. It is used to qualify something very great or glorious. For example Kalidasa describes the Himalaya as नगाफिराजः in his Kumarasambhava. अति = a prefix used to mean very, too, exceedingly etc धीरः = strong minded, wise, resolute. सिन्धुराजः meaning the chief of the oceans: indicates a mighty ocean. The Lord is very resolute, wise and strong minded like a mighty ocean. Kalidasa defines धीरः as one who is endowed with a mind that does not waver
even when assailed by deleterious forces that are capable of perverting it. (Kumarasambhava-1-59). Gita and the upanishads use the word to mean a person of wisdom or discrimination.

Just as in this body the Self passes into childhood and youth and old age, so does He pass into another body. The wise man has no delusions in this regard and so is not troubled in the mind. Arjuna had delusion in this regard. He admitted in the end that his delusion had been destroyed as a result of Krishna’s teaching. He said: नः मोहः स्मृतिरः त्वत्सादान्यायाच्युत्। BG(18-73). Again यं हि न व्यतान्तवे पुरुषं पुरुषार्थं समझे घ्यं पीरं सोऽमृतवाय कल्पे। 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 धीर: and also as स्थितप्रज्ञ: स्थितधीर: etc.. The upanishads use the word धीर: to indicate a man of wisdom and realisation. This example is from Kathopanishad एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्म एक्षुर्यं बहुधा यः करोति। तमात्मस्य येषनुपातिन्तिमा धीरा: तेषां सुखं शैतं नेतरेषाम्। KU(2-2-12). “The indwelling Lord of all beings; who is one without the second and has everybody under His control; transforms His one and single entity into multifarious; those wise persons who always observe (meditate upon) that Lord abiding in self; (it is they who) enjoy that eternal bliss; not the others.”

One other interpretation of the word is धीर: रूर्यं ईरं प्रेयं प्रेय तिमे 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 यो न: प्रचोदकार्यं। Shiva is known as गायत्रिविलङ्कः गायत्रिविलङ्क: गायत्रिप्रतिपाय इत्यर्थ:। 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:

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 गम्भीरः deep or profound. Describing the qualities of Rama, Narada tells the sage Valmiki that Rama was profound like the ocean समुद्र इव गम्भीरः। (Balakanda-1-17). The sage will appear to be simple, but his depth of knowledge and maturity cannot be measured: तुद्विर्गाह्यः। Because of his immense wisdom he cannot be overcome or overpowered. He is firm. He is beyond time and space as he has found he is अनन्तः and अपारः।। अपारः means shoreless. A jnani is limitless and all pervading as he has found his true nature स्वरूपम्। He is unshakeable; this refers to his emotional strength. On this point Krishna says
dुःखेषु विगर्तस्युः सुखेषु विगतस्युः।। वीरतारामभयकोयोः स्थिताप्रभुपूनिवृत्यते।। 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 प्रसादेद 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 पूर्णत्वम्। So he has no wants. His sensory experiences are like the rivers: they may bring in flood waters or may dry up. But the ocean does not swell or shrink in size. It retains its fullness. This is with reference to material possessions also. So whether he owns all desirable possessions समृद्धकामः or has none, he treats both situations like नारायणपरः. gifts from God. Ramayana gives a fine example in Rama for this. He was to be made the king but this was not to be. He was asked to go to the forest instead. But this sudden change of fortune did not upset Him in the least. Valmiki says: न वर्ज गन्तुकामस्य त्यजन्त्व वसुधराम।। सर्वरोकासिकाय दक्ष्यते चित्तविक्रिया।। (Ayodhya Kanda -19-33). No change of mood
was perceived in him,—any more than in a (master) yogi who surpasses all (common) men (because of his having risen above all pairs of opposites).—even though he was ready to retire to woods and was renouncing the sovereignty to the globe. The man of wisdom does not become arrogant or depressed. Rama was said to be like this. 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.

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. 

He says that one cannot describe His beauty directly, or by comparing it with a like object.
or by exaggeration. Describing it directly is not possible because His form is very subtle and cannot be grasped by words. There being none equal to it, one cannot use a simile and offer a comparison. Also one cannot use exaggeration to highlight His form. For example Kalidasa says that King Dilipa was tall like a tree साल प्रतिसुः: Raghuvamsa (1-13). This makes nice reading and sounds definitely better than saying that Raghu was exceptionally tall. But exaggeration will not work when talking about His qualities as nothing can excel them. Still poets resort to the use of the figures of speech as with the worldly objects while praising Him. This is done in their enthusiasm to sing His glory and we accept it in the right spirit.

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

6
6. अष्टक्ष्यज्ञेन्द्र गीतं स्तोत्रार्ज फ़ेठदस्तु भवत्व प्रयाणे ।
तस्यार्थसिद्धि विघटि मार्गम्येऽभवं चायुतोषो महेशः ।
शाम्भो ...
अष्टक्ष्य = the name of the author यजन = performer of sacrifices गीतं = sung स्तोत्रार्ज = great poem पेठि = reads य = whoever भवत्व = with devotion प्रयाणे = during a journey तस्य = for him. अर्थ = wish, desire सिद्धि = fulfilment, complete attainment विघटि = arranges. मार्ग्य = middle or central part मार्गम्य्ये = on the way अभ्यर्थ = freedom from fear, security आशु = fast, quick तोष = satisfaction, pleasure, delight. आयुतोष: = means one who is easily pleased महेशः = name of Shiva. This verse gives the benefit or the fruit of reciting the poem and is known as फलश्रुतिः । फलेः = means the fruit, the result or the reward. The author says that one who reads the poem with devotion during a journey will be successful and attain his goal or wishes. In addition he will feel secure and be protected by the Lord on the way. What is the nature of the Lord? He is महेशः = the Lord of the lords like Indra and Brahma. It is to Him that they all rush when they are confronted by fear or serious danger. This name was explained in verse No. 4 where it occurs. But though He is the supreme Lord a devotee can easily please Him by offering items that can be obtained without difficulty. He is known by following names: सुलभः । पत्रपुष्पफलादिभिः भक्तिमात्रसम्पिते: सुखेन लभ्यत इति सुलभः:
It is our tradition to mention the फलश्रुति: 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 फलश्रुति: 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 यज्ञन. The Manusmrthi states that performing sacrifices is one of the duties of a brahmin अध्यापनमययन्य यज्ञन याज्ञन तथा.
Kalidasa says that the kings of the solar dynasty tended the sacrificial fires by means of offerings and honoured the guests also. यथाविधि हुताशीनाः यथाकामार्थितार्थिनां (Raghuvasma-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

अर्घ स केवलं भुक्तं यः पचत्यात्मकारणात्।

यज्ञशिष्यांनां हेतुतत्सतांमः विधीयते॥

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

यज्ञशिष्यांतमोत्तमो यान्ति धन्य सनातनम्।

नाथ योकोस्यज्ञस्य कुतोदन्यः कुरुस्तम॥

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: सर्वंयज्ञस्वरूपत्वाद यज्ञः: “यज्ञो वीविषुः” (३३.१–७.४) इति श्रुते। VS(445). Also यज्ञः: सर्वंयज्ञस्वरूपत्वायज्ञः। “त्वं यज्ञस्तव्विषुः” संतिर्षितं 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 चित्तस्य शुद्धियें कर्म says Shri Sankaracharya in his Vivekachudamani. He defines such a person who has been regularly performing the sacrifices as noble minded महात्मानः: अश्वद्वितिः: in his commentary (BG-19-13). Anandagiri elaborates the definition as महान प्रकृतियो यज्ञादिभिः: शोधितं आत्मा सत्वं चेषां - those whose minds have been purified by sacrifice etc.. Such a person who is sincere, performs the duties expected of him and is broad minded is known as आत्म: - आत्म: यथार्थवत्कर्ता। - 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 आत्माकं 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 वेदं यथा मूर्तिधरार्थिस्पृष्टे। नेदाथवामुद्र च कक्षनार्थ श्रव्ते परानुभवमात्मशालिम्॥ The king said “shining like the vedas you have all come together from every quarter. You have no purpose of your own in this world (to achieve) in this world or in the next, except doing
good to others, which is your innate disposition.” BH(1-19-23). Shri Sankaracharya also talks about this trait of great men:

शान्ता महान्तो निवसति सन्तो वसन्तवद्धोकहिं चरन्तः।
तीर्थां स्वयं भीमभवार्यं जननाहेतुनायनिः तारायं।

(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 गीत = 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 भगवता गीता. This implies that He was not the author of the work (न कृत्ता) 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:

स्वर्णपिनिष्ठो गायो, दोंगो गोपालनन्दनः। पारथो वत्सः,
सुधीरमॊक्ता, दुर्भे गीतामृतं महत्।

The upanishads are like the cows. Gopala is the one who milks them. Partha (Arjuna) forms the calf. The pure minded one is the partaker and the supreme nectar Gita is the milk. In the same manner, in this case also the poet had glorified the Lord by stringing together some of His attributes. These attributes are to be found in the puranas etc., and so were known long back. Also the fact that singing the glories of the Lord will confer great benefits is also known from time immemorial. In the introduction to the Vishnu Sahasranama Bhishma tells Yudhishtira: I will tell you some of the renowned names of the Lord culled from various sources (such as the vedas and puranas) by great sages. These names will confer all merits यानि नामानि गोपालानि विश्वायानि महात्मनः। ऋषिभिः परिगीतानि तानि वक्ष्यामि
भूतये। Thus, the use of the word “sung” (गीतम्) seems appropriate. Why this piece is called स्तोत्र राजा a great or splendid piece of work? In the beginning of Chapter 9 of Gita, Krishna talks of the knowledge of brahman and to glorify the subject He calls it राजविधा राजगृहम्। “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 भक्त्वा प्रयाणे तस्य अर्थसिद्धि विघटः। (i.e.) whoever reads this with devotion during a journey, the mission will be completed successfully. The emphasis is on the word भक्त्वा - with devotion. This implies that such great hymns should not be read or chanted mechanically, by rote but with devotion. One should put his heart and mind in it. Bhishma says so in the introduction to Vishnu Sahasranamam: “Among the dhammas prescribed the one I am going to say namely, worshipping the Lord by singing His glories with devotion is, I consider the best.” एष में सर्वधार्मिकां धर्मेऽधिकतमो मतः। यद्वक्त्वा पुण्डरीकाः स्तवेिवर्च्छरः सदा॥ This is in reply to King Yudishtira’s question to him “which among the dhammas or duties you have mentioned is, according to you the best?”

को धर्मः सर्वधार्मिकां भवतः परमो मतः?

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

भक्तिमात्र य: सदोत्त्थाय शुचिस्त्रद्वतमानसः। सहस्रं वासुदेवस्य नामामेतत्र प्रकीर्तियेत्॥ १२५॥

इर्म स्त्रवमधियानां अश्रुभक्तिसमस्मित्वः।

युज्येतात्त्मसुखकालिनां-श्रीधृष्टिमृत्तिकीतिभि:॥ १३२॥

Shri Sankaracharya, in his commentary, says: भक्तिमात्रार्थं भक्तिमतः शुचि:।

सत्यायुक्तस्येकायचित्तस्य श्रुद्धारोविशिष्याधिकारिण: फळविशेष दर्शयति। Thus a great deal of emphasis is laid on devotion and faith. The Lord is अनिमिषः। always awake VS(215) and on the look-out for people who have devotion. He has innumerable number of ears, eyes, mouths etc. सर्वतः पाणिपां तत्र सर्वतोड्क्षिणिररहस्यः। सर्वतः श्रुदुमाधिको सर्वभावास्त्व तिष्ठति॥ SU(3-6). His (as Ganesa) ears are big and very sensitive. With them He can hear even prayers muttered softly. With His long proboscis He can detect even the faintest aroma of piety. He loves sincere prayers offered by His devotees and blesses them. He has the name: स्तवप्रियः। VS(680). This does not mean that He loves adulation. He has no need for it. It is we who benefit by singing His glories. It was said पठेयस्तु भक्त्वा प्रयाणे तस्य अर्थसिद्धि विघटः मार्गमध्येिवर्च्छ आशुतोषो महेशः। (i.e.) whoever reads this with devotion during a journey, the Lord will ensure that the mission is completed successfully.
In addition he will feel secure as he will be protected by the Lord on the way. We noted that the word प्रयाणम् means departure, or journey. But if we scratch a bit deeper we find that the word also means death or departure from this world. This latter meaning puts the statement in a different perspective and introduces a very important topic viz., the last moments of one’s life and how it is to be managed. Both प्रयाणकाल: and अन्तकाल: 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 स्मरन्युत्कम् कृते वरम् ।
भ: प्रयाति स मद्दावव चाति नास्त्यत्र संशयः: ॥

Who at the time of death, thinking of me alone, leaves the body and goes forth, he reaches My being; there is no doubt in this. BG(8-5). And;
यं वं वापि स्मरन्युत्तमं त्यजत्यन्ते कृते वरम् ।
तं तमेवैतौ कौन्तेय सदा लद्दावभावित: ॥ 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.
कामाण्य: कामयते मन्यमान: स कामभिंतयान्ते तत्र तत्र ।
पर्यासकामस्य कृतात्मनस्सद्भवावेव सर्वेव प्रविश्यन्ते 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 नामेतद्वां भारतमिति यत आर्थ्य व्यपदिशन्ति BH(5-7-3). The king was - महाभागवत: 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:

As a consequence he was reborn as a deer.

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 –

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

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

\[\text{निवृत्तस्वप्नद्रियवृत्तिचिंत्रमस्तुश्व जन्यं विसुज्जननार्द्धनम्} \text{ BH(1-9-31).} \]

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.

\[\text{इति मलिनपक्कतिपता वितुष्णा भगवति सात्वतपुजः विभूषि} \]
\[\text{स्वसुखमुपगते कचिद् विहृतु मकृतिमुपेयुषि यद् भवप्रवाहः} \text{ BH(1-9-32).} \]

He said that on the eve of his departure from this world he offers his mind which is free from all thirst for worldly enjoyment to the Supreme Lord. He begins by saying इति - “thus or in this manner.” “In this manner” means “in the manner as advised by You.” Has not Krishna promised earlier that: ” with mind and reason fixed on Me you shall doubtless come to Me alone?”

\[\text{भवूवाहः} \]
\[\text{तेजः परं परमारूणिकं पुरस्ततात,} \]
\[\text{प्राणप्रयाणं समये मम सत्ततायम्} \]
\[\text{BH(1-9-31).} \]

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:

\[\text{व्यत्त्वस्तपादः मवतसंति-वर्धिहर्षः,} \]
\[\text{साचीक्रवतीनि-विवेशिते-वेणुरभ्रम्} \]
\[\text{तेजः परं परमारूणिकं पुरस्ततात,} \]
\[\text{प्राणप्रयाणं समये मम सत्ततायम्} \]
\[\text{BH(1-9-31).} \]

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 अन्तकाटे च लiterally 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 लब्धीय-पद-पशुजपदरात्: अद्याब्दे मेविदातु
मानस-राजहंसः ।
प्राणप्रयाणसमयः कफ-वात-पित्तः कण्ठावरोधनविधी
स्मरण कुर्तस्ते ॥

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:

वायुनोतकमतोत्तमः कफसंहद्वीपादिकः ।
कास्थास्कृतायासः कणठे घुघुरायते ॥

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

अधानाशर्लोकस्य यावतीर्चातनाथयः ।
क्रमशः समनुक्रमय पुनरात्राब्रजेच्छुचि: ॥

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

न साम्परायः प्रतिभाति बालेः, प्रमाणान्त विस्मोहेन मूढम् ।
अर्थ लोको नासित पर इति मानी, पुरः पुनर्वशमापयते 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 अभिनबेशः। He says that the fear affects the wise people also.

स्वरसवाही विदुषोऽथित्तथा रसवाही स्वरसवाही: ।
साधनपादः: ९।
स्वस्त रसेन संस्कारणेव वहतीति स्वरसवाही ।
अभिनवशोभिमितकविद्वां तथैति तच्छवदः:
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। अच वा अस्थातान्ते वा मृत्युः प्राणिनां प्रवर्मण ॥ 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.  
ाहो राज्याणि गच्छन्ति सर्वां प्राणिनामि ।  
आयूष्य क्षयमन्त्याशु श्रीभेज जलमिस्वा ॥

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 त्वं किमन्यमनुशोचसि ।  
आयुः हीयते यत्र स्थित्यास्य 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).

सहेव मृत्युर्वर्जति सह मृत्युनिन्दित ।  
गत्वा सुदीर्घमध्यानं सह मृत्युनिवर्तते ॥

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:

अत: पृथ्वायां संसिद्धि योगिनां परम्य गुरुम् ।  
पुरुषस्येऽय यत् कार्यः प्रियमाणस्य सर्वर्था ॥

“I enquire of you, the greatest preceptor of the Yogs, 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 Bhagavatham and has been elaborated in the further Books also. This is similar to what is said in chapter 8 of Gita. We have seen that those who are soaked in samsara and lead a Bohemian life get inferior births. Those who perform their duties and rituals with desires सकाम कर्मोऽ get births suitable for the fulfilment of the desires. Those who perform desireless karmas निष्काम कर्मोऽ and also upasana (which includes offering prayers, worship of the Lord in any particular form etc.) form the next higher category. Krishna advises
that such people should, at the time of departure, cut off all attachments. Then they should concentrate on the Lord in His cosmic form as Virat Purusha or Viswarupa Iswara and leave the body. They attain liberation in stages called क्रममुक्ति:।
प्रयाण काले मनसासंचलन्तेऽमत्य युक्तो योगबलेन चैव।
भूविरङ्गे प्राणवेदन्य सम्यक्ष सं परं प्रकृतामुक्ति दिव्यम॥ BG(8-10)

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

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

अश्रीरां शरीरेषु अनवस्थेष्वस्तिथ्यम।
महान्ते विशुभूमात्मानं मत्वा धीरो न शोचितः॥

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 मन्ते ज्ञानवान् मां प्रफळते। वासुदेवः सर्वभिषिता स महात्मा सुदुर्मः।। BG(7-19).

At the end of many births, the man of wisdom comes to Me, (realising) that Vasudeva is the all: he is the noble-souled, very hard to find. Shri Sankaracharya explains in his commentary that these many births are required to gain the mental maturity to make him fit enough to acquire and assimilate the supreme wisdom that liberates him. बहुनां जन्मनां ज्ञानर्थसंस्काराणां अन्ते समासो ज्ञानवान् प्रत्यपरिपाकज्ञानः मां वासुदेवं प्रत्यगात्मानं प्रत्यक्षतः प्रपक्षते। He then realises the goal to be reached is Vasudeva who is the inner self of all. Why such a person is extremely rare to find? Krishna had said earlier: मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु काश्चिददत्तिः सिद्धैः। यत्ततामपि सिद्धां निहितं वेदिता तत्वतः।। 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 चतुष्णयसंपत्ति: 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: बालस्तावत् कीडासकः तरणस्तावत् तरणीसकः। बुद्धस्ताविन्त्यात्मकः परेशायणं कोडप्य सतः॥ 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 आचारेत्राझो परां भागवतानि॥ 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 शैशवेऽवतिनः समवेदोऽथवा वेदः॥ (1-7). Our tradition says that only that learning that leads to liberation can be called education. सा विद्या या विमुक्त्ये॥ Shri Sankaracharya also defines education as अतमनो बोधः while commenting on the popular verse beginning विद्या विनयसंपत्तिः ब्रह्मणे गच्छति वि॥ BG(5-18). It is knowing about Self. Thus Devi (LakShmi, Lalita) is called Vidya विद्या॥ The commentator’s explanation is: मोक्षपद्धानस्वरूपत्वादिविद्या॥ (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

इति ह स्म यद्विवदो बदन्ति परा चैवापरा च।
तत्रापरा ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथवेदः शिष्क्षा कल्यो व्याकरणं निरूर्ति छन्दो ज्योतिषमिति। अथ परा यया तद्दक्षरमधिगम्यते॥

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: श्रीयः प्रेयः मनुष्येऽत्सात् संपरायत्व बिविनक्ति 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 यथागृही। 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 - नाच्चेत कृत्वा कृपणो जमायस।. 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

शैशवेऽन्नि: राजर्षि: | झाल्यात्तामिहायुषा: ।
मुद्तोत्त सर्वमुत्तुत्व गतवान्यं हरिम्।| BH(2-1-13).

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 ते बुद्धं संयोगं लभते पौर्वदेहिकम्।
यतते च ततो भूयं संसिद्धो 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 शैशवेऽभ्यस्तविद्यानाम्। 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., यथाकालप्रवचोढिनां 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 तनुत्याजम्। 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. \textit{मार्गभ्रोऽयेदभ्रोऽच आशुतोषो महेशः।} 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 \textit{अनन्ते ब्रह्मणो विद्वान्। न विभेदित कदाचारनिति।} 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) \textit{तेषां सतत-चुङ्कानां भजतां प्रीति-}
\textit{पूर्वकम्। ददामि बुद्धि-योगं तं च देव मामुपवान्ति 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
\textit{यस्यां वै श्रृयमाणायाम् कृष्णं परमपूरुषे।}
\textit{भक्तिरुप्यते पुंसः शोकमोहमयापह।} 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 (\textit{श्रृयमाणायाम्}) 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 चः स्वपीनियतचेतनाचेतनं
पनायति नमस्यति स्मरति वक्ति पर्यति वा ।
गुणं कमपि वेत्ति वा तव गुणेष गोपावितुः
कदाचन कुतश्रण कचन तस्य न स्यादः।

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 फलुण्डत्रुति: . It is said न भयं कविद्रामोति बीयं तेजश्च विन्दिति and भवान्युष्मीये भीतस्तु मुच्येतापन्न आपदः । and जन्ममुन्युजरा वायाविषायम् नेवोपजायते ।. 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: - भयं संसारजं पुण्यामपण्यं भयापहः: । VS(935). But there may be fear from foes and elements etc.. God removes them also. Shiva is known as सहायः: - ब्रह्माकात्रात्चार रक्षक इत्यादी: । SS(762). He protects even gods like Brahma in times of danger. Lalita is called भयापहा - भयानि जलस्थलायृक्तानि सर्वार्थपन्नाति भयापहा । “आनंदं ब्रह्मं विद्वृत्तं बिमति कुतश्रणेति” श्रुते: । तथा च वायुपुराणं “अरणे प्रान्तं वापि जलं वापि स्थलं एवं वा” वायासुम्बितो भवस्याः विशेषत: । आधिष्ठपि च सर्वास्तं देवीनामानि कीतं दिदितं । 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:

विषाण्माइः शूरोदूतस्यन्तसभाया वनवसकुछ्छति: ॥
मृथे मुखेनसेनकारार्थाश्ितो दौषण्याहतास्म हरेः भिरक्षन: ॥ 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 Aswathama (the son of Dronacharya). The gopis also stated that Krishna saved them time and again from death from poisonous water, demons in various disguises, showers, storm and lightning and other perils

Thus the truly devout people never miss Him and are, therefore do not feel insecure on the way. The “way” may be viewed allegorically also. Our scriptures talk of many ways to worship Him. These are meant for people with differing tastes based on their temperaments. The Shiva-Mahimna Stotram says this:

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

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 येनगतः स पन्थः 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 reference to samsara. प्रपथ्य: वहुभिहित सेवितो मार्गः प्रपथ्यः, तत्र भव: 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: मचित: सर्वधुराणि मद्यसादातरिण्यसि। 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 Desikacharioor 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.

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