.. kandukastutiH ..

॥ कन्दुकस्तुतिः ॥

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This hymn - in praise of Lord Vishnu - is worded cleverly so that one can find a rhythm while reading it. It sounds like a ball is being tapped on the ground. It boUNCes back, only to be hit again. It bounces back and this is repeated.

अंबरगंगा-चुंबित-पादः पदतल-विदिल्लिः-गुरुतर-शकटः।
कालियनाग-श्वेषः-निहन्ता सरसिज-नवदल-विकसित-नयनः।
॥ १ ॥

अंबरगंगा-चुंबित-पादः।
अंबरं = sky. So, अंबरगंगा will mean the river Ganga flowing in the sky or heavens.
चुंबित = kissed or gently touched or caressed.
Pदः = foot.

The Lord’s feet are caressed by the waters of the river Ganges that flows in the heavens. The Ganges took its birth from the feet of the Lord. It is this association with His feet that makes its waters sacred.

पदतल-विदिल्लिः-गुरुतर-शकटः।
Pदतल = surface of the foot or sole of the foot;
विदिल्लिः = split into pieces, गुरुतर = very large, violent,
शकटः = the demon Shakata.

The demon Shakata was sent by Kamsa to kill Krishna who was then a child. The demon hid himself in the wheel of a cart waiting for an opportunity to kill Krishna. But, the child Krishna went near the cart and kicked the wheel of the cart. Shakata was killed. The incident is described in Bhagavata - Book No.10 (part 1).

कालियनाग-श्वेषः-निहन्ता
कालियनाग = the serpent Kaliya, (who was staying with his family in a meadow near Gokulam and was a terror to the residents.)
श्वेषः = playfully निहन्ता = one who subdued.

This refers to the incident (again to be seen in Bhagavata - Book No.10 (part 1).

सरसिज-नवदल-विकसित-नयनः।
सरसिज = lotus, नवदल = fresh petal, विकसित = opened or blown, 
नयनः = having eyes.
Krishna’s eyes are like the petal of a lotus that has just opened up. Thus they are very beautiful. Not only they are beautiful to look at, they are very auspicious and can fulfill all the desires of a devotee (including mokSha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death.)

One of His names (No:393 in Vishnusahasranama) is शुभेच्छ:।

Sri Sankaracharya in his commentary explains in detail the significance of the name as follows.

His auspicious looks grant liberation (mokSha) to those who seek liberation, grant pleasures to those who seek pleasures, destroy the sins of the sinners, remove all doubts, remove the knot of ignorance that ties up the mind and destroy all remnants of karma and also ignorance.

The first line describes the glory of Lord’s feet. Even Ganges that was born of His feet is reputed to be holy and capable of wiping out the sins of those who take bath in it. Then, what to say about the sins of the devotees who worship His feet? The feet also offer total protection from all enemies. The proof is lies in the fact that they could playfully destroy a fearful demon like Shakata. An additional proof is seen in the episode of Kaliya that says that Krishna subdued the terrible serpant Kaliya and ensured total security to His followers. Thus the Lord is the source of complete and most superior protection. A devotee need not seek any other protector. Any other source will be fragile and inferior only.

The great Vaishnavite acharya Shri Vedanta Desika says this

Sri Leelasukha says the same thing in his Krishnakarnamritam.
कालघनाली-कङ्कुर-कायः: शरशत-शकिलत-शिरपुशत-निरतः।
संतत-मस्मान पातु-समजव-खणपति-निरतः।

काल = of black or dark blue colour, घन = cloud, अर्थः = a black bee, कङ्कुर = of colour of pigeon, grey or of vareigated colour, कायः = body.

Krishna's body has the colour of a bee or cloud or gray like that of a pigeon.

सततगः: वेगम्।
समजवः: समतद।
खगपितः: गरुडः।
िनरतः: निःपुशत:।

सततगः: wind, समजवः = equal in speed,
खगपितः: the king of birds or Garuda,
िनरतः: = fond of or rested. The Lord is always resting on Garuda, who is fast as the wind.

The poets say that wind and the mind are the fastest things. Thus, Hanuman is also described to be as fast as these two. मनोजवं माहतुल्य-वेगम्।

The Lord rests on Garuda so that He can respond to the calls from His devotee, either to bless him or rescue him from trouble without any delay.

He came on Garuda to bless the child Dhruva.

सहःशीषा-ततो गरुडः यतो गजेः।
(Bhagavatam 4-9-1).

He also flew on Garuda to save Gajendra who was fighting for his life.

छन्दोपयेन गरुडेन समुद्रमानाधकायुपः धासु यतो गजेः।
(Bhagavatam 8-3-31).

Incidently we may note from this line that Garuda is not a bird but he represents the vedas. The vedas are divided into two sections. The first part is called the Karma Kanda and tells us how we should conduct ourselves, what to do and what to avoid. It also describes the rituals to be performed to get various material benefits. By diligently following the injunctions in this section one’s mind gets purified and calm. He, thus, becomes qualified for the study of the second part known as Jnana Kanda or Vedanta. This part consists of upanishads and are meant to be studied under a qualified guru because the teachings contained in them are very subtle and difficult to grasp without the guidance of a teacher. The study points the way to liberation.

Garuda’s two wings represent the two sections of the vedas.

शरशत-शकिलत-रिपुशत-निवहः।
कन्दुकस्तुतिः

शरशत = hundered(s) of arrows, शककित = reduced to pieces, रिपुशत निवह = multitudes of enemies.

This refers to His incarnation as Rama when He reduced a great armies of enemies to nothing with His arrows. One of His names to be seen in the Sahasranama is धनुर्धरः - श्रीमान् रामो महद्वृर्तर्यामासेति धनुर्धरः

संततं-मस्मान् पातु मुरारिः

मुरारिः = Lord, the enemy of the demon Mura, अस्मान् = us, संततं = always, पातु = let Him protect.

Let such a Lord Vishnu, who rides Garuda, the king of birds and who is as fast as the wind and the vanquisher of the demon Mura protect us.

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