

MUKUNDAMALA

(A Garland of Hymns to Mukunda)

of

KULASEKHARA ALWAR

A Rendering in English

By

Dr. M.S. RAJAJEE



Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams

Tirupati

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FOREWORD

'Mukunda Mala' of Kulasekhara Alwar is one of the most exquisite devotional poems in Sanskrit literature. This hymnal garland offered to Sri Krishna by the Prince among the servitors of Lord Vishnu contains forty scintillating slokas and each sloka is suffused with Krishna bhakti of a very high order. One finds the Alwar's supreme love for the all-pervading God of the Universe and his yearning for eternal communion with Him in every stanza of this much acclaimed poem of piety. The poet reiterates that he is not after any of the temporal values (Purusharthas) sought by ordinary men but the only thing he seeks is the perpetual link with His Lotus feet.

The present translation, rendered by Dr. M.S. Rajajee who had a very distinguished career in the Administrative service, is mainly intended for common readers. The substance of each stanza is given in a style which is luminous and unambiguous and a brief commentary brings out the essence of each sloka clearly.

The publishers shall feel amply rewarded if the Present reprint of this book serves as a useful guide to the seekers of Truth.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

T.T.DEVASTHANAMS

PREFACE

It is difficult to explain, even to myself, as to why I attempted a translation of and a brief explanatory note on "Mukunda Mala,, the great classic work by Sri Kulasekhara Alwar. On a particular day, a thought crossed my mind to read an English translation of "Mukundamala". I could lay my hands on a slim volume of translation, an excellent work brought out by the R.K. Math (Madras). I subsequently came across an equally good translation done by Sri Srinivasa Varada Chariar, brought out by the T.T.D. I looked around for a book which had explanatory notes and did not find one. I looked around for books in Telugu and came across a book brought out by the T.T.D. which was in the form of questions and answers and not a detailed commentary. I found small booklets which gave the meaning of Sanskrit Verse, word by word. Perhaps, there are works, both in English and Telugu, giving a detailed commentary. I did not come across these works.

I, therefore, ventured on this work. I realized my extreme limitations. I was neither deeply well versed in Vaishnavism, nor did I have a knowledge of Sanskrit. But, driven by a force beyond me, I have attempted this translation, with brief notes. I do not call it a commentary, because commentaries are written only by scholars. I am neither a scholar nor is this book intended for scholars. It is intended for people like me, who wish to know the meaning of the slokas, who would like to have some explanatory notes and would like to have contextual cross references to works by great scholars.

I must express my grateful thanks to Prof. Narasimha Charya, Professor of Vaishnavism of the Madras University, who went through my manuscript and made encouraging remarks. At that stage, I did not have an idea of publishing this work. My notes were intended for my personal knowledge and circulation

among family members. At a later point of time only, I thought of bringing out this publication. Had I gone back to Prof. Narasimha Charya again, my work would have been far superior. He is an erudite person, widely read, has a thorough understanding of Sanskrit and Vaishnavaitic works, is a scholar and an author of many books / articles. He never does anything by halves and is a stickler for perfection. It is my regret that I did not go back to him with the typescript. The finished work would have been far superior. I am mentioning this only to highlight the fact that though he read my manuscript and made encouraging remarks, the responsibility for the mistakes and omissions in the book are entirely mine. I am aware of the frailties of my work.

I have quoted from many sources. I gratefully acknowledge the quotations I have given from the Srimad Bhagavatham (Vol. I to IV) by Swamy Tapasyananda of the R.K. Math (Madras), from the Bhagavad Gita (translated into English and published by the Gita Press, Gorakhpur), the Vishnu Purana (translated by Manmatha Nath Datta), Sri Vedanta Desika Stotras (translated into English, by S.S. Raghavan, Dr. M.S. Lakshmi Kumari and Dr. Narasimha Chary), Thiruvencatathandadi and Thiruvencata Malai (translated by M.S. Ramesh), Bhaja Govindam (translated by C. Rajagopala Chari) Bhaja Govindam (translated by Swami Chinmayananda), Narada Bhakti Sutras (translated by Swami Prabhavananda) and Sri Krishna Karnamritam (by Lilasuka and Prabodhananda). In most cases, I have adopted the English translation of the individual slokas as given in the publication of R.K. Math. On some cases, I have adopted my own translation, where I felt that the meaning could be better conveyed in a different manner.

I must express my profound thanks to Sri Sivaramakrishna B.Tech. MBA, General Manager of HDFC who not only arranged to get the typing work done but meticulously did the proof

reading. A truly pious soul, he did the work with utmost sincerity and love. The typing work was done, again as a labour of love, by his colleague Sri P.B.V.S. Ayyangar. My handwriting is not the easiest of handwritings to read. He did the work, sitting late hours and did it with an excellent finish. It is only their devotion to the Lord that made the two of them to do this work, I cannot adequately express my thanks to the two of them.

My sister Dr. M.S. Lakshmi Kumari went through the manuscript and the typed copy and gave useful suggestions. I am thankful to her. My profound thanks are due to Sri Vinayak, IAS, Executive Officer (TTD) who arranged to accept this work for publication and gave necessary instructions for the printing of the book. I am touched by the quiet grace with which he did it. I am thankful to Sri Ramamurthi, Editor "Sapthagiri," who not only sorted out the procedural formalities but helped in the typing of the slokas in the Devanagari script. He did the work with quiet efficiency.

It was a conscious decision of mine not to have diacritical marks in the English transliteration and also not to have foot notes. This was because this book was intended for readers like me - people who wish to understand the slokas and appreciate the meaning. It is not for critics and scholars. If the readers derive as much satisfaction in reading it, as I did in writing it, I would regard myself as having achieved my objective.

I now place the book at the feet of the Lord.

M.S. RAJAJEE

MUKUNDAMALA

INTRODUCTION

MUKUNDAMALA, in Sanskrit, was written by Kulasekhara Alwar.

The Alwars are the mystic hymnologists who sought, felt, experienced and realised Lord Vishnu. They regard Lord Vishnu as the Supreme God. The Alwars, did not all live at the same period nor did all of them belong to the same sub caste or caste. Such is the catholicity of Sri-Vaishnavism. One of the Alwars was a lady and three were rulers, Kulasekhara being one of them. He belonged to the Chera Kingdom, part of present Kerala. Historians place him as being a Ruler in the 9th Century. He was a very great devotee of Lord Krishna. Mythology has it that one day he had a mystic vision of Lord Krishna, when he was asleep. He continued to enjoy this vision and hence he did not get up at the appointed time, when the court attendants came to wake him, with divine music. They made bold to enter the inner apartments and the king shared with them the immaculate vision he had that night. He became an even greater devotee of Lord Krishna and often visited Srirangam to offer worship to Lord Krishna. Mythology also has it that king Kulasekhara often wished to leave his kingdom, so as to visit Srirangam. Since it is not good for a king to be often away from his kingdom, his ministers hit upon a novel plan. For a Srivaishnava, it is as important (if not more important) to serve the Bhagawatas i.e. the devotees of the Lord as it is to serve the Lord. Hence, whenever the king was venturing to leave the kingdom to proceed to Srirangam, the ministers arranged for a group of Srivaishnava devotees to come in the opposite direction, wanting to visit the capital. King Kulasekhara, on meeting them, on the way, would return to the capital to serve the devotees. These mythological stories may be true or may not be true, but the works of Kulasekhara Alwar prove his great ardent devotion to the Lord. Apart from Mukundamala, the Alwar is credited with having written 105 Pasurams which are now known as Perumal Tirumozhi. They are incorporated into the Divya Prabandham.

MUKUNDAMALA, in Sanskrit, is an expression of Kulasekhara's devotion to the Lord. It stands for Mukundasya mala or the garland of Mukunda which confers liberation. Just as one feels happy by offering a garland of flowers to the Lord, one feel equally happy by studying this garland to the *Stava Priya*. As is the case with slokas, it is less concerned with presenting a plot and more with a floral tribute encapsulating the feelings of a beloved of the Lord.

Sloka 1.

श्रीवल्लभेति वरदेति दयापरेति
 भक्तप्रियेति भवलुण्ठनकोविदेति ।
 नाथेति नागशयनेति जगन्निवासे-
 त्यालापनं प्रतिपदं कुरु मे मुकुन्द ! ॥ १ ॥

*Shri Vallabheti Varadeti Dayapareti
 Bhaktapriyeti bhavaluntana kovideti
 Naadhethi nagasayanethi jagannivasa
 Thyaalapanam pratipadam kurume Mukunda*

Kulasekhara is praying to Lord Mukunda by calling Him as Srivallabha (He who is dear to Goddess Lakshmi) Varada (the bestower of boons) Dayapara (He who is merciful) Bhakta Priya, Bhavaluntana kovida (He who is an expert in breaking the samsaric bonds) Nadha (the Lord) Nagasayana (He who is resting on Adishesha), Jagannivasa (One who dwells in the Universe.) Kulasekhara requests the permission of the Lord to repeat the names of the Lord in the above manner.

Kulasekhara first addresses the Lord as Srivallabha. Sri stands for Goddess Lakshmi. God is in the nature of the father - he who gives but also chastises when needed. Goddess Lakshmi knows only to give. Hence the Lord is to be approached through the Goddess and we have the well known Principle of Intercession. God is never separated from 'Sri'. Hence, God has been addressed as one who is dear to the Goddess.

God is addressed as 'Varada' - one who confers boons. It can also be interpreted as "Varaan dhyathi" one who is troubling others will have the boons given to him taken away. God grants the prayer of his devotee and punishes those who have no devotion.

The Lord is ever merciful. In the first stanza of 'Dayasatakam' Vedanta Desika has described Tirumala as follows:

"I take refuge in the mountain (Tirumala) which like sugarcandy was formed, probably by the crystallization of the river 'daya' (compassion) of the Lord.

Mythology is full of instances, of those who benefited from the compassion of the Lord - Gajendra, Dhruva, Vibheeshana, Draupadi, Gopikas to name only a few.

The Lord is ever fond of his devotees (Bhaktapriya). In Chapter VII of the Gita, the Lord has said "of these, the best is the man of wisdom, ever established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion for, I am extremely dear to the wise man (who knows Me in reality) and he is extremely dear to Me". How the Lord came to the rescue of Prahlada is too well known to merit repetition. In the Vaishnava Sampradaya, the devotee is regarded as important as the Lord, because the Lord is "Bhaktapriya".

The Lord is called as 'bhavalunthana kovida'. Life is often compared to an ocean (bhava). Man has to cross this ocean of life and death, has to undergo many births and deaths before he is able to get Liberation. As Sankara has said in the Bhaja Govindam, 'punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam' and 'Iha samsare bahudussare kripayaa pare paahi murare'. Sankara has described in the Lakshmi Narasimha Stotra the various frightening things in this 'samsara'. The Lord alone can break this samsaric cycle and give us deliverance.

The Lord is "Naatha". He is the Lord of all. In Chapter VIII of the Gita, it is said as follows:

"All embodied beings emanate from the unmanifest (i.e. Brahma's subtle body) at the coming of the Cosmic

day. At the cosmic night fall, they merge into the same subtle body of Brahma, known as the Unmanifest,

Far beyond even this unmanifest, there is yet another unmanifest Existence, that Supreme Divine Person, who does not perish, even though all beings perish.

The Lord is resting on Adishesha; He is therefore a Nagasayaneti. Kulasekhara starts with his prayer to Lord Mukunda, but refers to Adishesha. That is because, though this prayer is addressed to Lord Krishna, Kulasekhara is always thinking of Lord Ranganatha who is resting on Adishesha. One is reminded of the Vaishnava Acharya, Parasara Bhatta who was so fond of the form of the Lord at Srirangam that he declared that if he were to go to Paramapada and did not find the Lord in the form as at Srirangam, he would then come back to Srirangam and serve the Lord.

The Lord is described as Jagannivasa within and without. He is the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer of the Universe. He is the supreme resort of the Universe. Arjuna is given a vision of the universal form (Viswa Roopam) of the Lord. After perceiving it, he says in Chapter XI of the Gita;

‘ O, Great Soul, why should they not bow to you, who are the progenitor of Brahma himself and the greatest of the great?. O, infinite Lord of the celestials, abode of the universe, You are that which is existent, that which is nonexistent and also that which is beyond both; namely, the indestructible Brahma. You are the primal Deity, the most ancient Person. You are the ultimate resort of this Universe. You are both the knower and the knowable and the highest abode. It is You who preserve the universe, assuming endless forms’

Sloka 2

जयतु जयतु देवो देवकीनन्दनोऽयं

जयतु जयतु कृष्णो वृष्णिवंशप्रदीपः ।

जयतु जयतु मेघश्यामलः कोमलाङ्गो

जयतु जयतु पृथ्वीभारनाशो मुकुन्दः ॥ २ ॥

*Jayathu Jayathu Devo Devakinandanoyam
Jayathu Jayathu Krishno Vrishni vamsa pradeepaha
Jayathu Jayathu Meghashyamalaha Komalaango
Jayathu Jayathu Prithvi bhaaranaasoe Mukundaha*

In this sloka, Kulasekhara is doing 'mangala sasanam' (benediction) for Lord Krishna. The purport is as follows:

"All glories to Lord Krishna, son of Devaki. All glories to Lord Krishna, the brilliant light of the Vrisni Dynasty. All glories to Lord Krishna, who has a tender body and the colour of a black cloud. All glories to Lord Mukunda, who removes the burden of the earth'

The word 'Jaya' appears throughout in this sloka. Wherever Lord Krishna is, there is victory. Jayathu Jayathu Devo Devakinandanoyam. Lord Krishna was born to Devaki. Is the Lord likely to be born at all in this world. One may refer to Chapter IV of the Gita (Verse 6 to 8) "though birthless and deathless and the Lord of all beings, I manifest

Myself, through my own Yogamaya, keeping my nature under control.

Arjuna, wherever righteousness is on the decline, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I body myself forth

For the protection of the virtuous, for the extirpation of evil doers and for establishing Dharma (righteousness) on a firm footing, I am born from age to age.'

As to how and why Lord Krishna was born to Devaki, one may refer to Skanda X of the Srimad Bhagavatham. Mother Earth sought Brahma (the creator) as she was unable to bear the weight of the Daityas. Brahma along with Shiva approached Vishnu. Lord Narayana reassures them that He would take birth on the earth to extirpate the evil doers. He was born to Vasudeva and Devaki, as they had earlier done a deep penance so that Lord Narayana may be born to them. The Lord granted them the prayer. As is stated in the Krishnaashtakam.

Devaki Paramanandam
 Krishnam Vande Jagadgurum.
 How was he born? Was He born as a normal infant.
 Thamadbhutam baalakam,
 Ambujekshanam,
 Chaturbhujam Shankagadhaadhy aayudham
 Srivatsa Lakshmam
 galashobhi kausthubham
 Peetaambaram Saandrapayodha saubhagam

He was born with the eyes of a lotus, with four hands, with the conch, discus, mace and other implements, with the Srivatsa in the chest, the kausthubha necklace on the neck, with a green dress, with the colour of the black clouds, he attracted the attention of all those present.

Jayathu Jayathu Krishno
Vrishi Vamsa Pradeepaha

We have already referred the reader to Book Ten of Srimad Bhagavatham. Special attention is invited to Discourse III of Book Ten, in which the advent of Lord Krishna is described. Lord Krishna, born in the family of Vrishnis was the Effulgent One. On his birth Vasudeva had said ".....The wise declare the appearance, the continuance and the destruction of this Universe. O Lord as proceedings from You, who are desireless, beyond the three gunas and changeless. This is not incompatible in You, who are at once Brahma (the Absolute) and the almighty Lord.....". No wonder, he was the Vrishni Vamsa pradeepaha.

Vedanta Desika in Gopala Vimsati, in 21 stanzas has described Lord Krishna and His life with the cowherds and cowherdesses. The third stanza alone is being quoted here, for illustration.

" The one appearing with the body of a cowherd lad, whose lips are throbbing with cries, bearing the fragrance of Vedas, whose eyes are misty now with tears and now smiling gently and who drank the life of the deceitful mother (Putana) along with her milk - him I understand as the Supreme Being...."

Jayathu Jayathu Meghashyaamalaha komalaango.

The Lord has the colour of black clouds. This is a very attractive colour. He has tender limbs and hence attractive. Elsewhere, Kulasekhara Alwar had described the beauty of the Lord and said that he would like to be the stepping stone before the idol of the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum, so that he may constantly gaze at the wondrous lips of the Lord.

“padiyaay kidandu n pavalavaay kaanbene’ - he wanted to constantly look at the lips of the Lord which were coral like .

The 14th Discourse in Book Ten of Srimad Bhagavatham gives details of Brahma extolling Lord Krishna.

“.....Wonderful and remarkable is the fortune and good luck of the inhabitants of Vraja ruled over by Nanda, the chief of cowherds, whose near and dear one is (none other than) Sri Krishna (the all perfect eternal Brahma), the embodiment of supreme Bliss. When even, We, Gods who enjoy only a part of Your Beauty in the shape of the fragrance etc. of Your body through the respective senses and organs of the cowherds of Vraja, deem ourselves highly blessed on that account, how much more blessed are the cowherds themselves, who enjoy the beauty of Your entire being, through the different senses and organs at once”. No wonder Kulasekhara refers to the Lord of Vrajas as “Komalaango”... Brahma in the early part of this Discourse in the Bhagavatham “ I offer my praises to You, the son of a cowherd, with tender feet... endowed with a personality dark as a rainy cloud”.

Sloka 3

मुकुन्द मूर्ध्ना प्रणिपत्य याचे
भवन्तमेकान्तमियन्तमर्थम् ।
अविस्मृतिस्त्वच्चरणारविन्दे
भवे भवे मेऽस्तु भवत्प्रसादात् ॥ ३ ॥

*Mukunda Moordhna Pranipathya Yaache
Bhavantha Mekaanthamiyantha Martham
Avismrithi tvachchara naaravinde
Bhave bhave mesthu bhavatprasaadaath.*

Meaning -

“O Lord Mukunda, I bow my head to you and respectfully ask you to grant me a desire of mine; that in each of my future births, I should, by your mercy, always remember your lotus feet”

*Mukunda moordhna pranipatya
yaache bhavantha mekaantha miyantayardham*

Kulasekhara is offering saranagathi to the Lord. Without saranagathi, nothing can be achieved in this life. Saranagathi or the concept of surrender to Lord is central to the Srivaishnava philosophy. The Lord must be regarded as “Ananya” that is “none else”. Ramanuja has said “tasya vaseekaranam tacharanaravinda sarana gatireva” - to be accepted by the Lord (to conquer), saranagathi is the principal instrument.

This principle of ‘ananyatwa’ is exemplified in Lakshmana desiring to accompany Sri Rama. Rama has been banished to the forest. Sita insists that she should accompany Ramachandra. Having come to know of this, Lakshmana comes there. Says Valmiki :

“..... Lakshmana could not bear the grief, from the impending separation from Rama. His face covered with tears, tightly pressing the feet of his brother, Lakshmana spoke to Rama ‘If your mind is set on proceeding to the forest, full of deer and elephants, I shall accompany you to the woodland, walking ahead of you, armed with a bow. Accompanied by me, you will roam about in delightful woodlands rendered noisy all round by birds and swarms of deer. Without you, I do not wish to ascend to heaven nor do I solicit godhood nor again do I crave for the rulership of the spheres’.

-“Swabraathru charanam gaadau’

Kulasekhara pleads that this is all that he is seeking "bhavantha mekaantha miyantha mardham". What is it he is seeking.

*"Avisminithi stvachcharanaaravinde
bhava bhava mesthu bhavat prasaadat'*

- always, in birth after birth, I should remember your lotus feet. There are many who seek the Lord for different things. The sad seek the end of their sorrow; the seekers of knowledge seek knowledge; the seekers of different forms of wealth seek wealth. But, the man of wisdom alone seeks the Lord. Seeking the Lord, he becomes one with the Lord.

In Chapter VII of the Gita (Verse 16) it is said

"Four types of devotees of noble needs worship Me, Arjuna, the seeker after worldly possessions, the afflicted, the seeker for knowledge and the man of wisdom, O best of Bharatas.

Of these, the best is the man of wisdom, ever established in identity with me and possessed of exclusive devotion. I am extremely dear to the wise man (who knows Me in reality) and he is extremely dear to Me.

Indeed, all these are noble, but the man of wisdom is My very self. For such a devotee, who has his mind and intellect merged in Me, is firmly established in Me alone, the highest goal". That is why Kulasekhara seeks to worship the feet of the Lord, again and again. Says Vedanta Desika in Paduka Sahasram.

*Harina Harineelaischa prathiyatna vathim sadaa
Ayatna labhya nirvaanamaahraye manipaadukam.*

and again

*Naasti Pitrarjitham kinchinna mayaa kinchi daarjitham
Asti me hastishailaagre vasthu paithaamaham
dhanam.*

If without effort one merely thinks of the feet of the Lord at the time of one's death, one gets liberation. Adds Vedanta Desika that Varadaraja at Hastagiri is his wealth. Compare this with what is said in the Gita (Chapter XII).

Those who depending exclusively on Me and surrendering all actions to Me, worship Me, constantly meditating on Me, with single minded devotion, Those Arjuna, I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, the mind being fixed on Me'

A true devotee therefore seeks not wealth or worldly pleasures. He wishes only to have the divine vision of the Lord. A bigoted saivite king had Kuresa alias Kurthalvan Alwar blinded. Ramanuja had gone away to Melkote. On the death of the king, Ramanuja returned to Srirangam and moved by the blindness of Kureshvara, offers to seek divine intervention to restore his eyesight. Kureshvara rejected it saying that the eyes which had beheld divine glory would see naught else.

Sloka 4

नाहं वन्दे तव चरणयोर्द्वन्द्वमद्वन्द्वहेतोः
कुम्भीपाकं गुरुमपि हरे नारकं नापनेतुम् ।
रम्या रामा मृदुतनुलता नन्दने नापि रन्तुं
भावे भावे हृदयभवने भावयेयं भवन्तम् ॥ ४ ॥

*Naaham vande tava charana
Yordwandwamadwand heto
Kumbipaakam guru mapi haare
naarakam naapanethum
Ramya raama mridutanulataa
nandane naapirantum
Bhave bhave hridyabhavane
bhaavayeyam bhavantam*

Meaning

"O Lord, it is not for being saved from the dualities of this existence or from the terrible hell called Kumbipaaka that I pray to you . I am not desiring to go to the heavenly gardens to enjoy the beautiful women there. I am only praying that birth after birth, I should remember you in the core of my heart". This sloka is a continuation of the previous one. Kulasekhara is not seeking worldly pleasures nor does he wish to be saved from difficulties and

unhappiness. He only wishes to have the Lord in his heart, life after life, till he is liberated.

Naaham vande tava

charanayordwandwa madwandaheto

‘Dwanda’ refers to the dual opposites - heat and cold, happiness and unhappiness, profit and loss, praise and humiliation. In life, it is common to experience these opposites, one after the other, with one or the other being more dominant, depending on one’s karma. Sita too experienced these opposites. Tulasidasa expresses the great happiness when Sita first sees Ramachandra in a garden. After the marriage, she is leading a blissful life and is looking forward to the coronation of her Lord. Rama is banished to the forest. She leads an idyllic life, till she is spirited away by Ravana. She experienced intense agony. In the Sundara Kanda, she expresses her intense unhappiness that she can not even end her life, as she is always surrounded by Rakshasis and as there is a time for everything in life - including death. To quote Valmiki from Canto XXV of the Ramayana.

‘ There is a popular saying uttered by the wise that the death of a woman or of a man is difficult to have before time, in as much as even though I am tormented by these fierce ogresses here and stand separated from Sri Rama and am afflicted, I am able to survive even for a while. Of poor merit and wretched that I am, I shall perish like a forlorn creature, even as a bark fully loaded and buffeted in a tempest, would flounder in the ocean. Unable to see my husband and fallen into the clutches of the ogresses, I am wasting away through grief, even as a river bank eroded by the current. Truly the fortunate are able to look at my aforesaid Lord, who has eyes resembling the petals of an expanded lotus, walks with the gait of a lion, who is alive to the services rendered to him.....Shame indeed be upon the human state and shame be upon dependence on others due to which it is not possible for me to even yield up my life of my own will’

Thus, even Maithili was not spared the opposites. Kulasekhara is not praying that he be spared these opposites.

*Kumbhipaakam guru mapi
hare naarakam naapanethum*

Kumbhipaakam is the hell where one is roasted in boiling oil. In Vishnu Purana (Part 2 Section VI) Parasara gives details of the various hells (and the sins for which one goes to such hells) as Raurava, Sukara, Rodha, Mahajwala, Taptakumba, Asipatravana, Kaalasutra, Rudhirandha (28 of them) and then adds that besides these there are hundreds of other hells where persons perpetrating diverse inequities are visited with various punishments. One such hell is 'Kumbhipaka'. Kulasekhara does not seek succor from going to such a hell. Obviously, this is because he knows, as is said in Vishnu Purana '.....the man who meditates upon Vishnu, day and night, is released from all sins and does not go to Naraka or hell after death'.

*Ramyaa raama mridhutanulataa
nandane naapi rantum*

There are many pleasures in this world which are sought by men. Kulasekhara says that he is not seeking the company of the 'apsaras' in heaven. Kulasekhara, knows, as has been said in Bhaja Govindam, that this body, which seeks pleasures is only a mix of flesh, mucous and fecal matter. When it dies, this body will not be touched, even by the near and dear. If so, why hanker after it? Says the Vishnu Purana "....Everything in this world is the source of all miseries. The same thing at one time brings on anger and again conduces to our delight. Pleasure, pain and the like merely denominate the various states of the mind. True wisdom consists only in the knowledge of Brahma...." That is why Kulasekhara prays

*Bhaave Bhaave Hridaya
bhavane bhaavayeyam bhavantam*

I want to keep you in the core of my heart, birth after birth. One of the Alvars was Vishnu Chitta - he was in the heart of the Lord and he always had the Lord in his heart. That is why he gave benediction to the Lord when

the Lord appeared in the sky to share in the glory of the victory of the devotee. (Pallandu Pallandu)

Sloka 5

नास्था धर्मे न वसुनिचये नैव कामोपभोगे
यद्यद् भव्यं भवतु भगवन् पूर्वकर्मानुरूपम् ।
एतत् प्रार्थ्यं मम बहुमतं जन्मजन्मान्तरेऽपि
त्वत्पादाम्भोरुहयुगगता निश्चला भक्तिरस्तु ॥ ५ ॥

*Naasthaa dharme na vasunichaye
Naiva kaamopa bhoge
Yadyadbhavyam bhavathu bhagawan
poorva karmaanuroopam
Yethath prarthyam mama
bahumatham janmajanmantharepi
Thwatpaadamboruhayuga gathaa
nischalaa bhakhthirasthu*

Meaning

"O Lord, I have no attachment to mere dharma or for wealth or for sense enjoyment. My life will go on as per my karma. But, I pray that birth after birth I should render unflinching devotional service to Your lotus feet."

This sloka is a further elaboration of the previous one. Kulasekhara says he is not praying for mere religiosity. It does not take one anywhere. If a person is externally religious but all the time is thinking of this worldly things, it is of no use.

The Gita says in Chapter III ".....He who outwardly restraining the organs of sense and action, sits mentally dwelling on the objects of senses, that man of deluded intellect is called a hypocrite.

On the other hand, he who controlling the organs of sense and action by the power of his will and remaining unattached, undertakes the Yoga of Action through these organs, Arjuna, he excels...."

Kulasekhara says he is not interested in the accumulation of wealth. Vedanta Desika was invited by

Vidyaranya, a boyhood friend of Desika, to adorn the court of the Vijayanagar Emperors, so that he may live in comfort, if not opulence. Desika contemptuously rejected this request, as he preferred to live by begging for alms. Desika composed the Vairagya Panchakam - a stotra in five stanzas. Says Desika.

“Are not rice grains gleaned from fields enough to quench the fire of hunger? Does not a handful of water from a lake sustain? Does not a dirty piece of cloth found on the road side serve as a loin cloth? Alas, even the wise resort to petty kings for the sake of their stomachs ‘ and again he says:

“The wealth acquired through life-long service to Lords which quenches the abdominal fire fuelled by food and water is ultimately useless. But the wealth in the form of the Lord who lifted the Goverdhana mountain, which is easily attained and worshipped is imperishable “

Nammalvar says in the Thiruvaimozhi “....O ye good hearted souls, when Lord Vishnu is standing in readiness to help you, how is it you are expectantly looking forward to Jestha Devi bestowing prosperity on you...”

Kulasekhara says that he is not seeking sensual pleasure. Vishnu Purana and Padma Purana tell us (with minor variations) the story of Yayati. Yayati who had two wives and five sons was cursed to become prematurely old. He requested his sons to exchange their youth with his old age. All rejected the request, except his son Puru. Having regained his youth, Yayati rejoiced with Viswachi, a nymph, thinking that his desires would be satisfied. He realized that desire is never satisfied with enjoyment. He realized that “.....when a man does not cherish any sinful feeling towards creatures and looks on all with an equal eye, he then finds everything full of pleasure and delight..”. (Vishnu Purana Part 4 Section X). He gave back the youth, retired to the forest and meditated, seeking liberation. The Gita says in Chapter V.

“ The pleasures which are born of sense contacts are verily a source of suffering only (though appearing as enjoyable to worldly minded people). They have a beginning and an end. It is for this reason that a wise man does not indulge in them.

He whose mind remains unattached to sense objects, desires through meditation the saatvika joy which dwells in the mind, then that yogi, having completely identified himself through meditation with Brahma, enjoys eternal Bliss...”

These are the thoughts which are reflected by Kulasekhara. He does not want deliverance from wealth or desire; he will suffer them, as per his Karma. ‘He wishes to render service to the feet of the Lord - did not Bharatha worship the paadukas in Nandigram village? Says Valmiki in the Ayodhya Kaanda.

“.....Having dedicated the sacred trust of (looking after the kingdom) to the sandals, Bharata who was sore stricken with agony, then spoke (as follows) - ‘ Hold the royal umbrella over these sandals; they are considered by me to be as good as the feet of my elder brother. By these wooden sandals of my brother, will righteousness be established in the Kingdom...”

Sloka 6

दिवि वा भुवि वा ममास्तु वासो

नरके वा नरकान्तक ! प्रकामम् ।

अवधीरित-शारदारविन्दौ

चरणौ ते मरणेऽपि चिन्तयामि ॥ ६ ॥

Divi vaa bhuv vaa mamaastu vaaso

Narake vaa narakaantaka prakaamam

Avadhrita - saaradaaravindau

Caranau te marane pi cintayaami.

Meaning -

O Lord, killer of the demon Naraka, let me reside in this world, in heaven or in hell (naraka), but let me pray

that at the time of my death that I may remember your lotus feet, whose beauty defies that of the lotus growing in the spring season.

In the third sloka, Kulasekhara had prayed that his faith in the Lord should be 'lavismriti' (always remembered). In the fourth sloka, he wants it to be bhava bhava (always) while in the fifth he prays for unwavering devotion (nischala bhakti) while in this sloka he seeks eternal remembrance (sadaaa smaranam) so that he remembers even at the time of his death.

Divi vaa bhuvi vaa mamaasthu

Vaaso narakeva narakaantaka prakaamam

The prayer is that wherever Kulasekhara may be, in this world or elsewhere, he should be able to remember (offer worship to) the two feet of the Lord. He may be in hell (naraka), even there he should be able to think of the feet. Because Kulasekhara refers to Narakam (hell), as a play upon the word, he refers to the Lord as Narakaantaka and not to his killing Putana or Kamsa or Sisupala. The story of Narakasura is found in Section XXIX of Part 5 of Vishnu Purana. Indra complained to Lord Krishna about the evil deeds of Naraka and his imprisoning 16,100 women at Pragjyotisha. Krishna killed Narakasura, released the imprisoned women and recovered the ear rings of Aditi (Indra's mother). Earth appears before the Lord and says ".....Thou art the eternal creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe, the origin of all the worlds and identical with the universe. How can we worthily chant Thy glories. Thou art the pervader and that which is pervaded, the act, the agent and the effect - thou art the soul of all creatures and how can we sufficiently chant Thy glories. Thou art the great soul - the sentient and living soul of all beings and imperishable - there is no praise worthy of thee. How then can we chant thy glories.."

It is no surprise that Kulasekhara addresses the Supreme Person as Narakantaka.

Avadheeratha Saaradaravindam

Charanam the maranepi chintayaami

In earlier slokas, we have referred to the importance of clinging to the feet of the Lord. It is also usual to refer to the feet as being like a tender lotus. In the present sloka, Kulasekhara has put it slightly differently. Among the seasons, the season favoured by the flowers is the sarad ritu (perhaps may be broadly translated as the autumn season). The lotus is partial to this season. The beauty of the feet of the Lord defies the tenderness and appeal of the lotus growing in this season. Kulasekhara's prayer is that at the time of his death, he should be able to remember these feet of the Lord. In Chapter VIII of the Gita it is said..

“....Arjuna, thinking of whatever entity one leaves the body at the time of death, that and that alone one attains, being ever absorbed in its thought.

He who departs from the body, thinking of Me at the time of death, attains My state. There is no doubt about it..’ (Verse 6 and 5). One may entertain a doubt as to how one can think of the Lord at the time of one's death, having lived like a profligate during one's lifetime? The other slokas in this chapter clarifies the position. The Lord says “think of Me at all times; you will doubtless come to me..”. “He who with his mind disciplined through Yoga in the form of meditation and thinking of nothing else, is constantly engaged in contemplation of God attains the Supremely Effulgent Person”. If one meditates constantly on the Lord, surely at the time of death one will think of God. The Bhagavatham tells the story of Bharatha who brought up a deer. (Srimad Bhagavatham Book 5 Dis. 8). A small deer floating in the waters was picked up by Bharatha. Bharatha got extremely attached to it. Was the deer safe?. Was the deer getting enough to eat? Where had the deer disappeared? - the sage was often assailed by these thoughts. Since he was so attached to the deer, naturally his thoughts when he died were on the deer and he was born in the next life as a deer [The moral of the story is that undue attachment is undesirable and there has to be the detachment preached in the Gita].

Divya Kavi Pillar Perumal Iyengar, a staunch Srivaishnavaita, a disciple of Sri Parasara Bhattar, among

other Prabhandha Kavyas, wrote Thiruvengatathu Andadhi. In stanza 45, he says "... As Krishna, the sweet melodious notes from your flute would easily collect the thousands of cows you were herding. You are the consort of the blemishless, ever youthful Mahalakshmi. In my last moments, when life is ebbing away and I am troubled by hiccups, please bless me by extending to me Your divine feet, whose dust transformed a stone into a beautiful lady". In stanza 26 he says” xxx He is the Lord who is fit to be known by Brahma as also Shiva. Do not tarry any longer, as in your last moments when life is ebbing away, and Yama the Lord of death tightens and draws the noose round your neck, you may not even be able to think of Him”. That is the reason why Kulasekhara is praying to the Lord that at the time of his death, he should be able to remember the feet of the Lord.

Sloka 7

कृष्ण त्वदीय पदपङ्कज पञ्जरान्तम्
 अद्यैव मे विशतु मानस राजहंसः ।
 प्राणप्रयाणसमये कफवातपित्तैः
 कण्ठावरोधन-विधौ स्मरणं कुतस्ते ॥ ७ ॥

*Krishna twadeeya padapankaja panjaraantam
 Adhyaiva me Vishathu maanasa raajahamsaha
 Praana prayaana samaye kaphavaatapithai
 Kantavarodhanavidhau smaranam kuthasthe*

Meaning -

O Lord Krishna, at the time of death, the heat, the wind and phlegm will choke my throat and will prevent my thinking of the Lord. That being the case, now itself please ensnare in the bird cage called your feet the royal swan (the Raja Hamsa) called my mind.

In the previous sloka, we had commented on the thoughts a person has when life is ebbing away. One may not think of the Lord as the body is wasting away, the mind is weak and the thoughts are wandering. That is why Peria Alwar has said “Appodikku ippodae solli vaithane arangathu avavanai palliya nae”

Oh Lord Ranganatha who is resting on the Adishesha, I am offering my prayers to you even now, so that it will be to my credit, for use during the last moments of my life.

Kulasekhara has compared his mind to a Raja Hamsa. The swan is white in colour and is therefore 'satvic'. Kulasekhara having led the life of a devotee has the mind of a 'satvic'. A swan likes a lotus. Hence Kulasekhara says that the Raja Hamsa of his mind is seeking the feet of the Lord, which are like a lotus. He compares the feet to a bird cage because the bird is kept trapped in a cage and in this case, Kulasekhara does not want his wandering mind to come away from the feet of the Lord.

The reference is always to the feet of the Lord and not to his head. In the Dwaya mantra, liberation is when saranam is sought from the charanam. Tiruppan Alwar in his work "Amalanadi Piran" describes the Lord from the feet upwards. Obviously inspired by Amalanadi Piran, Vedanta Desika wrote Sri Bhagawath Dhyana Sopanam. As in the case of a flight of steps (sopanam), Desika describes the effulgent Lord from the feet upwards. Says Desika in the second stanza (the first stanza being on the lustrous light at Srirangam) the lotus like feet of Sri Ranganatha, which bear the unbounded fragrance of the Vedas, which are saluted by the Brahmas, with their heads bent down, which manifested on the golden banks of the Cauvery filled with swans and which are lovingly fondled by the lotus like hands of Lakshmi and Bhudevi, are reflected in the well of my thoughts".

By contrast, Narayana Bhattathri in Canto 100 describes the divine vision from head to the feet, when he completed the Narayaneeyam. In the 10th verse, he says: "O Lord, Thy feet are the most beloved of all thy parts, as far as the Yogins are concerned. For the devotees, they are like the celestial tree, which yields them all their wants. O Krishna, O Lord of Guruvayoor, O Ocean of Mercy, May Those feet of Thine ever rest in my heart, destroy all my sufferings and bestow on me the treasure of Supreme Bliss".

It is this bliss which is sought during the last moments. But, thoughts of the Lord may not occur as al-

ready explained earlier. Lord Narayana himself will protect the true devotees.

Sloka 8

चिन्तयामि हरिमेव सन्ततं

मन्दमन्द हसिताननाम्बुजम् ।

नन्दगोप तनयं परात्परं

नारदादि मुनिबृन्द वन्दितम् ॥ ८ ॥

Cintayaami harimeva santatam

Manda manda hasitananaambujam

Nandagopa tanayam paraatparam

Naradaadi muni brinda vanditham

Meaning -

I always think of the Lord Hari whose face has a joyful smile. The son of the cowherd Nanda, He is the Supreme Absolute Truth, worshipped by sages like Narada.

In the previous sloka, Kulasekhara had said that it would be difficult to think of the Lord, at the time of ones death and hence he was worshipping the Lord then itself. In the present sloka, Kulasekhara says that he will always think of the Supreme Lord.

Cintayaami Harimeva Santatam

I shall always think of Lord Hari. Hari is everywhere. The story of Prahlada illustrates this. Hence we should see the Lord in everything and think of the Lord always. Prahlada was tortured by the attendants of Hiranyakasipu. They tortured him in different ways, but his thoughts were always with Hari. Says Prahlada, " O undecaying Hari, thou art wisdom and ignorance, thou art cause and effect, existence and non existence...thou art the substance of all perishable and imperishable elements and the refuge of all undeveloped rudiments. Salutations unto thee, who act both as one and many, Vasudeva and the first cause of all....." As he was so chanting, Great Hari, clad in yellow robes, suddenly appeared before him. (Vishnu Purana Part I Section XX). It is in this manner, Kulasekhara wants to

constantly think of Hari. As is said in the Gita (Chapter 6 Verse 26) “ Drawing back the restless and fidgety mind from all those objects after which it runs, he should repeatedly fix it on God.

The sinless Yogi, thus uniting his self constantly with God, easily enjoys the eternal Bliss of oneness with Brahma.

He who sees Me (the Universal Self) present in all beings and all being existing within Me, never loses sight of Me and I never lose sight of him”

Kulasekhara therefore wants to always think of Lord Hari. It is said that in the Kaliyuga, one gets God realisation and Liberation by constant chanting of the name of the Lord Krishna.

Mandamanda haasithananaambujam

The Lord is always depicted as one having a gentle smile. In verse 4 of Dasaka 100 of the Narayaneeyam, Narayana Bhattatri describes the face of the Lord, seeing whom the devotee is in ecstasy.

“ May Thy face appear clear to me with the nose prominent and charming brilliant with that pair of gemset ear ornaments of the design of the Makara fish adorning the lovely ears and the shine reflected on the cheeks resplendent like a mirror of blue sapphire, lustrous with those rows of teeth slightly visible and greatly cool with that gentle smile overflowing with love from within the cherry like underlip, sparkling red in colour...”

Desika calls this the ‘well meaning smile’. In Sri Bhagavaddhyana Sopanam, while describing the Lord he says as follows.

“....The attractive face of Lord Ranganatha which is blooming with an earnest well meaning smile, which has beautiful lips, red like the bimba fruit....”

Nandagopatanayam Paraatparam.

Though Lord Krishna was born to Vasudeva and Devaki, he was transferred to and brought up in the house of the shepherd Nanda as his son. The Srimad Bhagavatham has an excellent description of Vasudeva taking the new born babe to Yasoda. As it was raining at that time ".....Adishesha followed Vasudeva at his heels warding off the rain by means of his thousand hoods spread as an umbrella over His head....".

Though Lord Krishna grew up as a cowherd baby, he had shown his four armed real form to Vasudeva and Devaki and He also showed His Universal form to Yasoda when he opened his mouth to answer the charge that he was eating mud.

In His mouth she saw ".....this wonderful universe - consisting of a variety of organisms (moving as well as immobile), owing their diversity to the Jiva, Kala, Nature, Karma, the seed of Karma, as well as vraja, including herself (and Her son)....."

That is why Kulasekhara refers to the Lord as "paratpara".

Naradaadi muni brinda vanditham.

Groups of sages headed by Narada worship the Lord. The Srimad Bhagavatham has a very remarkable philosophic discussion in Discourse 87 of Book Ten. Narada goes to sage Narayana, raises the issue as to how the Sruti texts, dealing as they are with the three Gunas (material phenomena) refer directly to Brahma (the Absolute), which is indefinable and beyond the three Gunas and transcends both the cause as well as the effect. Narada got the clarification and concluded. "...One should constantly meditate on Sri Hari the Dispeller of all fears, who in His Absolute state keeps Maya at a distance, who plans this universe and continues at the beginning, middle and end of it; who is the Ruler of both the unmanifest and the Jiva; who having created this universe and entered it forthwith along with the Jiva, evolves bodies (for the Jivas) and controls them; and having attained to whom the Jiva sheds ignorance...."

That is the background against which Kulasekhara refers to Sri Hari being greeted by Narada and other sages.

Sloka 9

करचरणसरोजे कान्तिमन्त्रेत्रमीने

श्रममुषि भुजवीचिव्याकुलेऽगाधमार्गे ।

हरिसरसि विगाह्यापीय तेजोजलौघं

भवमरुपरिखिन्नः खेदमद्य त्यजामि ॥ ९ ॥

Karacharana Saroje kaanthi mannetra meene

Shramamushi bhujaiveechivyaakule agaadha marge

Harisarasi vigaahyapeeya tejojalaugham

bhavamaru parikhinnah Khedamadhyha tyajaami

Meaning -

The desert called material existence has exhausted Me. But today I will cast aside all my troubles by diving into the lake of Sri Hari and drinking freely the waters of His Glory. The lotuses in that lake are His hands and feet. The fish are His shining eyes. The water in that lake relieves all fatigue and is agitated by the waves His arms create Its current flows deep.

Bhavamaru parikhinnaha khedamadhyha tyajaami

Kulasekhara compares the samsara to a desert. When we are in a desert, how happy and relieved we are when we come across water. If Kulasekhara compares 'samsara' to a desert, Yamunacharya compares it to an inferno. Says he in the Stotraratna (stotra 29).

udeerna samsaara davaasu sukshanam

kshanena nirvapy paraam cha nirvritim

prayachchathi thva charanaambuja

dwayaanuraagaamrita sindhuseekaraha

- In the ocean of nectar called the devotion to your feet, a small amount of devotion, a drop, is sufficient to cool the burning inferno called the samsara and give happiness. Shankara says in the Lakshmi Narasimha Stotra that samsara is like an ocean, desires are the crocodiles in

that ocean, they devour the body; samsara is an unapproachable and fearful forest, wherein we do not know in which direction we are to go. Samsara is like an abandoned well. 'I have been surrounded by samsara, as by a wild elephant. The samsara has engulfed me like a wild fire. Just as you saved Prahlada, please save me' prays Sankara.

Karacharana Saroje kaanti mannetra meene

The lotus flowers in the lake are His hands and feet. We had earlier occasion to comment on how the feet are (always) compared to the lotus. Here Kulasekhara refers to the hands also as the lotus. By contrast, Desika in Sri Bhagavaddhyana Sopanam, calls the hands, the Parijata trees, which will yield all desires (including liberation to one who surrenders). Desika uses the same comparison with a slight variation in Verse 29 of Sri Devanayaka Panchasat. He describes the hands as ".....beautified by the marks of the bow string, they conquer even the Parijata tree and are adorned by beautiful armlets...".

Kulasekhara says that the fish in the lake are his eyes. It is usual to compare the shape of the eyes to the fish. Narayana Bhattathri compares the shape of the ears to an alligator while he refers to the play of the eyebrows as the play of a lotus. Yamunacharya in the Stotraratna calls the eyes as 'abja netra' (eyes like a lotus). The Srimad Bhagavatham tells us that in the advent of Lord Krishna, Vasudeva "... beheld that extraordinary boy with lotus like eyes..."

Shramamushi bhujaveechi vyaakule agaadha marge.

The lake of the Lord is very deep. It is not easy to fathom. It requires surrender to the Lord to fathom it. The water in the lake has a gentle wavy motion due to the movement of the arms of the Lord. A dip in this lake is exhilarating and relieves all fatigue. Visiting very many kshetras and taking a dip in the theerthas will not relieve us of the fatigue of the samsara. Says Sankara in Bhaja Govindam, a man may bathe in the Ganges or the sea, he may observe every austerity; but if he is devoid of true knowledge, even

after 100 lives, he will get no release (' muktim na bhajate janmasatana). As against this, if one studies the Gita even a little, sips a drop of the Ganges water and worships Murari, there is no discussion with the Lord of Death (Verses 17 & 20).

Sloka 10

सरसिजनयने सशङ्खचक्रे

मुरभिदि मा विरमस्व चित्त! रन्तुम् ।

सुखतरमपरं न जातु जाने

हरिचरण स्मरणामृतेन तुल्यम् ॥ १० ॥

Sarasijanayane sa-sankha chakre

Murabhidhi maa viramaswachittarantum

Sukhataram aparam na jatu jane

Hari charana smaranamritena tulyam

Meaning -

O mind ! please do not stop taking pleasure in thinking of Murahari, the destroyer of Mura the demon, of Him who has lotus eyes and bears the weapons, the conch and the discus. I know of nothing else that gives as much happiness as meditating on the feet of Lord Hari.

Murabhidhi maa viramaswachittarantum

O mind, please do remember to think of the destroyer of Mura (the demon), who has divine qualities. Krishna gets the name Murari for having killed the demon Mura. The legend of the killing of the demon Mura is part of the legend of killing Narakasura (please see page 16). This is mentioned in Section XXIX of Part V of Vishnupuranam. Indra complained to Krishna about the demon Naraka, son of Bhumi. Krishna proceeds to Pragjyothisha to destroy Naraka. The city was covered on four sides, to a distance of a yojana, by nooses whose edges were ' as sharp as razors', made by the demon Mura. Krishna destroyed all of these by hurling the discus. Mura attacked the Lord, with his seven thousand sons. By the flame of the discus, they were all killed "like so many moths". Mura was killed,

along with the demon Hayagriva (not to be confused with Lord Hayagriva) and Panchajana, who was shaped like a conch (from whose body was fashioned the conch Panchajanya). Narayana Bhattathri disposes off the entire event in a sloka and half in Dasaka 81 (sloka 6 and 7) of Narayaneeyam. ".....mounting that king of birds Garuda, who had approached at the mere thought and taking Sathyabhama on Thy lap, Thou did proceed to the abode of the enemy, as if to a pleasure garden close by. There Thou destroyed the impregnable fortresses. Thou made that city of Pragjyothisha, a city of blood, with the flood of the blood of the asura army .

The five faced Mura, springing up at Thee, from within the waters of the moat, had his heads instantaneously cut off by Thee, with Thy disc.....xxx"

The Lord has in his hands the conch and the discus. The Lord, with his four arms, was born as the child to Vasudeva and Devaki. After His true form, was realised, Vasudeva praised and prayed to Him. He assumed the form of a child; when he was a child, when Yasoda peeps into His mouth, she has the vision of the entire Universe there. In the Gita, Arjuna requests the Lord to show him the divine form, the imperishable form. Lord Krishna does so. Arjuna says ".....You are the Supreme indestructible worthy of being known; you are the ultimate refuge of this Universe.

You are again the protector of ageless Dharma. I consider you to be the eternal imperishable Being....".

Arjuna is also frightened. He says ".....I feel transported with joy, at the same time my mind is tormented by fear. Pray reveal to me that divine form; the form of Vishnu, with four arms..... I wish to see You adorned with a diadem on the head and holding a mace and the discus in two of your hands. O Lord, with a thousand arms, O universal Being, appear again in the same four armed form (Chapter 11 of the Gita).

Does Kulasekhara wish to remember the Lord as Devaki saw Him immediately on His advent or as Yasoda

saw Him when she reprimanded Balakrishna or as Arjuna saw Him when he sought to see the Supreme Being or as the four armed Krishna? All that Kulasekhara wants is not to forget Krishna with the conch, the discus and the mace.

Haricharana smaranamrithena tulyam

We already had occasion to comment on the need to worship the feet of the Lord. One may recall Verse 41 of Desika's Sri Varadaraja Panchaasat.

“O, inhabitant of Hastagiri, when will the streams of service to Your lotus feet put out the uncontrollable forest fire of the fruition of my karma, turning even old miseries into pleasant experiences...” (It is pertinent to mention here that Desika was so attached to the worship of the Lord of indescribable beauty that Lord Varadaraja is, he even indicates that he would prefer to render service to the Lord than reside in Vaikunta - Verse 49). Kulasekhara's plea is that nothing else ((na aparam) will give the happiness (sukhataram) as meditation on the feet of the Lord.

Sloka 11

माभीर्मन्दमनो विचिन्त्य बहुधा यामीश्चिरं यातनाः

नामी नः प्रभवन्ति पापरिपवः स्वामी ननु श्रीधरः ।

आलस्यं व्यपनीय भक्तिसुलभं ध्यायस्व नारायणं

लोकस्य व्यसनापनोदनकरो दासस्य किं न क्षमः ॥ ११ ॥

*Mabhir manda mano vicintya bahudhayamis ciram
yatanah*

*Naminah prabhavanti papa - ripava swami nanu
sridharah*

*alasyam vyapaniya bhaktisulabham dhyayasva
narayanam*

*lokasya vyasanapanodanakaro dasasya kim na
ksamah*

Meaning -

O, dull mind, abandon your fear about the torments of Yama. How can your enemies, the sins that you have accumulated, even touch you? Your master is Lord

Sridhara, the husband of Goddess Sri. Cast aside all hesitation and concentrate your thoughts on Lord Narayana, whom you can easily attain through devotional service. What will not the Dispeller of the world's troubles do for his servant?

This sloka has a great bearing on the story of Ajamila, mentioned in the Srimad Bhagavatham (Book Six). Ajamila, left his lawfully wedded wife and led a dissolute life. His youngest son was called Narayana. When Ajamila was about to die, he in great fear, called the name of his youngest son 'Narayana, Narayana'. Because of this, he earned the grace of Lord Vishnu, whose attendants arrived on the scene and prevented the attendants of Yama who had come there to take him to the abode of Yama, as a punishment for all the sins he had committed. Prevented as they were, the attendants of Yama went back to him. Yama explained "...It is from the Supreme Lord...that the evolution, maintenance and dissolution of the universe proceeds and the entire creation is subject to His control..... To develop loving attachment to the Lord through the utterance of His name is the paramount duty of all men in this world.....the average learned man (well versed in the scriptures - whose judgment is completely bewildered by the all powerful (divine) Maya (deluding potency) and whose thought is focused on (the teachings of) the three Vedas, generally does not realise the aforesaid glory of the Name and remains engaged in grand sacrificial undertakings.

The wise indeed resort with an undivided mind to the practices (the chanting of the Divine Name and so on) making for loving devotion to the Lord, possessing infinite virtues. They do not merit punishment at my hands, because ordinarily there cannot be any question of their committing any sins. Even if, through inadvertence, a sin is committed by them, the very utterance of the Name of the Lord, obliterates the sin....xxx Never approach such men, as they are ever protected by the mace of Srihari....". Sri Suka explained to Parikshit (in the Bhagavatham) that the chanting of the names and praises of Lord Vishnu is a complete atonement for the gratest sins.

The Lord says the same thing in the Gita (Chapter 9).

*.....Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint, for he has rightly resolved. (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship of God).

Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain Arjuna, that My devotee never fails.

X X X X

Fix your mind on Me, Be devoted to Me, worship Me and make obeisance to Me, thus linking yourself with Me and entirely depending on Me, you shall come to Me'

(Verse 30 to 34)

Kulasekhara therefore states that one should pray to Sridhara - the Lord of Sri. Yamunacharya in the Stotraratna calls the Lord, the Lashmi for Lakshmi (Shriyaha Shri), as did Parasara Bhattar, when he wrote "Sriyaha Shree Shree Rangasaya..." (Sriguna Ratnakosa).

Sloka 12

भत्रजलधिगतानां द्वन्द्ववाताहतानां

सुतदुहितृकलत्र त्राणभारार्दितानाम् ।

विषमविषयतोये मज्जतामप्लवानां

भवतु शरणमेको विष्णुपोतो नराणाम् ॥ १२ ॥

Bhava jaladhi gataanaam dhwandva vaatahaataanaam

Sutaduhitru kalatra traana bharardhitaanaam

Vishama Vishayatoye majjataamaplavaanaam

Bhavathu sarana meko vishnupotho naraanaam

Meaning -

People in this samsaric ocean are buffeted by the winds of material dualities. They are distressed by the burden of protecting their wives and sons (children). They struggle in the perilous water of sense indulgence. They have no raft (boat) to carry them to any shelter. Lord

Vishnu is the only boat which can save them, when they surrender to the Lord.

We earlier had occasion (Page 11) to comment on the material dualities. Even Maithili despairs about this in the Sundara Kanda. All people are blown about by these material dualities. They have additionally to look after the sons and the wife. No one (at that stage) asks the question as to who is the wife and who is the son, as Shankara asks in Bhaja Govindam (kaa te kanthaa kaste putrah). He says the entire bondage of the family is strange (samsaroya mateeva vichitrah). When there is no attachment, there is no delusion; when there is no delusion, there is tranquillity and when there is tranquillity, there is liberation (satsangatve nissangatvam; nissangatve nirmohatvam, nirmohatve nischalatatvam and nischalatatve Jeevanmukthih).

In the Srimad Bhaghavatham (Book Six Discourse XV) this is illustrated in a very lucid manner. Citraketu, the king of Surasena, had everything - a kingdom, wealth, the love of the people and many wives. But he had no children. Sage Angira once came to visit him and made enquiries of him. Citraketu replied that all was well with him, but that he had no children and he may be blessed to have atleast one son.

Sage Angira granted the prayer and said the son would be both a source of joy and sorrow to him. Shortly thereafter, the Chief Queen gave birth to a son. The baby was the apple of the eye of the king and hence he grew to be fonder of the eldest queen. This created a lot of jealousy among the other queens. They felt that the baby was the cause for all this and poisoned the baby. The king was overwhelmed with grief. Sage Narada and Sage Angira appeared there and consoled the King. He asked the sage as to what was the queen to him in the earlier birth, what was the child to him in an earlier birth and what would be the child in the next birth? Nothing. If so, why was he grieving? Sage Angira said that on his earlier visit he had come to impart divine knowledge to the king, but as the king made a worldly request, he could not do so.

“.....A votary of Vishnu does not deserve to be despondent. The agony of those blessed with a son is being directly experienced by you. Even so, a wife, riches, power and prosperity of various kinds, the fleeting glories of sovereignty, lands, kingdom, army, treasury, dependents, ministers, friends, relations - all these, Citraketu, are sources of grief, infatuation, fear and affliction. This body causes afflictions and agonies of various kinds to the embodied soul who regards it as his own self. Therefore, investigating with a composed mind the true nature of the Self, give up faith in the abiding reality of the objective world (implying duality) and resort to quietism.”

Visama visaya toyē majjataam

Kulasekhara refers to the people who are drowning in the perilous water of sense gratification. Bhaja Govindam refers to this in Verse 3 and 28. One should not fall prey to the maddening delusion by seeing the full bosoms of young women or noting the region of the navel. Bodily diseases come from casual indulgence. Even though the end is death, Sankara says, man does not give up his sinful ways (Tadapi Na munchat paapaacharanam) Perumal Pillai Ayyangar, the Divya Kavi says the same thing.

“.....In the clutches of Panchendriyas, I seek the passing sensual pleasures by singing the praise of women with their beautiful bodies and rosy palms. I fail to realise the troubles that flow out of such a pastime. But when death nears, these panchendriyas leave me. Then, O Lord, please rescue me by bestowing the support of your lotus feet....” (stanza 65 of TA)

This is precisely what Kulasekhara is also saying.
Bhavathu Saranameko Vishnupoto naraanaam

Seeking saranagathi of the Lord is the only recourse to save oneself. One should recall the Gajendra Moksham episode (Srimad Bhaghavatham Book Eight Discourse 3). Gajendra the elephant, was originally, a Pandyan King, who became a great ascetic, having his hermitage in Kulacala mountain. Because he was in penance, he did not recognise sage Agastya. As the king was immobile, like

an elephant, Agastya cursed that he be born as an elephant. He became Gajendra, a leader of a herd of elephants. While wandering on the Trikuta mountain, Gajendra entered a lake, to relieve himself from fatigue. An alligator seized the foot of the elephant (the alligator was a Gandharva, called Huhu who had been cursed by sage Devala to be born as an alligator). The elephant could not extricate himself. When the other elephants could not help him, the elephant realised “.. these, my kith and kin, have no power to extricate me, fallen in distress”. Gajendra turned to the Supreme Lord, for protection, “the Lord protects on every side a suppliant who is afraid of the serpent called Death. From such a Lord, Death himself runs in fear. Let us approach Him, as an Asylum..” Gajendra prays to the Lord in the celebrated hymn (Discourse III of Book 8).

“.....Hail, hail to you of endless potency, the protector of those who have taken refuge in you, the force of whose three fold energy is irresistible, who manifests Yourself as the the object of all perception and whose path is unattainable by those whose senses are directed towards the outside world...” Srihari frees Gajendra from the alligator. Gajendra assumed a form similar to the Lord. The alligator, assumed his original form and returned home.

No one wants calamities. But when they come, it makes us turn to the Lord, seeking His refuge, because He is the Boat to take us across. The Srimad Bhagavatham in Book Eleven (Discourse 23) tells us the story of a Brahmana, who was wealthy. He never shared his wealth with anyone, with his relatives, with the manes or with the Lord. He lost all the wealth. No one looked at him. He became a mendicant. He was abused, beaten and ill treated. He reflected and realised that wealth is the root cause of all difficulties “.....the tendency to misappropriate, discord, animosity, distrust, spirit of rivalry, fondness for women, love of gambling and addiction to wine - these fifteen evils have their source in wealth. A seeker of beatitude should abandon from a distance the evil going in the name of wealth. He concluded.”

I shall get over the mundane existence, having its root in the darkness of ignorance which is so difficult to cross, through the worship of the Lord Hari, the bestower of liberation....”

Sloka 13

भवजलधिं अगाधं दुस्तरं निस्तरेयं

कथमहमिति चेतो मास्मगाः कातरत्वम् ।

सरसिजदृशि देवे तावकी भक्ति रेका

नरकभिदि निषण्णा तारयिष्यत्यवश्यम् ॥ १३ ॥

*Bhava jaladhim agadham dustaram nistareyam
Katham aham iti ceto maa sma gaat kaataratvam
Sarasija drsi deve tavaki bhaktireka
narakabhidi nisanna tarayisyatyavasyam*

Meaning -

O mind ! do not be afraid (anxious) as to how you are to cross this ocean of material existence. Devotion to the lotus eyed Lord Krishna, who killed Narakasura will surely take you to the shore (of the ocean).

In the previous sloka, Kulasekhara was referring to the ocean of material dualities, samsara, sensual addictions and concluded that the boat that is Lord Vishnu will take one across such an ocean. In the present sloka, he says that devotion to the Lord will take one across the impassable ocean of material existence.

The Lord says in the Gita (Chapter XII)

“.....On the other hand, those who depending exclusively on Me, and surrendering all actions to Me, worship Me (Lord with attributes) constantly meditating on Me, with single minded devotion, those Arjuna, I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, their mind being fixed on Me.

Therefore, fix your mind on Me and establish your intellect in Me alone; thereafter you will abide solely in Me. There is no doubt about it.....”

The story of Prahlada (to which we made reference earlier at Page No. 20) exemplifies this. Prahlada specifically states (recalling Gajendra Moksham).“.....wealth, pedigree, comeliness of form, asceticism, learning, keenness of the senses, splendour, glory, bodily strength, self-endeavor, intelligence and yoga (breath control) are, I believe, not sufficient, for the propitiation of the Supreme Person. For the Lord was pleased with the leader of a herd of elephants, through mere Devotion.....”

Kunti takes the position that only in adversity, one is likely to turn to the Lord. All the children of the Pandavas are slaughtered by Aswathama. Lord Krishna saves the child Uttara is carrying in her womb . Says Kunti (Srimad Bhagavatham Book One Discourse 8)

“ O Almighty Lord, You repeatedly saved me, along with my sons from a series of calamities. It is You, O Hari, who protected us from poison, from a huge fire, from the look of man-eating demons, from the assembly of wicked people, from the perils of forest life, from the missiles of many a great warrior in every battle and just now from the missile discharged by Aswathama. May calamities befall us at every step, through eternity. O Teacher of the world, for it is in adversity alone that we are blessed with Your sight, which eliminates the possibility of seeing another birth. A man whose birth, power, learning and affluence go only to swell his pride is unable even to utter Your Name, You being open to the perception of only those who have nothing to call their own. You are the only wealth of those who have no sense of possession”.

Sloka 14

तृष्णातोये मदनपवनोद्धृतमोहोर्मिमाले
दारावर्ते तनयसहजग्राहसंघाकुले च ।
संसारख्ये महति जलधौ मज्जतां नस्त्रिधामन्
पादाम्भोजे वरद भवतो भक्तिनावं प्रयच्छ ॥ १४ ॥

*Trishna toyē madana pavanoddhuta mohormi maale
daaravarte tanaya sahaja graaha sanghaakule ca
samsarakhye mahati jaladhau majjataam nas-
tridhaaman
paadambhoje varada bhavato bhaktinaavam
prayachcha*

Meaning -

O, Narayana, we are drowning in the ocean of samsara, which is filled with the water of material hankering, with many waves whipped up by the winds of desire, with whirlpools of wives and with shoals of sharks and other aquatic monsters who are our sons and brothers. O, Varada, please give me the boat called the devotion to your feet.

Kulasekhara carries forward the ideas he had presented in the previous sloka. He says we are drowning in the ocean of material hankering. Desires beget desires. A man who has wealth, wants more wealth. It is like the demon Raktabeeja. Everytime he shed a drop of blood onto the ground, there would spring another demon, exactly like Raktabeeja. Hence, where Raktabeeja was deployed by Sumbha and Nisumbha, against the Devi, Varahi, Vaishnavi and other sakthis shot arrows at him. With every drop of blood, another Raktabeeja came up. Desires are like that. One desire is satisfied, another desire crops up.

Kulasekhara compares the samsara to an ocean, the wife to a whirlpool and the son as also the brothers to crocodiles in that sea. Considerable wealth often begets property disputes and not infrequently brings about an arrogance that money will get anything. Similarly, desires make one blind to several things. Running after 'kanchana' and 'kaminee' is therefore sinful. One has therefore to eschew the attachment to these and seek the feet of the Lord.

The Srimad Bhagavatham (Book 3 Dis.25) tells us about the discourse of Lord Kapila to Devahuti. Lord Kapila was born to Kardama and Devahuti, as a result of their

prayer to Lord Narayana. Realizing the divinity of Kapila, Devahuti one day told Kapila that she was sick of her wicked senses, that she had fallen into an abyss of ignorance due to her gratifying her cravings and sought the grace of Kapila to know the secret of true religion. Kapila replied ".....In my opinion the only means to final beatitude is yoga in the form of contemplation on the Supreme spirit, which is characterized by the absolute cessation of both joy and sorrow.. Mind alone is held responsible for the bondage and emancipation of the soul. Attached to the objects of the senses, it leads to bondage. When it develops affinity to the Supreme Person, it brings liberation to the soul. When the mind is purged of the impurities in the form of lust, greed etc., it becomes pure and grows indifferent to pleasure and pain and gets equipoised. With a mind equipped with true knowledge and dispassion, as well as with differentiation, the Jiva perceives the Self as one (without a second), undifferentiated, self effulgent, subtle and beyond matter. For striving souls, there is no blissful road to God-Realisation like Devotion directed towards the Lord, who is the soul of the Universe....".

It is to this, Kulasekhara makes a reference in the last line of this Sloka.

Sloka 15

माद्राक्षं क्षीणपुण्यान् क्षणमपि भवतो भक्तिहीनान् पदाब्जे

माश्रौषं श्राव्यबन्धं तव चरितमपास्याऽन्यदाख्यानजातम् ।

मास्मार्शं माधव त्वामपि भुवनपते चेतसाऽपह्नुवानान्

माभूवं त्वत्सपर्या व्यतिकर रहितो जन्मजन्मान्तरेऽपि ॥१५॥

*Maadraaksham ksheenapunyan kshanamapi bhavato
bhaktiheenaan padaabje*

*Maashrousham shraavyabandham tava charitam
apaasyaanyadaakhyaana jaatam*

*maasmaarsham maadhava tvaamapi bhuvanapate
chetasaapahnuvaanaan*

*maabhoovam thwatsaparyaa vyathikara rahito
janmajanmaanthereapi*

Meaning -

O, Madhava, I can not look at those who do not have even for a moment devotion to your feet. I will not listen to stories other than those relating to your pastimes, which stories are worth hearing. O Lord of the Universe, let me pay no attention to those who avoid thinking of You. Let me be able to serve you, birth after birth.

Kulasekhara, in this sloka, is praying to the Lord for four things.

- a) Not to see those who have no faith in the Lord
- b) Not to hear any but the prabhandhas retelling the glory of the Lord
- c) Not to pay attention to those who are not thinking of the Lord
- d) To serve the Lord, in every birth.

Madraksham ksheenapunyaan kshanamapi bhavato bhaktiheenaan padabje

Kulasekhara calls those who are not devoted to the Lord as 'ksheenapunyaan' - sinners. Kulasekhara does not wish to even look at them. Slokas 22 and 23 in the 'Stotraratna' are to be recalled in this connection. Says Alavandar, "I do not have Dharma-nishta. I do not have knowledge of the self. I do not even have devotion to your feet. Since I have nothing, since I cannot turn anywhere else, I turn to You, the savior of All, seeking Your refuge.

O Lord, all the sins which have been enumerated in the sastras, I have committed thousands of times. When the time has come to suffer for all those sins, since I can turn to none else, I am now submitting to you...". There is a contrast. Kulasekhara does not wish to even look at a sinner while Yamuna says that he is a sinner, many fold and seeks the refuge of the Lord.

Mashrousham shravyabandham tavacharita mapasya anyadakhyanaajaatam

Kulasekhara says he can hear only the stories of the Lord, the others he does not wish to hear (maashrousham).

Recitation of the stories of the Lord leads to bliss. In Narayaneeyam (Dasaka 3 Verse 6), it says, '.....On account of the pleasure of recitation and meditation of Thy merits, devotion to Thee is sweet from the very beginning. If it increases a little more, it destroys all sorrows. And then, at last, it brings on in the mind that identity of Supreme Bliss accompanying the dawn of immaculate knowledge. Other than this, what has one to desire or to pray for ?'.

*Maa smaarsham Maadhava thuwaamapi bhuanapathe
chetanaa apahnuvaanaar.*

Kulasekhara says he cannot even think of those who are even mentally abusing Lord Krishna. We earlier had recalled the story of Prahlada. Prahlada could think of naught else than Vishnu and when the Asura abused the Lord, the Lord vanquished the Asura.

Then what does Kulasekhara seek ? He says in every birth (janma janmantharepi), he should render service (saparya) to the Lord.

Sloka 16

जिह्वे कीर्तय केशवं मुररिपुं चेतो भज श्रीधरं

पाणिद्वन्द्व समर्चयाच्युत कथाः श्रोत्रद्वय त्वं शृणु ।

कृष्णं लोकय लोचनद्वय हरेर्गच्छांग्रियुग्मालयं

जिघ्र घ्राण मुकुन्दपादतुलसीं मूर्धन् नमाधोक्षजम् ॥ १६ ॥

*Jihve Keertaya Kesavam muraripum ceto bhaja
sreedharam*

*Paani dwandva samarchaya achyuta katha -
strotra - dvaya tvam srnu*

*Krishnam lokaya locana - dvaya harer
gachaanghriyugmalayam*

*Jighra ghrauna mukunda paada tulasim murdhan
namaadhokshajam*

Meaning -

In the previous slokas, Kulasekhara says that one should not look at those who do not have devotion to the

Lord, that one should not listen to the stories which are not about the Lord and that in every birth, he should be in a position to render service to the Lord. In this sloka, Kulasekhara prays that the different limbs should render service to the Lord. This sloka has its foundation in what Sage Suta told Sage Saunaka in the Srimad Bhagavatham (Book 2 discourse 3).

“.....the ears of man who has never heard the story of Sri Krishna are mere holes (that serve no purpose) and his tongue is as bad as that of a frog, if it does not recount the stories of Lord Vishnu (who is extolled in numerous ways). A head, which though decked with a silk turban or crown, never bows to Lord Mukunda is only a burden. Even so the hands which, though, adorned with wristlets of gold, never offer worship to Srihari are as good as those of a dead man. And, those human eyes that do not gaze on the images of Lord Vishnu are as useless as the eyes on the tail of a peacock. Similarly, the human feet which do not visit places sacred to Sri Hari are as good as the roots of trees. A mortal who has never bathed himself in the dust from the feet of the Lord's devotees is really dead, though living. Even so, the man who has never known the fragrance of the sacred Basil (Thulasi) leaves, offered at the feet of Lord Vishnu is a breathing corpse....” and sage Suta concluded “.....as a result of the discourses on Sri Hari dawns that spiritual enlightenment which sets at rest the waves in the form of passions. Nay, the heart gets pure and is filled with joy. One develops an aversion for the pleasures of the senses and a love for devotion which is the esteemed road to final beatitude.....”

First, Kulasekhara asks the tongue to praise the glories of Kesava. Is there a significance in Kulasekhara referring to the Lord as Kesava, giving it pride of place? In the Dwadasa names, Kesava is the first. In the Santiparva, Krishna tells Arjuna His secret names - “Narayana, Vasudeva, Vrishnigarbha Kesava. Three interpretations are given for the name Kesava”.

i) one who has fine hair ii) one who has the kesas Brahma and Rudra in His Control iii) One who destroyed the demon Kesi. The story of Kesi is mentioned in the Vishnu Purana (Part V Section XV) and in the Srimad Bhagavatham (Book ten Dis 37) Kesava having come to know about the death of Dhenuka, Putana and others, despatches Chanura and Mustika to defeat and destroy Krishna and Balarama. He advises them to take with them Kesi, a demon who wanders in the forest. Kesi, the Asura, is in the form of a horse. When the Asura gallops against Lord Krishna, the Lord catches hold of the horse by the tail, twirls it and then thrusts His hand into the yawning mouth of the Asura. When the horse tries to bite the hand, the Lord's hand goes on increasing in size and the Asura is killed. Narada (who it was who told Kamsa about the advent of Lord Krishna), came down from heaven to witness the fight between the Lord and the Asura. Lauds Narada ".....You are the one spirit, indwelling in all created beings and remaining concealed like the fire hidden in logs of wood, the witness of all, the Supreme Person, the almighty Lord..... You have descended into this world for the destruction of the goblins and the ogres and for the protection of the virtuous...". As the demon Kesi was so destroyed, Narada proclaimed that the Lord will be known as Kesava.

We already have referred to the story of the slaying of Mura (Page No. 25). The Lord always has Sri (Lakshmi) on his chest and is therefore known as Sridhara. The first sloka in Desika's 'Sri Stuthi' reads as follows. ".....I, who have no other means, take refuge in Lakshmi, who is of immeasurable greatness, the most auspicious among the auspicious, who by Her lustre adorning the chest of the slayer of the Madhu (Vishnu) and who is the embodiment of welfare.....". Achyuta or unfallen is Lord Krishna (Vishnu) because He does not perish when all other created beings perish. He is one who is not distinct from final emancipation. Kulasekhara refers to 'Mukundapaada thulasim' - the Lord is believed to be fond of the basil plant. Hence, the devotees offer basil leaf garlands to the Lord; in the Lord's garden are grown basil plants; the devotees wear

necklaces (maalas) made out of basil beads. The Devi Bhagavatham has a mythological story of Thulasi (a maiden) being the beloved of Lord Vishnu. Says Desika in Sri Bhagavaddhyana Sopanam (Sloka No. 6). ".... the broad chest of the Lord, the glory of which is proclaimed by the mark of Srivatsa, which is fortunate to bear the imprint of the feet of Goddess Lakshmi, which is rendered a ruddy hue by the gem Kausthuba which is shaded by garlands of thulasi leaves and the multicoloured flowers of the Vijayanthi and which is adorned with a garland of moon like pearls, removes the anguish in my mind....". The difference is that Kulasekhara says, please O my nose, please smell the thulasi at the feet of Srikrishna.

He concludes by asking his head to worship Adhokshaja (Sridhara). In effect, Kulasekhara is pleading that all the organs of senses be directed towards the Lord.

Sloka 17

हे लोकाश्शृणुत प्रसूतिमरणव्याधेश्चिकित्सामिमां
योगज्ञास्समुदाहरन्ति मुनयो यां याज्ञवल्क्यादयः ।
अन्तर्ज्योतिरमेयमेकममृतं कृष्णाख्यमापीयतां
तत्पीतं परमौषधं वितनुते निर्वाणमात्यन्तिकम् ॥१७॥

*He lokaah shrunuta prasuti marana vyaadhe cikitsam
imaam*

*Yoga-jnaah samudaaharanti munayo yaam
yaajnyavalkyaadayaah*

*antar-jyotir amayam ekam amrtam krishnaakhyam
apeeyataam*

*tat peetam paramaushadham vitanute nirvanam
aatyantikam*

Meaning -

Hearken, O fellow men, to this remedy for the illness of birth and death, given out by ascetics like Yajnavalkya who are adept in Yoga. Within you, there is one Supreme Light, the immortal and immeasurable Krishna. That is the supreme medicine. Take it always. That will confer on you absolute Bliss.

In the previous sloka, Kulasekhara has said that the different limbs should render service to the Lord. In this sloka, he says that the yogic practice of devotedly worshipping Lord Krishna, who is within each one of us, will confer absolute Bliss. This is what the Lord has said in the Gita. (Chap.6 Verse 46)

"The yogi is superior to the ascetics. He is regarded as superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The yogi is also superior to those who perform action with some interested motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi.

Of all yogis, he who devoutly worships Me, with his mind focused on Me, is considered by Me to be the best Yogi"

Yet again in chapter VIII it is said (verse 8 & 9) "Arjuna, he who with his mind disciplined through Yoga in the form of practice of meditation and thinking of nothing else, is constantly engaged in contemplation of Lord, attaining the supremely effulgent Divine Purusa.

He who contemplates on the all wise ageless Being, the Ruler of all, subtler than the subtle, the universal sustainer possessing a form beyond human conception, refulgent like the sun and far beyond the darkness of ignorance.

Contemplating on God with a steadfast mind, full of devotion, he reaches verily that supreme divine Purusa (God)"

Why does Kulasekhara refer to Yajnavalkya ? Yajnavalkya apart from having commented on Yajurveda the Satapatha Brahmana, the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, inculcated the necessity of religious retirement and meditation. He is therefore, considered the originator of the Yoga doctrine. In the Mahabharatha, in the Santi Parva, there is a discussion between King Janaka and Yajnavalkya. The latter explains that the light which is within, the soul is not different from the universal soul. Since the medicine (aushadham) Kulasekhara is suggesting is similar to what Yajnavalkya had mentioned in his

Doctrine of Yoga, Kulasekhara mentions sage Yajnavalkya (with other such sages).

Sloka 18

हे मर्त्याः परमं हितं शृणुत वो वक्ष्यामि संक्षेपतः
संसारार्णवमापदूर्मिबहुलं सम्यक् प्रविश्य स्थिताः ।
नानाज्ञानमपास्य चेतसि नमो नारायणायेत्यमुं
मन्त्रं सप्रणवं प्रणामसहितं प्रावर्तयध्वं मुहुः ॥ १८ ॥

*He martyaah paramam hitam srnuta vo vaksyaami
sanksepaatah
Samsaaraanavam aapaduurmi bahulam samyak
pravisya stitaah
naanaa -jnanam apaasya cetasi namo
naaraayaneya-tyamum
Mantram sa - pranavam pranaama - sahitam
praavartayadhvam muhuh*

Meaning -

O mortals, please listen to me. I concisely declare unto you what is supremely good. You are immersed in samsara rife with severe afflictions and dangerous situations like successive waves. Keeping aside varied and different kinds of knowledge, start repeating continuously in your mind 'Om Namo Narayana'. Thereafter, prostrate to the Lord, with love.

The theme of man struggling in samsara or the ocean of birth and death is continued here. Such a person is overcome by waves of misfortune. Kulasekhara says that to attain supreme benefit, one may put aside attempts at gaining knowledge and instead chant the mantra of Narayana with the pranava 'Om' prefixed to it.

*Naanajnanampaasyachetasi namo
Naaraayanetyamum mantram sa pranavam*

Put aside your attempts to gain knowledge and instead chant the mantra. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, the is an entire discourse analysing Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga (Book 11 Dis. 20)

“.....For the Yogi who is full of devotion to Me and has his mind fixed on Me, neither Jnana (spiritual enlightenment) nor even vairagya (dispassion) is generally conducive to blessedness in this world. By recourse to the discipline of devotion to Me, my devotee easily attains all that can be had through actions (enjoined by the Vedas), that which is obtained through askesis nay that which is secured by means of spiritual enlightenment and dispassion, practice of Yoga, piety in the form of liberality as well as by recourse to other means of attaining blessedness (such as undertaking a pilgrimage to sacred places and observing fasts etc.) - heaven, final beatitude or residence in My realm. Actually, pious men of wisdom exclusively devoted to Me, seek nothing, not even final beatitude. The wise declare desirelessness to be the greatest and most efficacious way to final beatitude. Devotion to Me, falls to his lot who does not seek anything else...”

But why the chanting of the Name? The answer is again found in the Srimad Bhagavatham. King Parikshit asks Sri Suka to explain how one is to shake off the evils of Kali Yuga. Sri Suka explains (Book 12 Disc.3) that in the Satya Yuga Dharma runs its course. In Treta Yuga, Dharma gets partially eroded and hence people love to perform vedic rites and rituals. There is further diminution of Dharma in the Dwapara Age. People are fond of great sacrifices. All evils manifest themselves in the Kali Age. But, “.....enthroned in the mind of men, Lord Srihari (the Supreme Person) drives away all evils occasioned by the Kali Age. Heard of or glorified by chanting His name or singing His praises, meditated upon and worshipped, the Lord stays in men's heart and drives away all their sins committed in thousands of lives. Dwelling in the mind of the Yogis (strivers), Lord Vishnu wipes out the seeds of their evil karma in the same manner as fire applied to gold burns all its impurities caused by the admixture of other metals. The mind of a man does not attain absolute purity through worship of gods, asceticism, control of breath, a bath in sacred waters, observance of sacred vows, charitable gifts as it does when the Lord's name is chanted and the Lord is enthroned in the heart.....”. Sri Suka adds that one

great virtue in the Kali Age, the storehouse of all evils is that by merely chanting the name of Lord Krishna, one is freed from all attachments and reaches the Supreme.

Sloka 19

पृथ्वी रेणुरणुः पयांसि कणिकाः फल्गुस्फुलिङ्गोऽनलः
तेजो निःश्वसनं मरुत् तनुतरं रन्ध्रं सुसूक्ष्मं नभः ।
क्षुद्रा रुद्रपितामहप्रभृतयः कीटास्समस्तास्सुराः
दृष्टे यत्र स तावको विजयते भूमावधूतावधिः ॥ १९ ॥

*Prithvi renur anuh payaamsi kanikaah phalguh
sphulingo analah
Tejo nihsvasanam marut tanu - taram randhram su -
sukshmom nabhah
Ksudraa rudra - pitaamaha - prabhrtayah keetaah
samastuah suraa
drste yatra sa taavako vijayate bhoomaa -
avadhootaavadhih*

Meaning -

Once the Lord has been seen, this planet becomes a speck of dust, all the waters of the oceans become mere droplets, fire a petty spark of little consequence, the wind becomes just a faint sigh, all space but a minute hole, gods like Brahma and Rudra insignificant manifestations and the denizens of the heaven become like small insects. Indeed the magnificence of the Lord transcends all limitations.

Lord Krishna is supreme and it is impossible to compare Him with anyone else. To say that God is greater than the constituents is somewhat meaningless. But to make us, of limited vision, to understand, Kulasekhara makes a comparison and explains the splendour of the Lord. Why does he choose the comparisons he does choose? Pantheists think that earth itself is God; or that the sky is God or that Brahma and Rudra are the Supreme Persons. Kulasekhara's metaphors dismantle all such notions.

The Lord explains to Arjuna in the Gita (Ch.VII)".....Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, reason and also ego; these constitute My nature, eightfold divided. This indeed is My lower (material) nature. The other than this, by which the whole universe is sustained know it to be My higher (spiritual) nature in the form of Jiva.

Arjuna, know that all beings have evolved from this two fold Prakriti and that I am the source of the entire creation and into Me again it disappears.

There is nothing beside Me, Arjuna..."

In Chapter X, the Lord says "....Arjuna, I am the universal self, seated in the heart of all beings. I alone am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings..."

Arjuna wants Lord Krishna to show him the Divine form. The Lord obliges. What does Arjuna see (Ch.II) ".....If there be the effulgence of a thousand suns, bursting forth all at once in the heavens, even that would hardly approach the splendour of the Lord...." He beheld all the gods and hosts of different beings. Brahma throned on his lotus seat, Siva and all the Rsis. Says Arjuna ".....I see you without beginning, middle or end, possessing unlimited prowess and endowed with numberless arms, having the moon and the sun for the eyes and the blazing fire for the mouth and scorching this Universe by your radiance..."

The Srimad Bhagavatham in Book 2 Dis.1 has a description of the cosmic form,

".....The sky constitutes His eyes, the Sun His sense of sight, day and night are His eyelids, the abode of Brahma represents the play of His eye brows, the air His breath..." In Book 12 Dis. 11, Sage Suta describes the Purusa form of the Lord

".....The earth represents His feet, heaven the head, the mid air region His navel, the sun His eyes, the air His nostrils, the quarters His ears. ...". The description goes on to identify the constituents of nature as the implements (aayudhaas) - air as the Kaumodaki (mace), water as the

Panchajanya, fire as the Sudarsana, ether as the sword while Vedas are represented by His carrier the Garuda.

In the Kena Upanishad a very interesting story is told. Once the Gods had achieved their victory over the Asuras, they became vain. The Supreme Lord wished to humble them. He appeared before them in a form in which they did not recognize him. He asked fire what he did; fire arrogantly replied that he can burn up anything. The Lord placed a straw before him and asked him to burn it. Try as he might, he could not do so. The Supreme Lord asked wind what he did. The wind god said that he could blow away anything on the earth. The Lord asked him to blow the straw. Try as he did, the wind god could not shift the straw. The Supreme Lord disappeared. The Goddess appeared before them and said that it was through the Supreme Lord they had attained victory and not by themselves. Concludes this part of the Upanishad ".....The Supreme Lord is the adorable Being in all beings. Meditate on Him, as such. He who meditates on him is honoured by all beings....".

It is this great truth that Kulasekhara conveys in this sloka.

Sloka 20

बद्धेनाञ्जलिना नतेन शिरसा गात्रेस्सरोमोद्रमैः
कण्ठेन स्वरगद्गदेन नयने नोद्रीर्ण बाष्पाम्बुना ।
नित्यं त्वच्चरणारविन्दयुगलध्यानमृतास्वादिनां
अस्माकं सरसीरुहाक्ष सततं संपद्यतां जीवितम् ॥२०॥

*Baddhenaanjalinaa natena sirasaa gaatrai sa -
romodgamaihi
Kanthena svaragadgadana nayane nodgeerna
baaspaambuna
Nityam tvaa - caranaaravinda - yugala
dhyanaamrtaasvaadinaam
Asmaakam sarasiruhaaksa satatam sampadyatam
jeevntam*

Meaning -

O, Lotus eyed Lord, may our lives be enriched constantly in this manner; palms of our hands reverently brought together in prayer for Your grace and protection. Our heads bowed down and our bodies thrilled by the fervour of devotion indicated by the hair standing on end; our voice choked with feelings of deep devotion; our eyes swimming in tears of joy as a result of the delight of the nectar of meditation on Your lotus feet.

Offering Anjali is the accepted form of worship of the Lord. In the temple when the 'sathari' is offered one bows the head in humility to receive the Grace of the Lord. In moments of ecstasy, one sheds tears - they are the tears of happiness because of the affinity to the Lord and tears of sorrow are at the separation from the Lord. All this is born out of the nectar of meditation on the feet of the Lord.

There is an extraordinarily touching reference to the feet of the Lord in the Gopika Geetham. The Gopikas sing

"...O beloved Lord ! our hearts break at the thought of Thy lotus - like tender feet being hurt by the sharp stones and thorns, while following the cows which Thou takest for the whole day for grazing....". At the same time (and in sharp contrast) they realize that they are the feet of the Lord whose protection they seek. Sing the Gopis,

"...O Destroyer of the sorrows of all ! O soul nourisher. Deign to place Thy hallowed feet on our bosoms. Thy feet, worshipped even by the lotus born Mother of everything that is auspicious and rich, an ornament to the earth which they tread, fit to be meditated upon by aspirants when they are in distress and which confer supreme beatitude on all....".

The story of Bilwamangala is well known. He had an affair with a lady of easy virtue, Chintamani. One day, he crossed a swollen river, vaulted a wall, by clinging to snakes (which he mistook for creepers). Chintamani chastised him and said that if he had shown the same affinity to God, he would have been an angel. Bilwamangala became

a changed man. It is said that he first became an Advaitin and that king Kulasekhara made him a staunch Vaishnavait. He was also known as Lila Suka and wrote Sri Krishna Karnamritam. Says he in stanza 30 "...O Lord, Thou ocean of Mercy ! with palms folded on the head and loud voice raised from my unrestrained throat, I pray that Thou mayest once soak me with a single drop of Thine Graceful Glance...". (In the previous sloka, Bilwamangala says "If Thou art pleased, what more remains needful for us? And, if Thou art not pleased, what else will be of any avail to us?...")

Kulasekhara uses the words "our eyes swimming in tears and our bodily hair standing up in jubilation". Desika, in one of the slokas describing an assembly of devotees says "... O Varada, certain blessed people who experience horripilation over their limbs and thus prosper, who have big drops of tears in their bud like eyes, adorn your assembly and enjoy the bliss of Your feet with their hearts marked by humility and make others also experience that bliss...". Markandeya had got the boon of not becoming old and dying. Pleased with his askesis, the Lord asked him to seek one more boon. Markandeya desired to see the divine act of Creation. Shortly thereafter, there was a deluge. The sage was washed away in the deluge. In the distance, he saw an effulgent baby, resting on a banyan leaf (Vatapatra). The poet describes the scene beautifully in the Narayaneeyam. ".....seeing Thee, the Lord of the Sages Markandeya with the hair standing on end in thrill of joy approached Thee quickly, with the desire of touching Thee. He was drawn within through the breath of inhalation and he saw there the host of all the worlds. Then again he was thrown out along with the breath of exhalation....". Kulasekhara is not seeking to see the creation; he is referring to the responses of the devotees when they worship the feet of the Lord.

Sloka 21

हे गोपालक हे कृपाजलनिधे हे सिन्धुकन्यापते

हे कंसान्तक हे गजेन्द्र करुणापारीण हे माधव ।

हे रामानुज हे जगत्त्रयगुरो हे पुण्डरीकाक्ष मां

हे गोपीजननाथ पालय परं जानामि न त्वां विना ॥२१॥

*He Gopaalaka he krpa-jala-nidhe he sindhukanyaa
pate*

*He Kamsantaka he Gajendra-karunaa - paareenaa he
Maadhavaa*

*He Ramanuja he jagat-traya-guro he pundaree-
kaaksha maam*

*He Gopijana naatha paalayaparam jaanaami na tvaam
vinaa*

Meaning -

O Gopaala (cowherd boy) ! O ocean of mercy ! O husband of Lakshmi, the daughter of the milk ocean ! O You destroyer of Kamsa! O You bestower of mercy on the elephant chief! O younger brother of Rama ! O Madhava ! O Preceptor of the three worlds ! O lotus eyed Lord of the Gopis, deign to save me, for I know no one greater than You.

The slokas 21,22,23 and 24 are slokas in praise of Lord Krishna. Kulasekhara addresses Lord Krishna by different names. That is because, from Lord Krishna emanate the various manifestations. It is said in the Bhagavatham (Book I Dis.3 Vers.26) " Even as thousands of rivulets flow from a lake that never dries, so there are countless descents of the Lord. The sages and seers, the Manus, the gods, the sons of Manus and Prajapatis (lords of created beings), in fact all these who possess great power are rays of Srihari. All these are however either part manifestation or rays of the Supreme Person, while Lord Krishna is the Lord Himself....".

In this verse, Kulasekhara calls Krishna by different names, describing the Krishna Leelas. He is called as Gopala, because Lord Krishna made the advent and grew up in the house of Nanda and Yasoda. When all the cowherds are wondering at His exploits, Nanda tells the cowherds what he heard from Sage Garga, " this son of yours, O Nanda, is a compeer of Lord Narayana in point of excel-

lence, splendours, fame and glory...". Krishna interferes with the sacrifices to Indra. Indra brings down torrential rain. Krishna lifts the Goverdhana mountain and gives protection to all the residents of Vraja. Indra is humbled and extols Krishna "... Hail, Hail to You, the almighty and infinite Lord, the inner controller of all, the soul of all living beings. On my worship having been interfered with, this mischief was done O Lord, for the destruction of Vraja by means of torrential rains and winds, by me who was full of pride and seized with violent rage. My pride having been crushed and my efforts having been foiled, I have been favoured by You. O Lord, I have sought You, the Supreme Ruler and Preceptor, My very self, as my refuge. .." (Bhagavatham Book 11 Dis. 27) It is to this Gopala, Kulasekhara prays .

Kulasekhara addresses the Lord as Kripajalanidhe - the ocean of compassion. Stories of Kubja, Dhruva, Prahlada and Vibheeshana are relevant in this context. Kubja was a hunchback, whose job it was to prepare unguents for Kamsa. Krishna and Balarama had come to participate in a contest. They ask Kubja to give them some unguents, which the hunchback (Trivakra was her other name) readily gave. The two brothers applied themselves with the unguents liberally. The Vishnu Purana says that they ".....looked like two clouds, one black and one white, decorated by the many tinted bow of Indra....." (Section XX) Krishna, the ever compassionate,"....skilled in the curative art, took hold of her under the chin, with the thumb and two fingers and lifted up her head and with His feet pressed down her feet and in this way he made her straight. By His contact, she became the most beautiful of damsels..." That is why Kulasekhara extols Him as the ocean of Mercy.

He refers to the Lord as "Sindhukanyapate'. In the ongoing battle between the gods and the asuras, the gods got disheartened. They approached the Supreme Lord, who suggested that there be a cessation of hostilities and the ocean be churned, so that nectar could be obtained, quaffing which immortality may be achieved. The asuras also

agree. Using the Mandara mountain as the churning rod, the ocean is churned. Halahala (poison), Uchaisrava, the celebrated horse, Airavata the elephant, Kausthubha the ruby, Paarijatha the tree and Apsaras emerged. Then appeared Goddess Ramaa, who is affluence personified. She was given various gifts by the Gods. The Goddess chose Lord Vishnu the bestower of liberation as her husband. Says the Bhagavatham (Book 8 Dis.8) ".....placing on His shoulders the charming wreath of fresh lotuses, resonant with the humming of swarms of maddening black bees and having attained to His bosom, Her own abode. With Her lotus like eyes blooming with a bashful smile, she stood by His side. Lord Vishnu made His bosom the permanent abode of Goddess Sri, the Mother of the three worlds and the source of ail riches....". Kulasekhara therefore extols Krishna as Sindhukanyapate - the Lord of the daughter of the ocean.

He calls Him also as "Kamsantaka". We have earlier referred to the advent of Lord Krishna. In response to the distressed submission of mother earth (in the form of a cow) that she is unable to bear the weight of the sinners, Lord Krishna made his advent. Kamsa tries various methods to destroy Krishna and Balarama. He invites them for a bout of wrestling with Chanura and Mustika. The brothers defeat the above two. Lord Krishna sprang to the dais, grasped Kamsa firmly by the hair and "...the support of the universe, jumped down in the person upon him. He dragged him hard, though fully dead, along the ground, as a lion would drag an elephant ..." (Srimad Bhagavatham)

Kulasekhara extols the Lord as the bestower of endless mercy on the elephant chief in his distress - we have already referred to this at Page(31) in detail the story of the liberation of Gajendra. Madhavi is a name given to Lakshmi ("Maa" means Lakshmi; Madhava is Her Consort). Kulasekhara extols the Lord of Madhavi. He calls Him as Ramanuja - the brother of Rama. The reference here must be to Balarama and not Lord Ramachandra (because Kulasekhara hardly ever refers to Lord Rama). He calls Him as Gopijananatha - the reference is to the lotus eyed

Lord of the Gopis. It will take up a lot of space to refer to the entire episode of the Gopis, their spending an enchanting time with the Lord, the separation when the Lord goes to Madhura (from Vraja) and the pining of the Gopis. The Bhakti literature recognised both the Love-in-union and Love- in-separation. The song of the Gopis (Gopika Gitam) is a celebrated part of the Srimad Bhagavatham. The gopis call Him by different names - dearest Lord, Lord of supreme delight, granter of boons, eternal companion, dear and lovely One, Hero of our hearts. Sing the Gopis in one stanza.

".....O Lotus eyed one, refresh and strengthen us with the spirit flowing from Thy lips, Thy mellifluous words and turns of speech that charm even the Gods. Ever ready to obey Thy commands, O heroic One, we are swooning because of Thy separation...". At the philosophic level, the urge of Gopis to be with the Lord represents the yearning of the Jivatma to be united with the Paramatma.

After extolling the Lord by different names, what does Kulasekhara seek ? He pleads for protection, as did Vibheeshana. Vibheeshana's advice is rejected by Ravana and he is expelled. Vibheeshana crosses the ocean, explains the position to Sugriva and concludes ".....I have sought Sri Rama, a scion of Raghu, as my refuge. Therefore, communicate to the high souled Sri Rama (a scion of Raghu) who is capable of protecting all the worlds, the fact of my being present (Vaalmiki Ramayana Yuddha Kanda).

Sloka 22

भक्तापायभुजङ्गगारुडमणिः त्रैलोक्यरक्षामणिः

गोपीलोचनचातकाम्बुदमणिः सौन्दर्यमुद्रामणिः ।

यः कान्तामणिरुक्मिणीघनकुचद्वन्द्वैकभूषामणिः

श्रेयो देवशिखामणिर्दिशतु नो गोपालचूडामणिः ॥२२॥

*Bhaktaapaaya bhujanga garuda - manis trailokya -
raksaa - manih*

*Gopilocana caatakaambuda - manih saundarya
mudraamanih*

*Yah kaanta - mani - Rukmini ghana - kuchadvandvaika
bhusaa manih
sreyo devasikhaa manih disatu no Gopaala Chooda
manih*

Meaning -

He is the special 'garuda' stone which drives away the difficult ties of His devotees like 'snakes'. He is the jewel protecting the three worlds, the jewel like cloud attracting the cataka bird eyes of the Gopis. He is the jewel among all who gesture gracefully. He is the jewelled ornament on the full breasts of Rukmini, who is herself the jewel among the beloved consorts. May that peerless gem, Gopala, give us supreme benediction.

As in the previous sloka, there are references to Krishna lilas. In every example, the Lord is described as a 'mani' - he is supremely effulgent.

Vishnu has, as his mount the Garuda. He is always with the Lord. In the Gajendra Moksham, the Lord hears the appeal of Gajendra. The Lord thinks of Garuda and Garuda appears before him. The Lord immediately proceeds to save the soul in distress. He does not even wish to wait for Sri to accompany Him. In the manifestation as Lord Ramachandra, since the Lord is born as a human being, Garuda is not making his appearance, always, with the Lord. Even here, when the Lord is entwined in a noose of serpents and lying on the battlefield, Garuda appears there. Rama does not recognize him. Garuda replies that Rama does not know Garuda but Garuda knows Him. Desika has two charming pieces on Garuda - the Garuda Panchaasat and the Sri Garuda Dandakam. Garuda himself is capable of saving us from the snakes of misery and distress. But, here Kulasekhara says that the Lord is the gem riding on the wings of Garuda, who carries the devotees on his wings.

He is the Protector of the three worlds. Earlier we had occasion to comment on "Jagadrakshaka".

Kulasekhara brings in an attractive simile. He says that he is the cloud attracting the eyes of the bird Caataka which are the eyes of the Gopis. The Lord is the pearl drop of water from the cloud for which the eyes of the Gopis are athirst. The Caataka bird is the bird which waits for the rain. It is believed to drink the water as the rain falls and not after it falls down. Hence, it always anxiously looks to the rain-bearing clouds. The Gopis are in the same position. They have drunk deeply of the nectar of Lord Krishna's company, when the boy Krishna was growing up as a cowherd boy in Vraja land. He has moved to Mathura. They are suffering the pangs of separation. They are anxiously looking for His arrival, like the Caataka bird, waiting for the rain. Actually, even when he was in Vraja land, they used to anxiously await his return. The following stanza from Gopika Gitam, poignantly reflects the position.

“ When during the day, Thou art away tending the cows in the woods, to us who are denied Thy celestial company, a moment would appear as long as an age. And, when we see at dusk, Thy Charming face and curly hair, we cannot but exclaim ‘stupid indeed is the creator who made lashes for the eyes!’ The Srikrishna Karnamrutham is a garland of verse, describing the yearning to seek the nectar called Srikrishna. The Lord of the three worlds sported with the rustic cowherd women, in their small world. “ O what an ineffable sportive beauty has Krishna revealed to the fullest extent before me. O, even in all directions, My eye is the witness there of. Alas, He keep himself at a distance beyond my extended hands. What is this O mother! O, the three worlds are then covered with my wistfully adolescent Krishna”. (Sri Krishna Karnamrutham - stanza 60).

The story of Rukmini is retold in the Srimad Bhagavatham (Book 10 Dis.55). Rukmini was the daughter of Bhismaka, King of Vidarbha. Rukmi the son of Bhismaka proposed to give her in marriage to Sisupala. Rukmini wished to wed Krishna only.

Krishna, at the request of Rukmini, takes her away when she visits the temple before the marriage and weds her in Dwaraka. Says the Bhagavatham ".....Great was the jubilation among the citizens in Dwaraka at the sight of Lord Krishna, the spouse of Sri (the goddess of beauty and prosperity) united in wedlock with Rukmini, who was no other than the said Goddess Lakshmi " (Dis.60) That is why Kulasekhara calls Rukmini as the jewel among the consorts (yah kantamani Rukmini...). Having described the Lord, what is the prayer of Kulasekhara ? He wants the Lord to give the blessing of Release, to grant supreme benediction.

Sloka 23

शत्रुच्छेदैकमन्त्रं सकलमुपनिषद्वाक्यसंपूज्यमन्त्रं
 संसारोत्तारमन्त्रं समुपचिततमस्सङ्घनिर्याणमन्त्रम् ।
 सर्वैश्वर्यैकमन्त्रं व्यसनभुजग सन्दष्ट सन्त्राणमन्त्रं
 जिह्वे श्रीकृष्णमन्त्रं जपजप सततं जन्मसाफल्यमन्त्रम् ॥२३॥

*Satru-chchedaika mantram sakalam upanisad vakya
 - sampujya-mantram
 Samsaarottaara - mantram samupachita tamasah
 sangha - nityaana mantram
 Sarvaisvaryaika - mantram vyasana-bhujanga -
 sandasta - santraana - mantram
 Jihve Srikrishna - mantram japajapa satatam janma
 saaphalya- mantram*

The holy formula of Sri Krishna is an unparalleled mantra to cut off everything hostile to one's good , it is the sum total of the mantras consisting of the sacred Upanishadic statements; it is the mantra that rescues one from samsara; it is the mantra that expels the mass of accumulated darkness; it is the only Mantra for the attainment of complete Lordship (freedom and mastery); it is the Mantra that completely delivers those who are bitten by the snake of addiction to passions. O , my tongue, always chant this Mantra, so that you may attain the fruition of your life...."

We earlier had occasion to write (Page No. 43) that in the Kali Yuga, it is the mere chanting of the Name that grants us liberation. The Vishnu Purana also narrates the same (Part VI Section II). Once upon a time, the sages assembled and wished to know how liberation is to be obtained in the dissolute Kali Age. Replied Veda Vyasa

“.....The fruit of the penance of continence, of silent prayer, and the like practiced in the Krita Age for ten years, in the Treta Age for one year, in the Dwapara Age for one month is obtained in the Kali Age in a day and night. The reward which a man obtains in the Krita Age by abstract meditation, in the Treta by sacrifice, in the Dwapara by adoration, he receives in the Kali Yuga by merely reciting the names of Kesava. O pious and great ascetics, in the Kali Age, by very little exertion, men attain to exalted virtue ...”. Maitreya was indicated the ‘secret’. That is why Kulasekhara extols the holy mantra of Sri Krishna and says it should be chanted, to show the devotion to the Lord.

How is bhakti (devotion) to be shown ? The Narada Bhakti Sutras addresses itself to this question and says that the characteristics of divine life have been variously described by the sages - Vyasa defines Bhakti as devotion to acts of worship and the like (Aphorism 16) Sage Garga defines Bhakthi as devotion to hearing and praising the Name of God; Sage Sandilya defines Bhakti as avoiding all distracting thoughts and taking delight only in the Atman; Narada says that when all thoughts, all words and all deeds are given up to the Lord and when the least forgetfulness of God makes one intensely miserable, then Divine Love has begun. The followers of Chaitanya believe that he is an incarnation of Lord Krishna. He sings

‘chant the name of the Lord and His glory unceasingly,

That the mirror of the heart may be wiped clean
And quenched that mighty forest fire
Worldly lust, raging furiously within.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has extolled Lord Krishna as follows:

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Hare Krishna Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare,
iti sodasakam naamnaam kalikalmasanaasanam
naatah paratarapayah sarva vedesu drsyate*

Meaning -

Hare Krishna....- these sixteen names composed of thirty two syllables are the only means of counteracting the evil acts of Kali Yuga. After searching through all the vedic literature, one cannot find a method of religion for this age so sublime as the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra....". That is why Kulasekhara says in the second line that this mantra is the sum total of the Upanishads. The following appears in the Mundaka Upanishad.

"Affix to the Upanishad the bow incomparable, the sharp arrow of devotional worship; then with the mind absorbed and heart melted in love, draw the arrow and hit the mark - the imperishable Brahman.

Om is the bow, the arrow is the individual being, and Brahman is the target. With a tranquil heart, take aim." Lose thyself in Him, even as the arrow is lost in the target.

Kulasekhara says that this mantra will cut off everything hostile to one's good. We earlier had occasion to refer to the story of Ajamila and Yama explaining to his attendants how he was helpless when the Name of the Lord is chanted. We have referred to the story of Prahlada and Gajendra. The above stories all relate to their being saved from death. This mantra will deliver an individual from one's mental enemies also - lust, greed, anger, illusion, madness and envy. That is why in the first sentence of the stanza, Kulasekhara calls it the mantra to cut off everything hostile to one's good. [Satru cheddaika mantram]

It is the mantra which rescues one from samsara. We had occasion to write about this earlier. Suffice it to quote from the Srimad Bhagavatham (Book 1 Dis.1). The sages tell Suta " Dear Suta, please explain to us who are

keen to hear about the Lord's descent on to this earth, which is intended for the prosperity and protection of all living beings. Any one , who has fallen into the terrible whirlpool of birth and death, can be speedily delivered from the same, if he utters his name even helplessly...”.

Man, in birth after birth commits sins. He lives in darkness. Hence, he accumulates ignorance. Repetition of the Name helps to dispel this darkness, this collection of ignorance, as “Jnana’ dawns on the person. Man is essentially dependent. It is only deliverance which gives him the freedom. Hence, Kulasekhara says that it is this mantra which helps one to achieve the above.

To quote Chaitanya once again :

O Name, stream down in moonlight on the lotus heart
Opening its cup to knowledge of Thyself
O self, drown deep in the waves of His bliss
Chanting His name continually
Testing His nectar at every step
Bathing in His name,
that bath for wearied soul
It is for that bliss Kulasekhara prays in the sloka.

Sloka 24

व्यामोहप्रशमौषधं मुनिमनोवृत्तिप्रवृत्त्यौषधं
दैत्येन्द्रार्तिकरौषधं त्रिजगतां सञ्जीवनैकौषधम् ।
भक्तात्यन्तहितौषधं भवभयप्रध्वंसनैकौषधं
श्रेयः प्राप्तिकरौषधं पिब मनश्श्रीकृष्णदिव्यौषधम् ॥२४॥
*Vyaamoha prasamaushadham munimanovritti
pravritty aushadham
Daityendraarti - karaushadham jagatam
sanjeevanaikaushadham
Bhaktaatyanta - hitaushadham bhavabhaya
pradhvamsanaikaushadham
Sreyah praptikaraushadham piba manah srikrishna
divyaushadham*

Meaning-

This medicine (aushadham) in the form of the divine name of Sri Krishna cures ignorance and discrimination. It inspires sages to engage their minds in meditation and it torments the 'daitya' demons. It is the medicine for restoring the three worlds to life and for bestowing unlimited blessings on the devotees of the Supreme Lord. Indeed, it is the only medicine that can destroy one's fear of material existence and lead one to the attainment of supreme good.

It is said that mantram, a mani (a jewel, a precious stone) and aushadham (medicine) go together, in the Hindu way of thinking, as far as curative properties are concerned. In the previous sloka, Kulasekhara had spoken about the jewel that the Lord is; here he speaks about the Lord being the medicine.

Bhakti or devotion is what makes us to think of the Lord. Thinking of the Lord, we chant His name. Kulasekhara says that this cures ignorance. Ignorance is lack of knowledge. There are two aphorisms from Narada's Bhakti Sutras which may be recalled here (Aphorism 28 and 32) " Some are of the opinion that knowledge is the means to attain bhakti". " A man cannot please a king by merely knowing about him and seeing his palace, nor can a man satisfy his hungers by the mere knowledge or perception of God; until love comes"

Hence, mere knowledge is not sufficient. That is why Kulasekhara says that the medicine in the form of the Name cures ignorance.

We already had occasion to state how the Name enables the sages to meditate seeking deliverance (in the Age of Kali). The Name torments the daityas. The Daityas here refers to asuras like Hiranyakasipu (and others) who were destroyed by the Grace of God as also to the daityas within us - anger, lust, envy, ignorance. The life giving medicine (sanjeevanaikaushadham) for the world is the Lord. Without Him, they cannot be sustained. We had occasion to quote the Upanishadic story - all the forces of

nature (Agni, Vaayu) derive their power only from the Supreme Lord.

It is the only medicine that can bestow unlimited blessings on the devotee. The story of Sridaama needs to be retold here (Srimad Bhagavatham Book x Dis LXXXI

Sridaama and Krishna had studied together under a preceptor. Sridama remained a poor brahmin. One day his wife persuaded him to meet Lord Krishna, as He was the bestower of prosperity. Offering to give a present, he carried with him four handfuls of beaten rice. The Lord received him joyfully and they spent a long time exchanging views. The Brahmana, feeling shy did not offer the trifling of a present he brought. The Lord took a grain of rice as whoever offers to the Lord with love, a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, He accepts that offering of love. Though the Brahmana did not make the request his wife had asked him to make, the Lord divined it. When Sridama reached his palace, he could not recognise the opulence - a magnificent house, gardens, servants and his wife, a bejewelled beauty looking like Lakshmi Herself. Sridaama realised that the Lord knows the mind of the devotee and 'gives in abundance' to the devotee. That is why Kulasekhara calls the Lord as bestower of unlimited blessings.

Kulasekhara concludes that the Lord is the only medicine that can destroy one's fear of material existence and leads one to the attainment of supreme good. To continue the story of Sridama, Sridama when he saw all the material prosperity, prayed "May I secure from birth to birth His goodwill, love, friendship and service (I have no need for wealth). May I ever cherish ever growing devotion to the lotus feet of the glorious Lord, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the one abode of excellent qualities and obtain association with his devotees. Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is ever free from the shackles of birth and death is acquainted with the evil underlying worldly prosperity. He knows how the intoxication of wealth and power brings about the fall of many a wealthy man...." Compare this with the last three slokas in Vairagya Panchakam of Sri Vedant Desika.

“ Let the abdominal fire comparable to the heat of the submarine fire playing in the midst of the ocean, burn. But, even then we will never beg for even a blade of grass of kings, with our words, which rob the jasmine which blooms in the evening of its fragrance”.

“ I have that wealth (Lord Krishna) which is dark like collyrium which is inexhaustible and which adorned the chariot of Arjuna”.

“ The wealth acquired through lifelong service to Lords, which quenches the abdominal fire, fuelled by water and food, is useless. But the wealth (the Lord) which lifted the Govardhana mountain which is easily attained and is easily worshipped by the noble minded people is the one that is imperishable”. Kulasekhara, in the concluding part of his sloka, wants this “aushadham”

Sloka 25

आम्नायाभ्यसनान्यरण्यरुदितं वेदव्रतान्यन्वहं
 मेदश्छेदफलानि पूर्तविधयः सर्वे हुतं भस्मनि ।
 तीर्थानामवगाहनानि च गजस्नानं विना यत्पद-
 द्वन्द्वाम्भोरुहसंस्मृतिं विजयते देवस्स नारायणः ॥२५॥

*Aamnaayabhyasana aranya - ruditam veda vrataany
 anv-aham
 Medascheda phalani poorta-vidhayah sarve hutam
 • bhasmani
 Tirthaanaam avagaahanaani ca gaja - snaanam vinaa
 - yat pada
 Dvandvaa bhoruha samsmritim vijayate devassa
 naaraayanah*

Meaning -

All glories to Lord Narayana ! without remembrance of His Lotus Feet, recitation of scriptures is a cry in wilderness, regular observance of the severe vows enjoined in the Vedas is only a way to lose weight, discharge of prescribed pious duties amounts to mere pouring of oblations onto the ashes and bathing at various holy sites is no better than an elephant's bath.

Kulasekhara makes it clear that various religious practices are of no value and merit, if they are done in a mechanical manner and without true devotion to the Lord. He says that chanting of the Vedas, without thinking of the feet of the Lord, would be a cry in forest (Aranya Ruditam). Similarly, mere observance of religious vows would only result in the restriction of fat in the body (Medaschedaphatam). In the same manner digging of tanks or wells would be like doing 'homa' to the ashes. The elephant is believed to throw mud on itself, after it has a bath. Kulasekhara says that having a bath in holy rivers like the Ganges, if one is devoid of devotion to the Lord, is like an elephant having a bath. It serves no purpose.

That is why our elders exhort us to do everything, offer everything to the Lord - "Sarvam Narayanam Samarpayami". There should be devotion in whatever we do; it should not be done mechanically. Aphorsim 76 of the Narada Bhakti Sutras reads "While you study the devotional Scriptures, meditate upon their teachings and follow them so that devotion to God may be intensified in your heart". It is said, most appropriately, if one is worshipping Lord Hari, what is the use of penance and if one is not worshipping Lord Hari, what is the use of penance? One should recall also sloka 29 in Krishna Karnamrita. Says Bilvamangala "...If Thou are pleased, what more remains needful for us. And, if Thou art not pleased, what else will be of any avail to us....".

If one worships Him, He will redeem us, is what Kulasekhara puts across in this verse. Yamunacharya in the Stotraratna conveys the same in a very telling manner (Sloka 25). He prays to the Lord that just as he had experienced sorrows in the past, he is ready to undergo sorrows in future also, but it is not correct for the Lord not to redeem those who had sought His feet, as the Lord would then earn the obloquy that the Lord has not saved those who had sought 'saranam'.

[Twadagre saranaagataanaam paraabhavo naadhana te anuroopah]

Sloka 26

श्रीमन्नाम प्रोच्य नारायणाख्यं
के न प्रापुर्वाञ्छितं पापिनोऽपि ।
हा नः पूर्वं वाक्प्रवृत्ता न तस्मिन्
तेन प्राप्तं गर्भवासादिदुःखम् ॥ २६ ॥

*Sriman - nama procya - narayanaakhyam
Ke na praapur vaanchitampaapino api
Haa nah purvam vaak pravrtta na tasmin
Tena praaptam garbhavaasaadi duhkham*

Meaning -

What person, even if he be the most sinful, has not attained the desired ends, if he had loudly repeated the blessed name Narayana. Alas, we never used our power of speech in that way and so we had to suffer such miseries as living in a womb.

In the previous sloka, Kulasekhara had said that since for all actions, the One who gives the fruit is the Lord, performing actions without thinking of the Lord is fruitless. In this sloka, Kulasekhara urges that the Name of the Lord be uttered. Earlier, we had occasion to refer to the story of Ajamila (Page No. 28). Ajamila, who led a dissolute life, accidentally utters the name Narayana, when he is about to die and the attendants of Vishnu save him from the 'Kinkaras' of Yama. Yama explains to his attendants how he is powerless before Vishnu and His devotees. The Vishnu Purana relates the discussions between Yama and his ministers (Vishnu Purana Part III Dis.VII). Says Yama ".....Never bring here any one who has obtained the shelter of the slayer of Madhu, for I am the Lord of all the spirits but not of the spirits of those who are devoted to Vishnu. I was appointed by Brahma, honoured by the immortals to sit in judgement upon the good and bad conduct of mankind. Hari is my Lord. I am not independent. As gold, though it is one substance, appears diversified as bracelets, tiaras and ear rings, so Hari, though He is one, appears as many, as gods, as man and as animal... He who

reverentially bows unto Hari whose lotus feet are being meditated upon by the celestials, is freed from all inequities. ..." Tells Yama to his attendants, 'do you avoid such a man who is freed from all sinful bonds, like unto fire, fed with clarified butter'.

The Narada Bhakti Sutras pose the question as to how one attains Supreme Love of God and answers it (Aphorism 36), by saying that Supreme Love is attained by uninterrupted and undiverted worship of God [Avyaavrtta bhajanaat] . What happens then? The answer is found (Aphorism 50) 'such a man, indeed, crosses this Maya and helps others to cross it...."

Kulasekhara further adds that, unfortunately we do not utter the name of the Lord and due to this reason we suffer such miseries as living in a womb. (garbha vaasadi dhukham). Lord Kapila, was the Supreme Person, who was born to Kardama and Devahuti (Please refer page No. 35). Devahuti asks Kapila , whose eminence she recognises (as he is an amsa of the Lord), to explain her as to how one is to attain the Lord. In the process of the explanation, Lord Kapila explains how the soul, enmeshed in birth after birth, suffers even at the stage of being in the embryo (Srimad Bhagavatham Book 3 Discourse 31). Says Kapila "...By force of Karma, as directed by Providence, the soul (destined to be born as a man) enters the womb of a woman... the foetus grows and remains in the abominable receptacle of faeces and urine, the breeding place of worms. Bitten again and again all over the body by the hungry worms in the abdomen itself, the creature suffers terrible agony on account of its tenderness and swoons away moment after moment. Nay, adversely affected by the bitter, pungent, hot, salty, dry acidic and other such irritating substances consumed by the mother, the foetus experiences a painful sensation in every part of its body..." That is why Kulasekhara concludes that if we do not devoutly utter the Name, we suffer birth after birth, which means we suffer the miseries of living in a womb.

Sloka 27

मज्जन्मनः फलमिदं मधुकैटभारे

मत्प्रार्थनीयमदनुग्रह एष एव ।

त्वद्भृत्यभृत्यपरिचारक भृत्यभृत्य

भृत्यस्य भृत्य इति मां स्मर लोकनाथ ॥ २७ ॥

Majjanmanah phalam idam madhu - kaitabhare

Mat praartaniya - mad - anugraha - esa eva

Tvad - bhrtya - brhtya - paricaaraka - bhrtya - bhrtya

Bhrtyasya bhrtya iti maam smara lokanaatha

Meaning -

O slayer of Madhu and Kaitabha, O lord of the universe, the fruition of my life and the most cherished mercy you could show me would be for you to consider me the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant of Your servant.

Kulasekhara begins the verse with an invocation to the Lord as the slayer of Madhu and Kaitabha. The story is well known. Lord Vishnu is reclining on the milky ocean. Brahma is resting on the lotus which has sprung from the navel of Lord Narayana. Madhu and Kaitabha, two Asuras, emanate from the wax in the ears of the Lord. Brahma extols the Lord, as he is petrified by the two Asuras and sees around himself, nothing but water. Lord Narayana destroys Madhu and Kaitabha (and hence gets the names Madhusudhana and Kaitabhajit). The prayer to the Lord results in the slaying of Madhu and Kaitabha (actually in this sloka, Kulasekhara addresses the Lord as Madhu Kaitabhaare or the enemy of Madhu and Kaitabha). He, of course, is the Lord of the Universe.

The prayer of Kulasekhara is that the Lord should consider him as the servant of the Lord, seven degrees removed. Why should it be seven degrees removed and not direct service to the Lord? The Lord prefers those who serve His devotees more than those who serve Him directly. That is why, in the Vaishnava sampradaya, a devotee is required to approach the Lord through an Acharya. It may

be recalled that in the Introduction, we had referred to a device whereby the ministers of Kulasekhara ensured that he did not abandon his kingly duties in Chera country and go to Srirangam, ever so often. Everytime, the king made ready to go to Srirangam, they arranged for some Vaishnava devotees to come to the king. The king felt that his paramount duty was to serve the devotees, more important than his personal service to the Lord. A doubt may still persist as to why it should be seven degrees removed and not just one degree removed? Tvad bhrtya-bhrtya parichaaraka-bhrtya-bhrtya - bhrtyasyabrhtya makes good poetry - apart from this, more abject the surrender, the more it appeals to the Lord. There is a sloka in the Stotraratna (stotra 65) - let me be born even as an insect ('keetajanma api) in the house of your dependents (devotees) so that I have an opportunity to serve them, but I do not wish to be born even as Brahma in the houses of those who are not devotees.

Sloka 28

नाथे नः पुरुषोत्तमे त्रिजगतामेकाधिपे चेतसा
 सेव्ये स्वस्य पदस्य दातरि सुरे नारायणे तिष्ठति ।
 यं कञ्चित्पुरुषाधमं कतिपयग्रामेशमल्पार्थदं
 सेवायै मृगयामहे नरमहो मूका वराका वयम् ॥ २८ ॥

Nathe nah purusottame tri-jagataam ekaadhipe
cetasaa
Sevye svasya padasya daatari sure naaraayane
tisthati
Yam kancit purusaadhamam katipaya - graamesam
alpaartha-dam
sevaayai mrgayaamahe naram aho mookaa varaakaa
vayam

Meaning -

Our Master, Lord Narayana, who alone rules three worlds, whom one can serve by meditation and who happily gives away His personal domain, is manifest before us. Yet, we still beg a small minor lord of a few villages, some lowly man who can only meagrely reward us. Alas, how foolish we are !

Kulasekhara rightly refers to the Supreme Being as our Lord and our Master. Nothing exists (let alone function) without Him. We are to serve the Lord by meditation. As explained in several earlier stanzas, he then gives us liberation or grants us God Realisation which means he takes us to 'vaikuntam' the abode of the Lord. Kulasekhara picturesquely describes this as giving away His personal domain (svasya adasya daatari). The Lord shares the domain, because he showers His compassion, even on the worst sinners, if they merely seek His presence. There are two lovely stanzas in Desika's Sri Devanayaka Panchasat (stanza 49 and 50) * O Vibhudhanaatha, having obtained me, who is an ocean of ignorance, leader of the wrong doers, breaker of commands and emperor among the destitute, why do you think of anyone else as the proper recipient of Your compassion? (The Lord should not). Again " O Vibhudhanaayaka ! Indeed Prahlada, herds of cattle, king elephant, Parikshit and others were protected by You (when they were) in great difficulties. Placing the act of their protection on one side and my own protection on the other, weigh them, deciding which is heavier (since my plight is more pitiable than theirs - You have to help me)' The compassion of the Lord is such that he would do so definitely.

When that is so, Kulasekhara says that we who are bewildered and degraded fools (mudhaah, varaakaah) beg a petty landlord for a few villages. We had earlier (Page No. 14) quoted from the Vairagya Panchaakam of Desika. Desika was living by seeking alms (unchavritti). His boyhood friend Vidyaranaya who was in the court of the Vijayanagar kings, invited him to go over to the court of the King and pursue his life. Desika turned it down, making it clear that he was not interested in seeking worldly riches; he was seeking the spiritual kingdom. The last stanza in the sextet of stanzas is striking "I have no wealth earned by my father, nor did I make any money. But I have the treasure (Lord Varadaraja) on the summit of Hastigiri, which was earned by the grand father (of the whole world, Brahma).

A story is said of a man who was very keen to serve a superior master. In the village in which he was residing, the village head man was the master. The man wanted to be his servant and was accepted. One day, he saw the head man being subservient to a taluka official. The servant moved to the above official to serve him. He noticed that the taluk official was subordinate to the district official and he went to serve the district official. When the king came to the district, he found that the king was the superior master and went to serve him. Often he used to see the king go to a forest. One day, he secretly followed the king and found him prostrating before an ascetic. The servant left the king and joined the ashrama. There, from the sage he learnt that the Supreme Master is God and he went on to serve the Lord. We should therefore realise, as Kulasekhara says, that we should not serve a minor lord of a few villages, but serve the Supreme Lord. In such a case, the Lord shares His domain with us. In the Srimad Bhagavatham (Book 11 Dis.2) there is a discussion between the nine sons of Rishabhā (who are siddha purushaas) and king Nimi. The king asks them as to what leads to ever lasting bliss. The sages reply that a person should worship Lord Narayana, with exclusive devotion, consecrating all as an offering to the Lord. The sages add ".....hearing the most auspicious descents and deeds of Sri Hari, singing His Names denoting His descents and actions, well known in the world, without any fear of being mocked at, one should move about, free from attachment. The man, who having adopted such a course of conduct, develops love for Him by singing the name of the Lord, his heart melting in devotion, loudly laughs and weeps, screams, sings or dances like one possessed...' as one who eats food feels satisfied, one who has resigned himself to the Lord, devotion, realisation of the Supreme God and aversion to other objects - all three appear at once. He attains Supreme Peace". It is for this Kulasekhara prays in this Sloka.

Sloka 29

मदन परिहर स्थितिं मदीये
मनसि मुकुन्दपदारविन्दधाम्नि ।
हरनयन कृशानुना कृशोऽसि
स्मरसि न चक्रपराक्रमं मुरारेः ॥ २९ ॥

*Madana parihara sthithim madeeye
manasi mukunda - padaaravinda - dhaamni
Hara - nayana - krsaaruna kroso si
Smarasi na cakra - paraakramam munaareh*

Meaning -

Cupid get away from my mind, which is the abode of the lotus feet of Lord Mukunda. You have already been incinerated by Lord Siva's fiery glance, so why have you forgotten the power of Lord Murari's disc ?

We had earlier (Page No. 35) made a reference to the discourse of Lord Kapila, given to his mother Devahuti. He tells her that clinging to the unreal, the Jiva performs actions which make him undergo repeated births and deaths. He specially informs her that the jivas should not cultivate the friendship of wicked fools who are the toys of women. Says Kapila. " Behold the might of Maya in the shape of a woman, who by the mere play of her eyebrows treads under foot even the consequences of the four quarters " (Srimad Bhagavatham Book 3 Dis.31) . Says Kapila that the infatuation and bondage which accrue to a man from attachment to any other object is not so complete as the one from attachment to women and from the fellowship of men fond of women.

The story of Vishwamitra is relevant. Vishwamitra, having been entertained by Vasishta, sought of the latter Surabhi, the celestial cow which could produce all that was required. Vasishta refused to part with the cow. Vishwamitra tried variously to take away the cow and is thwarted by the mere staff of Vasishta. Vishwamitra realised that before a Rishi, military strength is of no use. Hence, though a Kshattriya, he sat in deep penance. Wor-

ried about what boons Vishwamitra may seek, Indra decides to thwart the penance. He sends the celestial apsara Menaka. Cupid cooperates and the years of penance is wasted.

Kulasekhara admonishes Cupid and tells him to get away from his mind which has become the abode of the feet of Mukunda. (Mukunda padaaravinda dhaamni). He further cautions Cupid that he has already been incinerated by Lord Shiva. Due to the insult heaped on Lord Shiva, by her father, Sati immolated herself. Sati scratched the ground with her toe nail and immolated herself in the fire that came out therefrom. After the demise of Goddess Sati, Lord Shiva is alone. Sati is reborn as Uma, the daughter of Himavan. Uma decides to wed Lord Siva. The gods persuade Kaama to create the spring season and make Lord Shiva amorous, so as to wed Uma. With reluctance, (because Kaama knows the anger of a roused Siva), Kaama recreates the spring season and shoots his arrows of flowers on Shiva. Shiva looks around, finds that Kama is the cause for the disturbance of his penance and burns him up, by opening the third eye. Subsequently, on the intercession of Rati Devi, wife of Kaama, that Kaama was only an instrument of the Gods Lord Shiva gives him (Kaama) back his life but denies him a body. (That is why he is called Ananga - one who is without a body). Kulasekhara refers to this incident and tells Kaama Deva not to forget the power of Mukunda's disc.

Mukunda's disc is the Sudarsana. This is the thousand edged disc which severed the head of the alligator, when Gajendra appealed to the Lord (Page No. 31) and this is the disc which killed Mura and the other asuras before killing Narakaasura. In the celebrated Sudarsanaastakam, Desika says in verse 5, "You cut off multitudes of raaksasas; you (like the sun) remove the darkness of birth; you destroy the illusions created by the demons; you remove the ignorance of devotees. Your valour is witnessed by the Gods and You are seen whirling around in the battle field. Victory, Victory Sri Sudarsana victory, Victory Sri Sudarsana.

Kulasekhara uses the word 'Madana', in preference to the word 'Kaamadeva'. The word "Madana" means one who maddens or inebriates persons. This is more appropriate than 'Kaama' which means 'desire'. Krishna is called in the Srimad Bhagavatam 'Sakshat Manmatha manmathat' - that is one who disturbs the mind of even Manmatha.

Sloka 30

तत्त्वं बृवाणानि परं परस्मात्
मधु क्षरन्तीव सतां फलानि ।
प्रावर्तय प्राञ्जलिरस्मि जिह्वे
नामानि नारायण गोचराणि ॥ ३० ॥

*Tattvam bhruvanani param parasmat
Madhu ksharantiva satam phalani
Pravartaya praanjali rasmi jihve
Naamani Narayana - gocaraani*

Meaning -

My dear tongue, I with joined palms, beg you to recite the names of Lord Narayana. These names describing the Supreme Absolute Truth, bring great pleasure, as if exuding honey.

In the previous sloka, Kulasekhara had cautioned Madana (Cupid) not to come near him, as the Lord had already taken residence in his mind. In this sloka, Kulasekhara is begging the tongue to recite the names of Lord Narayana. Earlier in the book, we had explained the efficacy of the Name. It is the dispeller of darkness and is far more important than mere ritualistic worship. In the next line, Kulasekhara goes one step further. He says that Lord Narayana's name is supreme.

So chant only these names, but not of other gods, as Lord Narayana is supreme.

There is a lovely sloka of Divya Kavi Perumal Iyyengar. He says (in T.Ardhadhi Stanza 25) " The Lord is the one who is in Paramapada.

He is also the One who is lying down in the beautiful milky ocean. He is the Supreme One, the origin of everything and as such has none who can claim to be His father or mother. He is the one who created the panchabhoothas and He is also the one who safeguarded the panchabhoothas during the deluge, by swallowing them and keeping them safe". Elsewhere he says (stanza 42)

".....Even if dark coloured coal were to become the same as gold, Brahma and Shiva can never be equal to You. You are matchless. If I have to compare You with some one, it can only be with Yourself. You are incomparable...."

Kulasekhara wants the tongue to chant such names as signify the Absolute Truth. They will give great divine pleasure.

Sloka 31

इदं शरीरं परिणामपेशलं पतत्यवश्यं श्लथसन्धिजर्जरम् ।

किमौषधैः क्लिश्यसि मूढ दुर्मते निरामयं कृष्णरसायनं पिब ॥३१॥

Idam sariram parinaama pesalam

Patatya avasyam slatha - sandhi jarjaram

Kim aushadhaih klishyasi mudhadurmate

Niraamayam krishna - rasaayanam piba

Meaning -

This body which has grown attractive (in youth) must succumb to death after its hundreds of joints have loosened due to old age. O foolish man, why suffer taking sensual medicines. Just take the Krishna elixir, that never fails.

Time and tide wait for no one. What was the future shortly becomes the present to shortly become thereafter the past. Kulasekhara puts this across by stating that the youth who is today handsome, will shortly become an old man, with weakening joints. It serves no purpose to prolong this life, through medication. Kulasekhara says that one should take the Krishna elixir, as this never fails. The question may be asked, what does Kulasekhara mean

by saying it never fails? All human desires (as explained in some earlier stanzas) do not satisfy a human being. They leave him unhappy, as he is always seeking more of these desires - more of wealth and more of sensuous delight. These cannot last for ever, apart from their finally begetting unhappiness. The Lord's presence or liberation alone can be the perennial happiness and the process of seeking this gives tranquillity and contentment. Kulasekhara therefore advocates our taking the Krishna elixir.

According to grammarians, the word 'kimaushadhaiah' taken as a compound, means a worthless medicine. Why take useless medicine, when the powerful medicine of 'Krishna' is there? - is another interpretation.

We had earlier occasion to recall Sankara's Bhaja Govindam. It is relevant to recall the slokas once again. Says Sankara -

*Lost in play is the carefree stripling
Lost in his sweet hearts' charms, the youth
The old man broods upon his sorrows
None there is, alas, whose spirit
Yearns to be lost in the Parabrahman (stanza 7)
Youth being fled, what good is passion
water gone, what use is a lake (stanza 10)
Boast not of your or friends or wealth
Swifter than eyes can wink, by Time
Each one of these is stolen away
Abjure the illusion of the World
And join yourself to timeless Truth (Stanza 11)
Sunrise and sunset, day and night
winter and spring time, come and go
Even the course of time is playful
Life itself soon ebbs away
But man's vain hope, alas, goes onward
Timelessly onwards evermore (Stanza 12)*

*Feeble has grown the old man's body
Toothless his gums and bald his head
But there he goes, upon his crutches
clinging firmly to fruitless hope*

What does Sankara prescribe as the 'solution ? The refrain that appears throughout the verse is Seek Govinda, Seek Govinda, Seek Govinda, O Fool !'

Kulasekhara calls it the Krishna elixir (Krishna Rasaayanam piba)

Sloka 32

दारा वाराकारवरसुता ते तनूजो विरिञ्चः
स्तोता वेदस्तव सुरगणो भृत्यवर्गः प्रसादः ।
मुक्तिर्माया जगदविकलं तावकी देवकी ते
माता मित्रं बलरिपुसुतस्त्वय्यतोऽन्यत्र जाने ॥ ३२ ॥

*Daraa vaaraakaara vara sutaa te tanujo virinchihi
stotaa vedas tava sura - ganah bhrtya - vargah,
prasaadah
Muktir maayaa jagadavikalam taavaki Devaki te
Maata mitram bala - ripusutas tat tvad anyanna jaane*

Meaning -

The noble daughter of the milk ocean (Goddess Lakshmi) is your consort; Brahma is your son; the Vedas sing your praise; celestial beings are Your retinue; Your Grace is release from bondage; the entire Universe is nothing but the expression of Your inscrutable power; Your mother is Devaki; Arjuna, the son of Indra is Your companion. For these reasons, I have no interest in anyone but You.

In this sloka, Kulasekhara makes some cross - references as to why he has no interest in anyone but the Lord. We have already referred to the birth of Goddess Lakshmi (Page.No. 52) and Her becoming the consort of the Lord. Goddess Lakshmi is inseparably associated with the Lord, and like the protective Mother, intercedes on behalf of all

of us, children, so as to obtain His grace. Desika has written a lovely stotra, "Sri Stuti", containing 25 slokas, addressed to Sri. Says Desika -

" How can people of trivial intellect praise You, of innumerable virtues, who appeared from the milky ocean and from the sacrificial ground; whose abode is a forest of lotuses and the chest of Vishnu and whose wealth is the entire universe and the highest abode" (sloka 2) " You resorting to Mukunda, are the empress of the World. One who utters Your names like Lakshmi, Padma, Jaladhitanaya, Vishnupathni escapes the wheel of birth and death which is rotated by the wind of sins" . (Sloka 8)

" Some say You are the Supreme. . Some say that Your beloved is the Supreme. What is the use of these arguments which are vitiated by mutual contradictions.... For us, of course, O Goddess, You, the couple, constitute the Supreme Godhead " (sloka 9).

That is why Kulasekhara makes specific reference to the Goddess in this sloka.

Brahma came out of the navel of the Lord, when He was reclining (Page No. 34)

That is why Kulasekhara refers to ' Brahma' as the son of the Lord. We had explained earlier (Page No. 45) how the Supreme Lord encompasses Brahma and other Gods.

There is a passage in the Srimad Bhagavatham explaining the birth of Brahma (Book 3 Dis.8). The Lord was resting, prior to the creation, when the entire universe was submerged under water. "By force of Time, which roused into activity the residue of Karma of the Jivas, that subtle matter which came out of the navel of Lord Vishnu, sprang all of a sudden in the form of a lotus bud, illuminating with its splendours that vast expanse of water. (when the Lord entered the lotus) there appeared from it the creator (Brahma) who is no other than Veda personified..." Brahma looked around and did not find anything. He then perceived the Supreme Lord ".... Brahma now had a clear view of Sri Hari, who wore round His neck a wreath of sylvan flowers,

that represented His Glory and was graced by the Vedas that had taken the form of the bees to hymn His praises..."

That is why in the next sentence in the sloka, Kulasekhara says ' the Vedas sing your praise' ('veda stotha...'). Of course, there are many hymns in the Vedas, extolling the Supreme Lord.

Since the Supreme Lord encompasses all the gods and demi gods, Kulasekhara says that all the celestial beings are his retinue. We had earlier referred (Page No. 21) to the form of the Lord. We had also referred to the advent of the Lord. Kulasekhara fondly recalls that Lord Krishna's mother is Devaki.

The song of God is the Bhagawad Gita. While concluding, the Lord says (Ch. 18 verse 65)

" Give your mind to Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and bow to Me. Doing so, you will come to Me alone . I truly promise you, for you are exceptionally dear to Me" .

That is why Kulasekhara specially recalls Arjuna as the companion of Lord Krishna.

For all the above reasons, Kulasekhra proclaims that he has no interest in anyone but the Lord ('Tvadanyam na jane')

Sloka 33

कृष्णो रक्षतु नो जगत्त्रयगुरुः कृष्णं नमस्याम्यहं

कृष्णेनामरशत्रवो विनिहताः कृष्णाय तुभ्यं नमः ।

कृष्णादेव समुत्थितं जगदिदं कृष्णस्य दासोऽस्म्यहं

कृष्णे तिष्ठति सर्वमेतदखिलं हे कृष्ण रक्षस्व माम् ॥ ३३ ॥

Krshno raksatu no jagat-traya - guruh krsnam

namasya myaham

Krsnenamara sotravo vinihataah krishnaaya tubhyam

namah

Krsnaadeva samuthiitham jagad idam krsnasya daaso

asmya ahm

Krsne tishtati sarva-metad akhilam he krsna raksh

maam

Meaning -

May Krishna, the spiritual master of the three worlds, protect us. Constantly bow down to Krishna. Krishna has killed all our enemies. Obeisance to Krishna. From Krishna alone this world has come into existence. I am the servant of Krishna. This entire universe rests within Krishna. O Krishna, please protect me.

Grammarians note a speciality in the (Sanskrit) verse. In this verse, every reference to Krishna is in a different case ending - from nominative to vocative. It is said that when Chaitanya used to teach grammar to his students, he always used sentences (for examples) containing the name of Sri Krishna. Eventually, a grammarian of the Vaishnava school, in order to please Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, wrote a grammar text, in which all the rules of grammar are explained by using the name of Lord Krishna !

The Lord is the teacher of all the three worlds. The Lord is the greatest teacher as he has given us the Gita, the quintessence of Wisdom. He is the creator of three worlds. Hence, Kulasekhara calls the Lord as the spiritual master of the three worlds.

Krishna has killed all the enemies. The reference here is to the Asuras who have been killed - Hiranyakasipu, Mura, Naraka et al as also to the enemies within - desire, greed, envy, etc. It is from the Supreme Lord, this world has come into being and after the pralaya, it is absorbed into the Lord. Kulasekhara prays that we should do obeisance to the Lord and seek His protection.

Sloka 34

तत्त्वं प्रसीद भगवन् कुरु मय्यनाथे
विष्णो कृपां परमकारुणिकः किल त्वम् ।
संसारसागरनिमग्नमनन्त दीनं
उद्धर्तुमर्हसि हरे पुरुषोत्तमोऽसि ॥ ३४ ॥

*Tat tvam prasida bhagawan kurumayyanaathe
vishno kripaam parama - karunikah kila tvam
samsaara saagara nimagnam ananta deenam
uddhartum arhasi hare purushottamosi*

Meaning -

O Supreme Lord, Bhagavan, You are the most compassionate. So, please show me Your favour and bestow Your Mercy upon this helpless soul. You alone can lift me from the ocean of samsara into which I am sinking. O Lord Hari, You are verily the Purushottama, the Supreme Person.

Bhagavan Narayana is the Supreme Person. Reference may be made to Page No. 72 on this aspect. Kulasekhara says He is also the most compassionate. To say that He is the most compassionate, we may quote from a verse of Desika. In his great poem "Daya Satakam" writes Desika (Stanza 56).

"Daya ! In this world, the other compassions (of Brahma; Rudra and others) are of limited prowess, are impermanent and are uncertain in giving results. They again form the cause of difficulties. In contrast, You, possessing the wealth of unbridled strength and other qualities, grant to the people the unlimited power of Lord Srinivasa"

Kulasekhara therefore prays to the Supreme Being to bestow his mercy on the helpless soul. To quote Desika again (Sloka 29) " O Daya ! when I, the foremost among the sinners am present here, how are you able to survive on the limited sins of others, which will not be sufficient to fill Your stomach". Compare this with what is said in the Stotraratna (verse 23).

" O Lord, whatever has been decried and prohibited by the Vedas and Sastras, I have committed such sins thousands of times. At the time of suffering for those sins, I have no other recourse. I am representing to You." Why ? Because (the Stotraratna itself tells us)

“Brahma, Rudra and the other gods and the entire universe, are in You. You are the saviour of the Universe. The Universe has originated from Your navel only. You are the one who measured the Universe, as Trivikrama, in three steps. You are the one who stores the Universe in His stomach at the time of deluge. All these can be done by none else other than You. You are the Universal Being”.

That is why Kulasekhara is seeking the protection of such a Lord.

Sloka 35

नमामि नारायण पादपङ्कजं
करोमि नारायण पूजनं सदा ।
वदामि नारायण नाम निर्मलं
स्मरामि नारायण तत्त्वमव्ययम् ॥ ३५ ॥

*Namaami naaraayana paadapankajam
karomi naaraayana - pujaanaam sadaa
Vadaami naaraayana naama nirmalam
smaraami naarayana tatvam avyayam*

Meaning -

At every moment, I bow down to the lotus feet of Narayana, I perform worship to Narayana, I recite the pure name of Narayana and I reflect on the infallible truth of Narayana.

Kulasekhara says that at every moment, he bows down to the feet of the Lord. This may not be possible for all persons. We need to recall what the Lord Himself has said in the Gita. Says Lord Krishna (Chaper XII Verse 6 onwards) “.....Those who depending on Me exclusively and surrendering all actions to Me, worship Me, (God with attributes) constantly meditating on Me with single minded devotion, those Arjuna, I speedily deliver from the ocean of birth and death, their mind fixed on Me.

Therefore, fix your mind on Me and establish your intellect in Me alone; thereafter you will abide solely in Me. There is no doubt about this.

If you could steadily fix the mind on Me, Arjuna then seek to attain Me through the yoga of repeated practice..."

We already had occasion (Page No. 43) to comment on the efficacy of the chanting of the Name, in the Kali Yuga. The Vishnu Puranam states this ; the Srimad Bhagavatham elucidates this. How does one express devotion to the Lord ? Hiranyakasipu asks Prahlada to repeat something excellent that he has learnt from his teacher. (not bargaining for the reply). Prahlada replied (Bhagavatham Book 7 Dis.5).

"....(1).To hear the Names, praises and stories of Lord Vishnu and (2) to chant them (3) to remember Him (4) to wait upon Him (5) to offer worship (6) to offer salutation to Him (7) to dedicate one's actions to Him (8) to cultivate friendship with Him and (9) to offer one's own body as well as the bodies of the dependents and their belongings to Him. If Devotion marked by these nine features is practiced by a man as something directly offered to Lord Vishnu, I reckon such devotion to be the highest form of learning..."

The same thing is put slightly differently in the Narada Bhakti Sutras. Aphorisms 77 onwards are relevant.

"....It behoves a Bhakta not to waste a single moment, nor to delay worshipping God until he becomes freed from pleasure and pain, from cravings and greed.

The blessed Lord alone is to be worshipped day and night, in and through every aspect of life, without any distracting thought.

When the Lord is worshipped thus, He soon reveals Himself to the inner vision of His devotees....."

This Supreme Love is the Supreme Wisdom. Kulasekhara concludes that in offering devotion to the Lord, we remember the reality of Narayana which is unchanging (Smaraami Narayana tatvamavyayam)

Slokas 36 and 37

श्रीनाथ नारायण वासुदेव
श्रीकृष्ण भक्तप्रिय चक्रपाणे ।
श्रीपद्मनाभाच्युत कैटभारे
श्रीराम पद्माक्ष हरे मुरारे ॥ ३६ ॥

अनन्त वैकुण्ठ मुकुन्द कृष्ण
गोविन्द दामोदर माधवेति ।
वक्तुं समर्थोऽपि न वक्ति कश्चित्
अहो जनानां व्यसनाभिमुख्यम् ॥ ३७ ॥

*Sri Naatha Naaraayana Vaasudeva
Srikrishna Bhaktapriya Cakrapaane
Sri Padmanaabhaachyuta Kaitabhaare
Sri Rama Padmaksa Hare Muraare
Ananta vaikunta mukunda krishna
Govinda Daamodara Maadhaveti
Vaktum samarthopi na vakti kaschit
Aho janaanaam vyaasanaabhimukhyan.*

Meaning -

Srinatha, Narayana, Vasudeva, Krishna, friend of your devotees, Chakrapani, Padmanabha, Achyuta, Kaitabhari, Rama, Padmaksa, Hari, Murari, Anantha, Vaikunta, Mukunda, Govinda, Damodara, Madhava, - although all people can utter these names, yet they remain silent. Just see how eager they are for their peril.

In these two slokas, Kulasekhara has listed out the names of the Lord. He bemoans the fact that people still remain silent and they do not repeat the Names. It only shows that man's inclination to evil pursuits is amazing.

Even a sinner can get redemption, if only He thinks of the Lord. Yamunacharya says a similar thing in two slokas in Stotraratna (Sloka 58 and 64) . " O Lord, I am an animal; a bad fellow; I have no beginning and no end; I have become the receptacle of a collection of sins. But,

since you are an ocean of mercy, my mother and my father a reservoir whose depth cannot be measured by affection, I am thinking of Your qualities and am fearless.." and again (in a questioning mode)

".....You have vowed that you will save any one who seeks your pardon and says that he is Your dependent. When I am also such a person, do I not qualify to receive Your compassion? If You leave me, what happens to Your vow? ..."

Hence, what is crucial and important is to repeat the name of the Lord (with devotion as amplified earlier in a sloka).

Sloka 38

ध्यायन्ति ये विष्णुमनन्तमव्ययं
हृत्पद्ममध्ये सततं व्यवस्थितम् ।
समाहितानां सतताभयप्रदं
ते यान्ति सिद्धिं परमाञ्च वैष्णवीम् ॥ ३८ ॥

*Dhyaayanti ye Vishnum anantam avyayam
Hritpadma madhye satatam vyavasthitham
Samaahitaanaam satataabhaya pradam
te yaanti. siddhim paramaam tu vaishnavim*

Meaning -

The unlimited and infallible Vishnu, who is always present within the lotus of the heart, grants fearlessness to those who fix their mind upon him. The devotees who meditate on Him will reach the Supreme perfection of the Vaishnava (that is liberation).

The Supreme Lord is the Lord of the three worlds and is hence unlimited. All come out of Him and everything is absorbed back into Him. He is infallible. He does not fail. As seen in earlier slokas He is present always in our heart. He grants us fearlessness - fearlessness against what ? He frees us from the fear of our enemies and Asuras, as exemplified in earlier slokas and as seen from the stories of Gajendra, Mura, Naraka, Sisupala et al . He frees

us from the fear of death, as seen from the story of Ajamila and as explained by Lord Yama to his attendants. The Lord frees us from the Asuras within us, like envy, jealousy, desire etc. The devotees who meditate on him reach His presence - this Kulasekhara calls the Supreme perfection of Vaishnava (paramaam vaishnaveem siddhim)

Sloka 39

क्षीरसागर तरङ्गशीकर।

सारतारकित चारुमूर्तये ।

भोगिभोग शयनीयशायिने

माधवाय मधुविद्विषे नमः ॥ ३९ ॥

Kshirasaagara taranga sikaraa

saara taaraakita caaru moortaye

Bhogi bhoga sayaneeya saayine

Maadhavaaya Madhu vidvise namah

Meaning -

Obeisances to Lord Madhava, enemy of the asura Madhu, His beautiful form lying on the couch of the serpent Ananta, is speckled by the shower of spray from the waves of the milk ocean, making Him bedecked by cluster of stars.

Earlier (Page No. 66) we explained how Lord Vishnu had killed Madhu. He is therefore called Madhava. The Lord, whether he is standing or resting is supremely beautiful. When He is resting, He does so on Ananthashesha, who is believed to be an amsa of the Lord Himself. Sesha is both the couch and the canopy for the Lord, as the thousand heads of the serpent God, shade the Lord.

Since the Lord is resting between the deluge and the creation, Kulasekhara picturesquely describes that in this form, the Lord is speckled by the shower of spray from the waves of the milk ocean. There is also a fine simile here. The spray of milk drops look like stars arising in the sky. (The Lord's body is also blue in the sky).

It is in this form that Brahma extols the Supreme Lord , when he is born out of the Lotus bud.

Sloka 40

यस्य प्रियौ श्रुतिधरौ कविलोकवीरौ
मित्रौ द्विजन्मवर पद्मशरावभूताम् ।
तेनाम्बुजाक्ष चरणाम्बुज षट्पदेन
राज्ञा कृता कृतिरियं कुलशेखरेण ॥ ४० ॥

*Yasya priyau shruthidharau kaviloka virau
Mitrau dvijanma vara padma saravabhutam
Tenaambujaaksha caranaambuja shatpadena
Raajnaa krtaa krtiriyam kulasekharena*

Meaning -

This work is composed by king Kulasekhara, who was a honey bee fondly hovering round the lotus feet of Lord Narayana, synonymously called Ambujaksha and who had two friends dear to Him, being the twice born, expert vedic scholars, renowned as the leaders of the community of poets.(Dvijanma vara & Padma sara, according to some, were the names of those friends.)

Kulasekhara makes it clear, about the authorship of the Mukundamaalaa. Like a bee at the lotus feet of Lord Krishna, Kulasekhara by authoring this garland to Lord Krishna, has produced a pot of honey which has nectarine sweetness. He has prayed to the Lord for deliverance from the samsaric ocean. In the process, he has touched on the 'lilas' of Krishna and the greatness of the Supreme Being. In the process, he has produced very sweet poetry. How else can the poetry be, other than sweet when describing the ever and eternally beautiful Lord?

Says Bilvamangala in Sri Krishna Karnamrutam,
*Madhuram Madhuram Vapurasya Vihor
Madhuram Madhuram Vadanam Madhuram
Madugandhi mrudusmitham etadaho madhuram
Madhuram Madhuram Madhuram*

(The body of the Lord (Krishna) is doubly very sweet to look at. His face is triply sweet and the gentle sweet smelling smile of His, Oh, is quadruply sweet).

Compare this with what Sri Vallabhacharya says in Sri Madhavasthakam.

*Adharam Madhura Vadanam Madhura
Nayanam Madhura Hasitham Madhura
Hrudayam Madhura Gamanam Madhura
Madhuratipate rakhilam Madhura.*



