

Lord Narasimha - A Wondrous Incarnation

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Introduction

Lord Narasimha is a wondrous incarnation of Sriman Narayana. It is an incarnation not only a common person as well as a scientist can experience its wonder and the all pervasiveness of the Supreme Being. The Lord Narasimha (Man-Lion) is fourth incarnation among the major ten incarnation of Lord Narayana. Many scriptures of Sanatana Dharma such as Atharva Veda Samhita, Maha Narayana and Narasimha Tapaniya Upanishad describe in detail of this wondrous incarnation. The great epic Mahabharata, Harivamsha and Bhagavata Purana present graphic description of Lord Narasimha. Great saints, alvars, acharyas and haridasas have composed innumerable devotional poems that inspire and elevate us when we recite and understand them. There are innumerable temples throughout the world where Lord Narasimha is worshipped in various forms such as Ugra-Narasimha, Yoga-Narasimha and Lakshmi-Narasimha. Also many worship Lord Narasimha as kuladevata (family Deity) and Ishta devata (chosen Deity of the heart). The birth of Lord Narasimha is celebrated with faith and joy on the fourteenth day of bright half month of Vaishakha.

Significance of the wondrous incarnation

It is well known that the incarnation of Lord Narasimha is spontaneous and manifested for a short duration compared to several other incarnations of the Supreme Being. So a question may arise that what are the reasons for the significance? There are several insightful reasons such as:

- 1) The Supreme Being Narayana manifested as Lord Narasimha to prove to the world once for all that the words of an ardent pure hearted devotee who calls upon the Lord with sincerity and faith will certainly come true.
- 2) The Supreme Being can never be surpassed no matter how much boons through penance, intelligence, strength and power one acquires.
- 3) The all pervasiveness of the Supreme Being in the universe and beyond.

Many other reasons can be experienced as a devotee experiences the context and manifestation of this incarnation

King Hiranyakashipu and his son Prahlada

The King Hiranyakashipu was wicked and propitiated Lord Bramha by his extra ordinary severe austerities. His austerities were done to achieve invincibility, immortality, and eternal youth and control over three worlds. The boon that he was granted was not an ordinary one. He requested for a boon by the creator Bramha as *“Death shall not come upon me neither within doors nor out of door, neither by day or by night, neither on the earth nor in the air, neither from gods nor from asuras (demons) and the like, neither from men nor from beasts, neither by any being created by you nor by any weapons. Let me become the sole monarch of all living beings and maser of supernatural powers”*. Lord

Bramha granted this boon and thus Hiranyakashipu became the most powerful king. Thus intoxicated with unparalleled powers and inborn vices, he became world oppressor. In particular, he harassed the gods and holy men devoted to Lord Vishnu (Narayana) whom he considered as his sole enemy.

It is mysterious that Prahlada son of Hiranyakashipu was totally devoted to Supreme Being Lord Vishnu. Although King Hiranyakashipu sent Prahlada to specially be trained to hate Lord Vishnu, Prahlada's devotion to Lord Vishnu was unmoved. On the other hand Prahlada was advising his father to realize the greatness of the Supreme Being Narayana. He even advised his father about nine-fold devotional worship of the Lord (*Listening, Singing, Remembering, Worshipping Lords feet, Praying, Prostrating, Serving, Loving as friend and Total Surrender*). Hiranyakashipu was enraged by the behavior of his son. He wanted Prahlada to forget about Lord Vishnu (Narayana) but he did not succeed.

Moment of the wondrous incarnation

Hiranyakashipu imposed all sorts of punishments including death punishment to his son. However Prahlada with his pure devotion overcame all obstacles unharmed and deep in devotion to Lord. Then finally with his anger and frustration one evening at the twilight time, King Hiranyakashipu called Prahlada to assembly hall and shouted at his son, "Oh! Fool where is your Lord Vishnu?" To which Prahlada readily answered, "He is everywhere father". The Hiranyakashipu said "If he is everywhere, is he in this pillar also? Then let thy chosen refuge save thee" Then he hit the pillar with double fist with all his might and Lo, the reply was a terrible roar. Then immediately followed an astounding gigantic terror-inspiring form emerging from the pillar. It was none other than the Supreme Being Lord Narayana Himself in a marvelous form of Man-Lion as Lord Narasimha. Then the Lord killed Hiranyakashipu in a way that all the conditions of the boon were met. Lord manifested to make the words of his devotee true. A verse in Bhagavatam describes as: *"The Lord who is in all beings and pervades everywhere manifested in a pillar of an assembly hall through a wondrous form of neither an animal nor a human to prove the words of a true devotee as Truth"*

Concluding remarks

Thus every time we think of Lord Narasimha, we experience the wonder and grandeur of Lord Narasimha and this wondrous incarnation constantly reminds us of the all-pervading Supreme Being. The great devotee Prahlada reminds us of the sincerity and purity in devotion. Any devotee who achieves the sincerity and the purity in devotion (as Prahlada) will be blessed by the Lord. In the words of His Holiness Sri Ranga Priya Swamy, *"The manifestation of Lord Narasimha also refers to the yogic vision of an effulgent form of the spirit resembling lion above the neck and a man below it. The hearing of mystic sound followed by the sight of the Divine light is also a well known yogic experience"*.

Reference: "Narasimha Avatara" by His Holiness Sri Ranga Priya Swamy, (in book Dashavataras) by Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bengaluru (1983)