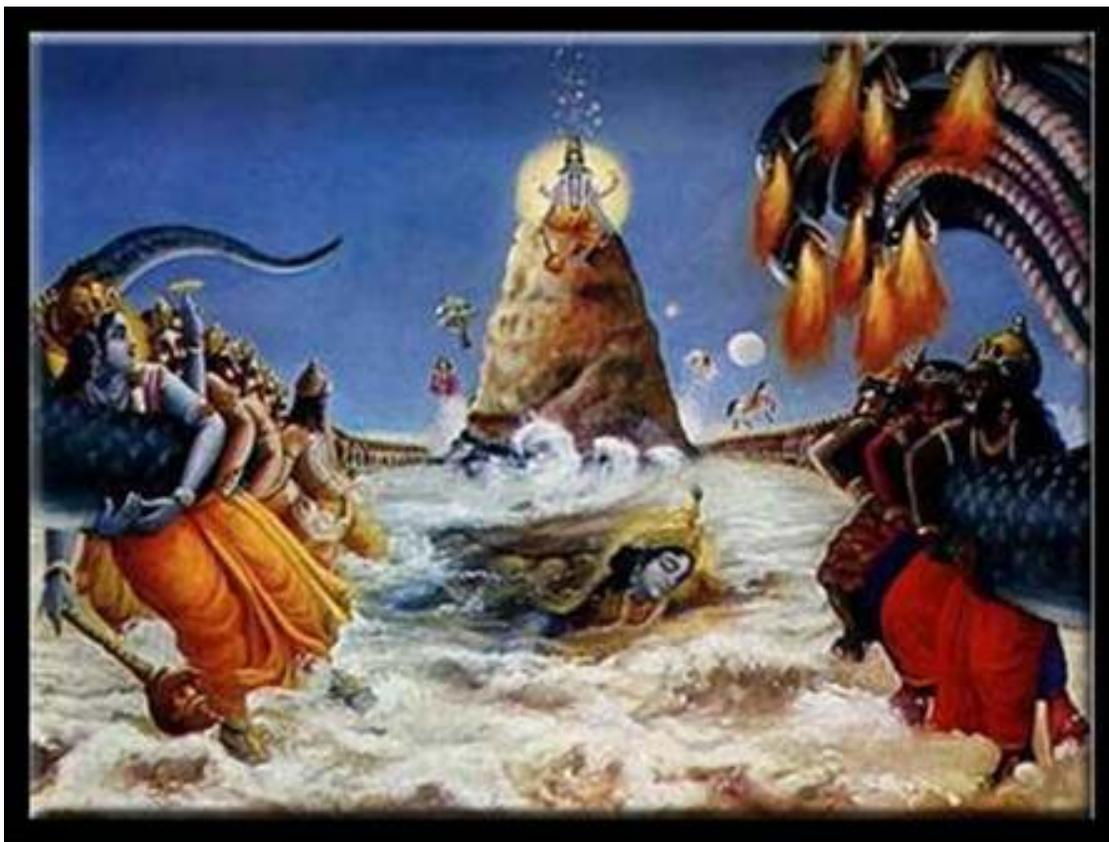


DASAHAVATAR - Kurma Avatar



Kurma (The Tortoise) Avatar

Kurma Avatar is the second avatar (incarnation) of the Lord Vishnu. This succeeds the Matsya Avatar, which we had learned earlier.

This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is to protect the “Amruta,” the Heavenly Nectar, from the Demons and use for the good of the world. Amruta gives immortality to whoever drinks it.

The gods, called devatas, and the demons, called asuras, always fight with each other for one or the other reasons. One time, Indra (the king of the gods) and the gods defeated the demons in a battle. Sage Durvasa comes to Indra to show his appreciation, and offers him a garland of flowers. Indra should have graciously accepted the garland around his neck. Instead, Indra arrogantly throws the garland on his elephant. The elephant immediately drops the garland off his tusks and began to stomp on it.

Sage Durvasa becomes very angry because Indra showed him no respect. Everyone should respect great sages like Durvasa. So he curses the Devatas, saying – “You will lose everything you are blessed with including your kingdom and immortality”. Now Indra realizes his mistake. He bows to Durvasa and begs for his forgiveness. Sage Durvasa says, “Lord Vishnu will do you good”, and left.

The Demons are waiting for such an opportunity and invaded heaven (the Kingdom of Indra and Gods). They defeated the Devatas in the war, and occupied the heaven. Indra loses his kingdom and hides away from the Demons.

The gods then approach Lord Brahma and plead with him - “Lord please find a way out to rescue us from the hands of these evil demons”. Lord Brahma went to Lord Vishnu with all Devatas, and put forth the appeal of the Gods. Lord Vishnu said “don’t fear; I will show you a way out. To make the Gods immortal they must drink the heavenly nectar. The sea of milk must be churned to obtain that. It is very difficult job, and it may not be possible if you do it alone. You need to get the demons assistance. Use the Mandhara Mountain as a churning rod, and Vasuki, the king of serpents, as a rope to pull the mountain back and forth, churning the ocean.”

The Gods approach Raja Bali, the king of the demons for help. The demon king readily agreed to this, and sends his army with the Devatas. The Gods and Demons all gather

together, and begin digging to uproot the Mandhara Mountain from its spot. They succeed after a great effort. Garuda (an Eagle), Vishnu's vehicle, carries the mountain to the seashore of the milky sea. They tie Vasuki as a rope. The Demons at one end and gods at the other end held Vasuki, and started churning the sea. The churning continues for some time without any problem, and then the mountain began sliding into the ocean bed as there was no proper base beneath the mountain. This becomes a cause of concern for both the Gods and Demons, as they had no clue how to continue the churning of the ocean without mountain.

They plead to Lord Vishnu again for help. Lord Vishnu incarnates himself as Kurma, a really large Tortoise, and brought the mountain to the surface, and acted as a base beneath the huge mountain. Gods and Demons began the churning of ocean once again with renewed zest.

In due course, a dark cloud suddenly arose from the ocean that choked both Gods and Demons. That was "Haalahalam", a very powerful poison. On seeing such a dangerous thing emerging from the ocean the gods and demons run helter-skelter. The Gods approach Lord Shiva, and explain to him all that happened. Lord Shiva asked them not to worry and drinks all the poison himself, and keeps it in his throat without swallowing it. The poison was so powerful that it turned Shiva's throat blue. That is why Lord Shiva is also called as "Neelakantha", the blue throated one.

The devas and asuras are once again revived, and began the churning once again with enthusiasm. As the churning continues, many celestial articles emerged from the milky sea. The churning brought Sura, goddess of wine; Chandra, the moon; Apsaras, who are proficient in the art of dance; Parijata, the wish granting coral tree; Airavatara, the four tusked elephant; Kamadhenu, the cow that grants all desires, and many others.

A surprising spectacle appeared after that. In the midst of the waves of the sea of milk, a goddess with heavenly looks came into view. She was standing on a fully blossomed lotus. She was Goddess Lakshmi Devi herself. The king of the sea appeared in his natural form, and comforted Lakshmi as his daughter. Lord Vishnu accepts Goddess Lakshmi as his wife.

The devatas and asuras continued the churning. Finally Dhanvantari emerged from the sea. Dhanvantari is the divine physician. He had a Kalash (sacred pot) contained Amruta. The demons are the first ones to notice the Kalash and they snatch it away

from Dhanvantari. They forgot their agreement, and took possession of the pot all for themselves. Immediately the devatas ran to Lord Vishnu, and requested Him to devise a plan to retrieve the Kalash for them.

Lord Vishnu changes into his “Mohini” form of a beautiful woman. As she was so graceful and beautiful, the demons could not stop looking at her. Mohini successfully obtained the Amrutha Kalash from the deamons assuring them that she would fairly distribute the Amrutha among the Gods and the Demons.

Mohini began distributing the Amrutha only to the gods and at the same time makes sure that demons do not suspect her intentions. Two Demons named Rahu and Ketu suspect Mohini and disguise themselves as Gods and managed to drink the heavenly nectar. The Sun and Moon realize that they are not gods and reported this to Lord Vishnu who cut their heads off with his Sudarshana Chakra. But before this the two demons swallow the Amruta, and their heads become immortal.

When the demons realize that they have been cheated upon, they declared a war with the gods. The gods who had gained strength by consuming Amruta defeated the demons easily, and drove them away.

Thus in his second incarnation, Lord Vishnu as Kurma saved the devatas from mortality, and losing their authority to the wicked asuras, thus saving the mankind.

Questions:

What is a devata?

What is an asura?

Why did Durvasa curse the gods?

What was the curse?

Why was Indra puffed up with pride?

Do we ever get puffed up with pride?

What did Lord Vishnu tell the gods to do to get rid of the curse?

What is amruta?

Who is Vasuki?

What form did Vishnu take in his second avatar?

Why did he take this form?

Daily Slokas:

Ganesh Sloka

*Vakra Tunda Mahaa Kaaya; Suryakoti Samaprabha
Nirvighnam Kurume Deva; Sarvakaaryeshu Sarvadaa*

Saraswati Stotra

*Saraswathi Namasthubyam; Varade Kamaroopini
Vidyarambham Karishyami; Siddhir Bhavatume Sada*

Guru Stotra

*Gurur Brahmaa Gurur Vishnu; Gurur Devo Maheshwarah
Guruh Saakshaat Parabrahma; Tasmai Shree Gurave Namah*

Vishun Stotra:

*Shuklambharadharam Vishnum Shashivarnam Chaturbhujam
Prasanna Vadanm Dhyayet Sarva Vignopa Shantaye*

Rama Mantra:

*Sri Rama Rama Rameti, Rame Rame Manorame
Sahasranama tattulyam, Rama Nama Varanane*

Durga Stotra:

*Om Sarva Mangala Maangalye Shive Sarvaartha Saadhike
Sharanye Triyambake Gauri, Naaraayani Namostute*

Hanuman Mantra:

*Manojavam Maarutatulyavegam; Jitendriyam Buddhimataam Varistham
Vaataatmajam Vaanarayoothamukhyam; Sriramadootam Sirasa Namami*

Matru Devo Bhava Sloka:

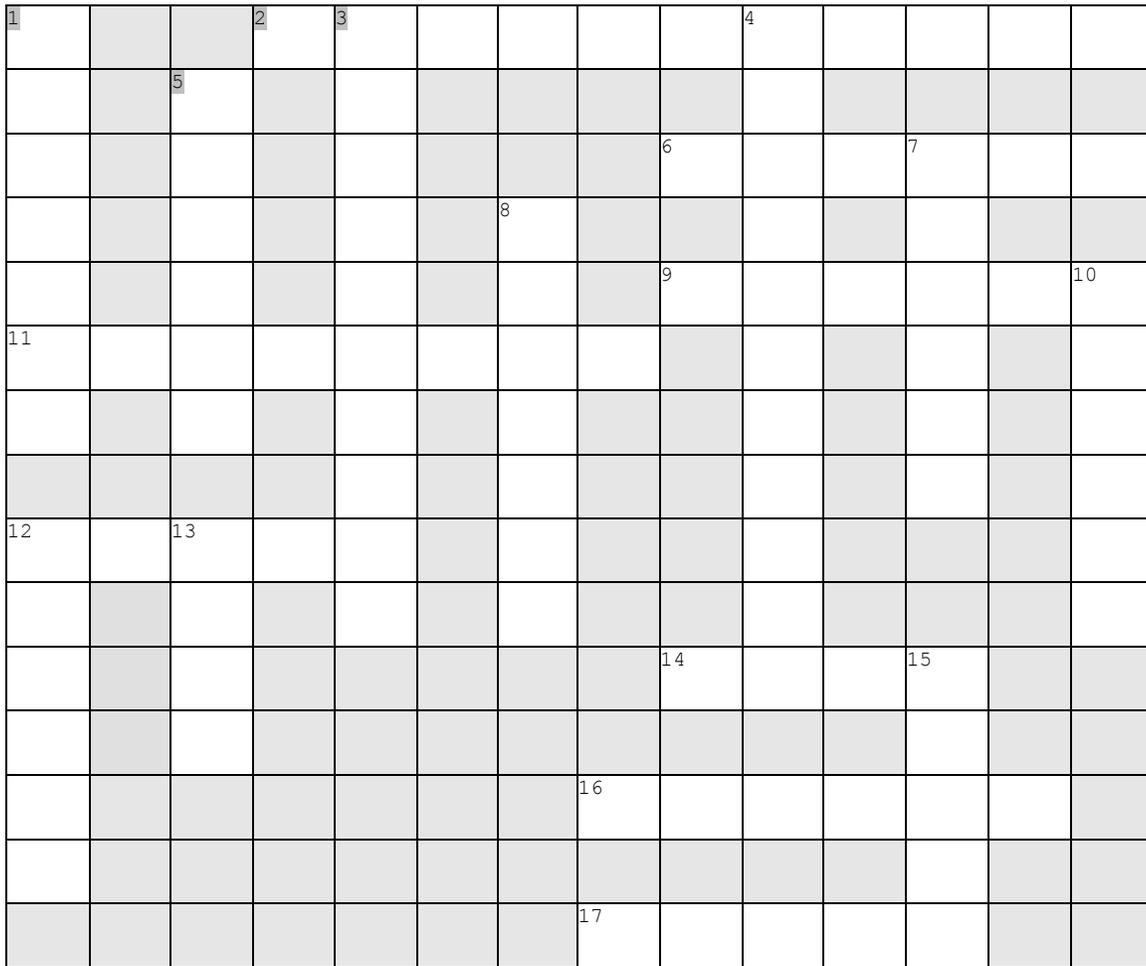
*Maathru Devo Bhava; Pitru Devo Bhava
Acharya Devo Bhava; Athidhi Devo Bhava*

Morning Prayers:

*Karaagre Vasate Lakshmi; Kara Madhye Saraswathi
Kara Moole Tu Govinda; Prabahate Kara Darshanam*

*Gange cha Yamune chaiva Godavari Saraswati,
Narmade Sindhu Kaveri jalesmin sannidhim kuru*

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 2 Doctor of Gods
- 6 Kingdom of Indra
- 9 The first Avatar of Vishnu
- 11 The mountain used for churning
- 12 The second incarnation of Vishnu
- 14 King of Demons
- 16 Vishnu's vehicle
- 17 The Lord who consumed poison

DOWN

- 1 Lord Vishnu's wife
- 3 Powerful poison that came out of Sea
- 4 Other name of Shiva associated with poison
- 5 The beautiful lady whom Lord Vishnu turns into
- 7 The king of serpents
- 8 The sage who gave curse to Gods
- 10 Heavenly Nectar is called
- 12 The Sacred pot
- 13 One of the demons who managed to drink Amruta
- 15 King of Gods

Coloring Exercise

