

DASHAVATAR – Matsya Avatar



God plays many roles for His Cosmic Family. As Creator, God is called BRAHMA; as Preserver, God is called VISHNU; as Dissolver (Destroyer), He is called SHIVA. Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Shiva together called Trimurty or Hindu Trinity. The important thing to remember is that they are all the same, and are just performing different roles.

Lord Vishnu is called the preserver or protector. This means that he is responsible for maintaining everything in the Universe. Every atom of the universe is filled with His Presence. Lord Vishnu is known by numerous names and a thousand names are given in "Vishnu Sahasranama".

To understand the concept, why Lord Vishnu is the preserver of the world, we have to understand that the powers of good and evil are in regular conflict to rule over the world. It is believed that whenever evil prevails over good, in order to win, Vishnu comes down to earth in some mortal form to save righteousness (good). He takes different avatars (incarnations) and acts in a way that he re-establishes proper balance between good and evil. He has ten different avatars that he takes to win over the evil, and those avatars are called Dashavataras.

1. Matsya – the fish avatar
2. Kurma – the tortoise avatar
3. Varaha – the boar avatar
4. Narasimha – the half man and the half lion avatar
5. Vamana – the dwarf-brahmin avatar
6. Parashurama - a sage with the axe
7. Rama – the prince and king of Ayodhya
8. Krishna – the central character in Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita
9. Buddha – a great thinker and spiritual man
10. Kalki – the sage prince (eternity, the destroyer of foulness)

First nine of these avataras have already manifested whereas the tenth one is yet to appear. Kalki is expected to appear a long time in the future.

Matsya Avatar

Today we will learn about Matsya, the one-horned fish, the first among the Dashavataras in this class.

One day Lord Brahma approached Lord Vishnu, and said that He had foreseen a disaster that would occur and wanted to warn Vishnu. Brahma told Vishnu that it was his responsibility to protect people.

One day Brahma was in a deep sleep. He kept with him the Vedas. These are really important books, like the blueprints for the whole universe. While he was asleep, a demon named Hayagriva (that is, one with a horse's neck – Haya means horse, Griva means neck) stole them. Hayagriva swallowed the four Vedas, and hid deep inside the ocean. Without the Vedas, the world was in a lot of danger of going completely dark, like the lights going off when there is no electricity. To protect the world, Lord Vishnu incarnated as Matsya to save all that was good in the world before its destruction.

At that time there was a pious king called Satyavrata who was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Satyavrata was down by the river for his morning prayers to the god Vishnu. His morning prayers were his daily ritual to lord Vishnu. After he picked himself up off the grass, Satyavrata went over to the river to wash his hands and cleanse himself. While he was washing his hands a tiny fish swam into the gap of his cupped hands. The fish was extremely small, no bigger than his pinkie, and he assumed it was just a baby. The fish appeared frightened. Satyavrata spoke the language of the animals and proceeded to try to comfort the small fish so that it did not die from shock. The fish was pleading for his life but Satyavrata told him there was no need because he could never harm such an innocent creature. Once Satyavrata began to talk, the fish immediately calmed down. Satyavrata found out that the name of the little fish was Matsya and that he had been separated from his large family by getting caught in a strong current.

Satyavrata felt bad for Matsya, and decided that he was going to take care of him. He cupped Matsya in his hand with plenty of water and walked his many miles home. He was extremely careful the whole trip and never let any of the water leave his hand. When he reached home, Satyavrata showed his wife the small little fish and asked her to find something to keep him safe. His wife, Neha, brought him a small little cup, which was more than enough room for Matsya. Matsya knew that he would always be safe in Satyavrata and Neha's protection and so he swam around in joy.

Matsya was not a normal fish, though, as they would soon find out. Within days, Matsya had grown to the size of Neha's small hand. She moved Matsya to a large bowl to make

sure that he always had enough room to swim. A few days later and Matsya had already outgrown the bowl! Satyavrata carried the fish to the small pond that was behind their home. This growing kept happening until Matsya had outgrown the pond, a stream, a lake, and a river. Satyavrata was not going to give up on Matsya because he felt an unnatural devotion to the once small creature. He was extremely drawn to him and felt that he must protect him at any cost. Matsya, in return, was always grateful for the help of Satyavrata.

The next move and presumably the last was Satyavrata putting Matsya into the ocean. He was in doubt that this would even be big enough to hold him but Satyavrata was out of options, so he got on his knees and prayed to Vishnu. This triggered something in Matsya. He revealed himself as Vishnu and he began to speak prophecy. He told Satyavrata that he had one week to prepare for a flood that would cover the entire earth, destroying everything. He instructed Satyavrata to take all medicinal herbs, all the varieties of seeds, and to bring the seven saints along with the serpent Vasuki and other animals, and to build a big boat to put them all in. He told Satyavrata that he would be back at the end of those seven days before the flood begins.

Then to restore the Vedas, Matsya dived into the ocean to kill Hayagriva. Lord Vishnu also took the form of Hayagriva as the demon can be killed in that form only. A furious battle ensued between Lord Vishnu and demon Hayagriva for seven days, in which Hayagriva was defeated and killed. Vishnu restored the Vedas to Brahma. Because there was so much splashing and fighting, a big deluge (rainfall) occurred all over the Earth. Everything was in a big flood!

Satyavrata made all arrangements as Vishnu had advised him and at the end of the seven days, Vishnu appeared in the form Matsya again. The lord advised Satyavrata and others to board the boat and fastens the serpent Vasuki to his horn as a rope to the boat, and sailed all of them to a safe place.

Matsya told Satyavrata that he had been chosen because he was the most kind and loving human Vishnu had ever seen. Satyavrata had shown his devotion to not only a god but also to a small helpless creature. Vishnu said there was hope in the world if all men were to show so much love to all creatures.

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*

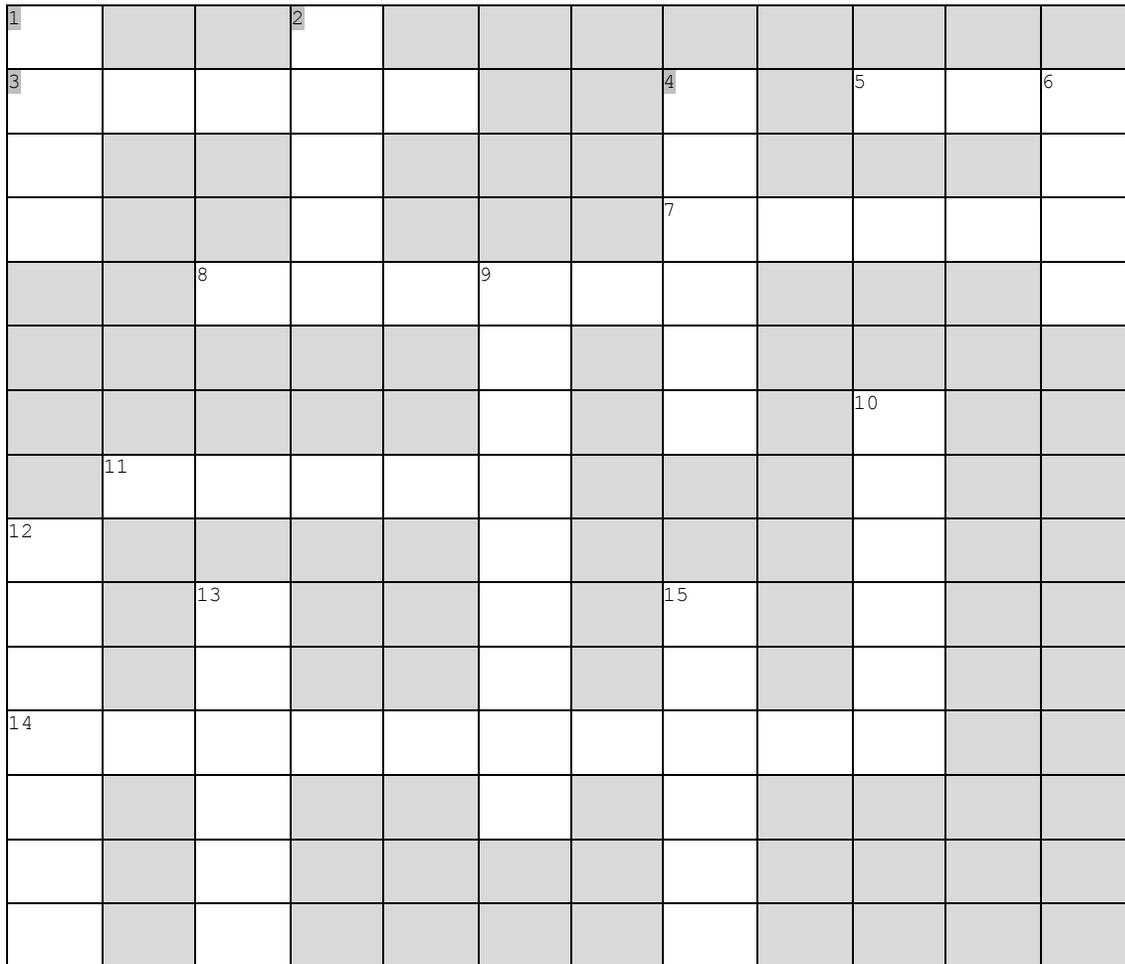
Morning Prayers:

*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

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ACROSS

- 3 Where did Hayagriva hide?
- 5 How many incarnations are there for Vishnu?
- 7 How many days fight happened between Vishnu and Daemon?
- 8 The preserver
- 11 The Dissolver in Trimurty
- 14 The King with whom Vishnu was happy

DOWN

- 1 Number of Vedas
- 2 The last Avatar
- 4 The serpent used as a rope
- 6 How many Avatars manifested so far/
- 9 The demon who stole Vedas
- 10 The Creator
- 12 Lord Vishnu's wife
- 13 The first of Dashavataras
- 15 Incarnation means

Coloring Exercise

