

DASHAVATAR - Narasimha Avatar



Narasimha Avatar is the fourth Avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu. The story of Narasimha Avatar is associated with Vishnu's incarnation as the boar or Varaha. Once there lived two demon kings, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu were brothers. To uphold dharma and save Bhoo Devi (Mother Earth), Varaha had killed the Demon King Hiranyaksha.

Hiranyakashipu was very angry that Vishnu had come in the form of a boar and killed his brother. He wanted lots of power and wanted to destroy Vishnu and keep the other Gods in heaven subdued. He told his soldiers to crush all those who worship Vishnu first, but the Gods protected the Devotees of Vishnu.

Hiranyakashipu thought to himself "First of all, I will have to match my powers to Vishnu's to rule over the three worlds". He started severe austerities and penance. Whenever anyone does enough penance, Brahma Himself appears and offers them a boon. Hiranyakashipu wanted to be made so no one could ever kill him in battle. But Brahma would not grant this boon. Hiranyakashipu was very clever. So instead of asking for that boon, he said "Lord grant me this boon: let me not die at the hands of a god, man, demon, animal or even an inanimate thing. Let it not be by day or night, outdoors or indoors, in the sky or on the earth; let it not be by any weapon whatsoever. Grant me also all the mystic powers of the universe." With these conditions, Hiranyakashipu could not imagine how anyone could ever kill him.

Armed with the above boon, he indulged in many schemes of destruction – all directed against the god and the godly – thus venting his anger. There is a proverb saying that "God's mill grind slow, but sure." Hiranyakashipu's cruel acts could not go on unchecked for long. He had a son named Prahlada. Being the son of a demon and a demon himself, one would think that Prahlada would also be mean and cruel. But he was not. In fact, he was very devoted to Vishnu! This made his father even angrier at Vishnu. Prahlada had immense faith in the Lord. He saw Vishnu everywhere and in everything. This is the truth about God – he is everywhere. But angry people don't see this. One day Hiranyakashipu and Prahlada had a big argument about Vishnu, and Hiranyakashipu became furious. Intoxicated with his might, he yelled at the child, "How dare you! I am the greatest! There is no power greater than mine!" Prahlada replied quietly and gently, "No, father. The truth is that all power is from the Lord. It is He who has granted you the boon." The king went insane with rage and ordered his soldiers to kill his very own son.

As Prahlada was arrested and put in chains, his body did not tremble nor did his mind quaver. They marched him to the edge of a cliff. Even as they threw him over, he was not gripped by the fear of death. His heart was filled with the stillness emanating from his faith that everything that happens is by Will of the Lord alone. He calmly and unceasingly repeated, "Om Namo Narayanaya!" and Lord Narayana made him fall slowly like a feather.

Prahlada did not run away. He simply sat quietly and chanted, "Om Namō Narayanaya!" The demon soldiers picked him up and dropped him into a cauldron of boiling oil. Lo and behold! The boiling oil changed into cold and refreshing rose water! They placed him, tied to a stake, on a pyre and set it ablaze. Through the roaring flames, they heard, "Om Namō Narayanaya!" All the wood became ash, and there they saw the boy, unscathed, sitting with eyes closed and hands folded in namaskar chanting, "Om Namō Narayanaya!"

Each demonstration by the Lord that he never fails his devotee increased the turmoil in Hiranyakashipu's mind. Prahlada did not gloat over these triumphs or get excited by the "reward" for his devotion. He told his father, "God who granted you the boon, is the One who saved me. Let us all worship the omnipotent (all-powerful) Lord together." At the words "omnipotent" Hiranyakashipu went violent. He shouted, "Prahlad! Where is the Narayana of yours? Let him come forth!" Prahlad answered, "He is omnipresent ... present everywhere in everything." The king asked, "Is he present in this pillar too?" and his son replied, "Yes."

After being told by Prahlada that Lord Narayana was present everywhere, even in the pillar that stood next to them. Hiranyakashipu said "He is everywhere, Huh!" Why don't I smash this pillar, and then your head! Then let Lord Vishnu protect you! Lord Narayana emerged from the pillar in the form of Nara-Simha (head of a lion and body of a man), and killed Hiranyakashipu at the doorstep, during the twilight hours of the day. By tearing open his chest after putting him across his thighs, Lord Narayana killed him by not transgressing the boon bestowed on Hiranyakashipu by Lord Brahma. Thus Hiranyakashipu fell a victim to his own anger.

Remember the boon that Hiranyakashipu asked for? He asked that he not be able to die at the hands of a god, man, demon, animal or even an inanimate thing. Look at the picture of Narasimha. Was he a man? A god? An animal? He was not exactly any of those. So Vishnu, taking this form, would not violate Brahma's boon. He was killed by the claws (nails) of Narasimha, which were neither animate nor inanimate.

What else did Hiranyakashipu ask for? He didn't want to be killed during or night. This would make it seem impossible to kill him at any time! So the time that Narasimha killed him was at twilight, when the Sun has gone down, which is neither day nor night.

Also, Hiranyakashipu could not be killed in either outdoors or indoors. So Narasimha killed Hiranyakashipu at the doorstep.

Hiranyakashipu also, according to Brahma's boon, could not be killed in the sky or on earth. So Narasimha held him on his lap, which is neither sky nor earth, and broke his back.

Hiranyakashipu could not be killed by any weapon. So Narasimha killed with his paws. Thus Lord Vishnu, not wanting to violate Lord Brahma's boons, satisfied all the requirements to put an end to the demon that had threatened Prahlada, his devotee.

The above story teaches us the evil consequences of anger. Anger is like a forest fire. It burns up all our good qualities. It reduces a person and degrades them to the level of an animal. Anger cannot be destroyed by anger. Anger can be subdued only by forbearance.

If you develop awareness that what you see around you is a part of you, and if your thought, word and action are laced with selfless love, anger cannot overcome you.

Questions:

- Why was Hiranyakashipu angry?
- Who gave boon to Hiranyakashipu?
- What was the boon given to Hiranyakashipu?
- How did Hiranyakashipu fall a victim to his own anger?
- How can one overcome anger?
- Who is Prahlada?
- Who killed Hiranyakashipu?

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*

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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Coloring Exercise

