

took the form of a turtle, and got under the Mandara mountain and lifted it up on his back. By the force of lifting it went higher and higher up. Then Mahāviṣṇu took the form of an eagle and sat on the top of the mountain and it came down a little and placed itself in the right position. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 8, Chapter 7; Agni Purāṇa, Chapter 3; Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa, Sarga 45).

3) *Varāhāvātāra*. (Incarnation as a Pig). Jaya and Vijaya were the two watchers who stood at the gate of Mahāviṣṇu. Once the great hermit-sages Sanaka and others reached Vaikuṇṭha to visit Mahāviṣṇu. Then Jaya and Vijaya treated the hermits without respect. The hermits cursed them that they would become Dānavas (Asuras or giants). They also said that when they were slain thrice by Mahāviṣṇu they would reach heaven. At that period when hermit Kaśyapa was carrying on his evening prayer and devotional rites, his wife Diti approached him with lustful desire. Kaśyapa told her that as he was engaged in prayer and meditation it was not proper on her part to select that particular moment for her lustful desire. But she persisted and the sage yielded and out of that union two sons were born. They are the two asuras Hiranyākṣa and Hiranyakaśipu. Of these Hiranyākṣa was the incarnation of Jaya and Hiranyakaśipu that of Vijaya.\* With the birth of these two the whole world began to tremble. These two asura brothers began to terrorize the world. They wandered about causing destruction and devastation wherever they went. Once Hiranyākṣa got down into the ocean and began to beat the waves in the ocean with his cudgel. The ocean began to sway and surge. Varuṇa (the Lord of water) was terrified and he ran to Mahāviṣṇu and sought protection. Mahāviṣṇu took the form of a Pig and came to the ocean. When Hiranyākṣa saw Mahāviṣṇu he took the earth in his hand and ran to Pātāla (the nether world). Mahāviṣṇu followed him and killed him and recovered the earth. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 3, Chapter 18; Bhāgavata, Skandha 2, Chapter 7 and Agni Purāṇa, Chapter 4).

4) *Narasimhāvātāra*. (Incarnation as lion-man). With the death of Hiranyākṣa, his brother Hiranyakaśipu became furious more than ever. He wanted to avenge the death of his brother. His fury was turned towards Mahāviṣṇu. So he got on the top of the Mountain of Mandara and did penance before Brahmā and Brahmā appeared and granted him boons, one of which was that nobody but Viṣṇu should be able to kill him. He returned with gladness and began to roam about torturing devotees of Viṣṇu everywhere.

A son named Prahlāda was born to him. He was a god-fearing child and from birth an ardent believer in Viṣṇu. Hiranyakaśipu tried his utmost to change his son to a hater of Viṣṇu. He got a special teacher for the purpose and Prahlāda was taken to the house of the teacher to live with him until he changed his mind. The result was that the teacher and all others who advised him ultimately became believers in Viṣṇu. Anger overpowered Hiranyakaśipu. Prahlāda was thrown before mad elephants. But the tusks of the elephant missed the aim and were driven into the earth and broken. Venomous snakes were employed and those which bit him had their fangs broken. Finally the child was put in blazing

fire. But the child felt the fire to be cool and soothing. From that fire a ghost arose and tried to kill Prahlāda. Instantly the Sudarśana, the wheel-weapon of Viṣṇu came down and cut off the head of the ghost. Hiranyakaśipu jumped with anger and called out. "Where is your Viṣṇu?" His son replied that his Viṣṇu dwelt in every movable and immovable thing. Hiranyakaśipu kicked at a stone pillar close by and asked him, "Is your Viṣṇu in this pillar?" Prahlāda replied, "My Viṣṇu is in Pillar and in fibre". Before he had finished, the Pillar broke open and a monster as horrible as the Destroyer Śiva, in the shape of a lion-man made its appearance.

"Mimāṃsamānasya samuthito 'grato  
Nṛsimharūpastadalaṃ bhayānakam  
Prataptacāmikaracaṇḍalocanam  
Sphuratsaṭākesarajrmbhitānanam  
Kārāladamṣtram Kāravālacañcala-  
Kṣurāntajihvam bhrukuṭimukholbanam  
Stabdhorhvakarṇam girikandarādbhuta-  
vyāttāyanāsamhanubhedabhiṣaṇam  
Divisprṣatkāyamadīrghapīvara-  
Grīvoruvakṣaḥsthalamalpamadhyamam  
Candrāmśugauraiśchuritam tanūruhai-  
rviṣvaghbhujānikaśatam nakhāyudham."

"Before him who was waiting with curiosity to see what would happen, with eyes blazing as molten gold, mouth wide open in the middle of long bushy mane, tusks long and curved and protruding fearfully, tongue swaying like a sword, eyebrows fierce looking, ears standing erect and still, two nostrils as wide and deep as mountain canyons, jaws prominent and thick and broad and set with fierceness, colossal body reaching the sky, neck very thick and fat and short, breast excessively broad and strong, waist very small and narrow, body thickly covered with bushy hair exuberantly grown and as yellow as the light of the moon, a number of claws very sharp and pointed, the horrid monster Narasimha (Lion with human head) suddenly appeared. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 7, Chapter 8, Stanzas 20-22).

This was the figure of Narasimha. Mr. S. Paramesvara Iyer, Ulloor, has described this figure in his "Bhaktidīpikā" as follows :

"Glarer eyes burning as blazing cinder, tongue as a dagger just used in piercing to death, neck with folds, eyebrows looking mad, tusks like young moon, fierce face with bushy mane grown to it, hair long and sharp like pointed wire, claws looking like having drunk blood, body shining as if countless suns had risen together, all combined as if the fire of anger burning inside had incarnated, in the shape of a lion up to neck and human shape beyond the neck." (Bhaktidīpikā)

The horrid monster caught hold of Hiranyakaśipu the King of the Asuras, pushed him to the ground and opened his heart with its fierce claws. Blood sprouted like a spring. With great ferocity he pulled out the intestines of Hiranyakaśipu and wore them round his neck as a garland and roared loudly. Prahlāda, with songs of praise and chanting of hymns of adoration pacified the stormy Narasimha and bowed low down before him. The Narasimha was pleased with the devotion of Prahlāda. He blessed the child and then disappeared. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 7, Chapter 8).

\*During their next birth they made their appearance as Rāvna and Kumbhakarṇa and during the third birth they were Śiśupāla and Daṇḍavakra.