

5) *Vāmanāvatāra*. (Incarnation as a Dwarf). It was to expel the Emperor Mahābali, that Mahāviṣṇu incarnated as a dwarf. To Kaśyapa, the son of Marīci and the grandson of Brahmā, was born of Diti, Hiranya-kaśipu. And from Prahlāda the son of Hiranyakaśipu was born Virocana and Bali was the son of Virocana. Bali got the name Mahābali because of his prowess. He was the emperor of the Asuras. A fierce battle began over the Ambrosia got from churning the sea of Milk, between the Asuras and the gods. In the battle Indra cut Mahābali down with his Vajrāyudha. The Asuras took the body of Mahābali to Pātāla (the nether world) where their teacher Śukra brought him to life again. Then Mahābali worshipped the Bhārgavas and became more powerful than before and went to heaven again and renewed the battle. This time he defeated the Gods altogether and subjugated the realm of the Gods who were scattered to all sides. The devas or gods are the sons of Kaśyapa born by his wife, Aditi. She felt very sorry at the defeat of the gods. Seeing that she was silent and sad Kaśyapa asked her the reason. She replied that she was thinking of ways to enable the gods to recover their lost power and position. Kaśyapa advised her to please Mahāviṣṇu by observing Dvādaśī vrata (fast of the twelfth lunar night). Aditi did so and Viṣṇu appeared before her and asked her what she desired. Her request was that Viṣṇu should take birth in her womb and recover Indra to his lost power and position. Thus Viṣṇu took birth as the younger brother of Indra in the shape of Vāmana (dwarf.)

At this time Emperor Mahābali was celebrating a sacrifice on the bank of the River Narmadā after having subjugated the whole of the world. A large number of hermits gathered there. Vāmana also was among them. He requested Mahābali to grant him three feet of ground as alms. The teacher Śukra warned Mahābali against granting the request. But the emperor granted the request and asked Vāmana to measure the ground. Vāmana immediately enlarged his body and measured the heaven, the earth and the Pātāla (the upper realm, the earth and the lower realm) in two steps and asked for place for the third step. The honest Mahābali showed his head and requested to complete the three steps. Vāmana put his step on the head of Mahābali and pushed him down to Pātāla. Thus the gods regained their lost places. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 8, Chapter 19). A description that by the toe of Vāmanas' raised foot (raised for measuring the third step) the testicle of Brahmā was cut open where from the Ganges originated, is seen in the Bhāgavata, Skandha 5.

When Viśvāmītra took Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the forest they entered a holy hermitage and Viśvāmītra told the boys that it was the hermitage where Aditi, long ago had observed dvādaśī fast. It was in that same place that Vāmana incarnated and placed his step on the head of Mahābali.

“The bright Mādhava took birth in Aditi as Vāmana and went to Mahābali, requested for three feet of ground and brought under control the three worlds for the good of all. By binding Bali by might, he gave to Indra the three worlds and this hermitage is the place where He once placed his steps. I am a devotee of that Vāmana.” (Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Bāla Kāṇḍa, Sarga 29).

6) *Paraśurāmāvatāra*. (Incarnation as Paraśurāma). Once Kārttavīryārjuna pleased the hermit-age Dattātreya

the son of Atri, by doing penance and got the boon of one thousand hands. One day he went to the forest for hunting and entered the bank of Narmadā. The hermit Jamadagni had been living there with his wife Reṇukā and sons Paraśurāma and others. The King being tired of hunting got into the hermitage. Paraśurāma was not there. The hermit called his divine cow Kāmadhenu, which provided the King and his followers with a very good supper.

When the King departed he asked for the wonderful cow. The hermit did not consent. The King caught hold of the cow by force and went to his city. Paraśurāma went to Māhiṣmatīnagar the capital of Kārttavīryārjuna, killed the King and took Kāmadhenu back. From that day onwards the sons of Kārttavīrya were waiting for an opportunity to take revenge.

Once Reṇukā went to the river to bring water. A gandharva (semi god) named Citraratha was bathing in the river. She happened to look at him for a little while. When she returned the hermit was very angry and asked each of his sons to cut off the head of their mother. They all refused. But Paraśurāma immediately obeyed his father and cut off her head. His father was pleased and said that he might ask any boon. He requested his father to bring his mother back to life. Accordingly Reṇukā was brought back to life.

Once the sons of Kārttavīrya got into the hermitage, at a time when Paraśurāma was away and cut off the head of the hermit Jamadagni and took it off. When he returned his mother told him how his father was killed. She cried and beat her breast twentyone times. Paraśurāma became an incarnation of revenge, and travelled over the world twentyone times and killed every Kṣatriya King. The blood of all those Kings flowed into one channel and gathered in a holy Bath called Syamanta-pancakam. Thus Mahāviṣṇu took his sixth incarnation as Paraśurāma and fulfilled his duty of destroying the wicked Kṣatriya Kings (For details about Paraśurāma see under Paraśurāma and Kārttavīryārjuna). (Bhāgavata, Skandha 9, Chapter 16).

7) *Śrī Rāmāvatāra*. Mahāviṣṇu took the incarnation of Śrī Rāma to kill Rāvaṇa. (For further information see the words Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa).

8) *Balabhadrarāmāvatāra*. (The incarnation of Balabhadrarāma) (See the word Balabhadrarāma).

9) *Śrī Kṛṣṇāvatāra*. (The incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) (See the word Kṛṣṇa).

10) *Kalkyavatāra* (The incarnation as Kalki). At the end of Kaliyuga (the Age of Kali) all the people would become atheists and sceptics. Rewards will be received from the depraved. The classes will be mixed. People would become degenerate having no good qualities. A religion called ‘Vājasaneyam’ with its fifteen doctrines only will be acceptable. People would become irresponsible wearing the garment of duty. Lawless people would take the form of Kings and will begin to eat men. In those days Lord Viṣṇu will incarnate as Kalki, the son of Viṣṇuśaśas and the priest of Yājñavalkya and learn the arts of wielding weapon and handling missiles and destroy all lawless ones. The subjects will be brought back to the four classes and the four āśramas or stages of life and the doctrines and directions of the long-established religion and peace and order will be