

■ Chapter - IV

Significance of Vaiṣṇava Myths

I. Introduction to Avatāra :

As already stated, myth is an historical element of supernatural world closely related to the particular religion. It is connected with a history of man or a divine personality depicting his obligations and other super natural activities for the betterment of the subjective world of reality. As such, in the literature of *Vaiṣṇava* religion, as can be read in the *Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas*, one finds the delineation of various activities or of incidents pertaining to the incarnate-forms of Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Godhead. The *Purāṇas*, major or minor describing the various aspects of different incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, like Matsya, Kūrma etc. are designated by *Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas*. And a perusal of such *Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas* makes it crystal clear that Lord Viṣṇu had multi-dimensional purposes to achieve goals destroying the evil effects and establishing righteous betterment of the world. Thus, it is essential to read the different incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu as described in the respective *Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas*.

Strictly speaking, an *Avatāra* means a descent, as its etymology shows, but the word is used to denote any of the three modes (manifestation, descent or birth), of the Lord's contacting us in a tangible form. Lord revealing Himself to Prahlāda form a pillar or

a royal court, in the form of Nṛsimha with a view to saving the prince from the atrocities of his father, Hiranyakaśipu, is an instance of the first mode.¹ Viṣṇu's appearing before Dhruva, the son of Uttānapāda, who was meditating in Madhu-vana at Mathurā, is an example of the second mode.² The Lord's birth as Rāmachandra in the palace of Ayodhyā is an illustration of the third.³

There is no binding on the Almighty as to when He must assume an *Avatāra* form, but He generally does so whenever virtue is overpowered by vice and the lives of good people who are in danger. Similarly, He responds to the sincere yearning of His devotees, and condescends to contact them to fulfil their desires.

According to the *Padma Purāṇa* the purpose of an *Avatāra*, as Viṣṇu Himself explained to Svayambhuva Manu, is three-fold :

- a) protection of those who are noble in character,
- b) the destruction of those who are wicked, and
- c) the re-establishment of virtue.⁴

1. सत्यं विधातुं निज भृत्य भाषितं व्याप्तिं च भूतेष्वखिलेषु चात्मनः ।
अदृशयतात्यद् भूतरूपमुद्धहन स्तम्भे सभायां न मृगं न मानुषम् ।

Bhāgavata Purāṇa 7.8.18

2. भगवानपि सर्वात्मा तन्मयत्वेन तोषितः
गत्वा ध्रुवमुवाचेदं चतुर्भुजवपुर्हरिः ।

Viṣṇu Purāṇam I.12.41

3. कौसल्या जनयाः मास पुत्रं लोकेश्वरं हरिम् ।

Padma Purāṇa VI.269. 62-63

4. यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् । धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

Padma Purāṇa VI.269.7.

The *Brahma Purāṇa* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* reiterate the same.⁵

Svayambhuva Manu later became king Daśaratha, and according to the *Padma Purāṇa*, when the lord actually appeared in response to the king's religious rites, He added two more purposes namely,

- a) the benefit of the deities,
- b) granting salvation to the people.⁶

Out of these five purposes, the first three are verbatim the same as preached in the *Gīta*; and the remaining two are peculiar to the *Purāṇas*. The deities are always disturbed, if the demons excel them in power. Thus, therefore, request the Lord to intervene, and the result is that He appears. Again when Lord Viṣṇu comes out to us, many a soul achieve their summon bonum by experiencing the divine communion.⁷

It must not be supposed that Viṣṇu appears in an *Avatāra* form only on this earth. Nay, the *Purāṇas* inform us that He manifests Himself on other planes also. For instance, once He was born of Aditi

5. *Brahma Purāṇa* : 56.35.36
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa : IV.53

6. उत्पत्त्येऽहं नृपश्रेष्ठ देवलोक हिताय वै ।
 परित्राणाय साधूनां राक्षसानां वधाय च ।
 मुक्तिं प्रदातुं लोकानां धर्म-संस्थापनाय च ॥
Padma Purāṇa : VI.269.53

7. नृणां निःश्रेयसार्थाय व्यक्तिर्भगवतो नृप ।
 अव्ययस्याप्रमेयस्य निर्गुणस्य गुणात्मनः ॥
Bhāgavata Purāṇa : X.29.14

and Kaśyapa, who are Indra's celestial parents.⁸ Similarly on another occasion, the Lord appeared in the form of a 'Hamsa' in the assembly of *Brahma-loka*.⁹

It is known from Brahma's eulogy offered to Sri Kṛṣṇa that the Lord appears among gods, sages, human beings, birds and beasts and also among aquatic creatures.¹⁰

Similar is the statement of *Akrūra* who feels happy to anticipate his talk with Kṛṣṇa who has appeared variously as *fish, tortoise, boar, horse, lion* and so on to save the creation.¹¹

II. Varieties of Avatāras :

The first manifestation of Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme on the material form is called *Puruṣa* or *Vairāja-Puruṣa*.¹² This *Puruṣa* associated with three phases of *prakṛti*, is said to have assumed, the forms of Brahma, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. These three forms are termed as

8. वासवस्यानुजो भ्राता ज्ञातीनां नन्द-वर्धनः ।
अदित्या अपि च श्रीमान् भगवानस्तु वै सुतः ॥
Vāmana Purāṇa : 27.4

9. तस्याऽहं हंस-रूपेण सकाशमगमं तदा ॥
Bhāgavata Purāṇa : 11.13.19

10. सुरेष्ठृषिष्वीश तथैव नृष्वपि तिर्यक्षु
यादस्वपि तेऽजनस्य जन्माऽसतां
दुर्मद निग्रहाय प्रभो विधातः सदनुग्रहाय च । *Ibid.*, X.14.20.

11. मत्स्य कूर्म वराहाऽश्व - सिंहरूपादिभिः स्थितिम् ।
चकार जगतो यो नः सोऽद्य मां प्रलपिष्यति ॥
Viṣṇu Purāṇa : V.17.10.

12. वै राजः पुरुषो योऽसौ भगवान् धारणाश्रयः ॥
Bhāgavata Purāṇa : II.1.25

Guṇāvatāras.¹³ Since Viṣṇu is responsible for the preservation of creation, and for the maintenance of law and order, He assumes such forms that are needed under special circumstances.

Kāla or time is divided into three main sections, which are called - *Kalpa*, *Manvantara* and *Yuga*. The Lord making a personal appearance for an activity designated to work any good for a *Kalpa*, is called a *Kalpāvatāra*. the *Varāhavatāra* is of this category, in as much as the Lord rendered the earth by assuming that form, fit for further activities of Brahmā during his day. The present kalpa, the first day in the second half of Brahmā's life time, is named *Varāha-kalpa*, after the Lord's *avatāra* in the form of a boar.¹⁴

A *Manvantara-Avatāra* is Viṣṇu's appearance for the sake of setting things right during the age of Manu. *Vāmana* is the form assumed by Viṣṇu for the benefit of *Purandara*, the Indra of the present Manvantara.¹⁵ The *Avatāras* of the preceeding six Manvantaras are *Yajña*, *Ajita*, *Satya*, *Hari*, *Mānasa* and *Vaikunta*.

Likewise, the Lord's appearance in various forms in four periods called *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara*, and *Kali* are *Yugāvatāras*.¹⁶

13. गुणावतारैर्विश्वस्य सर्गस्थित्यत्याश्रयम्
सृजतः श्रीनिवासस्य त्याचक्ष्वोदार-विक्रमम् ॥ *Ibid.*, III.7.28.

14. द्वितियस्य परार्द्धस्य वर्तमानस्य वै द्विज ।
वराह इति कल्पोऽयं प्रथमः परिकीर्तितः ॥
Viṣṇu Purāṇa : I.3.28

15. मन्वन्तरेऽत्र संपाप्ते तथा वैवस्वते द्विज ।
वामनः कश्यपाद विष्णुरदित्यां संबभूव ह ॥ *Ibid.*, III.1.42

16. चतुर्थगेष्वसौ विष्णुः स्थितिव्यापारलक्षणः ।
युगव्यवस्थां कुरुते तथा मैत्रेय तच्छृणु ॥ *Ibid.*, III.2.55

The assuming forms of various *Avatāras* is a sort of the Lord's sportive activity. The forms which live with us and with whom we establish personal contacts, are Viṣṇu's *Līlāvatāras*.¹⁷

The divine manifestation is two fold : a) Primary and b) Secondary.

The primary being called *Svarūpāvatāra* is that where the Lord Himself is acting as in the form of Kṛṣṇa. Here the divine contact is direct. The secondary called *Āveśāvatāra*, however, is that where He acts through some individual soul as in the form of Paraśurāma.¹⁸ Here, the divine contact is indirect, for such manifestation is of a tutelary character, co-existing with and presiding over, some particular souls.

Again the manifestation may be either *Aṁśa* (partial) or *Pūrṇa* (complete). According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Sri Kṛṣṇa is an instance of a complete manifestation, whereas his other forms are of the partial one.¹⁹

God is never incomplete. If so, what is meant by a partial manifestation is, as the *Sattvata-tantra* reveals, that the Lord

17. भावयत्येष सत्वेन लोकान् वै लोकभावनः ।

लीलावतारानुरतो दव-तिर्यङ्-नरादिषु ॥

Bhāgavata Purāṇa : I.2.34.

18. एतत्ते कथितं देवि जामदग्नेर्माहात्मनः

शक्त्यावेशावतारस्य चरितं शार्ङ्गिणः प्रभोः ॥

Padma Purāṇa, VI.269. 79-80

19. एते चांशकलाः पुंसः कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ॥

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, I.3.28

discloses therein only a fraction of his glory to meet the requirement under a particular circumstance.²⁰

The partial manifestations are divided into *aṁśa* and *kāla*, and according to the same *tantra*, an *aṁśa* is one-fourth of the whole and a *kāla* is the sixteenth part thereof.²¹

***Aṁśa* :**

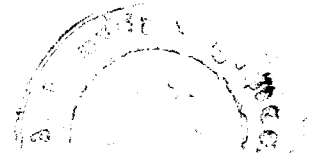
The first instance of an *Aṁśāvatāra* is Vairāja-Puruṣa Himself, for, according to the *Bhāgavata*, Nārāyaṇa, the Prime Deity having previously made *Virāt*, entered it with an *aṁśa*. The *Virāt* served as a Deity (par) for Him, and He, on account of reposing there, received the epithet of *Puruṣa*.²² The statement of the *Bhāgavata* that *Vairāja-Puruṣa* is an *aṁśa*, i.e., one fourth of the Supreme, is the wake of the vedic expression that only one foot (out of the four feet) of the Lord is here. Now, this *Virāj-Puruṣa*, who is an *aṁśa* of the Supreme, is in his own form, the source of other *aṁśāvatāras* and the *Kālāvatāras*.²³

20. ऐश्वर्यज्ञानधर्माश्च वैराग्यं श्रीर्यशस्तथा
एषां संदर्शनात् साक्षात् पूर्णो विद्धि भरुच्यते ।
तेषामपि भागानामल्पाल्पदर्शनादसौ
विभात्यंशकलाभेदो भगवान् भग-भेद-धृक् ॥
Sattvata tantram, III.7.8

21. अंशस्तुरीयो भागः स्यात्कला तु षोडशी मता ॥ *Ibid.*, 3.9

22. भूतैर्यदा पंचभिरात्मसृष्टैः पुरं विराजं विरचय्य तस्मिन् स्वांशेन विष्टः पुरुषाभिधानमवाप नारायण आदिदेव ॥
Bhāgavata Purāṇa : 11.4.3

23. एतन्नानावताराणां निधान बीजमव्ययम् । *Ibid.*, I.3.5



Another instance for an *amśāvatāra* is *Vāmana* who was born as a son of Aditi.²⁴ Similarly an instance of *Kālāvatāra* is Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana who was born as son of Parāśara and Satyavati.²⁵

The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* contains a dialogue between Brahma and Nārada on the technique of *avatāra*. Nārada interrogated his father, 'if Viṣṇu is ever free from all blemishes, why was he born among the men to be seen experiencing pangs of anxiety, fatigue, wound and nescience. ?' ²⁶

To this Brahma replied thus : 'Viṣṇu does not assume any bodies born of men and women. On the other hand, the Lord manifests His own eternal form which is made up of bliss and consciousness. This sort of manifestation of the Lord is said to be His birth, and nothing else. The Lord however, shows sometimes in his pure form such impurities as pain and ignorance simply with a view to infatuating the wicked. Full of wrong notions, the wicked are not to attain emancipation. They get hell. One should therefore, know that the *avatāras* are free from all defects.'²⁷

24. स्वांशेन पुत्रत्वमपेत्य ते सुतान् गोप्तास्मि मारीच-तपस्यधिष्ठितः ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.17.18

25. यस्यां पराशरात् सादादिवतीर्णो हरेः कला ॥ *Ibid.*, IX.17.18

26. नारद उवाच - निर्दोषश्चेत्कथं विष्णुर्मानुषेषूदपद्यत ।
चिन्ताश्रममग्राज । न दुःख युग् दृश्यते कथम् ?
(ब्रह्माण्डपुराणवचनम् विष्णुतत्त्वनिर्णये उद्धृतम् पृष्ठम् 94)

27. सीपुंमलाभियोगात्मा देहो विष्णोर्न जायते ।
किन्तु निर्दोषचैतन्यसुखां नित्यां स्वकां तनुम् ।
प्रकाशयति सैवेयं जानिर्विष्णोर्न चापरा
तथाप्यसुरमोहाय परेषां च क्वचित्
दुःखज्ञानश्रमादीन् स दर्शयेत् शुद्ध-सद्गुणः →

Viṣṇu appears in his various manifestations and birth as god, man, fish etc. This He does with Māya, which is His inscrutable power.²⁸ The forms which the Lord assumes, the *Purāṇas* tell us, are not material. They are spiritual in essence.²⁹ Even in his births as man, He does not take any body as ordinary people do.³⁰ It is a miracle beyond common understanding but great intellectuals and other *Vaiṣṇava* apostles have unflinching faith, the representative of the gnostics, says that the form of Sri Kṛṣṇa was not made of Prakṛti.³¹ Similarly Rāmānuja, the representative of the devotees, asserts the forms of Viṣṇu even in His avatāras are not material.³²

It is, however, a matter of faith to cherish the view that *avatāras* are not born of human parents, that they do not take on a material body, and that they do not give it up in the end. It is read in the

-
- दौर्लभ्यायैव मोक्षस्य दर्शयेत्तानुजो हरिः ।
 मिथ्या दर्शनं - दोषेण तेन मुक्तिं न यान्ति ते ।
 तमो यान्ति च ते नैव तस्माद् दोषविवर्जितम्
 प्रादुर्भावगतं चैव जानीयाद् विष्णुमंजसा ॥
 - मध्वाचार्यकृत विष्णुतत्त्वनिर्णये ९४ तमे पृष्ठे उद्धृतं ब्रह्माण्ड पुराण वचनम् ।

28. जगद्धिताय सोप्यत्र देहीवा भाति मायया ।
Bhāgavata purāṇa X.14.55.
29. सत्यज्ञानानन्तानन्दचिन्मात्रमूर्तयः । *Ibid.*, X.13.54.
30. न तस्य प्राकृती मूर्तिर्मदो - मज्जास्थितम्भवा ॥
Padma Purāṇa, Patala Khand 77.3.
31. अ) देहवानिव भवामि जात इव आत्म-मायया न परमार्थतो लोकवत् ।
 (गीतायाम् ४७ ६७ शांकर भाष्यम्)
 आ) तज्जन्म मायारूपं कर्म च साधूनां परित्राणादि मे मम दिव्यम् अप्राकृतम् । *Ibid.*, 4,9
32. अस्य देवादिरूपेणावतारेष्वपि न प्रकृतो देहः ।
 वेदान्त संग्रह - पृष्ठम् - १३०

Purāṇas about the parentage of *avatāras*. *Vāmana* was born of *Kaśyapa* and *Aditi*; *Rāma* of *Daśaratha* and *Kausalya*, *Kṛṣṇa* of *Vasudeva* and *Devāki* etc. This shows that these *Avatāras* have material bodies in addition to spiritual ones. It is also read about their giving up the material bodies. It is said that Lord *Kṛṣṇa* gave up the frame and form with which He did so many divine feats to lighten the burden of the earth. What is applicable to Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, a *Pūrṇāvatāra*, may be said about the *Amśāvatāra* also. The orthodox people explain the Lord's appearing in human form and other forms and then relinquishing them as His *Māyā*. They like this activity of the Lord in an *Avatāra* to that of an acrobat, and maintain that His form is spiritual only. Here follows an exposition of the importance of various *Avatāras* of Lord *Viṣṇu* :

2) THE CONCEPT OF MATSYĀVATĀRA

According to Hindu religion the first incarnation of Lord *Viṣṇu* is the form of *Matsya*. This myth has played very prominent part in the mythologies of ancient India. This concept of this myth is originated from the Indian flood legends. The *Matsya* incarnation is connected with the story of a universal Deluge. In ancient literature and folk lores, almost all the countries of the world, there is a mention of universal Deluge. Traditionally, flood legends are well known to all the races of the world.

Matsya in Vedic Literature :

In the *Ṛgveda* there is no clear reference to *Matsya* myth connected with the deluge. *Manu* occurs in various passages of the *Ṛgveda* but he is connected with the deluge. He is described five

times as the ancestor of the *R̥ṣis*. The vedic seers call him as “our father, naḥ pitā.” This belief has been well preserved in the *purāṇic* account of the *Matsyavatāra* where he is said to have create everything when the deluge subsided.

In the *Yajurveda* the word *Matsya* occurs twice in association with other water animals like *Śiśumāra* (porpoise), *Maṇḍūka* (frogs), *Kulipayas* (breath cocks), *Nakra*, (crocodiles). XXIV:21:34.

In the *Atharvaveda* there is an interesting passage, regarding numerous creatures, which include fish, aquatic birds and others.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* also connects deluge with Manu. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, a warning by a fish against the impending disastrous flood, is given to Manu. Manu being urged by fish, constructs a ship. The prediction comes true and the world is submerged with flood. Only Manu is saved and is carried to the lofty peak of the Himālayas. He then, performs a sacrifice out of which a woman arises. The two then create the mankind a fresh. These features of the Fish Incarnation seem to have been fundamental basis for further ideas developed. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* there is no explicit identification of the fish either with Viṣṇu or Prajāpati. But on the account recorded therein, the concept of *Matsyāvatāra* appears to have been based. The details given in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, are not inconsistent with those connected to the *Matsya-avatāra* in the *Purāṇas*.

This myth as described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, runs in terms of the parable of Manu and Ida as below :

“In the morning, they brought to Manu water for washing, just as now also they bring for washing the hands. As he was washing, a fish came into his hands,³³ and said, ‘care for me and I will save you.’ From what will you save me ? A flood will carry away all these creatures; from that I will save thee !’ “How am I to rear thee ?³⁴ It said “as long as we are small, there is great destruction for us; fish devour fish. Care for me at first in a pot, and when I out grow it, dig a trench and care for me in it. When I outgrow that, then take me down to the sea, for then I shall be beyond destruction.³⁵

It soon became a Jhasa (a large fish) for that grows largest of all fish. It said, “in a certain year, the flood will come. Then you will build a ship and come to me. When the flood has risen, you enter into the ship and I will save you from the flood.³⁶ And in the very year which the fish had indicated, he built a ship and came to him, and

33. मनवे ह वै प्रातः । अवेनेग्यमुदकमाजहूर्यभेदं
पाणिभ्याम् वनेजनायाहरन्त्येवं तस्यावनेनिजानस्य
मत्स्यः पाणीऽआपदे ॥

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa I. 8.1.1.

34. स हास्मै वाचमुवाद । बिभृहि मा पारयिष्यामि त्वेति
कस्मान्मा पारयिष्यसित्यौघ इमाः सर्वाः प्रजा निर्वोढा
तृस्त्वा पारयितास्मीति कथं ते भृतिरिति ॥ *Ibid.*, I.8.1.2.

35. स होवाच । यावद्वै क्षुल्लका भावामो बही वै
नस्तावन्नाष्टा भवत्युत मत्स्य एव मत्स्यं गिलति कुम्भ्यां
माग्रे बिभरासि स यदा तामतिवर्धाऽअथ कर्ष खात्वा
तस्यां मा बिभरासि स यदा तामतिवर्धाऽअथ माँ
समुद्रमभ्यवहरासि तर्हि वाऽअतिनाष्टो भवितास्मीति ॥ *Ibid.*, I.8.1.3.

36. शश्वद्ध भाष आस । स हि जेष्टं वर्धतेऽयेति समौ
तदौघ आगन्ता तन्मा नावमुपकल्प्यापासासै स
औधऽडात्थिते नवमापद्याखैथीम् तृस्त्वा पारयितास्मीति ॥ *Ibid.*, I.8.1.4

when the flood had risen he entered the ship, he fastened the rope of the ship through the northern mountain. In this way Manu alone remained. So the slope of the northern mountain is known as Manu's Descent.

In the *Mahābhārata*, also we find the same legend wherein the fish is spoken of as 'Śṛṅgi',³⁷ having a horn. Here He is considered to be a form of Prajāpati rather than of Viṣṇu.³⁸

The *Bṛhaddevatā* has an interesting story concerning the birth of Matsya.³⁹

Matsya in Purāṇic Literature :

It may be said here that these accounts of Matsyāvatāra found in the vedic literature are described with more details in the different *Purāṇas* as below :

According to the Hindu religion the first incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu is the form of a *Matsya*. The *purāṇas* at length, deal with the different avatāras of Lord Viṣṇu. The *Purāṇas* repeatedly say that in the beginning of the present creation the God appears as a *Matsya*

37. आगमिष्याम्यहं शृंगी विज्ञयस्तेन तापस ।

Mahābhārata III.185.31

38. अहं प्रजापतिर्ब्रह्मा मत्परं नाधिगम्यते ।

मत्स्यरूपेण यूयं च मयास्मान्मोक्षिता भयात् ॥ *Ibid.*, III. 185.48

39. बहुधा पतिते शुके कलशेऽथ जले स्थले ।

स्थले वसिष्ठस्तु मुनिः संभूत ऋषिसत्तमः ।

कुम्भेत्वगत्यः संभूतो जले मत्स्यो महाद्युतिः ॥

Bṛhaddevata V. 151-152

with the object of delivering Manu and resucing the vedas from the great deluge. Thus the *Matsyāvatāra* is connected with the story of a Universal Deluge.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* describes the Supreme Personality of Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation as a fish and in this context it is also describes the saving of the king Satyavṛata from an inundation. (VII.24)

The Supreme person Lord Viṣṇu expand Himself by *Svaṁśa* (His personal expansions) and *Vibhinnamśa* (His expansions as the living entities). As stated in the *Bhagavadgītā* :

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

Lord Viṣṇu appears on this planet for the protection of the good ones, and for the destruction of the misscreants. He especially descents to give protection to the cows, the *brāhmaṇas*, the demigods, the devotees and the vedic system of religion.⁴⁰ Thus he appears in various forms, sometimes as a *Matsya*, sometimes as a *Varāha*, sometimes as a *Vāmana*, sometimes as a *Nṛsimha* and so on.

But in any form of incarnation, although He comes within the atmosphere of the material modes of nature, He remains unaffected. This is a sign of His over all Supremacy. Therefore, no material qualities can be attributed to Him in any degree.

40. गोविप्रसुरसाधूनां छन्दसामपि चेश्वरः ।
रक्षामिछस्तनूर्धते धर्मस्यार्थस्य चैव हि ॥

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII. 24.5.

Being curious to know the very purpose of *Matsya* incarnation, king Parīkṣita asks to Suta thus :

“What was the purpose for which the Supreme personality of Godhead accepted the abominable form of a *Matsya*, exactly as an ordinary living beings accepts different forms under the laws of *Karma* ? The *Matsya* is certainly condemned and full of terrible pain.

Then He replies in the following manner :

“For the sake of protecting the cows, *brāhmaṇas*, demigods, devotees, the vedic literature, religious principles, and principles to fulfil the purpose of life, the Lord Viṣṇu accepts the forms of incarnation.

At the end of the previous *kalpa* (covering a day of Brahma or a thousand revolutions of the four *Yugas*) there came about an occasional dissolution of the universe consequent of Brahma’s requiring to bed (at the end of the day’s work). At that time, three worlds including earth were washed away by the ocean, O ! protector of men;⁴¹ “The powerful demon Hayagrīva so called because of his having the head of a horse, who was near by, stole away by dint of Yoga or concentration of mind the *vedas* which, while being unconsciously repeated by him had atomatically escaped as usual from the mouths of Brahmā, the creator, who was inclined to go to bed, overcome, as he was asleep

41. आसीद्दीतकल्पान्ते ब्राह्मो नैमित्तिको लयः ।

समुद्रोपप्लुतस्तत्र लोका भूरादयो नृप ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.24.7

under the influence of time. Perceiving that action of Hayagrīva, the Dānava chief, the mighty 'Lord Sri Hari assumed the form of *Fish*.⁴²

In that *kalpa* there was a certain royal sage, by name Satyavrta an exalted soul devoted to Lord Nārāyaṇa. He was practising austerities subsisting on water. In the previous *kalpa* the king Satyavrta was known as Srāddhadeva, the son of Sun-god Vivaswan. In the present kalpa he was exalted to the position of Manu by Sri Hari. One day an unknown fish appeared in the water held in the hollow of the palms of Satyavrta, who was offering handful of water to the manes on the bank of the river *Kṛtamālā*. Satyavrta who ruled over the Dravida territory, proceeded to drop alongwith the water, the fish contained in the hollow of his palms into the water of the river. The fish most pitifully said to that monarch, highly compassionate as he was, "therefore, do you throw me in the water of this river. O king ! who are so kind to the afflicted, helpless as I am, and afraid too of aquatic creatures that kill there own species ? Not knowing the Lord, who had lovingly assumed the form of a fish in order to shower his grace on himself, Satyavrta made up his mind to protect the fish.⁴³

42. कालेनागतनिद्रस्य धातुः शिशयिषोर्बलि ।
मुखतो नृसृतान् वेदान् हयग्रीवोऽन्तिकेऽहरत् ॥ *Ibid.*, 8.
ज्ञात्वा तद् दानवेन्द्रस्य हयग्रीवस्य चेष्टितम् ।
दधार शकरीरूपं भगवान् हरिरीश्वरः ॥ *Ibid.*, 9.

43. तत्र राजऋषिः कश्चिन्नाम्ना सत्यव्रतो महान् ।
नारायणपरोऽतप्यत् तं स सलिलाशनः ॥
योसावस्मिन् महाकल्पे तनयः स विवस्वतः ।
श्रद्धदेव इति ख्यातो मनुत्वे हरिणार्पितः ॥ →

On hearing the pitiful appeal of the fish, said merciful king put it in the water of the vessel he had brought with him and took it to his hermitage. Growing in that Kamandalu, in the course of a single night, however, and not finding space for itself in it, the fish actually said to the king as follows : “I am not able to live in this Kamandalu, with difficulty. Therefore kindly find for me a sufficiently extensive abode, in which I may comfortably live.” Removing it from the Kamandalu, he placed it in the water of a pitcher, and thrown into it, the fish grew to a size of three cubits in the course of less than an hour and said : “Even this jar is not sufficient for me to live in at ease, O king, therefore, kindly let me have spacious accommodation, since I have sought you as my refuge. Having been removed from the water jar, the fish was thrown by the king into a good pond. The same fish grew to be a monstrous fish and covered the lake with its body. Again the fish said O ! king, the water of this lake is not my comfort. Therefore, please put me in a large and deep lake containing an inexhaustable store of water with adequate arrangement for my sustenance during the transit.⁴⁴ Thus spoken, the king took the fish

→ एकदा कृतमालायां कुर्वतो जलतर्पणम् ।
 तस्याञ्जल्युदके काचिच्छक्येकाम्यपद्यत ॥
 सत्यव्रतोऽञ्जलिगतां सह तोयेन भारत ।
 उत्सर्ज नदोतोये शकरीं द्रवडेश्वरः ॥
 तमात्मनोऽनुग्रहार्थं प्रीत्या मत्स्यवपुर्धरम् ।
 अजावन् रक्षणार्थाय शक्या स मनो दधे ॥ *Ibid.*, 10-15.

44. नाहं कमण्डलावस्मिन् कृच्छं वस्तुमिहोत्सहे ।
 कल्पयौकः सुविपुलां यत्राहं निवसे सुखम् ॥
 स एनां तत आदाय न्यधादोदञ्जनोदके ।
 तत्र क्षिप्ता मुहुर्तेन हस्तत्रयमवर्धत ॥ →

by turns to a number of lakes of inexhaustable water each succeeding one being larger than the previous one, but finding it equal in size to each lake, eventually transferred it to the ocean. While being led into the ocean the fish spoke to him as follows : “Mighty alligators and other creatures in this ocean may eat me. O valiant monarch, therefore, you should not leave me here.” Then king asked, “who are you; bewitching us in the form of gigantic whale ? No aquatic creature possessed of such wonderful power as you have ever been seen or even heard of by us - you, who have grown in a day large enough to cover the whole lake, eight hundred miles in extent. You are undoubtedly the immortal Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself, the Destroyer of sins, who have assumed the form of aquatics in order to shower your grace on all created beings. Hail to you O ! Supreme person controlling the cosmic functions of creation, maintenance and dissolution you are the true self as well as the goal of us, your devotees that have sought you for protection.

All your sportful descends are conducive to the welfare of all living beings, I wish to know the purpose, for this form has been assumed by you. It is not futile to take shelter under your feet, O ! lotus eyed Lord, as it is to approach the feet of those who are identified with the body, you being the dissinterested friend, nay, the

→ न म एतदलं राजन् सुखं वस्तुमुदञ्चनम् ।
 पृथु देहि पदं मद्भयं यत् त्वाहं शरणं गता ॥
 तत आदाय सा राज्ञा शिषा राजन् सरोवरे ।
 तदावृत्यात्मना सोऽयं महामीनोऽन्ववर्धत ॥
 नैतन्मे स्वस्तये राजन्नुदकं सलिलौकसः ।
 निधेहि रक्षायोगेन हृदे मामविदासिनि ॥ *Ibid.*, 18-22

beloved self of all as is evident from the fact that you have revealed your wonderful form to us, your devotees.⁴⁵

To king Satyavrta who had spoken thus, the Lord of the universe, who desired to sport in the ocean for the dissolution of the universe at the end of the kalpa and had accordingly assumed the form of a fish, who sought to do a good turn to the king. He is of those exclusively devoted to Him. The glorious Lord said : O Subduer of foes all these three worlds will be submerged in the ocean rising for the dissolution of the Universe. When the three worlds are actually going to be submerged in the deluge water a mysterious and spacious boat sent by me, will approach you. Take with you in the mean while all the herbs and annual plants as well as seeds of all types and surrounded by the seven seers and accompanied by all varieties of animals you shall board that commodious vessel and sail about undaunted in that undivided expanse of water devoid

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45. क्षिप्यमाणस्तमाहेदमिह मां मकरादयः
 अदन्त्यतिबला वीरं मां तेहोत्स्त्रष्टुमर्हसि ॥
 एवं विमोहितस्तेन वदता वलुभारतीम् ।
 तमाह को भवानस्मान् सत्स्यरूपेण मोहयन् ॥
 नैववीर्या जलचरो दृष्टोऽस्मभिः श्रुतोऽपि च ।
 यो भवान् योजनशतमह्नालिव्यानशे सरः ॥
 नूनं त्वं भगवान् साक्षाद्धरिर्नारायणोऽव्ययः ।
 अनुग्रहाय भूतानां धत्से रूपं जलौकसाम् ॥
 नमस्ते पुरुष श्रेष्ठ स्थित्युत्पत्त्ययेश्वर
 भक्तानां नः प्रपन्नानां मुख्यो ह्यत्मगतिर्विभो ॥
 सर्वे लीलावतारास्ते भूतानां भूतिहेतवः ।
 ज्ञातृभिच्छम्यदो रूपंयदर्थं भवता धृतम् ॥
 न तेऽरविन्दास पदोषसर्पणं मृषाभवेत् सर्वसुद्धत्प्रियात्मनः ।
 यथेतरेषां पृथमात्मनां सतामदीदृशो यद् वपुरद्भुतं हि नः ॥ *Ibid.*, 24-30

of light, guided by the effulgence of the *R̥ṣis* alone. Attach that vessel tossed about by a mighty gale by means of the great serpent *Vāsuki*, to my horn as I shall be present by your side. Pulling the boat and all along with the seers I shall roam about in the vast expanse of water as long as the might of *Brahmā* (which is the same duration as his day) lasts, O ! king And at that time you will realise my glory - designated by the name of *parabrahmā*, the transcendent reality.⁴⁶

Thus instructed the king *Satyavṛta*, *Sri Hari* disappeared: While the former awaited the time which Lord *Viṣṇu* had already told him. Spreading blades of *Kuśa* grass with their ends pointing towards the east, the royal sage sat down with his face turned towards the north east, contemplating on the feet of Lord *Hari* disguised as the divine fish. Then was the ocean already seen rising high on account of huge clouds pouring down heavy rain and consequently overflowing its limits and inundating the earth on all sides. Revolving in his mind the command of the Lord the king perceived the vessel arrived by his side. Taking the herbs and plants he boarded it along with the great sages. The sages lovingly said to him, "Meditate on Lord *Viṣṇu*, O king, He will surely deliver us from this calamity and bring happiness to us. Thought of uninterruptedly by the king, the Lord then appeared in

46. आरुह्य बृहतीं नावं विचरिष्यस्यक्लवः ।
 एकाण्वे निरालोके ऋषीणामेव वर्चसा ॥
 दोधूयमानां तां नावं समीरेण बलीयसा ।
 उपस्थितस्य मे शृङ्गे निबन्नीहि महाहिना ॥
 अहं त्वामृषिभिः साकं सहनावमुदन्वति ।
 विकर्षन् विचरिष्यामि यावदब्रह्मी निशा प्रभो ॥
 मदीयं महिमानं च परं ब्रह्मेति शब्दितम् ।
 वेत्स्यस्यनुगृहीतं मे सम्प्रश्नैर्विवृतं हृदि ॥ *Ibid.*, 35-38

that vast expanse of water in the form of a golden whale, possessed of a horn and extending over an area of one lakh *Yojanas*. Fastening the boat to the horn of the divine whale with the king of serpents for a rope, as already enjoined by Śrī Hari, king Satyavṛta full of joy, hymned in the following words :

“People whose true knowledge of their own self stands obscure by dateless ignorance and who are exhausted by the toils of worldly existence, traceable to that nescience, realize you here when they take shelter in you by your uncountable grace.⁴⁷ Such as you are, may you act as our highest proceptor and prove to be the Bestower of final beautitude on us. This ignorant *Jīva* bound by its own *karma*, performs actions with great pains in the hope of happiness and is able to get rid of that hope as well as its wrong notion in the shape of identification with body etc. through your worship alone. May that Lord who is our guide, snap our knot existing in the heart. Through His worship alone can, an embodied soul shake of its impurity in the shape of ignorance and regain its essential character as silver and gold shed their impurity and regain their native brilliance

47. व्यायन् भगवदोदेशां दृशे नावमागताम् ।
 तामारुरोहं विप्रैर्द्वैरादायौषधिवीरुषः ॥
 तमुचुर्मुनयः प्रीता राजन् व्यायस्व केशवम् ।
 सवै नः संकटादस्मादविता शं विधास्यति ॥
 स्वोऽनुध्यातस्ततौ राज्ञा प्रादुरस्मिन्महाणवे ।
 एकशृङ्गधरो मत्स्यो हैमो नियुतयो जनः ॥
 निबध्य नावं तच्छृङ्गे यथोक्तो हरिषा पुरा ।
 वरत्रेणाहिना तुष्टस्तुष्टाव मधुसूदनम् ॥
 अनाद्यविद्योषहतात्मसंविदस्तन्मूलसंसार परिश्रमातुराः
 यदृच्छयेहोपसृता यमाप्नुर्विमुक्तिं दौ नः परमो गुरुर्भवान् ॥ *Ibid.*, 42-46

through contact with fire. May that immortal Lord who is higher than a Guru be our real protector. God, preceptor and other people joined together, can not by themselves show to a worshipper grace which is equivalent to one out of ten thousand parts of His. It is that almighty Lord in you whom I seek as my refuge. An unenlightened soul chosen as a preceptor in relation to an ignorant person is of the same worth as a sightless person appointed as a guide in relation to another blind man. By us who are eager to know the truth relating to the self, you have been elected as our preceptor, you who are not only self illumined like the Sun but also impart light to all the senses of preception. A worldly soul imparts to another unwise counsel showing the way to worldly riches and gratification of the senses alone, by which he is sure to enter darkness, which is hard to overcome.⁴⁸ You however impart undecaying and unfailing wisdom, through which the jiva easily realises its essential character. Indeed to the whole world you are the disinterested friend, beloved and inner controller, the teacher and the realisation of desired objects. Yet, having deep rooted desires and possessed of an undiscerning intellect, the world does not know you, though present in the heart. Such as you are, I approach you, the almighty Lord, adorable to gods and

48. जनोऽबुधोऽयं निजकर्मबन्धनः सुखेच्छया कर्म समीहतेऽसुखम् ।
 यत्सेवया तां विधुनोत्यसन्मतीं ग्रन्थिं रू लिन्धाद्धृदयं सनो गुरुः ॥
 यस्येवयाग्नेरिव रुद्रोदनं पुमात् विजह्यान्मकमात्मनस्तमः ।
 भजेत वर्णं निजमेष सोऽध्ययो भूयात् स ईशः परमो गुरोर्गुरुः ॥
 न यत्प्रसादावृतभागलेपमन्ये च देवा गुरवो जनाः स्वयम् ।
 कर्तुं समेताः प्रभवन्ति पुसस्तमीस्वरं त्वां शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥
 अचक्षुरन्धस्य यथाग्रणीः कृतस्तथा जनस्याविदुषोऽम्बुधो गुरुः ।
 स्वमर्कदृक् सवन्दृशां समीक्षयो वृतो गुरर्नः स्वगतिं बुभुत्सताम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 47-50

worthy of being sought for instruction. Kindly, therefore, with your words throwing light on the truth, existing in the heart and reveal your own self to me.

Sporting in that vast expanse of water in the form of a whale, Lord Viṣṇu taught the truth to the king. Further he revealed to the royal sage Satyavr̥ta in its entirety the mystery of His own self in the form of a divine collection of *purāṇic* lore dealing with Sāṅkhya philosophy, *Yoga* and rituals. Seated on board, the vessel with the seers, the king listened to the discourse on the truth of the self, the eternal Brahma, delivered by the Lord in the form of *Matsya*, so attentively as to leave no doubt in his mind, having killed the demon Hayagrīva and recovered the vedas. He restored the vedas to Brahma when the latter rose from his slumber at the end of the pralaya, that proceeded the current kalpa known as *Sweta Varāha Kalpa*.⁴⁹

The same king Satyavr̥ta, who was thus endued with spiritual knowledge and wisdom by the grace of Lord Viṣṇu figured the present kalpa as the Vaivasvata Manu. A man is rid of all sin by hearing this great story consisting of the dialogue between the royal sage Satyavr̥ta and Lord Viṣṇu disguised as a fish through His creative energy. He who recites from day to day the story of that

49. इत्युक्तवन्तं नृपतिं भगवानादिपुरुषः ।
 मत्सरूपीं महाम्भोधौ विहरंस्तत्त्वमब्रवीत् ॥
 पुराणसंहितां दिव्या सांख्ययोगक्रियावतीम् ।
 सत्यवृत्तस्य राजर्षरात्मगुह्यमशेषतः ॥
 अश्रौषीदृषिभिः साकमात्मतत्त्वसंसंगयन् ।
 नाव्यासीनो भगवता प्रोक्तं ब्रह्मा सनातनम् ॥
 अतीतप्रलयापाय उत्थिताय स वेधसे ।
 हत्वासुरं हयग्रीवं वेदान् प्रत्याहरद्धरिः ॥ *Ibid.*, 45-47

which is spoken of as the descent of Sri Hari in the form of a whale attains to the Supreme state and his desired objects are accomplished. I bow to that Lord, the cause of all disguised in the form of a whale on the deluge waters, restored the body of Śruti texts stolen away from the mouths of the creator, whose powers lay dormant after slaying the demon Hayagrīva, and who taught the *Purāṇa* dealing with Brahma to king *Satyavṛta* and the seers.⁵⁰

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in this manner reads the description of *Matsya* incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. In this description, the Universal Deluge has major concern with the demon Hayagrīva, the Vedas and king Satyavṛta. Also, it provides the reason for Lord's assuming *Matsya* incarnation which however leads to the benefit of the Universe.

No doubt, the description of *Matsya* incarnation can also be found in some of the *Purāṇas* like the *Matsya Purāṇa*, the *Agni Purāṇa*, etc. but with variant details. In this respect, the details found in the *Matsya Purāṇa* may be seen in brief as below :

Matsya Purāṇa :

A king named Manu leaving his kingdom went out to the Malaya country to perform penance; and there he obtained a boon

50. सत्यवृत्तस्य राजर्षेर्मयामत्स्यस्य शाङ्गिणः ।
 संवादं महदाख्यानं शृत्वा मुच्येत किल्बिषात् ॥
 अवतारो हरेर्योऽयं कीर्तयेदन्वहं नरः ।
 संकल्पास्तस्य सिध्यन्ति स याति परमां गतिम् ॥
 प्रलयपयसि धातुः सुप्तशक्तेर्मुखेभ्यः
 शृतिगणमपनीतं प्रत्युपादत्त हत्वा ।
 दितिजमकथयद् यो ब्रह्म सत्यवृत्तानां
 तमहमखिलहेतुं जिह्वामीनं नतोऽस्मि ॥ *Ibid.*, 59-61

from Brahma that he should be able to protect all the creatures at the time of dissolution. The boon was granted and then the king one day at the time of offering oblation to the Pitris, noticed a small fish in the palm of his hand. He put it in the water of pot which the fish fully occupied by waring during the course of the day. Then the king kept it in a jar and the same thing happened again. The fish was then thrown into well, and when it could not be contained there, then into a pond, after which into a river, and finally the fish was consigned to the ocean. When the piscine form filled the whole ocean by its giant size, the king became perplexed and asked him as to his real identity, Saying, "Are you the Lord of the Asuras, or God Nārāyaṇa himself ? How can any one else behave like this ? O ! I have known the truth; you are certainly Lord Viṣṇu, the cosmic deity in the form of the fish." The fish replied; "verily O king, you have known the truth. Soon the earth will be submerged under water. Look here at this boat which all the hosts of gods have improvised for the protection of living beings; place them on the ship and the same is rocked convulsively by the furious winds of dissolution, then fasten into my horn or cranial protuberance when the dissolution is over, you will be the Prajāpati of the world." Being asked by Manu Lord Viṣṇu foretells the way in which the dissolution takes place. Also he had said that in the dissolution all gods and other living creatures will be burnt excepting the moon, the sun, Brahma, the four world protectors, sage Mārkaṇḍeya Bhava, the Vedas, the *purāṇas* and subsidiary sciences. In the beginning of the creation you will be instructed the vedas. Accordingly there things took place after Lord Viṣṇu vanished from Manu's vision.

The details of *Matsya* incarnation as found in the *Matsya purāṇa* differ to some extent from that of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. Here in the *Matsya purāṇa* the universal Deluge is described without any concern with the demon Hayagrīva and king Satyavṛta. But in the place of king Satyavṛta referred too in the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*, Svayambhu Manu is spoken of in the *Matsya Purāṇa*. The description in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is more narrative, but the description in the *Matsya Purāṇa* is symbolic.

Symbolic importance of Matsya Incarnation :

There are several symbolical terms which need to be explained. The first question is about the real nature of Matsya. The fish is the symbol of egg. The cosmos is the egg of Brahman (*Brahmāṇḍa*). Here Brahman Himself is the fish and therefore the *Brahmāṇḍa* is the same as *Matsyāṇḍa*.

The *vedic* doctrine of Hiranyagarbha is here completely repeated in the story of the fish incarnation. The fish is an appropriate symbol of the principle of the egg; it is borne out by the scientific knowledge of the present day. The class pisces in the largest of all the vertebrate classes including some 20,000 species.

Meaning of Matsya :

We should consider the meaning of the Matsya : As already pointed out Matsya represents the emergence of life from out of the waters. It is the principle of the universal egg called *Aṇḍa* or *Virāj*. The creation of the golden egg is a doctrine very dear to *purāṇa* writers, it substantially represents the Hiranyagarbha-vidya.

The *Matsya Purāṇa* explains in a nut-shell the doctrine of the birth of the cosmos in the form of a golden egg; the equivalent of Prajāpati himself.⁵¹

Here we find two technical terms *Urdhva* and *Adhaḥ* are noteworthy, which are known in the *Rgveda* and which we also find in the *Gīta* describing the cosmic tree.

(ऊर्ध्वं मूलमधः शाखं अश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।)

The golden egg refers to the Prajāpati and has been fully explained in commentary. It is said here that the material egg splits into eight portions which represent the constitution of the world of matter.

The idea is that the self existent *Svayambhu* or Viṣṇu was the *Puruṣa* or *Kṣetrajña*. He created out of himself the golden egg from which, the eight-fold constituents of *kṣetra* or *prakṛti* emerged.

The *Matsya* incarnation may be read even in the *Varāha Purāṇa* (Chapter - IX), but with little variation in the content. As described therein at the end of the *kalpa* the supreme God sleeps and all the three worlds *Bhūḥ* and *Svaḥ* are subject to termoids. Night being over the god got up and thought about the four *vedas* despite His thinking he did not get the *vedas* as he was illusioned by the sense

51. जगदण्डमिदं पूर्वमासीद दिव्य हिरण्यम्
प्रजापतेरियं मूर्तिरितीयं वैदिकीश्रुतिः
ततु वर्षसहस्रान्ते विभेदोर्ध्वमुखं विभुः
लोकसर्जनहेतोस्तु विभेदाद्यो मुखं पुनः ॥

Matsya Purāṇa 248.1.

of sleep. Seeing then hidden in his own form called water the Supreme God thought of entering it in the form of a *Matsya*. After meditating for a while he assumed the form of great *fish* and entered into the water. Seeing the form of the Supreme God as great *Matsya* resembling a big mountain the goddess earth extoiled Him. Being, extoiled Lord Viṣṇu got the *vedas* together with *Upaniṣads* and other *Śāstras* out of the water.

In this portion of description of *Matsya* incarnation, the *Varāha Purāṇa* does not refer too either Vaivasvata Manu or the king Satyavṛta and makes no special note regarding this.

Further, in the *Padma Purāṇa*, too at the behest of Goddess Pārvati, Lord Śiva explains to her the grandure of *Matsya* incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. As found in this *purāṇa*; it is the demon called Makara, who went to Brahma's world and ceased the *vedas*. As a result the whole world became void hence god Brahma surrounded by hosts of all gods, went to the milk ocean prayed for the protection of the *vedas* being addressed thus Lord, Viṣṇu resorted to the *Matsya* form and entered the great ocean.⁵² Further having assumed the form of Makara (crocodile) Lord Viṣṇu killed that fierceful demon Makara by tearing him with a tip of his mouth. Having lifted up all the *vedas*, *Vedāṅgas* and *Upāṅgas* the Lord Viṣṇu in the form of *Matsya* gave them to Brahma by mixing up with

52. मकरस्तु महावीर्यो ब्रह्मलोकमुपागतः ।
ब्रह्मणं मोहयित्वाऽसौ वेदाञ्जग्राह वीर्यवान् ।
ग्रसित्वा च श्रुतिः सोऽथ प्रविवेश महार्णवम् ॥

Padma Purāṇa vol. 5. Uttarakhanda, Calcutta - 1959, 230-13, p. 798

one another. He then assuming the form of Vyāsa made then separated. Thus Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Matsya protected the vedas.⁵³

Narasimha Purāṇa :

The *Narasimha Purāṇa* also gives an account of the *Matsya* incarnation. But with little variation as comparing to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. As stated there in, it is Madhu and Kaitabha who stole away the entire vedic lore from Brahma. These demons were born from two drops of perspiration⁵⁴ fallen down in the water from the years of Lord Viṣṇu, when he took the *Yoganidrā* on the conch of the serpent Ananta. With a view to protecting the *vedic* lore from the clutches of these two demons Lord Viṣṇu took the form of *Matsya* extending over many *Yojanas* in length and breath. In this form of *Matsya* the embodiment of knowledge Lord Hari, enters the waters and found out the two demons. He made them infatuated, rescued the *vedic* lore and again recoured to *Yoga-Nidrā*.⁵⁵

53. एवमुक्तो हृषीकेशो ब्रह्मणा परमेश्वरः ।
मात्सर्यरूपं समास्थाय प्रविवेश महोदधिम् ॥
तं दैत्यं समहाघोरं माकरं रूपमास्थितम् ॥
तुण्डाग्रेण विदार्याऽथ जघानामरपूजितः तं
हत्वा सर्ववेदांश्च साङ्गोपाङ्गं समन्वितान् ।
गृहीत्वा प्रददौ तस्मै ब्रह्मणे समहाद्युतिः
अन्योन्यं मिश्रिता वेदाः ग्रसितास्तेन रक्षसा ।
व्यस्ता भगवता तेन व्यासरूपेण विष्णुना---- *Ibid.*, 230. P. 799

54. मधुकैटभनामानौ तस्माज्जातौ महाबलौ ।
महाकायौ महावीर्यौ महाबलपराक्रमौ ॥
Narasimha Purāṇa Dr. Siddheswar Jena
Nay publishers, Delhi, 1987 part I, 37, 4, p-276

55. तौ मोहयित्वा तुमुलं तज्ज्ञानं जगृहे हरिः ।
वेदशास्त्राणि मुनिभः सस्तुतो मधुसूदनः ॥ *Ibid.*, 21

After getting back their senses Madhu and Kaitabha found Lord Viṣṇu and identified Him as the procure of vedic lore. When they got ready to fight at once Lord Viṣṇu also called Kṛṣṇa, strong His Śruṅga bow and discharged the missiles as a result of which the demons were killed.⁵⁶ Thus due to the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Brahma got back the vedas and created the Beings in the manner prescribed in the vedas.⁵⁷

The *Matsya* has played a very prominent place in mythologies of ancient India and Babylon. The story of God incarnating himself as a *Matsya* is similar in both countries.

The Babylonean fish-God is *Ea* who was Supreme at the ancient sea deserted port of Erida. He was depicted in the skin of a fish. He is said to have lived in the persian gulf and to come everyday ashore to instruct the inhabitants of Erida how to make canals, grow crops etc. He also taught the people how to form and use alphabetic signs and instructed them in mathematics; he also gave them their code of laws. Thus Babylonian civilization is said to be a growth of *Ea* worship.⁵⁸

The Pilistine deity Dagon is also suspected to be a specialised form of ancient *Ea*. In Assyrian legends Queen Semiramis was

56. तौ युद्ध्वा सचिरं तेन दानवो मधुकैटभौ ।
हतौ शार्ङ्गविनिर्मुक्तैः शरैः कृष्णेन दुर्मदौ ॥ *Ibid.*, 32.

57. एवं कृष्णप्रसादेन वेदाँल्लब्ध्वा प्रजापतिः ।
प्रजाः ससर्ज भूपाल वेददृष्टेन कर्मणा ॥ *Ibid.*, 34.

58. A. Mackenzie, *Myths of Babylonia and Assyria*, p.30.

reported to be the daughter of Derceto, the fish goddess. She was deified and took the form of a goddess Nina and received offerings of fish of the image of Derceto one half is a women but the part which extends from thighs to feet terminates in the tail of a fish. A golden image of a fish was suspended in her temple.⁵⁹

The fish was sacred in Egypt also. There it was a phallic symbol. The great mother of Mendes, another form of Isis is depicted with a fish upon her head.⁶⁰

Thus it appears that the cult of the fish gods was widely defused in the ancient civilization of Babylonia and Egypt.

There are flood myths in many mythologies both in the old world and the new. But there is close resemblance between the flood stories of Babylonia and India, both being connected with the fish god. Ea addressed his message to his favourite Pir-napishtim in a dream and save himself. Instructions were given to Pir-Napishtim as to how to build a ship in which he should find refuge. Six days and six Nights went past and the tempest raged over the waters which gradually covered the land. But when the seventh day came, the wind fall, the waters grew peaceful and the sea retreated. The storm was over and the rain of destruction had ceased. Pir-napishtim looked forth. He and his wife were brought ashore by Bel.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 246.

60. *Egyptian Myths and Legends* pp. 68-69.

The Indian fish god as the instructor of Manu and the deliverer of the lore of the Veda parallels Ea the fish instructor from the Persian gulf.

In both these mythologies the fish had attained the status of a god-head. But primarily the fish like other animals belongs to folk lore. It has been said that all mythologies have animistic bases and that they are systematised folk-beliefs which were carried hither and thither in various stages of development by migrating and trading people.

3) THE CONCEPT OF KŪRMA AVATĀRA

At the outset, it may be said that the *Purāṇic* account of Viṣṇu in the form of the tortoise or the god's appearance in the form of *Kūrma* to be the pivot of the Mandāra mountain, at the time of churning the milk ocean by the gods and demons, has been considered as a *Vaiṣṇavite* adoption of mythical function found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas* too. The aiding and supporting function of the tortoise coincided with conceptions entertained by *Vaiṣṇava* devotees are of the purpose and significance of the gods incarnations to identify the animal of folklore with their particular god in the phenomenal form of a helpful living being.

In ancient *Vedic* mythology, the tortoise is said to belonged to *Varuṇa*. It did the duty of *Varuṇa* himself lying as husband besides a representative of the earth.⁶¹

61. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VII.5.1.6, VI.5.3.1

Viṣṇu is also earth's husband. The *Kūrma* is also able to exert fertilizing influences. In accordance with the nature of the animal *Kaśyapa*, 'the tortoise' enters the earth. It is considered as the father of all creatures, and Prajāpati in creating assumed the form of this reptile. The tortoise with its nature of drawing within itself all its limbs stands in later times, as a representative of the man who wishes to repress all his emotions and to restrain the activities of his senses.

Kūrma in Vedic Literature :

In the *Vedas*, the tortoise has acquired semi-divine position. In the *Sukla Yajurveda* it is spoken of as 'Lord of waters', and in the *Atharva Veda* it is called '*Kaśyapa*' identifying with Prajāpati. Also it receives the epithet of 'Svayambhu', 'self existent'. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* Prajāpati is said to have changed himself into tortoise when reproducing all creatures. This transformation came to know in Hindy mythology as the tortoise incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Specifically the *Kūrma* designated as '*Kaśyapa*' appears in the *Vedic* texts quite often. It is glorified with much adoration "as the regulator of Sun," thus here he is connected with Sun.⁶²

62. यत् ते चन्द्रं कश्यप रोचनावद यत् संहितं पुष्कलं चित्रभानु ।
 यस्मिन्सूर्या अर्पिताः सप्त साकं तस्य देवस्य ।
 क्रुद्धस्यै तदागो य एवं विद्वांसं ब्राह्मणं जिनाति ।
 उद वेपय रोहित प्रक्षिणीहि ब्रह्मज्यस्य प्रतिमुञ्च पाशान् ॥
Atharva Veda XIII.3.10.

The *Atharva Veda* further states that the term 'Kaśyapa' connotes the Sun.⁶³ The Sāyaṇa's commentary on the *Atharva Veda* also corroborates the same idea.⁶⁴ Quoting from the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* He considers Kaśyapa to be one of the eighth Sun.⁶⁵ The connection between the *Kūrma* and the Mandāra mountain which he beheld on his back at the time of churning the milk ocean, suggested in the *Vedic* passage. It is possible that the disc like shall of the tortoise, its slow movement and the act of withdrawing within its shell, may have inspired the seers to compare it or to identify with the Sun. Elsewhere in the *Caturbhāni* slow setting of the Sun is compared to the movement of the tortoise.⁶⁶

Etymology of the word 'Kūrma' :

The word *Kūrma* literally means 'a tortoise' referring to Prajāpati's form. Prajāpati is called *Kūrma* in as much as he having assumed that form, created all beings.

According to second etymology the vital airs also called *Kūrma* because these are the vital airs that retain all the creatures. The

63. परितृप्तो ब्रह्मणा वर्मणाहं कश्यपस्य ज्योतिषा वर्चसा च ।
मा मा प्रापन्निपदो दैव्या या सा मानुषीरवसृष्टा वधाय । *Ibid.*, XVII.1.28.

64. कालः प्रजा असृजत कालो अग्रे प्रजापतिम् ।
स्वयभूः कश्यपः कालात् तपः कालादजायत् ॥ *Ibid.*, XIX.53.10

65. कश्यपः आरोग भ्राजादि सप्तसूयपिक्षया अष्टमः सूर्यः ।
Taittirīya Āraṇyaka : I.7.1

66. हैमः कूर्मः इवावसीदति शनैः संक्षिप्त पादो रविः ।
Dhurtavita Samvada 70. p.119
Q : Kalpane Desai, *Iconography of Viṣṇu*,
Abhinava publications, New Delhi, 1973. p.70.

seeds of *Purāṇic* Kūrmāvatāra are found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. In the *Vācaspatyam* and the *Śabdakalpadruma*, this word stands, no doubt for an aquatic creature and the etymologies of the word are very fantastic for the word which is interpreted as a condensed from 'कुत्सित' and 'उर्मिः, कु, from कुत्सित* and स्म from उर्मिः.'⁶⁷

These interpretations come under the first category of semantic etymologies of simple words for,

i] The meaning a 'tortoise' or an epithet of Prajāpati or vital airs is not derived from the root mentioned. But the word can be compared with Greek "Klemmus", a 'tortoise'.

The Yāska also explains the word 'कच्छ' synonym of 'Kūrma'. A tortoise is traced to कच्छ + √पा which means either one who hides his mouth into his body or one who protects his other limbs by means of his peculiar mouth, or 'one who drinks with his peculiar mouth. The tortoise organ called 'कच्छ' is situated on its back. The flexibility of all organs depends upon it; it is by means of this organ that the tortoise can contact all its organs, and it is with this, that it drinks water.⁶⁸

And also mentioned in the Nirukta Indra reveals a tortoise or Kupara of boundless dimensions. The term akupara as explained

67. कुत्सितः कौ वा उर्मि वेगे यस्य मृषो । कच्छे कुत्सितः ईषत् वा उर्मि वेगो यस्य ।
के जले उर्मियस्येति व पुषोदरात् साधुः । जलवन्तुविशेषः ॥

Vācaspatyam, (Q) The etymology in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,
Dr. Nargis Varma, Nag. Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

68. पः कच्छं पाति कच्छेन पतीति वा कच्छेन पिबतीति वा ।

Nirukta IV.18, (Q) Siddeswar Varma, *The etymology of Yāska*,
Visveswarananda Institute Publishers, 1953, p. 129.

here, stands for the waters or the ocean, for the Sun and for the tortoise. It is also said here that the Kaccha or Khaccha mean one who covers the sky, thus identifying it with the Sun. It is, therefore, clear that the tortoise symbolizes the Sun and the waters and is also considered to be the Lord of Creation. It is in this connection with the Sun and the waters, that the identification of Viṣṇu with Kūrma in the *purāṇas* hold significance.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives the following account of the creation of tortoise as a wish of Prajāpati. It also discusses the symbolic importance of the tortoise. It is identified with the life sap of this world, the whole Universe and the Sun. It compares Puroḍāśa with the tortoise, and then explains its significance. "He (Prajāpati) put down a living tortoise; the tortoise means the life sap. It is life sap he thus bestows on Agni. This life sap is that tortoise of these worlds which flowed away from them when plunged into the waters; that life sap he now bestows on Agni; As far as the life sap extends so far the body extends; that tortoise thus is these worlds."⁶⁹

The following parable explains why the tortoise is the life sap of the world.

"Prajāpati desired to create the earth. So he compressed the primeval egg. The juice which flowed from, it becomes a 'tortoise'.⁷⁰

69. कूर्ममुपदधाति । रसो वै कूर्मो रसमेवैतदुपधाति यो वै स एषां लोकानामप्सु प्रविद्धानां पराङ्गसोऽत्यक्षर-
त्सङ्गण इमङ्गण लोकाः ॥ *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* : VII.5.1.1.

70. सोऽकामयत । अभ्योऽदभ्योऽधीमां प्रजनयेयमिति तां संक्लिश्याप्सु प्राविध्यत्तस्मै यः परङ् रसोऽत्यक्षरत्स
कूर्मोऽभवदथ यदूर्ध्वमुदौक्षतेदं तद्यदिदमूर्ध्वमदभ्योऽधि जायते सेय सर्वापि एवानुव्यैत्तदिदमेकमेव रूप
समदृश्यताप एव ॥ *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* : VII.5.1.2.

Kaśyapa who is personified as the life sap of the world, naturally is said to be the Lord of creation. He created the living beings; so it is called 'Kūrma'.⁷¹

It is said, "Prajāpati having assumed the form of Kūrma created living beings. What he created, he made; as he made he is called 'kūrma', and kūrma being the same as Kaśyapa, all the creatures are said to have descended from Kaśyapa. This kūrma is same as the Sun."⁷²

This particular aspect of the tortoise amply justifies the important role played in the myth of the churning ocean symbolising the myth of creation.⁷³ The shape and frame of the tortoise has also something to do with its identification with the universe, which He is the creator of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa :

"The lower shell of the tortoise is terrestrial world; as it were fixed, for fixed as it were is this world. And that upper shell is the yonder of sky; it has its ends, as it were bent down. That which is

71. स यत्कूर्मो नाम । एतद्वै रूपं कृत्वा प्रजापतिः प्रजाऽस्रजत यदमृजताकरोत्तद्यदकरोत्तस्मात्कूर्मः कश्यपो वै कूर्मस्तस्मादाहुः सर्वाः प्रजाः काश्यप्यइति । *Ibid.*, VII.5.5.

72. स यः स कूर्मोऽसौ सऽआदित्यः । अमुमेवैतदादित्य
मुपदधाति तं पुरस्तात्प्रत्यञ्चमुपदधात्यमुं तदादित्य
पुरस्तात्प्रत्यञ्च दधाति तस्मादसावादित्यः पुरस्तात्प्रत्यङ्
धीयते दक्षिणातोऽषाढायै वृषा वै कूर्मो योषाऽषाढा
दक्षिणातो वै वृषा योषामुपशेतेऽरत्निमात्रेऽरत्निमात्राद्धि
वृषा योषामुपशेते सैषा सर्वासामिष्टकानां महिषी
यदषाढैतस्यै दक्षिणतः सन्तसर्वासामिष्टकानां दक्षिणातो भवति ॥ *Ibid.*, VII.5.6.

73. J.N. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*.

between the shell is the air; that tortoise thus in these worlds. It is these worlds he lays down (to form part of the altar).⁷⁴

While piling up of the fire altar in the sacrifice, the *Kūrma* is built into it where it is left as the lord of the waters.⁷⁵

Assuming the form of tortoise, he created offsprings. From this it is clear that god is the Supreme, preserver, sustainer and cultivator of all.⁷⁶

In the *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* there is a reference to this cosmic tortoise.⁷⁷

In the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*, the Kaśyapa is also called the Lord of the waters.⁷⁸

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives the idea of the *Kūrma* incarnation in an embryonic form, where it is told that Prajāpati, desirous of creating the earth, compressed already the existing egg and threw it into the water. The juice which flowed out of it became a tortoise; and that which was spirituated upwards, dissolved itself all over the

74. तस्य यदधरं कपालम् । अथ स लोकस्तत्प्रतिष्ठितमिव भवति प्रतिष्ठिततऽइव ह्ययं लोकोभ्य यदुत्तरं सा द्यौस्तदव्यवगृहीतान्तमिव भवति व्यवगृहीतान्तेव हि द्यौरथ यदन्तरा तदन्तरिक्ष सऽण्डऽइमऽण्डव लोकाऽइमानेवैतल्लोकानुपदधाति ॥

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VIII.5.2.

75. *Ibid.*, VII.5.1.

76. यद्वेव कूर्ममुपदधाति । प्राणो कूर्मः प्राणो हिमाः सर्वा । प्रजाः करोति प्राणामेवैतदुपदधाति तं पुरस्तात्प्रत्यञ्चमुपदधाति पुरस्तात्प्रत्यञ्च प्राणां दधाति-तस्मात् पुरस्ता प्रत्यङ् प्राणो धीयते पुरुषमभ्यावृत्तं यजमाने तत्प्राणां दधाति दक्षिणातोऽषाढायै प्राणो वै कूर्मो वागषाढाप्राणो वै वाचा वृषा प्राणो मिथुनम् ॥ *Ibid.*, VII.5.7.

77. *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* III.203.27.

78. *Vājasaneyi Samhitā*, 13.31

water. Then, out of it, sprang the earth. Here it is suggested that the tortoise is at the bottom of the earth as its support. In another place, it is conveyed that Agni Vaiśvānara (Āditya) creeps over the three worlds in the form of a tortoise; while in another context a living tortoise is said to have been placed in the first layer of the 'Angicayana'. Thus it can easily be seen that the tortoise is the very root of all the worlds of which the layers are supposed to represent. It is further stated that Prajāpati in the form of a tortoise created living beings. And since a tortoise is Kaśyapa, therefore all creatures are said to have descended from Kaśyapa. Here we have the root of the story of the *Kūrma* incarnation.

The reference to *Kūrma* incarnation is found in its full fledged form in the two epics : *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. According to the *Rāmāyaṇa* the sons of Kaśyapa begotten by Diti and Aditi, i.e. the Devas and the Dānavas, decided to churn the ocean, the abode of Varuṇa, to attain eternal life through Amṛta and also to obtain the riches of the nether world. They used the Mandāra mountain as the churning staff and the serpent Vāsuki as the churning rope. Then follows the list of various objects that came out from the ocean. At the end Devas and Asuras quarrelled themselves for the Amṛta. Ultimately the sons of Diti were defeated.⁷⁹

In the *Mahābhārata*, the story assumes in little different shape. The gods and demons wanted to churn the ocean in order to obtain Amṛta. They wanted mountain Mandāra as support for the churning

79. *Rāmāyaṇa* I.41.

the staff. The gods approached the tortoise king (Kūrma-Rāja) to lend his back or shell as a support to Mandāra. Here the kūrma is not connected with Viṣṇu or any other god. Hence, it may be summarised that the churning of the ocean and the tortoise, who in its deified form is symbolically connected with the creation myth and assimilated in one legend.⁸⁰

Kūrma in Purāṇic Literature :

Here it is worthy to take a note of the episode of Durvāsa read in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (I.9) as it forms the cause for Kūrma incarnation.

One day, sage Durvāsa, emanation of Sankara, was wandering on this earth. There, the sage saw a Vidyadhari holding a celestial garland of Śāntānaka flowers in her hand. The rangers of the entire forest were attracted by the perfume of that celestial garland. Seeing that garland sage asked him the same. Solicited by him, that Vidyādhari gave that graceful garland to him.⁸¹ Adorning the garland

80. त ऊचुः कूर्मराजानमकूपारो सुरासुरः ।
अधिष्ठानं गिरेस्तस्य भवान् भवितुमर्हसि ॥
कूर्मेण तु यथोक्त्युक्ता पृष्ठमस्य समर्पितम् ।
तं शैलं तस्य पृष्ठस्थं यन्त्रेणेन्द्रो न्यपीडयत् ॥
Mahābhārata I.18-11.12

81. दुर्वासाः शङ्करस्यांशश्चचार पृथिवीमिमाम् ।
स ददर्श सृजं दिव्यामृषिर्विद्याधरीकरे ॥
सन्तानकानामखिलं यस्या गन्धेन वासितम् ।
अतिसेव्यमभूद्दृष्ट्वा तद्धनं वनचारिणम् ॥
उन्मत्तव्रतधृग्विप्रस्तां दृष्ट्वा शोभनां स्रजम् ।
तां ययाचे वरारोहां विद्याधर वधूं ततः ॥
याचिता तेन तन्वङ्गी मालां विद्याधराङ्गना ।
ददौ तस्मै विशालाक्षी सादरं प्रणिपत्य तम् ॥

Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Geeta Press, Gorakhpur. I.9.2-5.

on his head, the sage wearing the form of a maniac roamed about the earth on the way he saw Indra mounting on the Airāvata together with the celestials. And the ascetic, resembling a mad man taking garland out of his head, threw on the sovereign of the celestials. Then Indra taking the garland placed it on the head of Airāvata. The Airāvata too, overpowered by its perfume caste the garland away to the earth.⁸²

Seeing this, sage Durvāsa became angry and cursed Indra that his prosperity of the three worlds would perish.⁸³ So, due to the curse of sage Durvāsa Indra lost his lordship of three worlds, strength and valour.⁸⁴ On the consequent of this, the demons attacked the gods yet the latter could not face them as they were destitute of power.⁸⁵

Then Indra together with his celestial gods and Brahma approached Viṣṇu⁸⁶ to get the same back. Then Lord Viṣṇu said “In

82. स ददर्श तमायान्तमुन्मत्तैरावते स्थितम् ।
 त्रैलोक्याधिपतिं देवं सह देवैः शचिपतीम् ॥
 तमात्मनः स शिरसः सृजमुन्मत्तषट्पदाम् ।
 आदायामरराजाय चिक्षेपोन्मत्तवन्मुनिः ॥
 गृहीत्वाऽमरराजेन स्रगैरावतमूर्धनि ।
 न्यस्ता रराज कैलासशिखरे जह्वी यथा ॥
 मदान्धकारिताक्षोऽसौ गन्धाकृष्टेन वारणः ।
 करेणाघ्राय चिदोप तां स्रजं धरणीतले ॥ *Ibid.*, 7-10.

83. ततश्चक्रोध भगवानदुर्वासा मुनिसत्तमः । *Ibid.*, 11.

84. मया दत्तामिमां मालां यास्मान्न बहु मन्यसे ।
 त्रैलोक्यश्रीरतो मूढ विनाशमुपयास्यति ॥

85. एवमत्यन्तनिः श्रीके त्रैलोक्ये सत्त्ववर्जिते ।
 देवान् प्रति बलोह्योमं चक्रुर्देतेयदानवाः ॥ .

86. तेजसो भवतां देवाः करिष्याम्यपबृंहणम् ।
 वदाम्यहं यत्क्रियतां भवद्भिस्तदिदं सुराः ॥ →

the company of demons put all the medical plants in the milk ocean and making Mandāra the churning stick, Vāsuki the cord, churn the ocean for ambrosia. Then nectar will come up. Drinking that nectar you gain strength and valour.” Thus addressed by Lord Hari, gods and demons started churning the ocean. So, Lord Hari remaining in the midst of milk ocean, took the form of a Kūrma to support the churning stick, i.e. Mandāra.

Thus Durvāsa’s curse to the gods became the cause for Lord Viṣṇu’s incarnation as Kūrma.

Further, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes the manifestation of Lord Viṣṇu as Kūrma in detail. In days of yore the fight ensued between the gods and demons. The god were defeated and all of them took refuge in Viṣṇu. All the god eulogised and Lord Viṣṇu asking for restoration of their prosperity.⁸⁷ Eulogised by the gods, and Lord Hari appeared before then and said :

→ आनीय सहिता दैत्यैः क्षीराब्धौ सकलौषधीः ।
 प्रक्षिप्यात्रामृतार्थं ताः सकला दैत्यदानवः ॥ *Ibid.*, 76.
 मन्थानं मन्दरं कृत्वा नेत्रं कृत्वा च वासुकिम् । *Ibid.*, 77.
 मन्थताममृतं देवाः सहाये मय्यवस्थिते । *Ibid.*, 78.

87. a) एवमुक्त्वा सुरान्सर्वान् ब्रह्मा लोकपितामहः ।
 क्षीरोदस्योत्तरं तीरं तैरेव सहितो ययौ ॥
 स गत्वा त्रिदशैः सर्वैः समवेतः पितामहः ।
 तुष्टाव वाग्मिरिष्टाभिः परावरपतिम् हरिम् ॥

Viṣṇu Purāṇa, 38-39, p.38

b) पुरा देवासुरे युद्धे देवा दैत्यैः पराजिताः ।
 सर्वे ते शरणं जग्मुः क्षीराब्धितनयापतिम् ॥
 स्तोत्रेण तुष्टुवुः सर्वे समाराध्यः जगत्पतिम् ।
 कृताञ्जलिपुटा राजन् ब्रह्माद्य देवतागणः ॥

Narasimha Purāṇa, XXXVIII.1.2.

“you all go their and make a peace with the demons, put all the medicinal herbs in the milk ocean, with mountain Mandāra on the churning rod and serpent Vāsuki as the rope, taking all the demons with you, churn the ocean, I would be there to help you, out of the churning, would came out ‘amṛta’, the exiler of life by drinking which within no time the gods would be fortified with strength and valour.

By the advice of the Lord of the Universe, in full co-operation with demons they exerted all their strength in churning the ocean.

With mountain Mandāra as the churning rod and the serpent Vāsuki as the rope they started churning out the ‘amṛta’ from the ocean.⁸⁸ In fact of churning in the region facing the mouth of Vāsuki, Viṣṇu engaged the demons and in the region facing its tail gods were engaged.

In course of churning, mountain Mandāra, without any support started sinking down in the ocean. At this, for the good of the universe, Lord Hari assumed the form of a Kūrma and supported the Mandāra. Placing Himself under it,⁸⁹ when the ocean was churned there came out, most deadly poison known as ‘kālakūta’. All the

88. मन्थानं मन्दरं कृत्वा नेत्रं कृत्वाथ वासुकिम् ।
ततो माथितुमारब्धं नृपते तरसामृतं ॥
सर्वलोकहितार्थाय कूर्मरूपमधारयत् ।
आत्मानं सम्प्रवेश्याथ मन्दरस्य गिरेरधः ॥ *Ibid.*, 17.20.

89. क्षीरोदमध्ये भगवान्कूर्मरूपि स्वयंहरिः ।
मन्थनाद्रेरधिष्ठानं भ्रमतोऽभून्माहामुने ॥
रूपेणान्येन देवानां मध्ये चक्रगदाधरः ।
चकर्ष नागराजानं दैत्यमध्येऽपरेण ॥
उपर्याक्रान्तवाञ्छलं बृहद्वपेण केशवः ।
तथापरेण मैत्रेय यन्न दृष्टं सुरासुरैः ॥

Viṣṇu Purāṇa 88-90.

Nagas part took of it; and whatever was left out, was taken by Samkara at the command of Nārāyaṇa. In the second round of churning, came out Airāvata. In the third there appeared most beautiful nymph 'Ūrvaśī', and in fourth round, came out Pārijāta, the great tree of Svarga. Then in fifth there was moon and finally Gandharvas and different kinds of divine jewels and ornaments. All the gods and demons were extremely delighted to look at these wonderful object produced from the ocean.

At the command of the Lord the clouds began to drizzle, on the side of the gods and also sweet pleasant breeze began to blow in the direction of gods; But many demons affected by the poisonous breath of serpent Vāsuki lost their life.⁹⁰

From that ocean, arose Śrī, then came out Dhanvantari with a pitcher full of 'amṛta'. The demons were trying to take that amṛta. Then Viṣṇu appeared in the form of a woman endowed with all the auspicious features and approached the demons and recovered the amṛta from them. The gods drank that 'amṛta' and got strength and valour; they then defeated the demons and regained their kingdom.⁹¹

90. अभवञ्जातहर्षास्ते तत्र सर्वे गुरासुरः ।
 देवपक्षे ततो मेधाः स्वल्पं वर्षन्ति संस्थिताः ॥
 कृष्णाज्ञया च वायुश्च सुखं वाति सुरा न प्रति ।
 विषनिःश्वासबातेन वासुकेश्चापरे हताः ।

Narasimha Purāṇa, 30-31.

91. पीतेमृते च बलिभिर्देवैर्देत्यचमूस्तदा ।
 वध्यमाना दिशोभेजे पातालं च विवेशवे ॥
 ततो देवा मुदा युक्ताः शङ्खचक्रगदाभृतम् ।
 प्रणिपत्य यथापूर्वमाशासत्तन्निविष्टपम् ॥

Viṣṇu Purāṇa 111-112.

Kūrma in the History of World Culture :

The tortoise occupies a more exalted position in the folk lore of many races of Asia and America. Its worship obtains certain primifire Indian tribes, and in western Bengal disguised tortoise worship in the image of Dharma Thakur, is even now a living cult amongst certain low caste people.

The available myths and legends, about the tortoise deity are tabulated below and compared with the symbolisms associated with Dharma Thakur image.

- a) Both in Asia and America, the turtle is one of the mythical animals on which the world rests. In the Iroquois myths the world was at first covered with water and then Antaenstsic fell from heaven, the animals held a conference to decide how she was to be received and the turtle caught her on his broad back, with the aid of mud or sand brought up by water fowl the earth was formed.
- b) In China the tortoise was used for the purpose of divination. The arched shell represent heaven the flat nether plate, the earth and the flesh mankind.⁹²

In China, the tortoise has divine attributes. Tortoise shell is a symbol of unchangeability and symbol of rank used for court girdles ----- During the reign of the chinese emperor Yao, a tortoise rose from

92. Martindale, *The Religious of Mankind*, Benn's Sixpenny Library, 1931, p.22.

the water and rested on the ultar; on its back was an inscribed order instructing Yao to reign in favour of Shan.

**The conception of the tortoise with the flood,
the Sun and the Moon :**

The tortoise plays a conspicuous part in North American myths. In same versions the tortoise and the moon goddess are one and the same; in others, the louder of thunder are due to the tortoise. The tortoise is also the cause of floods. The mother of two gods Sun and Moon is represented as falling from heaven into the primeval waters and being received on the back of the tortoise.”

A gigantic mythical tortoise is supposed in the Far East to live in the depths of the ocean. It has one eye situated in the middle of the body. Once in every three thousand years, it rises to the surface and turns over on its back. So that it may see the Sun.⁹³

4) THE CONCEPT OF VARĀHA AVATĀRA

Introduction :

The *Varāha* incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu has been known the third incarnation. The references of this incarnation can be traced to the *vedic* literature. In particular, the *R̥gveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda*, *Kapisthala*, *Kathā Samhitā*, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* etc. make implicit references to the concept of Varāha. Such references have been found

93. D.A. Mackenzie, *Myths of China and Japan*, p-112.

re-enforced in the *purāṇas* like *Bhāgavata*, *Agni*, *Viṣṇu*, *Padma*, *Kālikā* etc. before looking into these references it is better one should know the very significance of the derivative meaning of the word *Varāha*.

Etymology of the word *Varāha* :

The word “*Varāha*” may be split into *Vara*+*Aha* giving the etymology as “कृणोतीति वरः”, “आहोतीति आहः”. The significance is to refer to the principle of force which envelopes and prescribes a limit to an undefined field; and by its controlling potency it gives to that which is formless and creates a system of forces and counter forces, regulates the things according to a magnetic rhythm. Now this principle is most illustrated in *Sūrya* and its solar system; and therefore the main *Varāha* form is exemplified in *Sūrya*.

In the *Nirukta*, *Yāska* offers the following explanation while discussing the term *Varāha*;⁹⁴ “*Varāha*” is the designation of both, the cloud and the boar; for *Varāha* is one who eats as the best type of food. The cloud is *Varāha* because He takes the best food, i.e. the water. So also is the boar as He takes the best roots that grow up. Thus, the cloud and the boar are etymologically identified. We can say that *Varāha* is their morphic form of the *Vṛtra*, that is, cloud. The equation of *Varāha* with clouds or premordial waters seems to be a sound preposition. The same idea is found in a hymn of the *Atharvaveda*.⁹⁵

94. वराहो मेधो भवति वराहारः । वरमाहारमहर्षीर । इति च ब्राह्मणम् ॥

Nirukta V.4.

95. मत्वं बिभ्रतीगुरु भृद् भद्रपापस्य निधनं तितिक्षुः ।
वराहेण पृथिवी संविदाना सूकराय विजिहीते मृगाय ॥

Atharva-veda XII.1.48.

Varāha in the Vedic Literature :

In the *Rgveda* several gods are equated with Varāha myth. In the form of demon Vṛtra, this myth plays a significant role in the vedic mythology which laid the foundation of the whole of the Varāha myth in the latter period.⁹⁶

Several mantras are connected with this myth in the *Rgveda*. Viṣṇu carried away hundred buffalo and cooked rice milk, which are guarded by a boar called Emūṣa, who had apparently taken up His station on the other side of the mountain.⁹⁷ Emūṣa is the name of Varāha first occurs in the *Rgveda*. Emūṣa is a symbolical term composed of three elements a+im+usha (आ+इम्+उष् from the root वस्) that which envelops His earth and the cosmos. In the Vedas, Vṛtra is the personification of the clouds; and therefore, the Varāha myth is identified with Vṛtra representing the natural phenomena.

The Maruts are called the 'iron tusked boars', and the 'wild boars'.⁹⁸ Rudra is addressed as the boar of the sky. He is spoken of

96. अनुत्का महीं इति पाजसी इति अचक्रे इति द्यावाक्षाम ।

मदताम इन्द्रः कर्मन् । त्वम् वत्रम् आऽशयानम सिरासु महः वज्रेण सिस्वपः वराहम् ॥

Rgveda : I.121.11

अस्य इत् ॐ इति मातुः सवनेषु सद्यः महः पितुम् पपिऽवान चारु अन्ना । मुपायत विष्णुः पचतम् सहीयान् विध्यत् वराहम् तिरः अद्रिम् अस्ता ॥ *Ibid.*, I.61.7.

सः इत् दासम् तुविऽरवम् पतिः दन् षट्ऽअक्षम् त्रिऽशीर्षाणम् दमन्यत् । अस्य मित्रः नु ओजसा वृधानः विपा वराहम् अयःऽअग्रया हन्निति हन ॥ *Ibid.*, X.99.6.

97. विश्वा इत् ता विष्णुः आ अभश्त् ऊरुऽक्रमः त्वाऽइषितः शतम् महीषान् क्षीरऽपाकम् ओदनम् वराहम् इन्द्रः एमुषम् ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.77.10

98. इन्द्रः वल्म रक्षितारम् दुधानाम करेणऽइव वि चकर्तरेवेण ।

स्वेदांजिऽभिः आऽशिरम् इच्छमानः अरोदयत् पणिम् आगाः अमुष्णात् ॥ *Ibid.*, X.67.7

as 'heavenly Varāha,' having Kaparda locks on His head.⁹⁹ There is again a reference to Varāha as Sūrya, who is same as Rudra.

Atharvaveda speaks of an intimate relation between Varāha and Pṛthvi.¹⁰⁰

"The earth goddess loves the Varāha and opens herself for the wild boar. When the Brāhmaṇa writer identified Varāha with Prajāpati. It is stated in the *Atharvaveda* VIII.7.23,¹⁰¹ that the boar knows the plant (*Varāho' Veda Viridham*). II.27.2, it inform us of a ceremony to be performed with a plant in order to be victorious in a disputation; the plant, the root of which is to be chewed is addressed as follows : "the eagle discovered thee; the hog (sukara) dug thee with his snout." In this myth, the Varāha is said to be in possession of Odana - "grain mashed and cooked with milk."¹⁰²

In the Brāhmaṇic literature, the relation of Varāha myth with goddess Pṛthvi is fairly shown. This myth becomes a personified form of the great deity Prajāpati. The *Kapisthala Kathā Samhitā* refers to the following legend concerning the form of Varāha. "In the beginning

99. दिवः वराहम् अरुषम् कपर्दिनम् त्वेषम् रूपम् नमसा
निहयामहे । हस्ते बिभ्रत् भेषजा वार्याणि शर्म वर्म छर्दिः अस्मभ्यम् यंसत् ॥ *Ibid.*, I.114.5

100. मत्वं बिभ्रतिगुरु भृद् भद्रपापस्य निधनं तितिक्षुः ।
वराहेण पृथिवी संविदाना सूकराय विजिहीते मृगाय ॥
Atharvaveda, XII.1.48

101. वराहः वेद वीरुधं नकुलः वेद भेषजीम् ।
सर्पाः गन्धर्वाः याः विदुः ताः अस्मै अवसे हुवे ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.7.23.

102. आपः पुत्रासः अभि सम् विशध्वम् इमम् जीवम् जीवऽधन्याः समऽएत्यं । तासां भजध्वम् अमृतम् यम्
आहुः यम् ओदनम् पचति वाम् जनीत्री ॥ *Ibid.*, XII.3.4

of this universe, there were primeval waters. Once Lord Prajāpati, taking the form of Varāha, entered it and brought up the soil exactly of the size of his snout. That soil became this earth."¹⁰³

There is a similar legend in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* also. It says, in the beginning there were only primeval waters. Prajāpati taking the form of Vāyu, entered the waters, where He saw Pṛthvi. Then he assumed the form of boar, He brought her up on the surface and assuming the form of Viśvākarma, planned for creation. She then accordingly expanded and became Pṛthvi.¹⁰⁴

The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* also mentions that the earth was upheld by the black boar with a hundred arms.¹⁰⁵ Myth of Varāha rescuing the earth from the waters, deserves an idea that Varāha is one of the forms of Prajāpati in its initial stages.

In the *R̥gveda*, Varāha is referred to as Vṛsākapi. (X.86) The *Mahābhārata* also states that Vṛsākapi is the form of Varāha.¹⁰⁶

103. सलिलमेव स प्रजापतिर्वराहो भूत्वा पन्यमञ्जत् ।

तस्य यावन्मुखं आसीत् तावतीं मृदमहरत् । सैयमभवत् ॥

Kapisthala Kathā Samhitā, VI.7.

104. आपो वा इदमग्रे सलिलमासीत् । तस्मिन् प्रजापतिर्वायु भूत्वाऽचरत् । स इमामपश्यत् तां वराहो भूत्वाऽहरत् । तां विश्वकर्मा भूत्वा व्यमार्त । साऽप्रथत् सा पृथिवी अभवत् ॥

Taittirīya Samhitā VII.1.5.1

105. भूमिर्धेनुधरणी लोकधारिणी ।

उद्धृतासि वराहेण कृष्णेन शतबाहुना ॥

Taittirīya Āraṇyaka X.1.8.

106. कपिर्वराहः श्रेष्ठ च धर्मश्च वृष उच्यते ।

तस्मात् वृषाकापिं प्राहः काश्यपो मां प्रजापतिः ॥

Mahābhārata, XII.330.24.

The extension of this myth is found in the *Taittirīya Samhitā*.¹⁰⁷ It describes that once sacrifice went away from the gods in the form of Viṣṇu and entered the earth. Indra declares himself to be “a slayer in an inaccessible place. Lord Viṣṇu replies : “I am a carrier off from an inaccessible place,” in the form of Varāha, and keeps the wealth of the Asuras concealed the side of the seven hills. He asks Indra to slay the boar. Indra does so and asks Viṣṇu to carry boar away. Thus they won the wealth of the Asuras. A paraller description appears in the *Kapisthala Kathā Samhitā* too,¹⁰⁸ It says thus :

“There is a *Varāha* called *Emūṣa* behind the twenty forts of the Asuras. He has all the wealth of the demons. The term is translated as *Emūṣa* as fierce.¹⁰⁹ The term is really the keynote to the character of this myth. *Muṣa* (*Moṣa*) means the one who carries off or steals; and *Vama* stand for the riches or treasures. Thus, *Varāha* or *Emūṣa* *Varāha* means the one who carries off the riches or treasures. Therefore, the earth is the embodiment of the riches. This character is reflected in the words of *Matsya Purāṇa*.¹¹⁰

107. यज्ञो देवेभ्यो निलायत् विष्णु रूपं कृत्वा स पृथिवीं प्राविशत् तं
देवा हस्तान्त्स रभ्यैच्छन् तमिन्द्रं उपर्युपर्यत्यक्रामत् सोऽब्रवीत्
को माहयमुपर्युपर्यत्यक्रमीदित्यहं दुर्गे हन्तेत्यथ
कस्त्वामित्यहं दुर्गोदाहर्तेति सोऽब्रवीद् दुर्गे वै हन्ताऽवोचथा वराहोऽयं वाममोष ॥
Taittirīya Samhitā VI.2.4.2

108. एमूषो नामायं वराह इत्यब्रवीदेकविंशत्याः पुरामश्ममहीनां पारे यत्किंचासुराणां वामं वसु तेन तिष्ठति तं
जहि य एष कृच्छे हन्तवोचथा इति ॥

Kapisthala Kathā Samhitā XXXVIII.5.

109. A.B. Keith, *Indian Mythology*, Vol. VI, p.30.

110. छायापत्नी सहायो वै मणिश्रृंग इवोच्छितः ।

Matsya Purāṇa : 248.73.

The earliest notice of the Varāha is found in the Brāhmaṇa literature. In the *Taittiriya Samhitā* and in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* the creator Prajāpati afterwards known as Brahma, took the form of Boar for the purpose of raising the earth. The *Taittiriya Samhitā* says, this universe was formerly waters, fluid, on it Prajāpati becoming wind moved. He saw this earth. Having assumed the form of boar, he took her up; and in the form of Viśvākarma he wiped her.

In the Purāṇas, however, this old legend of the Brāhmaṇas has been appropriated to Viṣṇu. According to the *Harivaṃśa purāṇa*, the earth burdened with the weight of hills and mountains complained to Lord Viṣṇu that she was unable to sustain the load. She sank into the waters below and prayed to Viṣṇu to support her. Then Hari assumed the form of Varāha and raised her up. Then Viṣṇu put into order the disturbed surface of the earth. Then, the demon named Hiranyākṣa claimed the earth and challenged the gods. The gods could not stand the contest and were getting afflicted much. Viṣṇu once again assumed the form of big Varāha and killed the demon.

In this purāṇic account, Viṣṇu, appears not only as a deliverer of the drowned earth, but also as a victorious conqueror and slayer of a demon. The first detailed account of this myth is found in the *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa*.¹¹¹

111. ततो विभुः प्रवराहरुपधृक् वृषाकपिः प्रसभमथैकदंष्ट्रया ।
 समुद्धरद् धरणिमतुल्यविक्रमो । महायशाः सकलाहितार्थमच्युतः ॥
Harivaṃśa Purāṇa - III.34.48.
 नीलमेघप्रतीकाशं मेघस्तनितनिःस्वनम् ।
 महागिरेः सहननं श्वेतदीप्तोग्रदंष्ट्रिणम् ॥ *Ibid.*, III.34.31.

The idea of the sacrificial boar seems related to another myth in the *Taittiriya Saṁhitā*. A boar, the plunderer of wealth kept the materials of the Asuras on the other side of seven hills. Indra placing up a bunch of kuśa grass and piercing through these hill slew the boar. Viṣṇu, named Yajña carried the boar off as a sacrifice for the gods. So the gods obtained the goods of the Asuras.¹¹²

In this Tantric account the boar has been raised to cosmic proportions all the sacrificial rites being traced to different parts of the body. It thus takes on the place of the cosmic man in the *Ṛgveda*. Thus, in all the three main types of Hindu scriptures, the boar appears as a deliverer of the earth. But in the purāṇas and the Tantras respectively, it appears also as a slayer of the demon and as an amorous being.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* leads a step in clarifying the imaginary of Varāha by saying that Varāha is a Fat-dripping animal.

“The gods once put a pot of ghrhita in the fire, from that a boar was produced; hence the boar is full of fat, it was produced from ghrhita. Hence cows also readily take to a boar,” it is indeed their own essence or life sap. Obviously the boar is an animal in which thick layers of fat underlie the skin. But this is only superficial, the real meaning is that Sūrya is the fat dripping animal from whose fat the cosmos is being created.”

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that the earth was of the size of a span. A boar named ‘Emūṣa’ raised her up. Her lord Prajāpati,

112. Macdonell ‘Vedic Mythology’ p.41.

in consequence prospers him with this pair and makes him complete. It is also said here that *Varāha* is the triple force of the cosmos.¹¹³

In the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is Brahma who becomes a boar, rises up the earth and creates the whole world; before all was water only. (2.110.3).

In *Mahābhārata* (3.83.18 310.28) and else where Kṛṣṇa is called the great boar, fire and Sun. And we find the detailed account of how Kṛṣṇa - Viṣṇu assumed the form of a roaring boar, penetrated into the nether regions and destroyed the daityas, dānavas and demons who had become jealous of the prosperity of the gods and oppressed the earth with a heavy load, so that “she seemed as if going down into the nether region.” This version of the story approaches the classical form of the *Varāha-Avatāra*.

In the *Mahābhārata* he is considered to be one of the eleven Rudras.¹¹⁴ Here he has been incorporated in the Avatāra cycle of Viṣṇu. It is stated that Madhusūdhana or Janardhana assumed the form of *Varāha*,¹¹⁵ and also that Vṛṣākapi is the form of *Varāha*.

Varāha is the creature of par excellence who eats the *Pravargya* portion of the food as it is rejected out of the body of a living being pranic centre. Sūrya is called *Varāha* because as *kāla* or *saṁvastara*, it eats the whole world. But on the other hand as *Satya Nārāyaṇa*

113. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XIV.1.2.11

114. *Mahābhārata*, XIII.7091

115. मधुसूदनमित्याहुकृषयश्च जनार्दनम् ।
वराहश्चैव सिंहश्च त्रिविक्रमगतिः प्रभुः ॥
Mahābhārata, VI.63.13.

it is also organising and substantiating the energy radiated by its own immortal centre which is Brahman. The essence of the whole conception of *Vajna Varāha* is that there are two stages in the evolution of cosmos. The ocean in the *Varāha* story is also called *Rasatala* and *Varāha* is named as *Ādi-Varāha*. The union of the two parents namely *Svayambhu* and *Virāj* or *Nārāyaṇa-Varāha* and *Bhūdevi* leads to cosmic creation. This was an important theme in the philosophy of the *Pancharātrāgama* to which *Kālidāsa* has drawn pointed attention :

रसातलदादिभवेन पुसां भुवः प्रयुक्तोद्वहनक्रिययाः ।

अस्याच्छमभ्यः प्रलयप्रवृद्धं मुहूर्तवक्त्राभरणं बभूव ॥ *Raghuvamśa* 13.8.

Varāha in the Purāṇas

An account of the Lord *Viṣṇu*'s incarnation as *Varāha* occurs in the many *Mahā purāṇas* such as the *Bhāgavata*, *Viṣṇu purāṇa*, *Varāha purāṇa*, *Matsya purāṇa*, *Agni purāṇa*, *Padma purāṇa*, *Liṅga purāṇa*, *Kūrma purāṇa* and in the *Upa-purāṇas* such as *Narasimha purāṇas*, *Kālikā purāṇa*, *Vāyu purāṇa* and in the *Harivaṃśa*.

Of the *purāṇas* dealing with an account of *Varāha avatāra*, the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* is more explicative. However, the third skandha, of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* provides an account of *Varāhavatāra* in detail. And the fifteenth chapter of this *skandha* reads the cause for the Lord's incarnation as *Varāha*.

Once the *Sanaka* and his three brothers performed severe penance, with a desire to gain the vision of *Viṣṇu*. After their penance they came to *Vaikuntha* and were very eager to behold god.

Therefore, even so, spectacular scenarios did not attract their mind. In their present attempts at Yoga, they passed through six successive doors, and attained the seventh door. There they saw the two doorkeepers named Jaya and Vijaya who were more dearer to Lord Viṣṇu. Both of them had maces in their hands and they were adorned with precious ornaments. They did not allow those ascetics to enter the door. So, the sages grew very angry and cursed them to be driven out from that holy region of Vaikuntha.

Being cursed from the sages, both approached Lord of Vaikuntha and requested to wipe out the effects of the curse. When it is suggested as not being possible they two requested Lord Viṣṇu as to be killed by Lord himself in all three lives.

Accordingly they were born to Diti wife of Kaśyapa and were named as Hiraṇyakaśipa and Hiraṇyākṣa. Both of them grew very powerful demons and haughty due to their might. They over powered the celestial gods.

Further, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* states forming part of the story of Hiraṇyākṣa's conquest of the four quarters. Fearing death at the hands of none by virtue of the boon got from Brahma Hiraṇyakaśipa was puffed up with pride and brought under his sway by the strength of his arms the spheres along with their gardian deities. His younger brother Hiraṇyākṣa who always tried to please him and was very fond of war, once went up to heaven, mace in land seeking combat. His tempo was difficult to resist. He had anklets of gold tinkling about his feet. Adorned with Vaijayanti garland, he rested his mace on his shoulders. The gods therefore, were seized with fear.

So demons saw that they had vanished before his might.¹¹⁶ Hiranyākṣa returned to the ocean, the aquatic creatures forming the host of Varuṇa were distracted with fear and ran away. Moving about in the ocean, Hiranyākṣa smote the gigantic waves tossed by the winds with his mace and again reached Vibhavari, capital of Varuṇa. There he fall at latter's feet like low man to make him fun, and said to give him a battle. Varuṇa come out of the palace, admitted his incapacity of fight Hiranyākṣa and suggested to him to challenge Mahāviṣṇu.

Hearing the words of Varuṇa, the proud and vainglorious Hiranyākṣa hurriedly betook himself to the depth of the ocean. It was during this period of time that the earth got engulfed in water. Svayambhu Manu requested his father, Brahma to raise up the earth from water. But now elsewhere could be seen the earth everywhere, it was only a vast expanse of water. Brahma then meditated upon Viṣṇu who came out through Brahma's nose in the form of a tiny boar. He saw this victorious Divine Boar hearing the earth upwards on his tusks and robbing the demon on his splendour by His reddish eyes. Turning to the Lord, Hiranyākṣa said, "Oh ! an amphibious

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116. a) चक्रे हिरण्यकाशिपुर्दोभ्यां ब्रह्मवरेण च ।
वशे सपालाल्लोकांस्त्रीनकुतो मृत्युरुद्धतः ॥
- b) हिरण्याक्षोऽनजस्तस्य प्रियः प्रीतिकृदन्वहन् ।
गदापाणिर्दिवं यातो युयुत्सुर्मृगयन् रणम् ॥
- c) त्वं वीक्ष्य दुःसहजवं रणत्काञ्चननुपुरम् ।
वैजयन्त्या स्रजा जुष्टमंसन्यस्तमहागदम् ॥
- d) मनो वीर्यवरोत्तिकमसृव्यमकुतोभयम् ।
भीता निलित्यिरे देवस्तार्क्ष्यत्रस्ता इवाहयः ॥
- e) स वै तिरोहितान् दृष्ट्वा महसा स्वेन दैत्यराट् ।
सेन्द्रान् देवगणान् क्षीवानपश्यन् व्यनदद् भृशम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 19-23.

beast come on fool leave the earth. The maker of the universe entrusted her to us. You can not escape unscathed with her¹¹⁷ before my eyes.” Thus he gave a chase to the Lord.

The Lord place the earth on the surface of the water within his sight and transferred to her His own energy. Hiranyākṣa and Lord Hari in the form of a boar struck each other with their huge maces in great rage, each seeking his own victory. There was a keen rivalry between the two combatants.

Brahma being surrounded the sages came to witness the combat between Hiranyākṣa and the Supreme Spirit who assumed the semblance of Varāha with his Māyā. Seeing this Hiranyākṣa was full of manliness and devoid of fear, had referred the blows of the Lord.¹¹⁸ Then Lord Brahma requested Lord Hari slay this sinful demon and establish the worlds in peace.¹¹⁹

Here the description of their combat is worth reading, as it weaves Tāmasic powers against Sattvik powers, and finally upholds the victory of super-natural power of Lord Viṣṇu.

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117. तदेवमाकर्ण्य जलेशभाषितं महामनास्तद विगणस्य दुर्मदः ।
 हरेर्विदित्वा गतिमङ्ग नारदाद रसातलं निर्विविशे त्वरान्वितः ॥
 ददर्श तत्राभिजितं धराधरं प्रोन्नोयमानावनिमग्नदंष्ट्रया मण्णन्तमक्षणा स्वरुचोऽरुणश्रिया जताह चाहो
 वनगोचरो मुगः ॥
 आद्वैनमेह्यज्ञ महीं विमुञ्च नो रसौकसां विश्वसृजेयमर्पिता ।
 न स्वस्ति यास्यस्यनया ममेक्षतः सुराधमासादिसूकराकृते ॥ *Ibid.*, 1-3.
118. दैत्यस्य यज्ञावयवस्य मायाग्रहीतवराहतनोर्माहात्मनः कौरव्य मद्यां द्विषतोर्विमर्दनं दिदृक्षुरागाहषिभिर्वृतः
 ॥ स्वराट् ॥ *Ibid.*, 20.
119. दिष्ट्या त्वां विहितं मृत्युमयम्पसादितः स्वयम् ।
 विक्रम्यैनं मृधे हत्वा लोकानाधे हि शर्मणि ॥ *Ibid.*, 28.

Lord Viṣṇu, who represents all the sacrifices, discharged His Sudarśana, which was capable of dispersing the Mayas displayed by Hiranyākṣa. That very movement, all of a sudden, a shudder ran through the heart of Diti as she recalled the words of her husband sage Kaśyapa; and blood flowed from her breasts. When Hiranyākṣa saw, his magic forces dispelled, he went into the presence of Lord Varāha once more; and full of rage he encompassed Him within his arms in order to crush Him.¹²⁰ But he found the Lord standing outside the circle of his arms. As he began to strike the Lord with his fists, which were harder than adamant, Lord Viṣṇu slapped him in the root of his ear, even as Indra hit the demon Vṛtra.

As struck by the Lord Nārada, the demon's body began to wheel, the eye balls bulged out of their sockets; and he fell down dead like a gigantic tree uprooted by the wind. His arms, legs and hair on the head were broken and scattered. Brahma and others saw the demon with fearful tasks lying on the ground. Having thus killed Hiranyākṣa of irresistible prowess, Lord Hari, who had appeared in the form of Ādivarāha retired to His own Realm.

As seen in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* with a view to killing Hiranyākṣa and lifting up the earth when Lord Viṣṇu incarnated in the form of

120. प्रादुर्भूतानां मायानामासुरीणां विनाशयत् ।
 सुदर्शनास्त्रं भगवान् प्रायुक्क दयितं त्रिपात् ॥
 तदा दितेः समभवत् सहसा हृदि वेपथुः ।
 स्मरन्त्या भर्तुरादेशं स्तनाच्चासृक् प्रसुप्नुवे ॥
 विनष्टासु स्वमायासु भूयश्चात्रज्य केशवम् ।
 रूषोपगुहमानोऽमुं ददृशेऽवस्थितं बहिः ॥ *Ibid.*, 22-24.

Mahāvarāha all gods including goddess earth praised the supreme glory of Lord Viṣṇu, by using many significant His adjective which establish over all Supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu such adjectives denote magnanimous epithets of Him, such as पुण्डरीकाक्ष, शङ्खचक्र गदाधरः, जनार्दन, गोविन्द, वासुदेव, अखिलज्ञानमय, अव्यय, अनन्त, अव्यक्त, व्यक्तमय, परा, परमात्मा, यज्ञपति, यज्ञपुरुष, मूर्त, अमूर्त, दृश्य, अदृश्य etc. The adjectives to Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Viṣṇu, undoubtedly speak of identity between the original form of Lord Viṣṇu and His incarnated forms which is upheld by the *Upaniṣadic* texts नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन् । as can be seen in its interpretation of *Madhva*. Similarly the other purāṇas like purāṇa, have exclaimed Lord Viṣṇu's overall Supremacy by using such epithets.

The *Matsya Purāṇa* narrates the figure of Viṣṇu in the *Varāha* form. The *Varāha* was ten *Yojanas* in breath a thousand *Yojanas* in high colour is very dark like a cloud; and his roar was like thunder, His bulk was vast as a mountain; His tusks were white,, sharp and fearful, fire flashed from his eyes like lightening, He was radiant as the Sun, His shoulders were round, fat and large. He strode along like a powerful lion, His haunches were fat, His body was smooth and beautiful.¹²¹

121. जलक्रीडारुचिस्तस्माद्वराहं वपुरास्थितः ।

अदृश्यं सर्वभूतानां वाङ्मयं ब्रह्मा संस्थितम् शतयोजन ॥६३॥

विस्तीर्णमुच्छ्रितं द्विगुणं ततः । नीलजीमूतसंज्ञाशं

मेघस्तनितनिस्वनम् ॥ गिरिसंहननं भीमं श्वेत तीक्ष्णग्रदंष्ट्रिणम् । विद्युदग्निप्रतीकाशमादित्यसमतेजसम् ॥

पीनोन्नतकटीदेशे वृषलक्षणपूजितम् । रूपमास्थाय विपुलं वाराहमजितोहरिः ॥६७॥

पृथिव्युद्धरणायैव प्रविवेश रसातलम् । एदपादो

यूपदंष्ट्रं क्रतुदन्तश्चितीमुखः ॥६७॥

अग्निजिह्वो दर्भलोमा ब्रह्मशीर्षो महातपाः ।

अहोरात्रेक्षणधरो वेदाङ्गश्रुतिभूषणः ॥६८॥ →



According to the *Kalikā Purāṇa* the story is different. The novel features have been added to the old myth and it has been elaborated into a love story. Viṣṇu took the form of a boar and delivered the sunken earth by driving a tusk through her. Then he assumed a form of serpent Ananta with seven heads and supported the earth with one head. Then he set about the task of putting the earth to order. (chap. 25)

In this version, the story of slaying the demon Hiraṇyākṣa has been dropped and a fresh motif has been introduced. Viṣṇu in the process of receiving goddess earth fell in love with her and forced her to accept him. The earth could not sustain the impact of the boar and Śiva interceded on her behalf and persuaded Viṣṇu to give up the boar form. Viṣṇu agreed and vanished from Śiva's sight. But he took shelter in the lokāloka mountains in the form of a *Varāha* accompanied by the earth as a *Varāhi*, a sow. The amorous boar pursued a course of never ending desires. Three sons called Suvṛtta Kanaka, and Ghora

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- आज्यनासः स्त्रुधतुण्डः सामधोषस्वनोमहान् ।
 सत्यधर्ममयः श्रीमान्कर्मविक्रमसत्क्रमः ॥ ६९ ॥
 प्रायश्चित्तन खोघोरः पशुजानुर्मखाकृतिः ।
 उद्राथा होमलिङ्गोऽथ बीजौषधि महाकलः ॥ ७० ॥
 वाय्वन्तरात्मा यज्ञास्थिविक्रतिः सोमशोणितः ।
 वेदस्कन्धो हविर्गन्धो हव्यकव्यविभागवान् ॥ ७१ ॥
 प्राग्वंशंकायो द्युतिमान् नानादीक्षाभिरन्धितः ।
 दक्षिणा हृदयो योगि महासत्रमयो महान् ॥ ७२ ॥
 उपाकर्मोष्ठरुचकः प्रवर्ग्यावर्तभूषणः ।
 नानाच्छन्दोगतिपथोगुह्योपनिषदासनः ॥ ७३ ॥
 ध्वायापत्नीसहायो वै मणिशृङ्गद्वोच्छितः ।
 रसातलतले मग्नां रसातलतलङ्गताम् ॥ ७४ ॥
 प्रभुर्लोकहितार्थाय दष्ट्रांग्रेणोज्झहार ताम् ।
 ततः स्वस्थानमानीय वराहः पृथिवीधरः ॥ ७५ ॥

W.H. Wilson, *Matsya Purāṇa*, Nag Publishers,
 Delhi, 1983, Ch-CCXLVIII, 63-75, p-1080.

were born and they were creating havoc in the world. The gods waited upon Viṣṇu and laid there grievances before him. Viṣṇu confessed Śiva that he was tied by desires and was unable willingly to give up the boar forms. He therefore, asked Śiva to kill him by assuming the form of 'Śarabha' a mythical animal with eight legs. Śiva agreed and became a Śarabha. Then ensued a fight between the boar and the Śarabha. Ultimately the boar was killed. Then from the different parts of the boar's body all the various sacrifices arose.¹²² (chap. 29-31)

Pañca-Varāhaki :

The concept of Pañca-Varāhaki designates five epithets of Varāha form of God.

122. कस्त्वां चान्यः क्षमो वोढु वराहं ते वपुर्विभो ।

विशेषतस्त्वया पृथ्वी सकामा घर्षिता जले ।

स्त्रीधर्मिणी त्वत्तेजोन्निः साधाद् गर्भं च दारुणम् ॥

Kalika Purāṇa -Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1991, ch-29.13.

रजस्वला क्षमा गर्भं यमाधत्त जगत्पते ।

तस्मादयस्तनयो भावो सोऽप्यादास्यति दुर्यशः ॥

एष प्रप्यासुरं भावं देवगन्धर्वहिंसकः ।

भविष्यतीति लोकेशः प्राह माँ दक्षसन्निधौ ॥ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

काले प्रप्ते पुनस्त्वन्यं कायं वराहमद्भुतम् तै ।

करिष्येहं दुराधर्षं लोकानां भवनाय वै ॥२१॥

इति संज्विन्त्य स तदा सूकरः परमेश्वरः ॥

जगाद शरभं देवं महदेवं महाबलं ॥ *Ibid.*, 131.

ततस्ते तान त्रिभिः पुत्रैर्विधध्वं जगतां हिते ।

कनकेन सुवृत्ते घोरेण जगन्मयीम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 134.

रेतो भागात्तथैवाज्यं स्वधामन्त्रा समुदगताः ।

यज्ञालयः पृष्ठभागादहृत्पद्मद्यज्ञ एव च ।

तदात्मा यज्ञपुरुषो मुञ्जाः कक्षात्समुदगताः ॥ *Ibid.*, 33.

एवं यज्ञ वराहस्य शरीरं यज्ञतामगात् ।

यज्ञरूपेण सकलमाप्यायितुमिदं जगत् ॥ *Ibid.*, 35.

The Vedic conception of creative modality comprises the five fold pattern of *Svayambhu*, *Parameṣṭi*, *Sūrya*, *Chandra* and *Prthvi*. The first two being unmanifest and the last three manifest. They are known as *Pañcapura*, *Pañcajana*, *Pañca Kristhti*, *Pañca-deva* or the pantadic scheme of creation. Each one of those has its *Varāha* or the developing principle by which their respective forms are held fast together round a fixed centre which does not permit the force to disintegrate and the forms to disrupt. These are together known as *Pañca-Varāhas* :

- i) *Svayambhu* as *Ādi-Varāha*
- ii) *Parameṣṭi* as *Yajña Varāha*
- iii) *Sūrya* as *Śveta-Varāha*
- iv) *Chandrama* as *Brahma Varāha*
- v) *Prthvi* as *Emūṣa Varāha*

Varāha as Satya and Dharma :

In the *Matsya Purāṇa* *Satya-Dharma* mayah has been used in describing the *Yajña-Varāha*. In the beginning of an *Iṣṭi*, the *Yajamana* takes the vow of moving from untruth to truth, by means of *Yajña*. The *Purāṇas* give to the *Varāha* incarnation as the name of Dharma.

Varāha as Bhṛgu and Aṅgīrasa :¹²³

The primeval waters - अपः are spoken of as comprised of the frow principles of heat called *Aṅgīrasa* and cold called *Bhṛgu*. this is just

123. आपो भृग्वङ्गिरोरूपमापो भृग्वङ्गिरोमयम्
 सर्वमापोमयं भूतं सर्वं भृग्वङ्गि गोमयम् ।
 अन्तरेते त्रयो वेदा भृगूनङ्गिरसोनुगाः ॥ *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* I.1.39.

using a mythical language for a scientific truth and it amounts to saying that the first cause of creation comprised the two principles of Agni and Soma. This repeated several time in the Vedas. Therefore, it is quite consistent to speak of the two principles of Bhṛgu and Aṅgīrasa as making up the first cause called आपः. The only feature is that in the state of rest or the unmanifest condition, the heat is withdrawn into its substratum of water or cold, that is Aṅgīras is concealed by Bhṛgu. Thus, the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa rightly says :

अन्तरेते त्रयो वेदा भृगूङ्गिरसोऽनुगाः ।

Here the importance of Trayi-Vidya or the three vedas in other words Varāha who is none other than Agni or Hiraṇyagarbha or Sūrya or Nārāyaṇa is spoken of.

This is the meaning of the great legend of Varāha myth, which the purāṇas accept as the principle motif in the scheme of Sṛṣṭi-Vidya for which they have adopted a rich symbolical terminology.

Maha-Varāha in Indian Art :

The most important conspicuous example of Mahā-Varāha's lifting the earth from the ocean is found at Udayagiri in the rock out temple excavated in the time of Chandragupta - Vikramāditya. During the age of the Guptas the Varāha exploit was known as Saukara siddhi.

What is found in Udayagiri is a rock-out image of Varāha of colossal size, standing as a powerful human figure with a boar's head shown in profile. He supports the earth goddess on his folded left arm. The figure is extremely well built and wears a long lotus

garland which in the Gupta age was called 'किञ्जल्किनी' and consisted of one thousand lotuses. Infront of the Varāha, is the figure of the cosmic serpent, Ananta Śeṣa, literally the infinite substratum, who is supporting the primeval god. By his side is the figure of Garuḍa with an eagle's head and holding a serpent in his hands. In the next panel political idea is illustrated in an emphatic manner.

It seems, the authors of the purāṇa followed these political intimations with their inspiring exposition of the Mahā-Varāha, conception on a philosophical plane, which is accorded with national approval. We also find the representation of Varāha and Bhudevi in Chālukyan art of Badami and in Pallava art in the Varāha Maṇḍapa at Mahābalipuram in the south.

Varāha myth in Ancient Greece :

Dr. J.N. Gonda has drawn attention to an interesting ceremony called, 'Eidofer' described by Homer, in which a wild boar was sacrificed as an offering to zeus, the earth and the Sun. One can trace many other references to the boar in Nordic, celtic and Austric myths and cults. It should, however, be cautioned that an anthropological approach to the problem is barren and inadequate to explain the Vedic and Purāṇic evidences. Here Varāha as Prajāpati furnishes the key to unlock the mystical truth.

In Rajputāna there was a regular spring festival at which the bear was killed because he was regarded as the special enemy of Gauri, the Rajput tribal goddess. The egyptians regarded the boar as an unclean animal. If they touched it casually they at once plunged

into water to purify themselves. In Syria, the boar was a taboo and in the Highlands the black boar is identified with the devil. In Egypt both the good and the evil spirits were represented by the boar. Osiris was a boar and so was Set his enemy. The suggested explanation is that the boar might be either the friend or enemy of the Corn-god. At the sowing time it rendered service by cleaning the soil of noxious roots and weeds, which retard the growth of crops. When the crops were grown the boar which damaged the corn was identified with Set, the enemy of Osiris the boar hunt then ensued as a matter of course. Often times tribal jealousy may be at the root of different estimations. A particular animal might be looked upon by one tribe as an incarnation of their Satan.¹²⁴

The association of the boar with the storm god is noted in Hindu, Germanic, celestial myths. So also the cosmic boar of the Tantras as the source of all sacrificial rites which control the wind and the weather giving rise to varied crops finds a parallel in the Yule-Boar and its sacrifice in the Scandinavian countries. Similarly the association of the boar with the celestial love-God Angus and its identification with Greek Ares may bear witness.

In Greek mythology the Varāha was sacred to Demeter. In art she was portrayed carrying or accompanied by a Varāha and it was regularly sacrificed in her mysteries. In the Thesmophoria, it was customary to throw Varāha, cakes of dough and branches of pine tree

124. Mackenzie, *Egyptian Myth and Legend*, p-64.

into the chasms of Demeter and persephone which appear to have been sacred caverns or vaults.¹²⁵

In zoroastrianism the form of the boar is one of those assumed by Verethraghna, the god of victory. In the R̥gveda, Rudra, the storm god is described as the boar of heaven.¹²⁶ In Germanic mythology the boar is associated with storm and regarded as a fertility animal in harvest time.

In Sweden and Denmark at Yule (christmas) it is the custom to bake a loaf in the form of a boar-pig. This is called the Yule-Boar. The corn of the last sheaf is often used to make it. The Yule boar stands on the table. Often it is kept till, the sowing time in spring when part of it is mixed with the seed corn and part given to the plough-man and plough horses to eat in the expectation of a good harvest. Formerly a real boar was sacrificed at christmas and apparently also a man in the character of the Yule-Boar. This may be informed from the present day Christmas custom still observed in Sweden.¹²⁷

Correspondence with the amorous boar of the tantras :

It is already said that the sanskrit word for boar is *Varāha* which means also the cloud. The etymology of *Varāha* is said to be obscure. It may, however, be connected with some earlier formation like *Varāha*; cf. *Kakubh*, *Kakucha*, *barjaha*, with suffix *bha*, also

125. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, ambridged edition, p. 469.

126. Macdonell, *Vedic Index* vol. II. p.245.

127. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, ambridged edition, p. 461-62.

dhūmrabha, air. In this connection balāhaka, or Valāhaka, cloud may also be considered. The almost exclusive use of the suffix-bha, to denote animal names might have suggested the secondary meaning of a boar.¹²⁸

The fight of Varāha-Viṣṇu and demon Hiranyākṣa resolved itself into a conflict between the cloud god and demon drought. The association of the cloud with erotic sentiments may give rise to the conception of the boar.

5. THE CONCEPT OF NṚSIMHA AVATĀRA

The Nṛsimha is the fifth among the ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. However the Story of Nṛsimha incarnation appears to have its root in the Namuci legend read in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. It runs thus :

By means of Sura (liquor) Namuci the asura carried off Indra's strength the soma drink. He hastened up to Aśvins and Sarasvati crying, 'I have sworn to Namuci, *"I will slay the neither by night, or nor by day, neither with staff, nor with bow, neither with the palm of my hand nor with the fist, neither with the dry, nor with the moist and yet he has taken these things from me; Seek ye to bring these things back from me; Asrins and Saraswati after securing a promise for a share in those things poured out foam of water as thunder bolt, Saying; It is neither dry nor moist, and when and when the night*

128. Wackernagel; *Altindische Gramatic*, Part I.

Q : Banikant Kakati, *Viṣṇuite myths and legends*; Sri Tarini Das Ltd., Gauhati 1952, p. 128-129.

was clearing up the Sun had not yet risen. Indra thinking, “It is neither by day nor night; there with struck off the head of Namuci Asura”.¹²⁹ It may be observed here that the conditions (granted) by Indra to Namuci are very similar to those granted to Hiranyakaśipu by brahma by in the Purāṇas.¹³⁰ But mere similarity in posing conditions, does not suffice to state that the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* can be the root source of Narasimha myth.

Besides, the *Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad*, a portion of the *Taittiriya Āraṇyaka* of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*, makes a reference to “*Nṛsimha*” as being one of the names of *Puruṣa*. It runs thus :

वज्रनखाय विद्महे तीक्ष्णदंष्ट्राय धीमहि ।
तन्नो नारसिंहः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Here, the *Upaniṣad* characterised the features of the Narasimha. The words वज्रनख तीक्ष्णदंष्ट्र speak of His being dreadful.¹³¹

The first trace of the myth is found in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Āraṇyaka parva* (cha. 100. 20) says how the great Lord Purusottama

129. a) इन्द्रस्येन्द्रियमन्नस्य रसम् । सोमस्य भक्षा सुरयासुरोनमुचिरहरत्सोऽशिष्वनौ च सरस्वतीञ्चोपा-
धावच्छेदानोऽस्मिन्मुचये न त्वा दिवा न नक्ता हनानि न दण्डेन न धन्वना न पृथेन न मुष्टिना न
शुष्केण नार्देणाथमऽइदमहर्षीदिदम्माजिहीर्षभेति ॥

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, II volume, ed. Vamshidhara Shastry,
Achyutagranthamala Karyalaya, Kasi, 1997. XII.7.3. p.1266.

b) The Namuci episode with some variations occurs in the *Shalya Parva* of *Mahābhārata* (M.B. Shalya Parva chap.40).

130. *Religion and Mythology of the Brāhmaṇas*, G.V. Devasthali, Asthekar Vedic Research series, Pune, 1965, pp. 9-11.

131. *Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad*, G. Guruvenkatacharya Dvaita Vedanta studies, and Research foundation, Bangalore, 1995, *Mantra*, 31 p.28.

having assumed the form of Nṛsimha, killed Hiranyakaśipu, who was a great demon of great prowess. The other references are found in the Nārāyaṇa Mahābhārata. In these later references the reason for killing Hiranyakaśipu is given briefly. "I shall kill Hiranyakaśipu, son of Diti. because he destroys sacrifice, which is for the benefit of gods. By assuming the form of boar, Manlion, dwarf etc. I shall kill the arrogant enemies of the gods."

In *Śaivite purāṇas* Where the Nṛsimha myth has been taken up just to show the superiority of Śiva cult over the Viṣṇu-cult some new conditions also appear. The redactors of *Skanda purāṇa* and *Śiva purāṇa* too add some new points to the number of conditions under which Hiranyakaśipu would not die. In *Iskanda purāṇa* V. *Avantikhandā* I. *Avantikṣetra Mahātmya* ch. 77. 8 -11 the new addition is :- he may be killed by the Guhyakas or the race of hinds; in *Śiva purāṇa* 2. *Rudra Samhitā* 5. *Yuddha Kāṇḍa* (ch. 43. 16-17) his extra prayer is :- he would have no fear of death from above or below, from Siddhas or thounder bolts.

The *Matsya Purāṇa* explains the meaning of Narasimha as below : Narasimha is a type of Puruṣa-Paśu in which the lion being an animal of the forest. It is symbol of the unharnessed energy of the divine Parameṣṭhi, who is described as the Forest. That power of the universal comes to the level of matter and creates the Man - lion form. It deals with Hiranyakaśipu or Origin of Prakṛti. Kaśyapa literally means a cushion or a seat of gold or Hiranya. Hiranya is the principle of prāṇa which descends to the level of matter. Hiranya is Puruṣa and Kaśipa is Prakrit. Both of them combine in the golden

egg in which Prakṛti offers herself as seat for the divine Hiranya-garbha. the's ideas of the legend is that Hiranyakaśipu howsoever powerful in the three worlds succumbs to the might of Narasimha.

It is here observed about the relief that the master touch of the work of artist may be seen in the way in which the interlocking of the leg of Narasimha withthat of Hiranyaka is carried out. The *Matsya Purāṇa* seems to describe this sort of image in these words. 'The god and demon should be shown should fighting with their legs interlocked; The former should appear as being repeate attached by the fired demon who should be shown as holding a sword and shield.'¹³²

The description of Narasimha myth in the *Matsya purāṇa* runs in three chapters with little more details.

As seen in this purāṇa, Hiranyakaśipu practises penance and obtains many boons from Brahma, with the power of boons, he has acquired, the demon King grew terrific to the gods and to world of human beings. Of course, Brahma conveyed the gods about Hiranyakaśipu's death by Lord Viṣṇu with an assistance of Omkāra, assumed a most effulgent form of Narasimha and chanced to see the most beautiful assembly hall of that valiant demon.¹³³

132. Jitendranath Banerjee, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1974, p.416.

133. सहायश्च महाबाहुरोङ्कारं गृह्य सत्वरम् ।
अथोङ्कारसहायसतु भगवान् विष्णुरव्ययः ॥
हिरण्यकाशिपुस्थानं जगाम हरिरीश्वरः ।
नजसा भास्कराकारः शशीं कान्त्येवचापरः ॥ →

Prahlāda became astounded to see his supernatural vision and acknowledges him to be the form of Lord Viṣṇu. Also Prahlāda expresses His divine glory before his father. Having seen this unusual form of *Narasimha*, *Hiraṇyakaśipu* ordered his warriors to capture Him. But those warriors were instantly scared by *Narasimha*. All attempts of *Hiraṇyakaśipu* of killing *Narasimha* became futile. At the by means of his claws *Narasimha* for him into peaces. Being praised by Brahma and others Lord started to the northern coast of the milk Ocean, where after establishing His *Narasimha* form, Lord Viṣṇu assumed His original form and returned to His Realm riding on *Garuḍa*.¹³⁴

*The Garuḍa purāṇa*¹³⁵ accounts some aspects of the *Narasimha* incarnation which is described by Suta on the basis of the hymn of *Narasimha* camposed by Lord Śiva. As expressed there in the goddesses named *Mātrikas* of yore showed their desire of devouring alldemons and men. But Lord Śiva did not allow them to do this, and

→ नरस्य कृत्वाद्धतनुं सिंहस्याद्धतनुं तथा ।
नारसिंहेन वपुषा पाणिं संस्पृश्य पाणिना ॥

The Matsya Maha Purāṇam, H.H. Wilson, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1983,
slokas - 35, 36, 37, p.774.

134. क्षीरोदस्योत्तरं कूलं जगाम हरिरीश्वरः ॥
नरसिंहं वपुर्देवः स्थापयित्वा सुदीप्तिमत् ॥
पौराणं रूपमास्याय प्रययौ गरुडध्वजः
अष्टचक्रेण यानेन भूतयुक्तेन भास्वता ।
अव्यक्तप्रकृतिर्देवः स्वस्थानं गतवान् प्रभुः ॥

Matsyamahapurāṇam, slokas - 103 to 105, p. 788.

135. *Garuḍa Purāṇa* : e.d. Manmath shastry, The Chowkhamba Sankrit series,
Varnasi, 1968. XII. pp. 763-765.

asked them to banish such cruel intentions from their minds. In spite of this, Mātrikas paid no heed to His words and began to devour the universe. Instantly Śiva meditated upon the Narasimha form. consequently Narasimha form appeared before him and bend down to Śiva. Addressing to this form of Narasimha, Lord Śiva said “The Mātrikas, whom I had created for the purpose of killing the demon, Andhaka are now derouring the inmates of the universe without paying heed to my admonition. Invincible though, I am, yet I do not wish to kill them myself as it is I who have brought them into being. Suta said : Having been thus addressed by Rudra, the Lord Narasimha caused the Mātrikas to be merged in his person and having re-established peace in this world, vanished in the air.

The *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*, in its *Bhaviṣya parva* reads the story of Narasimha myth in seven chapters. Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Narasimha, show within himself to his devotee Prahlāda, all the three worlds.¹³⁶ This is a novel point.

Following the *Matsya Purāṇa* a mention of Omkāra with the help of which, Narasimha killed Hiraṇyakaśipu is made in the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*. At the end, Lord Viṣṇu in His original form left for His Milk Ocean, His Eternal Abode.¹³⁷

136. सर्वं त्रिभुवनं राजन् लोकधर्मस्य शाश्वतः ।

दृष्यते नारसिंहेऽस्मिन् यथेदौ विमले जगत् ॥

Harivaṁśa III.43.14. p.867.

137. समुत्पत्य ततस्तीक्ष्णैः मृगेन्द्रेण महानकैः ।

तत्र ओंकार सहयेन विदार्य निहतो विधि ॥ .

Harivaṁśa Purāṇa (Mahābhārata - khilabhaga), Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Samrat 2055, III.47.14.

The seventeenth chapter of the first Amśa describes of the *Viṣṇu purāṇa* describes the myth of Nṛsimhāvatāra. It runs thus : In the days of yore, the three worlds were brought into subjection by the valiant son of Diti - Hiranyakaśipu, proud of the boon conferred on him by Brahma. That Daitya has ----- the sovereignty of Indra and exercised the functions of the sun of the air, of the Lord of waters, fire and the moon. He himself became the Lord of richness and yama; and that Asura appropriated to himself, without reserve, all that was offered in Sacrifice to the celestials. Renouncing their own region all gods wandered upon the Earth, disguised in mortal shapes. Having conquered the three worlds, he was inflated with the pride of the riches and being enloguised by the Gandharvas, enjoyed all wished for objects. There upon, all the Siddhas, Gandharvas and Pannangas worshipped the valiant Hiranyakaśipu addicted to drinking.¹³⁸

His son by name Prahlāda residing in the hermitage of his preceptor read such reading as are studied in early years. Once upon a time Prahlāda in the company of his preceptor appeared before his father, Hiranyakaśipu, while drinking. The father raising up his son

138. दितेः पुत्रो महावीर्या हिरण्यकाशिपुः पुरा
 त्रैलोक्यं वशमानिन्ये ब्रह्मणो वरदर्पितः ॥
 इन्द्रत्वमकरोद्वैत्यः स चासीत्सविता स्वयम् ।
 वायुरग्निरपां नाथः सोमश्चाभून्महासुरः ॥
 धनानामधिपः सोऽभूत्स एवासीत्स्वयं यमः ।
 यज्ञभागानशेषास्तु स स्वयं बुभुजेऽसुरः ॥
 देवाः स्वर्गं परित्यज्य तत्रासान्मुनिसत्तम ।
 विचेरुरखनौ सर्वे बिभ्राणा मानुषीं तनुम् ॥
 जित्वा त्रिभुवनम् सर्वं त्रैलोक्यैश्वर्यदर्पितः ।
 उपगीयमानो गन्धर्वैर्बुभुजे विषयान्प्रीयान् ॥

prestrate at his feet, spoke to Prahlāda of unmitigated prowess saying “Reapet the substance of what you have read during the period.” Prahlāda said : Father, I will reapet the substance what I have read, I bow to the great Being, who is without beginning middle or end, increase or diminutions the imperishable Lord of the world, the universal cause of the causes.” Hearing there words, Hiranyakaśipu, eyes were red with ire and lip swollen with indignation looked towards the preceptor and asked what he had taught to his son, the worthless commendation of his foe. The preceptor said that he had not taught his son that uttered by Pralh. Prahlāda said Viṣṇu is the instructor of the whole world in his present in our minds. Hiranyakaśipu who is very angry with his son hearing the name of Viṣṇu again and again by his son.¹³⁹

Hiranyakaśipu said to destroy this vicious minded boy; there is no use of his life, he is fraud to his own family since he has proved

139. तस्य पुत्रो महाभागः प्रह्लादो नाम नामतः ।
 पपाठ बालपाव्यानि गुरुगेहङ्गतोऽर्भकः ॥
 एकदा तु स धर्मात्मा जगाम गुरुणा सह ।
 पानासवतस्य पुरतः पितुर्देत्यपतेस्तदा ॥ *Ibid.*, 10-11
 पठ्यतां भवता वत्स सार भूतं सुभाषितम् ।
 कालेनैतावता यत्ते सदोद्युक्तेन शिक्षितम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 13.
 अनादिमध्यान्तमजमवृद्धिक्षयमच्युतम् ।
 प्रणतोऽस्म्यन्तसन्तानं सर्वकारणकारणम् ॥
 एतन्निशम्य दैत्येन्द्रः सकोपो रत्कलोचनः ।
 विलोक्य तद्गुरुं प्राह स्फुरि ताधरपल्लवः । *Ibid.*, 15-16.
 न केवलं तात मम प्रजानां ।
 स ब्रह्मभूतो भवतश्च विष्णुः ॥
 धाता विधाता परमेश्वरश्च ।
 प्रसीद कोपं कुरुषे किमर्थम् ॥

a traitor to his skin. Being thus commanded by him hundred and thousands of demony with huge weapons addressed Himself for his destruction.

Prahlāda said, "Since Viṣṇu is present in your weapons shall faild to hurt me," Demons assailed Prahlāda with their weapons but he did not feel the least pain and his strength was ever----- Hiranyakaśipu again ordered the serpents to destroy him. Thus comanded by him kuhaka, Takshaka, Andhaka and many other serpents hit him in every part of his body. But Prahlāda could not feel anything.

Then, the boy cast down on the earth being assailed by the tasks of elephants of the spheres as huge as mountains peaks; but he is recollecting Govinda, thousands of tasks were blunted against his breast. Then he brought out from the demons and put in the house of his preceptor to learn again the lessons from the sons of Dānavas.¹⁴⁰

140. निष्कास्य तामयं पापः शास्यतां च गुरोर्गृहे ।
 योजितो दुर्मति केन विपक्षविषयस्तुतौ ॥ *Ibid.*, 27.
 इत्यज्ञास्तस्तेन प्रगृहीतमहायुधाः ।
 उद्यतास्तस्य नाशाय दैत्याः शतसहस्रशः ॥ *Ibid.*, 32
 विष्णुः शस्त्रेषु युष्मासु मयि चासौ व्यवस्थितः ।
 दैतेयास्तेन सत्येन माक्रमन्त्वायुधानि मे ॥
 ततस्तैश्शतशो दैत्यैः शस्त्रौघैराहतोऽपि सन् ।
 नावाप वेदनामल्पामभूद्यैव पुनर्नवः ॥
 ततः स दिग्गजैर्बालो भूभृच्छिखरसन्निभैः
 पापितो धरणीपृष्ठे विषाणैर्वावपीडितः ॥
 स्मरतस्तस्य गोविन्दमिभदन्ताः सहस्रशः ।
 शीर्णा वक्षःस्थलं प्राप्य स प्राह पितरं ततः ॥
 दन्ता गजानां कुलिशाग्रनिष्ठुराः ।
 शीर्णा यदे ते न बलं ममैतत् ॥ →

There also be taught his impious doctrines to other Dānava sons. Then the poison was given to him, mixing that poison with his food. But he did not suffer any harm either in body or in mind. Again Hiranyakaśipu said As to Asura Samvara to slay the body. That Asura Samvara, desirous of destroying the boy, practised his magical charms against Prahlāda. Prahlāda was engaged in meditation. There upon to protect him the excellent and laming discus *Sudarśana* was despatched by the great God. Thus all the magical charms being baffled, the high minded Prahlāda again repared to the abode of his preceptor. And the preceptor instructed Prahlāda daily in the science of -- essentially necessary for the administration of the Government and invented by Uṣaṇas for the behalf of Kings.

Bowing down to the feet of his father, Prahlāda, who had humidity as his ornament, again told the glory of Lord Viṣṇu that He is identical with all beings, manifest all over the world, He is exist in me, as well as all other creatures. Having heard this Hiranyakaśipu got up from his seat, in great rage spurned Prahlāda on the¹⁴¹ with

→ महाविपत्ताविनाशनोऽयं ।

जनार्दनानुस्मरणानुभावः ॥ *Ibid.*, 42-45

ततो गुरुगृहे बालः स वसन्बालदानवान् ।

अध्यापयामास मुहुरूपदेशान्तरे गुरोः ॥ *Ibid.*, 54.

141. श्रुयतां परमार्थो मे दैतेया दितिजात्मजाः ।

न चान्यथैतन्मन्त्रं नात्र लोभादिकारणम् ॥

जन्म बाल्यं ततः सर्वो जन्तुः प्राप्नोति यौवनम् ।

अव्यहतैव भवति ततोऽनुदिवसं जरा ॥ *Ibid.*, I 17. 55-56

ते तथैव ततश्चक्रुः प्रह्लादाय महात्मने ।

विषदानं यथाज्ञातं पित्रा तस्य महात्मनः ॥

हालाहलं विषं घोरमनन्तोश्चारेण सः ।

अभिमन्त्र्य सहाय्येन मैत्रेय बुभुजे तदा ॥ →

his foot. Again the demons speedily bound him with ropes and threw him into water. Prahlāda triembeled the mighty deep; and --- agigated throughout, it rose in mighty waves. Prahlāda praises Lord Hari, the great Hari --- in yellow robes, suddenly appeared before him. Again Prahlāda went to his father and bowed down before him. The Hiraṇyakaśipu treated him with kindness and repented for his past actions. Prahlāda conversant with pity and attended diligently upon his father and preceptor. After his father has been --- by Lord Viṣṇu in the form of man lion, he became the sovereign of the demons. Obtaining the splendours of royalty on account of piety, he came by immense wealth and was blessed with numerous progeny.¹⁴²

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- अविकारं स तद्भुक्त्वा प्रह्लादः स्वस्थ मानसः ।
 अनन्तख्यातिनिर्वीर्यं जरयामास तद्विषम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 18. 4-6
 ततो भगवता तस्य रक्षर्थं चक्षुमुत्तमम् ।
 आजगाम समाज्ञप्तं ज्वालामालि सुदर्शनम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 19.19.
 क्षीणासु सर्वमायासु पवने चक्षयंगते ।
 जगाम सोऽपि भवनं गुरोरेव महामतिः ॥ *Ibid.*, 19.25
 प्रणीपत्य पितुः पादौ तदा प्रश्रयभूषणः ।
 प्रह्लादः प्राह दैत्येन्द्रं कृताञ्जलीपुटस्तथा ॥ *Ibid.*, 19.33
 एतद्विजानता सर्वं जगन्स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।
 द्रष्टव्यमात्मवद्विष्णुर्यतोऽयं विश्वरूपधृक् ॥ *Ibid.*, 48
 एतच्छ्रुत्वा तु कोपेन समुत्थाय वरासनात् ।
 हिरण्यकशिपुः पुत्रं पदा वक्षस्यताडयत् ॥ *Ibid.*, 50.

142. ततस्ते सत्वरं दैत्या बद्धातं नागबन्धनैः ।
 भर्तुराज्ञां पुरस्कृत्य चिक्षिपुः सलिलार्णवे ॥ *Ibid.*, 55
 देव प्रपन्नार्त्तिहर प्रसादं कुरु केशव ।
 अवलोकनदानेन भूयो मां पावयाच्युत ॥
 तं पिता मूर्धन्युपाधाय परिष्वज्य च पीडितम् ।
 जीवसीत्याह वत्सेति बाष्णर्द्रनयनो द्विज ॥ *Ibid.*, XX.30.
 पितर्युपरतिं नीते नरसिंह स्वरूपिणा ।
 विष्णुना सोऽपि दैत्यानां मैत्रेयाभूत्परिस्ततः ॥ *Ibid.*, 32 →

The *Padma purāṇa* describes the Lord Viṣṇu in the form of *Nṛsimha* as below :

Having assumed the body of *Nṛsimha* Viṣṇu manifested there only. He was covered with the lustre of crores of suns and fires. In his face he resembled a lion, and in the body he had a human figure. His mouth was fierce due to fangs, and was raised up to the sky with his throbbing tongue. The ends of his hair were surrounded by flames. The Lord had eyes like burning fire brands. Covered by a thousand long arms, full of all weapons, he appeared like Meru mountain, with many trees having branches. He had worn a garland of divine flowers, and was decorated with divine ornaments.

To destroy all demons he remained in the form of a man lion. Seeing very powerful, terrible looking man lion, the Hiraṇyakaśipu burnt with his eyelashes and body affected. Then Prahlāda seeing Viṣṇu like man lion saluted ¹⁴³ Viṣṇu with the words “Victory to you,

→ एवं प्रभावो दैत्याऽसौ मैत्रेयासीन्महामतिः ।
 प्रह्लादो भगवद्भक्तो यं त्वं मामनुपृच्छसि ॥ *Ibid.*, 35
 प्रह्लादं सकलापत्सु यथा रक्षितवान्हरिः ।
 तथा रक्षति यस्तस्य शृणोति चरितं सदा ॥ *Ibid.*, 39

143. नृसिंहवपुरास्याथ तत्रैवाऽऽविरभूद्धरिः ।
 अनेककोटिसूर्याग्नितेजसा स समावृतः ॥
 मुखेपञ्चाननप्रख्यः शरीरे मानुषाकृतीः ।
 दंष्ट्राकरालवदनस्त्रयक्षश्च त्रिसटोद्धतः ॥
 ज्वालावलितकेशान्तस्सस्फुलिगेक्षणोविभुः ।
 सहस्रबाहुभिर्दीर्घैः सर्वायुधसमान्वितैः ॥
 वृतेमेरुरिवाभाति बहुशाखानगान्वितः ।
 दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरो दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनः ॥
 श्रीवत्स कौस्तुभोरस्को दिव्याभरणभूषितः ।
 तस्यौ नृकेसरी तत्र संहतु सर्वदानवान् ॥ →

on the limbs of that high souled man lion he saw worlds, seas, Islands, gods, gandharvas, human beings; thousand cosmic eggs were seen on the tips of his mane. Similarly in his eyes were seen the moon, the sun etc. In his eyes god Āśvins were seen, directions and intermediate directions. On his forehead Brahma and Rudra; in his nose the sky and air. In his mouth Indra and Agni were seen. On his tongue Sarasvati was seen. On his fangs lions, tigers, Śarabhas and great serpents were seen. On his throat meru and great mountains were seen on his shoulders. On the arms of the noble one gods, lower animals, human beings were seen. The atmosphere was seen in his navel, and the earth was seen in His feet. On his hair all herbs, on the rows of his nails trees. In His breaths, Vedas with Angas and Upangas were seen. On all his limbs Ādityas, Vasus Rudras, hosts of Maruts Gandharvas and celestial nymphs were seen.¹⁴⁴

→ तं दृष्ट्वा घोरसंज्ञाशं नरसिंह महाबलम् ।
 दग्धाक्षिपक्ष्मादैत्येन्द्रो विह्वलाङ्गः पपात हे ॥
 प्रह्लादोऽपि तदा दृष्ट्वा नारसिंहोपमं हरिम् ।
 जयशब्देन देवेशं नमश्चक्रे जनार्दनम् ॥

Padma Purāṇa VI.238, 95-100

144. ददर्श तस्य गात्रेषु नृसिंहस्य महात्मनः ।
 लोकान्समुद्रान्सद्धीपान्बुरगन्धर्वमानुषान् ॥
 अजाण्डानांसहस्रं तु सटाग्रे तस्य दृश्यते ।
 दृश्यन्ते तस्य नेत्रेषु सोमसूर्या दयस्तथा ॥
 कर्णयोरश्विनौ देवौ दिशश्च विदिशस्तथा ।
 ललाटे ब्रह्मरुद्रौ च नभो वायुश्च नासिके ॥
 कर्णयोरश्विनौ देवौ दिशश्च विदिशस्तथा ।
 ललाटे ब्रह्मरुद्रौ च नभो वायुश्च नासिके ॥
 इन्द्राग्नी तस्य वक्त्रान्ते जिह्वायां तु सरस्वती ।
 दंष्ट्रासु सिंहशार्दुलाः शरभाश्च महोरगाः ॥
 कण्ठे च दृश्यते मेरुः स्कन्धेऽपि च महाद्रयः ।
 देवतिर्यङ्गनुष्याश्च बाहुष्वपिमहात्मनः नाभौ ॥ →

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* devotes the description of Narasimha myth in fire sections of the first Adhyāya (I.16.20). Of course, there are some differences in the description of Narasimha Avatāra form. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* having seen firm devotion of Prahlāda to Lord Viṣṇu His Father Hiranyakaśipu could not sustain and as such he made efforts to reduce his son to death. But all his efforts rendered fruitless.¹⁴⁵ Being very much pleased by Prahlāda's devotion, Lord Viṣṇu sends his Sudarśana to protect His devotee Prahlāda from the clutches of Hiranyakaśipu.

In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Prahlāda enlogizes Lord Viṣṇu singing His immutable greatness. In response to Prahlāda's enlogy Lord Viṣṇu manifests Himself not in the form of *Narasimha* but in original form Viṣṇu. This is clear from the following verse :

तस्य तच्चेतसो देवः स्तुतिमित्थं प्रकुर्वतः ।

आविर्बभूव भगवान् पीताम्बरधरो हरिः ॥ (I.20.24)

In contrast to *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Prahlāda in the *Viṣṇu purāṇa* earnestly asks Lord Viṣṇu for removing the taint of sin clinging to his father Hiranyakaśipu.¹⁴⁶

→ चास्यन्तरीक्षं च पादयोः पृथिवी तथा । मेवादयः पर्वताश्च दृश्यन्तेऽङ्गुलिपङ्क्तिषुरोमस्वोषधयः । सर्वाः पादपानखपङ्क्तिषु । निःश्वासेषु च वेदाश्च साङ्गोपाङ्गसमान्विताः आदित्या वसवो रुद्रा विश्वेदेवा मरुद्गणाः आदित्यावसवो रुद्रा विश्वेदेवा मरुद्गणाः । सर्वाङ्गेषु प्रदृश्यन्ते गन्धर्वाप्सरसश्च ये इत्थं विभूतयस्तस्य दृश्यन्ते परमात्मनः । श्रीवत्सकौस्तुभोरस्कं वनमालविभूषितम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 100-100

145. ततो भगवता तस्य स्थायं चक्रमुत्तमम् ।

आजगाम समाज्ञप्तं ज्वालामालि सुदर्शनम् ॥

Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Manilal Gupta, Gita Press,

Gorakhpur, 1988, I.19.19. p.105.

146. त्वयि भक्तिमतो द्वेषादधं तत्सम्भवं च यत् ।

त्वत्प्रसादात्प्रभो सद्यस्तेन मुच्येत मे पिता ॥ *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* I.20.24. p.113

Lord Viṣṇu however favours His devotee with all what he had asked for; besides, Lord Viṣṇu bestows upon him with a boon of Mokṣa.¹⁴⁷ No doubt *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* does not deal with the description of Narasimha incarnation, but makes a suggestion through the sage Parāśara, that Hiranyakaśipu was killed by Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Narasimha.¹⁴⁸

(The description of Narasimha incarnation runs through nine chapters of seventh skandha in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The story is introduced by Nārada in his dialogue with Yudhisthira) As an introduction to the description of Narasimha Avatāra of Lord Viṣṇu, the story of Jaya and Vijaya is narrated. Further Hiranyakaśipu rids his mother Diti of his grief caused by the death of his younger brother Hiranyākṣa.

Hiranyakaśipu performs severe penance to please Brahma and obtains deathlessness at the hands of man, animal, weapons, missile etc. Hiranyakaśipu's atrocities and Prahlāda's virtues have been beautifully recounted in the purāṇa. Being very much angry at his son Prahlāda who is very much devoted to Lord Viṣṇu, attempts the life of Prahlāda but went in vain. Prahlāda teaches moral lessons and true Philosophy, to the demon boys. He tried his level best to change the demonic atmosphere covered all around. At last, Lord

147. यथा ते निश्चलं चेनो मयि भवितसमान्वितम् ।

यथा त्वं मत्प्रसादेन निर्वाणम्परमाप्स्यसि ॥ *Ibid.*, I.20.28.

148. पितर्युपतिं नीते नरसिंहस्वरूपिणा ।

विष्णुना सोऽपि दैत्यानां मैत्रेयाभूत्पतिस्ततः ॥ *Ibid.*, I.20.32. p.114

Narasimha was extolled on the death of the demon king Hiranyakaśipu at his hands.

The manifestation of Narasimha form of Lord Viṣṇu is described in an extra-ordinary manner in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Being very much angry at Prahlāda, Hiranyakaśipu asks to show his Lord Viṣṇu and knocked the pillar near by his fist at that moment itself. Here a detail description of Narasimha's killing of Hiranyakaśipu is narrated. Throwing down, at the entrance on his thighs, The demon who was impatient at having been caught and was wriggling all over, and whose skin had remained unscratched as a serpent would knock down a rat, Lord Narasimha tare him with his claws in sport even as Garuḍa would tear a most venomous Snake.¹⁴⁹ licking with his tongue the corners of his gaping mouth, the Lord, whose frightful eyes were difficult to gaze at due to fury and whose maners and countenance had turned reddish, stained as they were with drops of blood, and who wore a garland of entrails, shone as a lion would by having killed an elephant.¹⁵⁰ Casting off the demon, whose lotus like heart had been split upon by His pointed claws, the Lord, endowed as He was with a multitude of stout arms, slew with his nails,

149. विष्वक् स्फुरन्तं ग्रहणातुरं हरिव्यलो यथाऽऽखुं कुलिशाक्षतत्वरम् ।

द्वार्युर आपात्य ददार लीलया नखैर्यथाहिं गरुडो महाविषम् ॥

Bhagavat Mahapurāṇam, Part I, C.I. Goswami, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 1971, VIII.29. p.762.

150. संरम्भदुष्प्रेक्ष्यकराललोचनो व्यात्ताननान्तं विलिहन् स्वजिह्वया ।

असृग्लवात्कारुणकेसराननो यथान्त्रमाली द्विपहत्यया हरिः ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.30.

weapons and heals his bodyguards that had followed Him on every side in thousands with uplifted arms.¹⁵¹

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* the *Narasimha myth* is recaptured during a brief description of all of Viṣṇu's *Avatāras*. *Narasimha* appears as the twelfth manifestation, preceded by that of the tortoise and followed by Viṣṇu on Garuḍa who saves an elephant from a crocodile.

The myth is sufficiently short to present here in its entirety :

“The Lord assumed the form of Nṛsimha and tare into pieces with his nails the Lord of the Daityas, Hiranyakaśipu by name, who was approaching the celestails with a dreadful club in his hand. In this form his face worn a very dreadful sight by reason of the rolling eyr-brows and grinding teeth.”

In the *Agni purāṇa* this myth occurs as well in a description of Viṣṇu's *Avatāras*, which begins classically with the fish manifestation and places *Nṛsimha* after the tortoise and boar. This myth appears with similar variation in the *Brahmāṇḍa purāṇa* and *Vāyu purāṇa*. Both myths begin abruptly with the austerities of Hiranyakaśipu, which are seemingly without motivation, lasting for 100,000 years and culminating in the granting of a boon by brahma. Here the text differ on the actual words and terms of the boon. The *Vāyu purāṇa* is mareterse and does not emphasize the neither nor fabric of which

151. नरवाङ्कुरोत्पाटितहृत्सरुहं विसृज्य तस्यानुचरानुदायुधान् ।

अहन् समन्तान्नखशास्त्रपार्ष्णीभिर्दौर्दण्डयूथोऽनुपथान् सहस्रशः ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.31

the boon is after made ; “immortality and invialability from all beings. Having conquered the gods with yoga, to become the god of all. Demons, Asuras, and gods must be equal and I must possess the great sovereignty of Maruti. Give me this wish (Vāyu purāṇa 67, 62)

The conditions here although like the Brahmāṇḍa purāṇa with invincibility and immortality, become curiously modest and humorously democratic. In no other variant the demon supress the desire to literally put down the Devas. The Brahmāṇḍa purāṇa also begins with the same words about invincibility, immortality and conquering the gods through yoga. Further this purāṇa developing the Asura’s feeding of power, continues in phrases that are common place in subsequent myths. Thus in the both purāṇas Hiraṇyakaśipu achieves a sovereignty over the trailokya that is cosmologically improper, there is little of the unabashed maderalence in his actions that finds in subsequent myths.

The *Brahma purāṇa* and *Viṣṇudharmottara purāṇa* are structurally and semantically as close to one another as the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa, as parallel text reconstruction has shown. This procedure revealed that the *Brahma purāṇa* and Harivaṁśa versions are mare similar to each other than to the Viṣṇu dharmottara, which supplements to the end of the myth with a great deal mare discription of the terrifying appearance of *Narasimha* and his battle with the demons and differs in several details as well. The myth deviates after the *Nṛsimha* form is fashioned, and begins to supply with the some of the full blown pralayic imagery in many versions; the description of *Nṛsimha* goes beyond the dark cloud and is full of light and fire,

recalling again both the storm and the destruction. In several phrases, the likeness of this terrifying theophany to the pralaya itself is explicit; His tongue was moving up and down, to and fro appeared and disappearing and it quivered like the lighting of the cloud at the end of the pralaya.¹⁵² Another provocative metaphor recalls the pralaya and Śiva's association with it as well; having the lustre of the submarine troops.

The *Śiva purāṇa* and *Kūrma purāṇa* introduces the figure of prachada for the first time in the context of the myth, and the element of *Darśana* begins to figure into the structure of the myth. The versions are similar basically in their treatment of this aspect. The *Śiva purāṇa* version makes clear the malicious and power hungry nature of Hiranyakaśipu. After the death of his brother at the hands of Viṣṇu in the *Varāhavatāra*.¹⁵³ The Asura always fond of enmity with Viṣṇu that he was wreaked such havoc on the trailokya that the gods were forced to abandon heaven and roam the earth incognito. After this incident the myth continues in its usual way with the tapes of Hiranyakaśipu. The cosmological significance of this act is made explicit here for the first time. The fiery power of Asur's tapas is clearly prologistic in its threat of destruction; The smoking fire penance springing from his head, spreading all around scorched by that and went to the Brahma's region.¹⁵⁴

152. *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* I. 54.40, 42.

153. *Śiva Purāṇa* II.5.43.

154. *Ibid.*, II.5.43, 12-13, 16-17.

Brahma arrives at Hiranyakaśipu's dwelling and grants the boon. Hiranyakaśipu sets about his usual work; he disturbed all righteous activities and defeat all the gods.

Then Viṣṇu assumes in *Nṛsimhāvatāra*, described in majestic and terrifying imagery.

The *Kūrma purāṇa* myth begins in the traditional manner but offer some unique additions that brilliantly help to elucidate the basic conflicts of myth the meaning of Prahlāda's role and in a kind of epilogue, an insight into the nature of Nṛsimha. Here the Hari assumes the Nṛsimha form through yogic meditation. Arriving at the demon city, the Nṛsimha dramatically eclipses his predecessor. He assumed like the fire at the time of *pralaya*. Prahlāda is despatched to do battle with the enemy but quickly defeated. Watching the battle progress from the sidelines Prahlāda sees the man lion escape the pāśupata weapon, unharmed and, in a flash of insight, he know that He is Lord Nārāyaṇa. Unlike his earlier recognition of paras, this brings knowledge, an instantaneous conversion and an out pouring of bhakti. Futilely trying to sway his father from further battle, Prahlāda watches as the Nṛsimha tears Hiranyakaśipu to pieces his claws. His brothers suffer a puzzling fate. The other son's headed by Anuhrada and thousands of demons were led to the valley of death by Nṛsimha.

The full meaning of this act is difficult to discern. The same episode occurs in *Matsya purāṇa* and in *Garuḍa purāṇa*.

The *Līṅga purāṇa* myth begins with a description of Prahlāda as a Viṣṇu bhakta. After repeated efforts on Hiranyakaśipu's part

sway his son from Viṣṇu's to his own worship, the Asura king vows to have Prahlāda put to death. here we have an unadorned form, the final phase through which the myth passes.

As in the *Śiva purāṇa* version, this effront to his own Bhakta causes Viṣṇu become the Nṛsimha and kill Hiranyakaśipu. Arriving at his palace like the fire amihilation at the close of the yogas, he harrassed the leading Daitya splitting him open with his clows.

At this point, in both the *Śiva purāṇa* and *Liṅga purāṇa* myths, a substle shift of events begins. In another versions, the tapes of Hiranyakaśipu took on a threateningly destructive tone, and *Nṛsimha*, in a properly prologic robe wiped him out, inaugarating a new sense of order. But in this saivite context rules begin to change after he slays Hiranyakaśipu, Nṛsimha himself becomes a threat of pralayic, propertions.

In the *Śiva purāṇa* myth, Prahlāda is sent to cool Nṛsimha down. He cools his heart, but the flame of fases does not subside Now the gods go to Śiva for refuge, praising him with epithets among which in Vāmana completing the inversion began when they praised *Nṛsimha* as pasupati. Śiva calls forth one of his own terrifying forms Virabhadra, the cause of the great Dissolution, Śiva-Virabhadra attempts to calm Nṛsimha, who rages more furiously; "I am now going to annihilate the universe of the mobile and immobile things. I am kāla, the cause of destroying the worlds. As they hander back and forth about the superiority of each one's destruction power, Śiva take a new form, the awful Sambha, a horrifying winged beast that bird *Nṛsimha* and flies off with him clutched in its talons. Nṛsimha

concedes the fight, acknowledging his own arrogance and praising Śiva's power. Śiva Śarabha destroys the Nṛsimha and in the Liṅga version just as water mixed with water mixed with water, milk with milk and all merged into one in the same manner Viṣṇu has merged into Śiva.¹⁵⁵

In these versions, we see how the theme of Viṣṇu bhakti will come to radically alter the mythological structured elements and move the focus of the myth from trailokic dharmic concerns to those of the larger universe of bhakti.

In the *Skanda purāṇa* the Nṛsimha myth begins with established the sovereignty on Earth, having vanquished the chief of gods. He begins to covet heaven and torment his son Prahlāda.

6. THE CONCEPT OF VĀMANA AVATĀRA

The *Vāmana* incarnation is one of the important myths among the ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. *Vāmana* myth manifests the beginning of the human form where as the earliest Viṣṇu myths make the earlier stages in human evolution and semi-human beings. It signifies the conquest of great demon power by a tiny man who covered the entire Universe. It is an established fact that the origin of the *Vāmana* myth traced to the *R̥gveda*, having traversed the Universe with His three strides. Hence He is described as *Urukrama*, *Urugāya*, and *Trivikrama*.

155. *Śiva Purāṇa* II.27. III.2.35.

Liṅga Purāṇa I.96.27, I.96.34

The motif of the Vāmana story was rooted in the Vedic symbolism of Viṣṇu taking three strides and measuring out of the three lokas.¹⁵⁶ This motif of three steps is repeated in several other hymns of *Rgveda*.¹⁵⁷

The story of *Vāmana-Trivikrama* myth is clearly stated in *Rgveda* that *Vāmana* god changes Himself into *Virāt* the Giant form which includes all the dimensional and temporal extensions of time and space. Viṣṇu first appears in the form of an young celibate and then assumes all pervading form.¹⁵⁸

At another place, Viṣṇu is applauded for traversing the earth to bestow it on men for inhabiting.

“Over this earth, with mighty step strode Viṣṇu ready to give it for home to Manu. In him the humble people trust for safety; the nobly born has made them specious dwelling.”¹⁵⁹

In the *Rgveda* Lord Viṣṇu's benevolence and kindness towards man is expressed. Although the three steps of *Vāmana* have their

156. इदं विष्णुर्विचक्रमे त्रैधानि दधे पदम् ।
समूकहस्य पांसुरे ॥
त्रीणि पदा विचक्रमे विष्णुर्गोपा अदाभ्यः ।
अतो धर्मणि धारयन् ॥ *Rgveda* - I.22.17.

157. *Ibid.*, I.154.2

158. यः पार्थिवानि त्रिभिरिद्विगामभिरुक्रमिष्टोरुगायाय जीवसे ॥ *Ibid.*, I.155.4
चतुर्भिः साकं नवतिं च नामभिश्चक्रं न वृत्तं व्यतीरवीविपत ।
ब्रह्च्छरीरो विमिमान ऋक्वभिर्युवकुमारः प्रत्येत्याहवम् ॥ *Ibid.*, I.155.6

159. विचक्रमे पृथिवीमैष एतां क्षेत्राय विष्णुर्मनुषे दशस्यन् ।
धृवासो अस्य करियो जनास उरुक्षितीं सुजनिमाचकार ॥ *Ibid.*, VII.100.4

most obvious link with the *Avatāra* in the *Vāmana* form, a point to be discussed about the nature and consequence of His deeds which uphold the divine glory of this *Avatāra* concept as a whole. The nature of the three steps of *Vāmana* portrays the God Viṣṇu in His all pervasive and cosmogonic perspectives. This may be read in the following hymns :

“I will now proclaim the heroic powers of Viṣṇu, who has measured out the terrestrial regions; who established the upper gathering place, having, wide-paced, strode out triply.”¹⁶⁰

“By reason of His heroic power, like a dread beast that wanders at will, that haunts the mountain, Viṣṇu is praised aloud for that; He in whose threes strides all beings dwell.”¹⁶¹

“Let my inspiring hymn go forth for Visnu, the mountain dwelling wide-pacing bull, who alone with but three steps has measured out this long far-extended gathering place.”¹⁶²

160. विष्णोः नु कम वीर्याणि प्रवोचम ।
यः पार्थिवानि विस्ममे रजांसि ।
यः अस्कभायत उतऽतरम् सधऽस्थम् ।
विऽचक्रमाणः त्रेधा उरुगायः ॥ *Viṣṇu Sukta*, I.154.1.

161. प्र तत् विष्णुः स्तवते वीर्येण ।
मृगः न भीमः कुचरः गिरिऽस्थाः ।
यस्य उरुषु त्रिषु विऽक्रमणेषु ।
अधिऽक्षियन्ति भुवनानि विश्वा ॥ *Ibid.*, 2.

162. प्र विष्णवे श्रूषम एनु मन्म ।
गिरिऽक्षिते उरुऽगायाय वृष्णे ।
यः इदम् दीर्घम् प्रऽयतम सधऽस्थम् ।
एकः विस्ममे त्रिऽभिः इत् पदेभिः ॥ *Ibid.*, 3.

“Whose three steps filled with mead, unfailing, rejoice in bliss; and who in three fold wise alone has supported earth and heaven, and all beings.”¹⁶³

“I would attain to that dear domain of his, where men devoted to the all god rejoice; for that, truly akin to the wide-strider, is a well of mead in the highest step of Viṣṇu.”¹⁶⁴

“We desire to go to those abodes of you two, where are the many horned nimble kine; there indeed that highest step of the wide-pacing bull shines brightly down.”¹⁶⁵

When the place of direction in which the three steps were taken is described in vedic hymns, there we find three basic views :

- a) In *Rgveda* I.22.17, I.154.3, I.154.4, Viṣṇu strides horizontally across the earth with three steps.
- b) In VI.49.13, VII.100.3,¹⁶⁶ Viṣṇu strides horizontally across the earth three times.

163. यस्य त्री पूर्णा मधुना पदानि ।
अक्षीयमाणा स्वधया मदन्ति ।
यः ॐ इति त्रिधातु पृथिवीम् ।
उत उत द्याम् । एकः दाधार भुवनानि विश्वा ॥ *Ibid.*, 4.

164. तत् अस्य प्रियम् अभि पाथः । अश्याम् ।
नरः यत्र देवऽयवः मदन्ति ।
उरुक्रमस्य सः हि बन्धुः इत्या ।
विष्णोः पदे परमे मध्वः उत्सः ॥ *Ibid.*, 5.

165. ता वाम् वास्तूनि उश्मसि गमध्वै ।
यत्र गावः भूरिऽश्रृङ्गाः अयासः ।
अत्र अह तत् उरुऽगायस्य वृष्णः ।
परमम् पदम् अव भाति भूरि ॥ *Ibid.*, 6.

166. यो रजांसि विममे पार्थिवानि त्रिश्चिद विष्णुर्मनवे बाधिताय ।
तस्य ते शर्मन्नुपदद्यमाने राया मदेम तन्वाहे ताना च ॥ *Rgveda* - VI.49.13 →

- c) In I.154.1, I.155.5, VIII.29.7,¹⁶⁷ Viṣṇu strides vertically, the third or highest step seen as being to or in heaven. It presupposes that strode from earth to heaven.

These references make the following points clear :

First, by either striding over the earth, with three strides or three times, or by traversing the “Universe” from the earth to the place where “no one ventures to approach, no, nor, feathered birds of air who fly with wings,” where the gods rejoice. Lord Viṣṇu has clearly demonstrated His pervasive nature unparralleled by any other Vedic god. Whether the earth is striden over or the Universe traversed, or even if the strides number seven (RV. I.22.16. VIII.69.7), the point being made is quite unique. Viṣṇu traverses the whole and reaches its pinnacle, and that third step that *Paramam Padam* is linked to an eye fixed in heaven which singers light up and is said to shine down greatly (I.154.6). Through His three steps, Viṣṇu is able to traverse the Universe, attain to its transcendent point, and still pervade it like a shining light. This is a point hard to forget when calling to mind the *Avatāra* concept.

This myth is fully developed in Brāhmaṇic literature. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Viṣṇu is said to have become preeminent

→ त्रिर्देवः पृथिवीमेष एतां विचक्रमे शतर्चसं महित्वा ।
प्र विष्णुरस्तु तवसस्तवीयान् त्वेषं ह्यस्य स्थविरस्य नाम ॥ *Ibid.*, VII.100.3.

167. द्वे इदस्य क्रमणे स्वदृशोऽभि ख्याय मर्त्यो भुरण्यति ।
तृतीयमस्य न किरादघर्षति वयश्चन पतयन्तः पतत्रिणः ॥ *Ibid.*, I.155.5
त्रीण्येक उरुगायो विचक्रमे यत्र देवासो मदन्ति ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.29.7.

among the gods as He is identified as the sacrifice. Viṣṇu is the sacrifice. (*Sa yaḥ sa Viṣṇur Yajñah sa.*). The *Taittiriya Āraṇyaka* V.I. 1-7 provides a variant of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Myth*, with more etiological explanations; as Viṣṇu's head is severed, It travels through heaven and earth; "from its so travelling (*pravarttata*), the 'pravargya' got its name. Virile energy feels from the mighty oen (*mahatah*); Hence the *mahāvira* (*sacrificial kittle*) got its name ! And *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* offers a collapsed version of the former two, calling Viṣṇu 'makha' at all times. The identification of Viṣṇu is here affirmed rather, redundantly, in the statement that 'makha' is the sacrifice (*Yajñam*).

The third setting for the identification of Viṣṇu with the sacrifice is the most familiar one in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (I.2.5). It is called germ myth of the *Vāmanāvatārai*, in which the gods invoke Viṣṇu, the sacrifice itself to win back the entire earth from the demons. Again an etology accompanies the myth; "By it (Viṣṇu, the sacrifice), the gods obtained this entire earth. As they obtained this entire earth by Him. So the sacrificial ground is called *Vedi* i.e. altar.¹⁶⁸

The association of Viṣṇu's three steps with the three worlds, only tentative in the *Rgveda*, is made explicit in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (28.7), the strides encompass not only the three worlds, but basic components of the sacrificial Universe; the *vedas* and *vāk*. "Indra and Viṣṇu fought with Asuras; having conquered them and they said, "let us make an arrangement;

168. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* I.2.5.2.

the asuras said, 'be it so,' Indra said, 'so much be ours, let the rest be yours.' So He traversed these worlds, then the *Vedas*, then speech."

The final extension of this *Vāmanāvatāra* may be seen in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in which Viṣṇu is identified with the sacrifice and three strides are replaced completely by the three meters, गायत्री, जगती and त्रिष्टुप्, that encompassing Viṣṇu, win the entire earth back from the Asuras. In this myth, several elements joined together to express a lasting cosmological statement, the creative power of Viṣṇu as sacrifice, as strider of the three steps are translated into the sacrificial terms of the three meters, and as obtainer of the earth. The cosmology implicit in the *Brāhmaṇa* of the *Vāmana* is stated explicitly in the *purāṇa* version, 'the whole Universe is in the Viṣṇu's body.'

Further the *Taittirīya Samhitā* associates the sacrificer with Viṣṇu and assimilate the power of His three strides by His own striding thrice.¹⁶⁹ Again in *Taittirīya Samhitā* it is said : "Viṣṇu won finally three worlds by the metres, in that he strides, the sacrificer becoming Viṣṇu win finally these worlds. Thus, in the *Brāhmaṇas* the three strides which are equated with the three worlds, have

169. यान्येवैनं भूतानि व्रतमुपयन्तमनूपयन्ति तैरेव सहावभृथमवैति विष्णुमुखा वै देवाश्छान्दोभिरिमाल्लोकानन-
पजय्यमभ्यजयन् यद्विष्णुक्रमात् क्रमते विष्णुरेव भूत्वा यजमानश्छान्दोभिरिमाल्लोकाननपजय्यमभि जयति ।
विष्णोः क्रमोऽस्यभिमातिहेत्याह गायत्री वै पृथिवी त्रैष्टुभमन्तरिक्षं जगती द्यौरानुष्टुभीर्दिशश्छान्दो-
भिरिवेमाँल्लोकान् यथापूर्वमभि जयति ॥

Jaittirīya Samhitā : I.7.5.4.

grounded their own nature of cosmogony and cosmological totality in the creative milieu of the sacrifice.¹⁷⁰

In the *Brāhmaṇas*, Viṣṇu's role as an aid to Indra in demon's vanquishing, continues, but becomes more active and explicit. In *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* Viṣṇu's part is still somewhat vague; Indra when raising his thunderbolt at Vṛtra, was supported by Viṣṇu. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (28.7), Indra and Viṣṇu fight the Asuras and conquer them. So Indra arranges for Viṣṇu to win back the worlds. The association of three strides with Indra Vṛtra fight is extended and made more explicit in *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*.¹⁷¹

A variation to *Vāmana-Viṣṇu* comes here again in the context of a Daivāsura struggle, in which Viṣṇu gains the power of three strides from the sacrifice of a dwarf beast. "The gods and the Asuras strove for these worlds, Viṣṇu saw this dwarf; he offered it to its own deities, then he conquered these worlds. One who is engaged in a struggle should offer a dwarf to Viṣṇu, then he becomes Viṣṇu and conquers these worlds. Thus, idea of sacrificing the dwarf of a

170. विष्णुमुखा वै देवश्चन्द्रोभिरिमाल्लोकाननपजय्यमभ्यजयन् यद्विष्णुक्रमात् क्रमते विष्णुरेव भूत्वा
यजमानश्चन्द्रोभिरिमाल्लोकाननपजय्यमभि जयति
विष्णोः क्रमोऽस्याभिमातिहेत्याह गायत्री वै पृथिवी
त्रैष्टुभमन्तरीक्षं जगति द्यौरानुष्टु भीर्दिशश्चन्द्रोभिरेवे
माल्लोकान यथापूर्वमभि जयति प्रजापतिरग्निमसृजत सोऽस्मात् सृष्टः ॥ *Ibid.*, V.2.1.1.

171. विष्णुरन्या देवताऽसीत् सोऽब्रवीद्विष्णवैहिदमा
हरिष्यावो येनायमिदमिति स विष्णुस्त्रेधाऽऽत्मानं
पृथिव्यां तृतीयमन्तरीक्षे तृतीयं दिवि तृतीयमभिपर्यावर्ता द्यविभेद्यत् पृथिव्यां तृतीयमासीत्
तेनेन्द्रो वज्रमुदयच्छद्विष्णवनुस्थितः सोऽब्रवीन्मा मे प्र हारास्ति वाइदं ॥ *Ibid.*, II.2.12.3.



species to Viṣṇu is preceded by a mythological reference, in *Taittiriya Samhitā*.¹⁷²

A very similar idea is expressed in a hymn where he is said to have taken vast strides with Indra and stretched out of the world for existence.¹⁷³

A remarkable point in the evolution of the basic concept of *Avatāra* is its association with Viṣṇu right from its initial stages. Unlike other *avatāras*, *Vāmana* is not a separate entity, later on synthesized with Viṣṇu, but it represents the essential and original aspect of the God.

The development of this myth starts from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and mentions the story of the fight between gods and demons and states that Viṣṇu assumed the form of a dwarf and

172. भवति साहस्री वा एषा लक्ष्मी यदुन्नतो लाक्ष्मियैव
पशुनव रुन्धे यदासहस्रं पशून् प्राप्नुयादथ वैष्णवं
वामनमा लभेतै तस्मिन् वै यत् सहस्रमध्यातिष्ठत्
तस्मादेष वामनः समीषितः पशुभ्य एव प्रजातेभ्यः
प्रतिष्ठां दधाति कोऽर्हति सहस्रं पशुन्
प्राप्नुमित्याहुरहोरात्राप्येव सहस्रं सम्पाद्याऽऽ लभेत पशवो ॥ *Ibid.*, II.1.5.2.
वैनं वैभीदक इधो भिनत्त्यैवैनं वैष्णवं
वामनमा लभेत यं यज्ञो नोपनमेद्विष्णुर्वै
यज्ञो विष्णुमेव स्वेन भागधेयेनोप धावति स
एवास्मै यज्ञं प्र यच्छत्युपैनं यज्ञो नमति वामनो
भवति वैष्णवो ह्येष देवतया समृद्ध्यै त्वाष्ट्रं
वडबमा लभेत पशुकामस्त्वष्टा वै पशुनां मिथुनानां ॥ *Ibid.*, II.1.8.3.

173. इन्द्रविष्णु तत्पनयाय्यं वां सोमस्य मद् उरु चक्रमाथे ।
अकृणुतमन्तरिक्षं वरीयोऽप्रथतं जीवसे नो रजांसि ॥ *Rv.* VI.69.5.

measured the share of Gods.¹⁷⁴ Often in ceremonies, the sacrificer is asked to stride the “three Viṣṇu strides.” Regarding this the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* says, “Viṣṇu truly is the sacrificer, by striding (vi-krama) he obtained for the Gods all pervading power (vikranti) which belongs to them. By the first step, he gained this earth by means of the *Gāyatrī* metre, second in the aerial expanse by the Tristubh metre, and third in the sky by *Jagati* metre.”¹⁷⁵ (1.9.3.9-10).

In some of the rituals, the Viṣṇu-strides ritual is accompanied by another one known as “*Vātsapra rite*”.

“For Prajāpati, having by means of Viṣṇu - strides produced creatures created vital power, for them by means of *Vātsapra rite*.”¹⁷⁶

The *Vātsapra rite* is the recitation of the Yajurveda mantras, (XII 18-28) (Ṛgveda X-45) *Vātaspati Blandana* is a seer who is associated with these mantras, and hence the rite is known as

174. यद्वैव विष्णुक्रमात्क्रमते । यज्ञो विष्णुः स देवेभ्यः इमां
विक्रान्तिं विचक्रमे येषामियं विक्रान्तिरिदमेव पथमेन पदेन
पस्पाराथेदमन्तरिक्षं द्वितीयेन दिवमुत्तमेनताम्बेवैष एतस्मै
विष्णुर्यज्ञो विक्रान्तिं विक्रमने तस्माद्विष्णुक्रमान्क्रमते तद्वाऽइत
एव पराचीनं भूयिष्ठा इव क्रमते ॥ *Śatapatha brahmana* I.9.3.9.

175. तदुतपृथिव्यां विष्णुर्व्यक्रस्त । गायत्रेण छन्दसा ततो
निर्भत्कोयोऽस्मान्द्वेष्टि यं च वयं द्विष्मोऽन्तरिक्षे
विष्णुर्व्यक्रस्त त्रैष्टुभेन छन्दसा ततो निर्भत्को
योऽस्मान्द्वोष्टि यं च वयं द्विष्मो दिवि विष्णुर्व्यक्रस्त जागतेन छन्दसा ----- *Ibid.*, I.9.3.10.

173. a) अथवात्सप्रणोपतिष्ठते । एतद्वै प्रजापतिर्विष्णुक्रमैः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा ताभ्यो वात्सप्रोणायुष्यमकरो-
त्तथैवैतद्यजमानो विष्णुक्रमैः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा ताभ्यो वात्सप्रोणायुष्यं करोति ॥ VI. 7.4.1.

b) स हैष दाक्षायणहस्तः । यद्वासप्रं तस्माद्य जातं कामयेत सर्वमायुरियादिति वात्सप्रणौनमभिमृशेत्तदस्मै
जातायायुष्यं करोति तथो ह स सर्वमायुरेत्यथ यं कामयेत वीर्यवान्स्यादिति विक्रत्यैनं
पुरस्तादभियन्त्रयेत तथोहस वीर्यवान्भवति ॥ *Ibid.*, VI. 7.4.1.2.

“*Vātsapra*.” It appears in three mantras of this hymn which are relevant with the Viṣṇu’s three strides and have sanction on the basis of four clauses of the Yajur mantra which are mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.¹⁷⁷

An elaboration of purāṇic mythology of the *Vāmana* myth is derived from *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. According to this myth, the dwarf among the gods, was instrumental in recovering the earth from asuras in fight between the devas and Asuras. The latter condescended to give the gods only that part of the earth which would be occupied by *Vāmana* measured by his three steps thinking that they would close only little portion because of His small size. But Viṣṇu was identical with sacrifice, He covered the whole Universe.

A similar legend is mentioned in *Taittiriya Samhitā*¹⁷⁸ and *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* also. In earlier versions of the story refers instead of measuring the three worlds, extends His steps to the three directions to obtain the possession of entire earth.

For the first time, the myth of Bali and *Vāmana* is referred to in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Here the story runs thus : Viṣṇu assumed the form

177. i] विष्णोः क्रमोऽसि सपलहा गायत्रं छन्दऽआरोह पृथिवीमनु वि क्रमस्व ।
 ii] विष्णोः क्रमोऽस्याभिमातिहा त्रैष्टुभं छन्दऽआरोहान्तरिक्षमनु वि क्रमस्व ।
 iii] विष्णोः क्रमोऽस्यरातीयतो हन्ता जागतं छन्दऽआरोह दिवमनु विक्रमस्व ।
 iv] विष्णोः क्रमोऽसि शत्रुयतो हन्ताऽऽनुष्टुभं छन्दऽआरोह दिशोऽनु वि क्रमस्व ॥ *Yajuh* - XII.5.

178. देवासुरा एषु लोकेष्वस्पर्धन्त स एतं विष्णुर्वामनमपश्यत तं स्वायै देवाताय । आऽलभत ततो वै स इमालोकानभ्यजय द्वैष्णवं वामनम् । लभेत स्पर्धमानो विष्णुरेव भूत्वेमाल्लोकानभि जयति विषम आ लभेत विषमा इव हीमे लोकाः समृद्धया इन्द्राय मन्युमते मनस्वने ललामं प्राशृङ्गमा लभेत संग्रामे ॥
 तैत्तिरीय संहिता - VI.2.4.2.

अनंतशास्त्रिः यज्ञेश्वरशास्त्रिः भारत मुद्रणालयः पारडी नगरम् 1957.

of a dwarf in order to subdue the pride of the Asura-king Bali. At the time of Sacrifice, He approached him and asked the gift of measuring the land, the size of His three steps. When he granted the offer He enlarged Himself into a wonderful giant form and measured the whole Universe. King Bali was then sent to the neither world.¹⁷⁹

The entire myth is evolved in the purāṇas in the form of powerful story and to excel the glory of Lord Viṣṇu. The description of Vāmana incarnation, here follows the lines of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as it is explicit therein.

Bali the son of Virochana, the commander of the Daitya army made encampments all over outside the celestial city with a desire to attain the status of Indra. So the celestials assumed various different forms at will, disappeared from heaven. Vāli reigning in the city of Indra, Amarāvati, brought the three worlds under his subjection. And the descendants of Bhṛgu fond of their disciples, made their world conquered Vāli performed *Aśvamedha Yajña* for attaining to the status of Indra. By virtue of his having performed *Aśvamedha Yajña*, Bali reigned spreading his fame all over the three worlds on all sides shining as he did like the moon surrounded by

179. वेरोचनिमुपागम्य त्रीन् याचत् पदक्रमान् ।
 लब्ध्वा च त्रीन् पदान् विष्णुः कृत्वारूपमथादुभूतम् ॥
 त्रिणिः क्रमैस्तथा लोकानाजहार त्रिविक्रमः ।
 एकेन हि पदा कृत्स्नां पृथिवी सोऽध्यतिष्ठति ॥
 द्वितीयेनाव्ययं व्योमं द्यां तृतीयेन राघव ।
 तं च बद्धाञ्जलिं कृत्वा पातालतलवासिनम् ॥
Rāmāyaṇa : I.27. 12-14.

stars. He considered himself as blessed and he enjoyed the prosperity acquired through the Brāhmaṇas.¹⁸⁰

Consequently the celestials disappeared and Daityas took the possession of gods, Heaven, seeing the condition their mother, Aditi, felt much distressed like a helpless woman.¹⁸¹ Kaśyapa asked his wife Aditi the cause of her pale countenance. She told her desire, that the gods regain their wealth, fame, prosperity and positions of which they had been robbed by the powerful demons. The Kaśyapa told her that Lord Hari could fulfil her desire. He asked her to perform a sacred vow. i.e. *Payovrata* to propitiate Lord Hari, He also explained thus : “Full of Supreme devotion and subsisting on milk one should worship Lord Viṣṇu for twelve days during the bright fortnight of the month of Phālguna. Besmearing his body with the

180. तुल्यैश्वर्यबलश्रीभिः स्वयूथैर्देयूथपै ।

पिबद्भिरिव खं दग्भिर्दहद्भिः परिधीनिव ॥

वृतो निकर्षन् महतीमासुरीं ध्वजिनीं विभुः ।

ययाविन्द्रपुरीं स्वृद्धां कम्पयन्निव रोदसी ॥

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII.15. 10-11.

एवं सुमन्त्रितार्थास्ते गुरुणार्थानुदर्शिता ।

हित्वा त्रिविष्टपं जग्मुर्गीर्वाणाः कामरूपिणः ॥३२॥

देवेष्वथ निलीनेषु बलिर्वैरोचनः पुरीम् ।

देवधानीमधिष्ठाय वशं नित्ये जगत्त्रयम् ॥३३॥

तं विश्वजयिनं शिष्यं भृगवः शिष्यवत्सलाः ।

शतेन हयमेधानामनुव्रतमयाजयन् ॥३४॥

ततस्तदनुभावेन भुवनत्रयविश्रुताम् ।

कीर्तिदिक्षु वितन्वानः सरेज उडुराडिव ॥३५॥

बुभुजे च श्रियं स्वृद्धां द्विजदेवोपलम्बिताम् ।

कृतकृत्यमिवात्मानं मन्यमानो महामनाः ॥३६॥ *Ibid.*, 32-36.

181. एवं पुत्रेषु नष्टेषु देवमातादितिस्तदा ।

हृते त्रिविष्टपे दैत्यैः पर्यतप्यदनाथवत् ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.16.1.

earth, turned Varāha, if actually available on the Amāvāsya, the devotee should, while standing in the middle of the stream, recite the prayer, and Lord Hari appears in the form of *Ādi-Varāha*. And then, worship the Lord with a concentrated mind in an image, altar, the sun, water, fire and even his preceptor by reciting some mantras. Having decorated the Lord with sandal paste, flower and so on uttering the mantra sacred to the Lord (the twelve sullabled mantra). This Supreme vow is known as Payovṛta.¹⁸²

Thus, instructed by her husband, Aditi, performed Payovṛta. Having obtained a boon from Lord Hari as securing Him as her son. Aditi waited upon her husband with Supreme devotion like one who has accomplished her purpose. Lord Hari entered the mind of Kaśyapa and concentrated his mind and entered the womb of Aditi *Hiranyagarbha*.¹⁸³

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182. फाल्गुनस्यामले पक्षे द्वादशाहं पयोव्रतः ।
 अर्चयेदरविन्दाक्षं भक्त्या परवयान्वितः ॥
 सिनिवाल्यां मृदाऽऽलिप्य स्नायात् क्रोडबिदीर्णया ।
 यदि लभेत वै स्त्रोतस्येतं मन्त्रमुदीरयेत् ॥
 त्वं देव्यादिवराहेण रसायाः स्थानमिच्छता ।
 उद्धृतासि नमस्तुभ्यं पाप्मानं मे प्रणाशय ॥ *Ibid.*, 25-27.
 अर्त्विवा गन्धमाल्याह्वैः पर्सिं स्नपयेत् विमुग्धम् ।
 वस्त्रोपवीताभरणपाद्योपस्पर्शं नैस्ततः द्वादशाक्षरविद्यया ॥ *Ibid.*, 39.
183. इत्युक्ता सादिती राजन् स्वभर्ता कश्यपेन वै ।
 अन्वतिष्ठद् व्रतमिदं द्वादशाहमतन्द्रिता ॥ *Ibid.*, VIII.XVII.1.
 उपाधावत् पतिं भवया परया कृतकृत्यवत् ।
 स वै समाधियोगेन कश्यपस्तदबुध्यत् ॥
 प्रतिष्ठमात्मानि हरेरंशं ह्यवितथेक्षणः ।
 सोऽदित्यां वीर्यमाधत् तपसा चिरसम्भृतम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

Lord Hari appeared on the Svarṇa *Dwādaśī* when the moon happened to be in the mansion called 'Sroṇa' (Śravaṇa) and in an hour known by the name of *Abhijit*. There arose a tumultuous din of various instruments and other musical instruments. Full of joy, Apsaras danced and the chief of the Gandharvas sang; sages, gods, manus, manes, hosts of siddhas, vidyādhara along with Kimpuruṣas suparṇas and attendants of god covered the hermitage of Aditi.¹⁸⁴

Lord Hari assumed a personality by His creative energy and sprang from her womb. In that very form Lord Hari who is unembodied consciousness had assumed and which was obviously resplendent with jewels and weapons, like an actor of wonderful movements, became a short statured Brāhmaṇa-boy.¹⁸⁵ Greatly rejoicing to see the Lord in the form of that dwarfish Brāhmaṇa-boy, eminent sages placed the Lord at their head and performed all sacred rites. The sage Brhaspati gave Him sacred thread and

184. श्रोणायां श्रवणद्वादश्यां मूर्हूर्तऽभिजिति प्रभुः ।

सर्वं नक्षत्रताराद्याश्चक्रुस्तज्जन्म दक्षिणम् ॥ *Ibid.*, 18.5.

शङ्खदुन्दुभयो नेदुर्मुदङ्गपणवानकाः ।

चित्रवादित्रतुर्याणां निर्धोषस्तुमुलोऽभवत् ॥

प्रीताश्चाप्सरसोऽनृत्यन् गन्धर्वप्रवरा जगुः ।

तुष्टुवुर्मुनयो देवा मनवः पितरोऽग्नयः ॥

सिद्धविद्याधरगणाः सकिभ्युरुषकिन्नराः ।

चारणा यक्षरक्षांसि सुपर्णा भुजगोत्तमाः ॥

गायन्तोऽतिप्रशंसन्तो नृत्यन्तो विबुधानुगाः ।

अदित्या अश्रमपदं कुसुमैः समवाकिरन् ॥ *Ibid.*, 7-10.

185. दृष्ट्वादितिस्तं निजगर्भसम्भवं परं पुमांसं मुदमाप विस्मिता ।

गृहीतदेहं निजयोगमायया प्रजापतिश्चाह जयेति विस्मितः ॥

यत तद्धपुर्भाति विभूषणायुधैरव्यक्तचिद् व्यक्तमधारयदुरिः ।

बभूव तेनैव स वामनो वटुः सम्पश्यतोर्दिव्यगतिर्यथा नटः ॥ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Kaśyapa gave a sacred cord made of *Manja grass*, Goddess earth gave a deer-skin Soma, a sacred staff and his mother gave a strip of cloth to cover his body and Dyauḥ gave an umbrella, Kubera gave Him a small vessel for receiving and holding alms, and Goddess Umā all virtuous gave Him alms.¹⁸⁶ Thus honoured by all those who assembled in the hermitage, that boy moved from that place.

On the bank of river Narmada, named as Bhṛgukachchha, a number of Ṛtviks of the Daitya king Bali were engaged in performing the sacrifices, saw the Dwarf Brāhmaṇa boy, approaching them there like the Sun rising in the sky. Being shorn of their lustre by the effulgence of the Dwarf, the priests, sacrificers and country people were very wonder. The mighty dwarf entered the courtyard of that horse sacrifice. The Dwarf bore with Him a staff, an umbrella and a Kamandalu filled with water. Seeing the subtle *Vipra*-Dwarf wearing a zone of Manja grass with deer skin, scarf thrown over his shoulders after the fashion of holy thread, the Bhṛgus and their disciples together with the deities of fire having had their brightness beaten back, suddenly stood up and accorded unto him a respectful reception.

186. तं वटुं वामनं दृष्ट्वा मोदमाना महर्षयः ।
 कर्मणिकारयामासुः पुरस्कृत्य प्रजापतिम् ॥
 ब्रह्मपतिर्ब्रह्मासुत्रं मेखलां कश्यपोऽददात् ॥
 ददौ कृष्णार्जिनं भूमिर्दण्डं सोमोवनस्पतिः ।
 कौपीनाच्छादनं माता द्यौश्चत्रं जगतः पृष्ठं ॥
 कमण्डलु वेदगर्भः कुशान् सप्तर्षयो ददुः ।
 अक्षमालां महाराज सरस्वत्यव्ययात्मनः ॥
 तस्मा इत्युपनीताय यक्षराट् पात्रिकामदात् ।
 भिक्षां भगवती सा क्षादुमाददम्बिका सती ॥ *Ibid.*, 13-17.

Bali rejoiced on seeing handsome person and offered him seat. Bali worshipped the feet of the mighty one and then addressed his adorations to that charming one, and the Bali held on the crown of his head that auspicious and sacred water with which Hari's feet had been washed and which was capable of destroying sin. Thus king Bali worshipped the Brāhmaṇa-boy and told him to ask anything of His wish. Vāmana praised Hiraṇyakaśipu and Hiraṇyākṣa for their heroic activities, and after thus praising the family in which Bali had been born, He begged the king for three feet of land.¹⁸⁷

Bali agreed to give this land in charity, since this was very insignificant. Śukrāchārya who could understand that dwarf was Viṣṇu, the friend of demi gods forbid Bali to give this land. Śukrāchārya advised Bali to withdraw his promise. He explained that in subduing others, in joking, in responding in danger, in acting for the welfare of others and soon one could refuse to fulfil one's promise and there would be no fault. By this philosophy Śukrāchārya tried to dissuade Bali from giving land to Him. But Bali could not agreed.¹⁸⁸

187. तं नर्मदायास्तट उत्तरे बलेर्य ऋत्विजस्ते भृगुकच्छसंज्ञके ।
 प्रवर्तयन्तो भृगवः क्रतूत्तमं व्यचक्षतारादुदितं यथा रविम् ॥
 तऋत्विजो यजमानः सदस्या हतत्विषो वामनतेजसा नृप ।
 सूर्यः किलायात्युत वा विभावसुः सनत्कुमारोथ दिदक्षया क्रतोः ॥ *Ibid.*, 21-22.
 मौञ्ज्या मेखलया वीतमुपवीताजिनोत्तरम् । जटिलं वामन विप्रं मायामाणवकं हरिम् ॥
 प्रविष्टं वीक्ष्य भृगवः सशिष्यास्ते सहाग्निभिः ।
 प्रत्युग्रहन् समुत्थाय रक्षितास्तस्य तेजसा ॥ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

188. यजमानः प्रमुदितो दर्शनीयं मनोरमम् ।
 रूपानुरुषावयवं तस्मा आसनमाहरत् ॥ *Ibid.*, 26.
 यद् यद् वटो वाञ्छसि तत् प्रतीच्छ मे त्वामर्थिनं विप्रसुतानुतर्कये ।
 गां काञ्चनम् गुणवद् धाम मृष्टं तथान्नपेयमुत वा विप्र कन्याम् ॥
 ग्रामात् समृद्धांस्तुरगान् गजान् वा रथांस्तथार्हत्तम् सम्प्रतीच्छ ॥ *Ibid.*, 32.

The Vāmana of Hari wonderfully increased His body and encompassed the three fold qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. In His form existed the earth, the sky, the quarter, the heaven, oceans, the celestials, all the Ṛṣis etc. In that body identical with three fold qualities of Hari, endued with great spiritual wealth. And the second foot of His extending above heaven through Mahārloka, Tapaloka, and Jnanaloka and Satyaloka. And there is no space for third step so king Vāli requested Lord Hari to put his third step on his head. So Lord Hari put His third step on Vāli head he went to Pātālaloka. The Vāli was liked by all the sages for his generosity. Vāli being released, bowed down unto Lord Hari and entered Sutala with Asuras. Having thus conferred the three worlds upon Indra and satisfied the desire of Aditi, the Lord governed the entire Universe.¹⁸⁹

Meaning of Vāmana :

The *Matsya Purāṇa* gives the meaning of *Vāmana*. There are two aspects of Divine principle. One as the unmanifest called Vāmana, and the other as the manifest called *Viṣṇu*, *Virāt*, *Mahat* etc. That which is Virāt comprises the three or Viśvabhuvanas. It is the power of Svayambhuvanas. It is the power of Svayambhu who is the same as manifest Vāmana or the self existent centre which expands as the diameter and the circumference. This law of creation is expressed in the formulas. वामनो ह विष्णुरास सहि वैष्णवो यद् वामनः वैष्णवो वामनः ।

189. एष वैरोचने साक्षाद् भगवान् विष्णुर्ध्रुवः ।

कश्यपाददितेर्जातो देवानां कार्यसाधकः ॥

प्रतिश्रुतं त्वयैतस्मै यदनर्थमज्ञातता ।

न साधु मन्ये दैत्यानां महानुपगतोऽनयः ॥

The meaning is that *Vāmana* and *Virāt* are two aspects of same Divine Power that which is *Vāmana* or a Dwarf in its source or in the seed, becomes *Vaiśvānara* or *Virāt* in the cosmic tree. It is the intrinsic power of the manifest centre which expands into the diameter on the basis of which the circumference is ascribed. All the measurements of space which become manifest in the diameter abide in the centre and it is only the principle of movement that makes it expand. The centre is *Vāmana*, whom all the devas worship - मध्ये वामनमासीनं सर्वे देवा उपासते । The centre symbolizes the principle of rest (*pratiṣṭha*) or stasis (*sthiti*) but when the principle of ragas becomes operative the centre has to expand become manifest in space.

It is already stated that in the story of *Vāmana*, God changes himself into *Virāt*, the Giant form which includes all the dimensional and temporal extensions of time and space. According to *R̥gveda* *Viṣṇu* first appears as *Yuvakumara* and He becomes of giant form.

Bali is depicted as an *Asura* king, the asuric force which keeps the tendency of manifestation in its grip or coils which is the literal meaning of *Vāli*. After its surrendering by the Asuric power, the *Yajña* of the cosmos fulfils its course. All growth or manifestation is *Yajña* in which the divine powers unfold itself in matter which is symbolized by the three *lokas* with three steps of *Vāmana*.

This *avatāra* of *Viṣṇu* was originally Vedic yet received an enthusiastic treatment in the *Bhāgavata* teachers.

Vedic Astronomy and Mythology and The Vāmana Incarnation :

According to the Hindu mythology the twelfth day of bright half of Bhadrapada is the birthday of the fifth incarnation, the Dwarf - Vāmana. The reward of the penance and prayers of Aditi was the descent of the divine Vāmana in the house of Kashyap. This legend can be explained in the terms of astronomy as follows; Viṣṇu stands identified with the Sun in the beginning of the Summer solstice. The shadow of the Sun on the meridian on that day is the longest and from the next day begins to become shorter. On the day of the beginning of the winter solstice which is noted as the day of Indra festival, the shadow of the Sun of the meridian becomes shortest. This phenomenon was interpreted as the birth of Vāmana - the Dwarf.

On the twelfth day of the bright half of the month of *Bhadrapada* the Moon is generally in the last leg of the sign of capricornus or the beginning of that of Aquarius. When the above legend of the birth of Vāmana was conceived the commencement of the summer solstice was the sign of Leon and that of the winter solstice in the sign of Aquarius. The person who held this pot i.e. Aquarius - Kumbha was the king Bali of Hindu mythology. In the southern region like kernel and cylon and in the countries like Iraq there were Asura kingdoms known as 'Bali'. In these regions there used to be very heavy rains even in winter solistices.

It could therefore be naturally imagined that the Vedic Indra became a victim of the 'Ba' or 'Bali' Rājā. The Bali Rājā had robbed

Vedic Indra of his sovereign status. The Devas wanted there hegemony to be established and recognised. Vāmana was born at the commencement of the summer solstice, then covered the autumnal equinox and then placing his third step on the winter solstice he crushed 'Bali' under his feet. The story goes, Bali came forward to gift away to Vāmana what he had demanded. While Bali was prepared to pour water on the hand of Vāmana a token of gift through his pot kumbha - in confirmation of his gift, it was Shukra - venus the Guru of the Asura king, who attempted to step the king in his self liquidation by that suicidal gift. P-53.

The Dhundhu Myth :

Among the thirty versions of *Vāmana* such a myth has appealed to us, the myth that personifies our more naive and idealistic conceptions of what the *Vāmanavatāra* is all about.

Strangely, and perhaps; significantly, this favorite version is an aberration among the thirty; it is not about the familiar characters Bali and *Vāmana*, but about Viṣṇu who, in a bygone Mahāyuga, descended as a dwarf to outwit the demon Dhundha, userper of the three worlds. The myth is told within the expansive *Vāmana Purāṇa* (49-65) *Vāmana* myth as its fifty second chapter, to explain the existence of a *Viṣṇupāda tīrtha* prior to *Vāmanas* three steps on earth. The tale that ensues parallels the usual *Vāmana* versions, but highlights some points that remain largely in the shadows of the other versions.

In the fourth Kali age, the demon Dhundhu practiced tapas and was rewarded with invulnerability by Brahma. Usurping heaven and

its throne, Dhundhu was not yet sated, till desiring Brahma's abode to which the gods had fled. To this wish, the demons reply to their king "we don't have the power of going, O ! Protector of the world, bywhich we can go to the residence of Brahma because the path is very far and extremely impossible."

This escalation of goals on Dhundhu's part makes nice symmetry with his tapas; that is, a demon who wins by force desires only the triple world; but he who conquers by tapas desires true immortality.

Adament in his desire, Dhundhu consults Śukra, who suggests to perform hundred Aśvamedhas as did Indra, thereby winning the Brahmaloaka. Assembled at the river bank, the Asuras begin the sacrifice, and the gods, smelling smoke, call to Viṣṇu for help. Viṣṇu "made His mind to bind Dhundhu feigning virtue." Taking the form of a dwarf, he floated up river to the site of the Asuras sacrifice and pretending to be drawing was hauled out by them. When questioned by them, he told a sad tale. The younger of two sons of a brāhmin, named Netrabhasa and Gatibhāṣa, when his father died, he was cheated out of his inheritance by his elder brother, who gave him this excuse; "A hump backed a dwarf, a lame person, a eunuch, a leper a madman, a blind man - these people have no share in property." At this protestation, Gatibhāṣa was thrown into the river by his greedy brother.

Flattering the Asuras with compliments, then in return offered him a myriad of sumptuous gifts, which he declined asking only for these steps of land. Granted this, He assumed His Trivikrama form

and began striding, “robbing” the earth, atmosphere, and heaven with His first two steps and squashing Dhundhu with his third.

Here the myth is unique in the instrumental role given to Viṣṇu’s dwar fishness, the fact that He was cheated out of His possessions because he was a dwarf becomes the motivation for Dhundhu’s giving, and His status as a brahmin, although present, clearly takes a back seat.

The myth excels in its ability to combine the expression of differing religious goals in a unique balance, while still preserving the impishness, inherent, but largely ignored, in the figure of the dwarf. And by the very existence of the *Gitābhasa-Vāmanāvatāra*, a whole new realm of cosmological meaning is implied; that although the *Avatāras* have sociocosmic relevance to the present Mahāyuga, they are a repetitive cosmological structure, constant through time.

The *Vāmana Purāṇa* (49-65) and *Padma Purāṇa* (*uttarakhandā* 266-267) versions describe Bali’s reign as dharmic, characterizing it as a satya yuga. The *Vāmana Purāṇa* version gives him a decisive role. In other words, each mytheme or element seems to be independent of the others, usually within the boundaries that logic dictates.

This is not to say that there are no meaningful patterns within this variation, but several basic patterns that arise out of the multitudes. Again, these do not change the action and structure of this myth, but they are no less important in pointing out the poet’s vision of the concerns that backon the *Avatāra*.

According to Wedy O' Flaherty, there are three patterns.¹⁹⁰ The first situation that prompts the *Avatāra* takes as its the classic *daiva-sura* struggle; Bali is a typical demon; due to his *Svadharmā* he wants to cause trouble, to usurp the sovereignty of Trailokya, to steal the sacrifice. Likewise he is ignorant of Viṣṇu's Supremacy and strength. This, as, Flaherty notes, is typical of the concerns of the vedic period and recall as well as earliest "germ" of the *Vāmana* myth. These concerns are still voiced in such versions as *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* I.2.5.1, *Rāmāyaṇa* I.29, *Agni Purāṇa*, 4.4-11, and *Skandha Purāṇa* VII.4.19. 10-14.

The second situation presents with a skewed version of the *daivasura* conflict. Bali is now characterized as a virtuous Asura; that is, one who violates his *Svadharmā* to honour *Sanātana dharma*. This still possess threat to the gods; perhaps a more serious one, for

190. तद् वामनं रूपमवर्धताद्भुतं हरेरनन्तस्य गुणत्रयात्मकम् ।
 भूः खं दिशो द्यौर्विवराः पयोधयस्तिर्यङ्मृदेवा ऋषयो यदासत् ॥
 काये बलिस्तस्य महाविभूतेः सहस्रिगाचार्यसदस्य एतत् ।
 ददर्श विश्वं त्रिगुणं गुणात्मके भूतेन्द्रियार्थाशयजीवयुक्तम् ॥
 रसामचष्टाङ्गितलेऽथ पादयोर्महीं महीध्राद् पुरुषस्य जङ्घयोः ।
 पतत्रिणो जनुनि विश्वमूर्तेरूर्वोर्गणं मारुतमिन्द्रसेनः ॥
 संध्यां विभोर्वाससि गुह्या एकत् प्रजापतीञ्जघने आत्ममुख्यान् ।
 नाभ्यां नमः कुक्षिषु सप्तसिन्धूत् रुरुक्रमस्योरसि चर्क्षमालाम् ॥ *Ibid.*, ch. 20, 21-24.
 पदं द्वितीयं क्रमतस्त्रिविष्टपं न वै तृतीयाय तदीयमण्वपि ।
 उरुक्रमस्याङ्घ्रिरुपर्युपर्यथो महर्जनाभ्यां तपसः परं गतः ॥ *Ibid.*, 34.
 यद्युत्तमश्लोक भवान् ममेरितं वचो व्यलीकं सुखर्य मन्यते ।
 करोम्यतं तन्न भवेत् प्रलम्भनं पदं तृतीयं कुरु शीष्ण मे निजम् ॥ *Ibid.*, ch.22.2.
 वत्स प्रह्लाद भद्रं ते प्रयाहि सुतलालयम् ।
 मोदमान स्वपौत्रेण ज्ञातीतां सुखमावह ॥ *Ibid* ch. 23.9.
 य इदं देवदेवस्य हरेरद्भुतकर्मणः ।
 अवतारानुचरितं शृण्वन् याति परां गतिम् । *Ibid.*, 30.

a demon who tries to 'be good' is violating his Svadharma, paving the road for his own ruin as well as for the obstruction of cosmic order. In many myths such as these, Bali is shown as a dharmic king, outdoing even Indra. Sometimes, Bali is said to have been able to win heaven through a boon given by brahma in reward for his austerities. Such in the case in *Harivaṃśa* 248-256, *Vāmana Purāṇa* 2-10. This type of situation echoes the concerns of the post vedic period, when power was won through ascefcism and virtue.

The final characterization finds Bali as a *Viṣṇu-bhakta* who willingly gives up his kingdom to Viṣṇu in an act of renunciation motivated by bhakti. We find this in such versions as *Padma Purāṇa*, *Śrṣṭikhaṇḍa* 25, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* VIII. 15-23, IV.76.1-27 and it is obviously characteristic of the period of bhakti that, as Flaherty notes," resolves the conflict between gods and good men or demons by introducing the Vedic concept of dependence on the gods.

These characterizations are helpful in setting some of the mytheme variations in a meaningful contexts.

Bali's attainment of the Sovereignty :

The myth of Vāmana incarnation presents with three different views of how Bali attains sovereignty over the trailokya. The first stage, the Asura true to his *Svadharma*, causes trouble by defeating the gods, and ousting them, with Indra at their head, from heaven. The asura's victory comes as no surprise, for, as elder brothers to the gods, they have been classically depicted as their superiors in physical strength such as was the case in the brāhmaṇas.

The *Skanda Purāṇa* (VII.4.19.10-14) is unique in giving us a date for this victory, “at the end of the *Kṛta Yuga*”. The second group of texts explains that Bali won his crown following in the footsteps of his great-grand-father Hiranyakaśipu; by obtaining a boon of invincibility from Brahma in reward for his tapas. This method of attaining the sovereignty corresponds to O’ Flaherty’s second stage, where ascetic practice and virtue become the primary means of gaining power; Bali is virtuous in his austerities, but, employs the power yielded by the fruit of such action toward typically Asuric ends. Perhaps, this alternation in the myth was coterminous with the creation of Hiranyakaśipu’s parallel role in the *Narasimha* myth.

The conditions of Brahma’s boon are spelled out in *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (I.55,) the *Padma Purāṇa* (Sṛṣṭi Khanda 25) and *Vāmana Purāṇa* (52) Bali is given “invincibility, unconquerability in the battles between the gods and demons, in its characteristically poetic elaboration, reminds Bali of his privileged position through the mouthpiece of Prahlāda, the Bali’s grandfather.

Again *Vāmana Purāṇa* (II.10) and *Mahābhārata* (12.326 72-76) versions express knowledge of some kind of invincibility Bali possesses, in the *Vāmana Purāṇa* version Aditi tells Indra that ‘Bali can killed in the battle field by Viṣṇu by Him alone and the *Mahābhārata* says that Bali is unslayable by all the gods.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (VIII.15-23) relates that Bali became extremely powerful through the Visvajit sacrifice performed for him by his preceptor Śukrāchārya. In fact, through this sacrifice Bali, essentially, is “Indracized”. When the proper oblation of havi was

offered into the sacrificial fire, there arose immediately from the fire a golden chariot like those of Indra, and one pennon having the emblem of lion as well as a celestial bow having a golden frame, two quivers filled with unending arrows and celestial armour.

Further, this myth appears ambiguous about how Bali attains the sovereignty in heaven, or even if he does, *Skanda Purāṇa* relates that Bali became the sovereignty of the earth. But because Bali's reign is so righteous, Indra seeks out Viṣṇu for help, saying "All the world has gone to the *Devaloka* O Keśava !" Due to Bali's virtuousness as king, the earth has become like heaven.

The description of Vāmana :

Through penance, Aditi wins boon from Lord Viṣṇu, that he will be born as her son, the younger brother of Indra to win back the sovereignty for Śukra and reinstate the gods in their proper dwelling. Aditi must carry the fetus for a thousand years or alternately, her tapas has lasted a thousand years; but after a long time period of one kind of discomfort or another, Viṣṇu is born from Aditi. Besides those myths mentioned later in which Viṣṇu is not born from Aditi at all, two myths tell of Viṣṇu's birth from Aditi, but not as a dwarf. *Kūrma Purāṇa* (I.16) states that Viṣṇu was born as Upendra, and subsequently goes to Bali's sacrifice "assuming the form of a dwarf". (I.16.48). In the *Mahābhārata* (III.13. 23-25) Viṣṇu is born and remains a child, and he is said to be born as the twelfth *Āditya*.

The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* mentions the Kaśyapa, the wise prajapati performed *Vāmana's Samskaras* including *Jātakarma* and other

ceremonies. The *Matsya Purāṇa* also provide full account of the ceremony. The *Vāmana Purāṇa* states that *Bhāradvāja*, a descendant of *Br̥haspati*, performed the *Jātakarma* and *Upanayana* ceremonies.

Vāmana is quite often called a boy, (*batu*). This occurs in eight versions and in *Mahābhārata* text it is used to the exclusion of *Vāmana*, thus in these texts *Viṣṇu* is born as a *brāhmaṇa* boy-dwarf. The reasons for this additional diminutive might be several; for the sake of logic, as he is just born; to reinforce the structural element of smallness on which *Vāmana*'s trick depends; to emphasize that quality of *Vāmana*'s which proclaims the small innocent unlearned character of a boy-dwarf by contrast with his knowledge of the sacrifice and his theophany. The nature of his dwarfishness come in only two versions of the *Skanda Purāṇa* (VII.2.14), *Śukra* warns *Bali* about the laws and that forbid him to let *Vāmana* enter the sacrificial arena "All *Brāhmins* who are miserable, blind, wretched, and so on are to be honoured at the entrance, as well as those who are deaf, dwarfed, humpbacked, diseased and cruel." And, in the *Vāmana Purāṇa* myth, the dwarf plies his case to the demons, saying he is poverty stricken because his brother tricked him out of his share of their father's estate with these words, "A humpbacked, a dwarf, a lame person, a eunuch, a leper, a madman, a blind man these people have no share in property. (*Vāmana Purāṇa* 52.64). With these exceptions, then *Viṣṇu*'s dwarfishness, that is, as a freak of nature, has little meaning in the myth; it almost seems that his size as dwarf or boy is structurally relevant only to the myth.

The Roles of Prahlāda and Śukra :

In many versions of the myth, we find Prahlāda, wise grand father of Bali. With the exception of Harivamśa 41.79.103, *Brahma Purāṇa* 213. 8-105 and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* II.73. 75-87. *Vāmana Purāṇa* 98.59-89, in which Prahlāda is named as one of the demons battling Viṣṇu's theoplany, in which Prahlāda tries to prevent Bali from giving land to Viṣṇu because he is not a brahmin boy but the man-lion returned. (It is significant, however, Prahlāda recognizes *Vāmana* to be *Narasimha* through his divine eye), His nature and role remain constant; He is an asura with a bhakta's knowledge of the all encompassing power of Viṣṇu a properly devotional attitude.

When Bali notices that the demons have become lack lustre, devoid of Tejas he consults his grand father to find the cause. Through the meditation, Prahlāda sees Lord Viṣṇu residing in Aditi's womb, about to be born. His vision of Viṣṇu is properly theophanic, all the Universe is contained in his body. After Prahlāda has impressed upon the young king the absolute power of Viṣṇu Bali foolishly denies that any of his demon warriors are not as strong as Viṣṇu and could not defeat Him. Enraged by his own grandson's blasphemous ignorance, Prahlāda rails against him, and finally curses him to fall from power, and kingdom. Thus Prahlāda as in the most "devotional" versions of the *Narasimha* myth, acts as Viṣṇu's agent.

Śukra, as spiritual preceptor of the Asuras, plays an integral role at Bali's sacrifice. The counterpart of Brhaspati, the asura brahmin Śukra has a Svadharma Sanātana dharma conflict all his own. As a brahmin sage, Śukra has privileged vision of the sacred, but he uses

that vision toward demonic ends; Śukra recognizes Viṣṇu in his dwarf disguise because Śukra alone among the demons has true spiritual insight, but he uses this insight to warn Bali and to demons not to promise Viṣṇu anything lest Viṣṇu take away his entire kingdom.

Śukra is so adamant in preventing *Vāmana* from receiving the gift that in *Nāradiya Purāṇa* I. 10-11, a version often duplicated in folk traditions, Śukra tries to prevent Bali from pouring the water that ceremonially seals the offer he had made to *Vāmana* and is blinded by Lord Viṣṇu with a blade of grass turned into a deadly weapon. In several cases, when Bali characteristically rejects Śukra's advice, either because it is simply improper to refuse any guest at a sacrifice or because he now recognizes Viṣṇu's Superiority and welcomes Him. Śukra is so enraged at his pupil's disobedience that he curses him to lose his kingdom.

In this respect, one can see the roles of Prahlāda and Śukra as complementary opposites; Prahlāda transmits knowledge of Viṣṇu benevolence to Bali, who rejects it *Svadharmā* and is then cursed by Prahlāda. Śukra transmit knowledge of Viṣṇu's malevolence to Bali, who rejects Sanātana dharma-bhakti and then cursed by Śukra.

Special relationship with Indra :

The *Vāmana* myth does not forget Viṣṇu's firm alliance with Indra. It may be useful to highlight here the exchange power that occurs between the two gods Indra fades and Viṣṇu's importance begins to rise.

By the time of the *Brāhmaṇas* the incapability and the power of sovereign Śukra has began to wane, and we hear of the retribution Indra receives for his sins. When Indra violated his pact of friendship with Namuci and killed him through guile, he became polluted and had to be purified with hymns (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* III. 225). In the epic Mahābhārata Indra's sins and losses he suffered from them serve as a basis for the divine birth of the Pandavas. He killed the sons of Tvastra and his Tejas *diminished*, he violated the pact of friendship by killing Vṛtra-Namuci and his power diminished, taking the appearance of Gautama he violated Ahalya, and for this, his form got *diminished*.

Certainly in the epics, he is a 'spent force', a nominal sovereign who is no longer immune to the ethical code of the Universe and who can no longer defend the cosmos against demons. It is clear that Viṣṇu raises in importance, He becomes the mythological heir to Indra's legacy. Thus in the epic and purāṇic myths, Indra is a virtual *homme depaillé*, with Viṣṇu taking over his demon-conquering tasks, certainly one of the *raisons d'être* of the *Avatāras* and his ability to change shape to accomplish a task. Although Indra retains his title of king, Viṣṇu gains his wife Sri, the symbol of sovereignty.

In many versions of *Vāmana Purāṇa* that *Vāmana* acts for Indra, that he either descends for Indra's sake or that having put Bali in pātāla, he restores the kingship to Indra. Further it is mentioned that Viṣṇu as born from Aditi, becomes younger brother of Indra and called Upendra.

7. THE CONCEPT OF PARAŚURĀMA AVATĀRA

All the five *Avatāras* discussed above obtained importance largely owing to their symbolic significance rooted in the ancient past. But *Paraśurāma* is a real historical incarnate figure, probably a great warrior of a particular tribe. Hence with the advent of *Paraśurāma* some historicity is introduced into the *Avatāra* cycle of Viṣṇu.

Panini mentions a tribe or people known as *Paraśus*. *Paraśurāma* is used merely as a proper noun and besides in earlier references, He is found designated as *Rāma*, *Bhārgava* or *Jāmadagni*. He is called *Paraśurāma* because of His association. With the *Parasu* or axe - His weapon, with which He killed His mother at the command of His father.¹⁹¹

The character of *Paraśurāma* is briefly presented in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He is defeated by the *Dāsarathi Rāma*, which may be the result of an attempt to establish the supremacy of the Kṣatriyas over the *brāhmaṇas*.¹⁹²

The famous story of *Paraśurāma* is related in detail in the *Mahābhārata* [III.116]. The sage *Jāmadagni* had five sons by *Reṇukā*, the last of them being *Rāmā*. Once when *Reṇukā* had gone to the riverside to fetch fruit for the sacrifice, she saw king *Citrabhānu* sporting merrily in the river. *Reṇukā* waited for a while witnessing

191. Wendy D.O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*, University of California Press, 1976, pp. 78-93.

192. *Nirukta* V.3.119.

the scene. When she returned to the hermitage excited with impure thoughts, the sage turned her out and ordered his sons, one after another, to kill her. Failing to carry out his orders, the first four sons were cursed to death. They were burned to ashes. *Rāma*, the youngest of all, obeyed His father and proceeded to kill his mother. Pleased with his deed, Jāmadagni offered a boon to his son. Paraśurāma asked for the resurrection of His mother and brothers.

Once king Kārtavīrya came to the hermitage of Jāmadagni and forcibly took away their cows. So *Paraśurāma* went and killed the king. To avenge their father's death, Kārtavīrya's sons murdered the sage Jāmadagni, in the absence of *Paraśurāma*, who later on took an oath to destroy the whole of the Kṣatriya race. He undertook his campaign of destruction twenty one times.¹⁹³

Bhṛgu's son, Jāmadagni has mastered all the *vedas* and *vedāṅgas* and had practised a severe penance, on the auspicious sandy bank of Ganga, in honour of Indra, for a thousand years. Then the Lord being pleased, and said, "to ask for a boon. Then the brahmana sage spoke to Indra to give him, a desire, yielding cow Surabhi always fulfilling one's desires."¹⁹⁴

Then Indra gave him the divine Surabhi fulfilling all desires, Jāmadagni having obtained Surabhi, lived with a great grandeur like another Indra. Then Jāmadagni married with Reṇukā daughter

193. *Rāmāyaṇa* - I.71.

194. *Mahābhārata* III.116.14

of Reṇukā. The pious-minded one, for many years enjoyed with her as Indra with Paulomi, his auspicious queen.

Then Jāmadagni with a desire for having a son, performed a great sacrifice. With that sacrifice he pleased god Indra. Indra promised him a very strong, powerful and mighty armed son tormentor of all enemies. Then in course of time, Jāmadagni generated strong and powerful son with a part of a portion of Viṣṇu and having all good marks, on Reṇukā, when a son was born, his grandfather joyfully gave him a name indicating Viṣṇu's portion, *Paraśurāma*. Being born from Jāmadagni he was called Jamadagnya. His thread ceremony was performed.¹⁹⁵

He was proficient in all sciences and arts. To practice penance, he went to the *Śālagrama* maintain. There he saw a brāhmaṇa. Sage, Kaśyapa of unlimited splendour. The Brāhmaṇa Marici's son, was full of delight with him. In the proper manner, he gave him the indestructible formula of Viṣṇu.

195. भृगुपुत्रो महानासीजामदग्निर्द्विजोत्तमः । समस्तवेद वेदाङ्ग पारगश्च महातपाः ॥ तपस्तेपे स धर्मात्मा महेन्द्रं प्रति भामिनि ॥ सहस्रवर्षपर्यन्तं गङ्गायाः पुलिने शुभे ॥ ततः प्रसन्नः प्राहेदं भगवान्पाकशासनः ॥२॥ ततः प्रसन्नो देवेशस्तस्मै विप्राय गोत्रभित् । प्रददौ सुरभिं देवीं सर्वकामदुधां तदा ॥ स लब्ध्वा सुरभिं देवीं जमदग्निर्महातपाः । उवास महदैश्वर्यः शतक्रतुरिवाऽपरः रेणुकस्यसुतां रम्यां रेणुकां नामनामतः । उपयेमे विधानेन जमदग्निर्महातपाः ॥१॥

तर्गिसह स धर्मात्मा रेमे वर्षाव्यनेकशः पौलोभ्या शभयादेव्या यथासङ्क्रन्दनो विभुः ततः सपुत्रकामत्वादिति चक्रेसुधार्मिकः । दृष्ट्या संतोषयामाख पाकशासनमीश्वरम् परितुष्टः शचिभर्ता ददौ पुत्रं महाबलम् महौजसं महाबाहुं सर्वशत्रुप्रतापनम् ॥२॥

पुत्रमुत्पादयामास महावीर्यं बलान्वितं विष्णोरंशभागेन सर्वलक्षणलक्षितम् । चक्रेथ नामधेयन्तु राम इत्यस्यशोभनम् जमदग्नेः समुत्पन्नो जमदग्न्य इतीरितः ।

Kṛṣṇa Dvaipayana Vedavyasa *Padma Purāṇa*

Gurumadal Series, Calcutta, 1959, VI.241.15, p-835.

Having received the formula from Kaśyapa, the *Paraśurāma*, muttering day and night the great six syllabled formula, worshipped the Lord of Lakṣmī. That pious Bhārgava, meditating upon Lord Viṣṇu practised penance for many years. He, with senses subdued and speech controlled, and practising great penance, remained. The Jāmadagni remained on the bank of Ganga. He performed pious acts according to the precepts like sacrifices and gifts. By the favour of Indra's cow, his wealth was full. Some times the king, the lord of Haihaya, surrounded by his entire army, having conquered all countries, reached the hermitage of Jāmadagni and asked the devout sage about his well being, and gave him garments and ornaments. He too honoured the king that has come to his house. Having honoured according to the precept the king with *madhuparka*, the sage fed the king along with his army. The Jāmadagni solicited "*Surabhi*". She the cow of plenty produced food, drink etc.¹⁹⁶

Seeing that cow the king begged Jāmadagni for *Surabhi*.

Thus, addressed by the king, Jāmadagni said, 'this cow cannot be given to you by me. This one was protected by Indra, if

196. तपस्तप्तुं जगामाऽथ शालिग्रामाचलं प्रति । ददर्श कश्यपं तत्र बह्वर्षिममितौजसम् । तेनसम्पूजित-
स्सम्यङ्गरीचितनयो द्विजः ॥ विधिना प्रददौ तस्मै मन्त्रं वैष्णवमव्ययम् लब्धमन्त्रस्तदा रामः कश्यपात्त
महात्मनः । तपस्तेपे स धर्मात्मा बहुवर्षाणि भार्गवः । जितेन्द्रियस्तु यतवाक्तदा तस्थौ महातपाः
जमदग्निस्तु विप्रर्षिः स्थितो गङ्गातटे शुभे । विजित्वा सर्वराष्ट्राणि सर्वसैन्यसमावृतः । भार्गवस्याऽऽश्रम-
म्नाप्यजमदग्नेर्महीपतिः समीक्ष्य तं महाभागं ववन्दे मुनिसत्तमम् । प्रददौ नृपतिस्तस्मै वस्त्राण्याभरणानि
च । स च सम्पूजयामास राजानं गृहमागतम् मधुपर्केण विधिना पूजयित्वा नृपोत्तमम् । पर्थिता सुरभिस्तेन
भार्गवेण सुधीमता । *Ibid.*, VI.241-16-25, p. 235-236.

शबलां देहि मे विप्र कपिलां सर्वकामदाम् ।

अन्यधेनुसहस्राणि दास्यामि तव सुव्रत् ॥ *Ibid.*, VI.241.31, p-836.

i) the wealth of gods. The king, thus addressed, was then excited with anger. He, surrounded by the entire army, seized the cow forcibly. Then the glorious cow became angry, and with her horns and soles of her hoofs struck his huge army, and went near Indra. Then Kārtavīrya Arjuna seeing his army struck, was overcome by anger. With his first he struck Bhārgava.¹⁹⁷

Being struck by him in many ways, he was weakened. The sage suddenly fell on the ground and died. The Kārtavīrya killed the three sages and entered his own city. After performing the severe penance, the Rāma Bhārgava got a auspicious power and power of destroying those kings who cause a burden to the earth and for the good of the deities.¹⁹⁸

197. न देयां शबलां राजन्मया तव महीपते ।
इयं च देव देवेन शक्रेण परिपालिता ॥
देवतानां धनं राजन्दातव्यं स्यात्कथं मया ॥३३॥
Ibid., VI. 241-33 p.836.

198. इत्युक्तः स तदा राजा क्रोधेन कलुषीकृतः ।
बलाञ्जग्रां शबलां सर्वसैन्यसमावृतः ॥
ततः क्रुद्धा शबला वरवर्णिनि ।
जघान तस्य सैन्यानि शृङ्गैः खुरतलैरपि ॥
धातयित्वा मुहुत्तन सोऽर्जनः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः ।
मुष्टिना ताडयामास भार्गवीद्विजसत्तमः ॥
हत्वामुनिवरं तत्र पापात्मा हैययाधिपः ।
महासैन्यपरीवारो विवेश नगरं स्वकम् ॥
Ibid., VI.241. 34-40, p. 836-837.

रामस्तु देवदेवेशं पूजयामास वत्स । भवतोऽनियतात्मनः । सम्प्रदास्यामितेविप्रमच्छक्तिं परमांशुभाम् आवेशितोऽथ
मच्छक्त्या जहि दुष्टान्नपोत्तमान् । भूमारकविनाशायदेवतानां हिताय वै । इत्युक्ता प्रददौ देवः परशुं
शत्रुधर्षणम् । वैष्णवं च महच्चापं दिव्यान्यस्त्राण्यने कशः दत्त्वा प्रवोच भगवाञ्जामदग्न्यं जनार्दनः ॥ ५३ ॥
Ibid., VI.241.43 p.837.

Lord Viṣṇu gave him an axe capable of killing the enemies, so also the great bow of Viṣṇu and many divine missiles. And said, “O ! best brāhmaṇa, killer of enemies, take this entire earth bound by the ocean. Full of piety and great heroism you protect it. In course of time, you will reach my position by my grace. Having given the boon, the god vanished. Rāma also suddenly went to his father’s hermitage. Seeing his father killed, Bhārgava was filled with anger. He desired to make the earth, crowned with kings, clear of Kṣatriyas. He went to the city of Kārtavīrya with his body burning anger, raised his weapon, stood at the gate. The citizens of the city seeing that very powerful Jamadagnya, looked upon him as the destructive fire at the end of the world. Being afflicted by fear all ran away to the king.¹⁹⁹

The king ordered his strong servants to arrest him. Having gone, they saw at the gate. They were not even able to look at him. From all sides they desirous of seizing him. The *Paraśurāma* said

199. रामोऽपिचाऽथसहसाप्रययौपितुराश्रमम् पितरं निहतं दृष्ट्वा भार्गवः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः । निःक्षत्रां कर्तुम-
 न्विच्छन्महीं नृपसमाकुलाम् जगाम हैहयपतेर्नगरं नृपसम्भृतम् । क्रोधावेशज्वलद्वात्रे द्वार्यतिष्ठदुदायुधः ॥
 तं दृष्ट्वा तत्पुत्रजना जामदग्न्यं महौजसम् ।
 जाज्वल्यमानं वपुषा कालाग्निमिव मेनिरे ॥
 भयार्ता विद्रुताः सर्वे राजानं हैहयाधिपम् ।
 शशंसुस्तं महासत्त्वं सर्वायुधसमान्वितम् ।
 श्रुत्वा सराजा तद्वाक्यं प्राह विस्मिततेजसा ॥ ५० ॥ *Ibid.*, VI.241, 49-50, p.837
 प्रेरयामासतं दुष्टं गृहीतेत्याहदुर्मतिः ते गत्वा दूषुर्वीरं परद्वारि महाबलम् । ज्वलन्तमिव कालाग्निं दुर्निरीक्ष्यं
 स्वतेजसा तस्य सन्दर्शनेऽप्यत्र नशक्तास्ते महाबलाः । ग्रहीतुकामास्तं वीरं समन्तात्प्रययुर्भृशम् तान् दृष्ट्वा
 सायुधान्सर्वान्पार्थि वेन्द्रस्य किङ्करान् । प्रहसन्प्राह विप्रेन्द्रो जामदग्न्यो महाबलः । *Ibid.*, VI.241.57. p.838
 कार्तवीर्यस्य रुधिरं मत्पित्रे तिलसयुतम् । दस्यामि पिण्डदानं च तच्छिरः कबलेन वै कालाग्निरिव सन्तस्थौ
 सर्वभूतभयङ्करः श्रुत्वा तु किङ्करान्स्वस्य हतात्रमेण धीमता । हैयाधिपतिर्वीरः क्रोधसंरक्तलोचनः ॥ निर्ययौ
 सहसैन्येन द्यत्राऽस्ते भगवोऽव्ययः । तं दृष्ट्वा घोरं संझाशं ज्वलन्तसेनतेजसा त्रस्ताः सर्वे जनास्तत्र
 शङ्कमाना जनक्षयम् ॥ *Ibid.*, VI.241. 59-65, p.838.

that he came to kill the king and offer his blood mixed with seasamum seeds to his father's piṇḍa. Then drawing the bow of Viṣṇu, he made the sound of the bow-string. With that sound the three worlds were filled, gods were frightened. He killed the servants, he stood like the destructive fire at the end of the world, deadly to all beings.

Hearing that servants were killed by Paraśurāma, the king became very angry, went out with his army to the place where Bhārgava stood. Then a battle took place between Rāma and the kings, with fearful strokes of weapons and missiles. Rāma burnt the king's army in a moment with the Viṣṇu's missile. Then Rāma of unlimited valour cut off the thousand arms of the wicked Kārtiyavira with his sharp axe. The wicked-minded one lost his valour due to his own sin. And also killed Sahasrabhānu and all the kings with his axe. Seeing Paraśurāma, all other kings on the earth ran away. The angry Rāma, killed the kings even though they had fled due to the resentment against his father's murder. The valorous Rāma made the entire world clear of the Kṣatriyas, but protected only the great family Ikṣvāku due to its being the family to which his maternal grandfather, was related, and due to his mother's words.²⁰⁰

200. निर्ददाह क्षणात्सर्वं वैष्णवास्त्रेण लीलया ।

ततः परशुना रामस्तीक्ष्णेनाऽमितविक्रमः चिच्छेऽ

बाहुसाहस्रं कार्तवीर्यस्य दुर्मतेः ।

चिच्छेद तच्छिरः क्रुद्धो रेणुकातनयोबली ॥

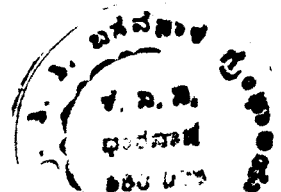
महादिश्वरं वज्रेण यथा देवपतिर्बलि ।

हत्वा सहस्रबाहुं तं जामदग्न्यः प्रतापवान् ॥ *Ibid.*, VI.241. 66-68, p.838.

निक्षत्रं कृतवान्सर्वं जामदग्न्यः प्रतापवान्

ररक्ष भगवानेकमिक्ष्वाकाः समुहत्कुलम् ।

मातामहस्यान्वयत्वाद्ग्रेणुकावचनादथ ॥ →



The incarnation of *Paraśurāma*, is available however, in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, but with much bravity. Only two chapters of the ninth *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* describe this myth. Moreover, in similitude with the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* does not give any special element. Therefore, the portion of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* wherein this myth is described has not been taken here for consideration.

Of the Mahapurāṇas, the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* is the sole text that abounds in the description of *Paraśurāma* incarnation with more details as it almost covers twenty-four chapters in the third section of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*. The description of this incarnation begins with the dialogue between Aurva and *Paraśurāma*. Being very much desirous of seeing his grand father and mother *Paraśurāma* went to them and started performing severe penance to please Lord Śiva on the Himālayan mountains, as suggested by his grand parents. As a result he acquires the knowledge of many *Astras* from Lord Śiva.

Thereupon, the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* reads an incident of *Paraśurāma*'s protecting a boy from tiger which forms the subject matter of twenty fifth chapter. Once *Paraśurāma* entered a cave in the Himalayan mountains in a dense forest, there he saw a boy, the son of Brāhmaṇa crying like one who was extremely frightened as he was chased by a tiger. He was holding his vital airs with great difficulty. On seeing him, Rāma had his heart overwhelmed with sympathy and

→ तान्भ्राष्टराज्यान्कृत्वा वै मातामहकुलोद्भवान् ।

न हत्वा मनुवंशांस्तात्रामो नृपकुलान्तकः ॥७६॥

Ibid., VI.241. 69-76, p. 838-839.

he became excited due to his eagerness to save him. Saying “stop” loudly, he persued that tiger. Chasing him with great speed, the seion of the family of Bhṛgu, caught up the extremely terrible tiger in the forest after a long time.

That Brāhmaṇa boy who was persued by the tiger, fled with great fright for his life. He fell down near a cave in the forest. Rāma has his eyes turned red due to anger. With a desire to redeem the Brāhmaṇa boy he took up a small blade of grass and chanted mantras over it as though it were a missile of Kuśa grass. In the mean time the tiger of great power ran after the Brāhmaṇa boy. On seeing him fallen, he roared loudly making the heaven and earth tremble. With the fire of his missile the tiger who was striking with the tips of his claws. He thus released the Brāhmaṇa boy who was not at all wounded. That sinful tiger whose body had been burned completely due to the Brāhmaṇical fire, assumed the body of a *Gandharva*.

Rising on to the sky, he spoke thus to Rāma with great respect, “O sage, formerly, as I had been cursed by a brahmana and attained the state of a tiger. Redeemed now from the effects of that curse, he is going heaven.” Then he went away hastily after saying thus, Rāma who was wonder struck sympathetically lifted up the fallen Brāhmaṇa boy. Sitting near the Brāhmaṇa boy he said the following words, “Do not be afraid,” O king. Slowly he stroke his limbs, reviving his life. Lifted up thus by Rāma he opened his eyes and looked around. He saw the most excellent one among the members of the family of Bhṛgu infront of him. He became surprised on seeing the tiger reduced to ashes. With his fear dispelled he asked him who is he ? How did he

came here ? By whom was this tiger reduced to ashes, the tiger of terrifying shape and size, who almost appeared like another god of death and attempted to kill him. The boy told the Rāma, that his mind is highly deluded and excited due to fear, although it has been killed, all the quarters appear to be filled with the tiger even. His father, mother and his preceptors brought him back to his life from the greatest mishaps.

There was a certain excellent sage of great penance called Santa, the boy was his son. Desirous of visiting holy centres, he went to the village of Śālagrāma. From there he proceeded to the mountain Gandhamandana, desirous of visiting holy penance grove of Badarika resorted to by many groups of sages.

Desirous of going further, he lost way on the Himālayan mountain. Entering a fascinating, forest he got confused while viewing the different regions. He went a distance of Krośa towards the east. As ill luck would have it, and was afflicted with fear and ran away. There he had been fallen down, and lifted up from the ground with great love and marciffulness by *Rāma*. Then the story had been narrated by boy to Rāma.

Being listened the story of the boy, *Rāma* narrated his story entirely to him in due manner. Mutually conversing thus, they were delighted very much. He did not stay there for a long time thereafter. Thus he desired to proceed ahead. Followed by him, *Rāma* came out of that cave with great joy and started towards the residence of his parents. Since he was not wounded although he was caused and fall on the ground by the tiger and since he was saved by Rāma who

killed the tiger, the name of that Brāhmaṇa boy became well known on the earth as Akṛtāvṛana, ever since then, he became a great friend and follower of Rāma in every situation like a shadow on the ground when there is sunlight.

Then the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* continues to describe Kārttyavīrya's visit to the Hermitage of Jāmadagni his reception and halt at night in the hermitage, Haihayas advice to confiscate Jāmadagni's divine cow, his ----- over the cow, and the disappearance of divine cow in this uprore. Consequently Reṇukā wife of Jāmadagni laments over the disappearance of the divine cow. *Paraśurāma* declares his vow to slay all Kṣatriyas. Thereupon *Paraśurāma* is advised by Lord Brahma to approach Lord Śiva for the acquisition of many more missiles. No doubt *Paraśurāma* becomes successfull in his endeavour. Thereupon the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* with the story of an antelope and his beloved illustrates how the heroic king Kārttyavīrya, who had the favour of Datta was slain by *Paraśurāma* in the battle.

After receiving the *kavaca* and the mantra directly from the preceptor, *Rāma* began to practise the same with great devotion. *Rāma* stayed at Puskara for a hundred years regularly sleeping down on the bare ground, devoted to the performance of the Sandhyā prayers and bathed three times a day, and never remaining languid. Everyday Akṛtavrana, brought materials of worship such as sacrificial twigs, flowers Kuśa grass etc. from the forest and gave them to Rāma, the member of the family of Bhṛgu. *Rāma* is most excellent one among intelligent persons, was continuously absorbed in meditation. He thus, propitiated Lord Kṛṣṇa the destroyer of sins.

As he continued his worship and his perpetual meditation, a hundred years elapsed.

Once *Rāma* the great sage went to the middle puṣkara for taking bath. There he saw an excellent miracle. A stag came there running accompanied by a hind. He was being chased by a hunter. He was extremely afflicted and distressed by the heat. He was thirsty and was eager to drink water. Even as *Rāma* was watching he came to the bank of the lake. The hind came afterwards she was frightened and her eyes were tremulous due to fright. Both of them drank water with auspicious minds. By that time, the hunter also came there holding up the bow and having an arrow in his hand. On seeing *Rāma* the delighter of the members of Bhṛgu's family remaining there along with Akrtavrana, he stood there with his eyes fixed far off. Afraid of the scion of the family of Bhṛgu, he then thought thus, "this *Rāma* is great warrior. He is capable of destroying wicked persons. How can I kill the stag and the hind hunted by me, when he is within sight." Occupied with this thought, he remained there itself frightened in his mind on account of *Rāma*. On seeing the pair of deer drinking water as though terribly frightened, the intelligent *Rāma* began to conjecture, "what is the cause of fear here ? There is no roar of a tiger here, nor is the hunter in sight. What is the reason by there two are anxious and afraid and have tremulous eyes due to fright.

Or the very species of deer has by nature tremulous eyes due to fright. Therefore, these two even while drinking water look around with roving frightened eyes. There is no reason here sufficient

enough to make them agitated, but they are trembling with fear and sorrow because all their limbs are exhausted and fatigued and they appear shaking and trembling." On thinking thus Rāma the sage stood in the middle Puskara lake accompanied by his desciple while they too continued to stand there. After drinking water they resorted to the shade of a tree. Even as they continued to look at the noble souled *Rāma* they carried on their joyous dialogue. The hind also said that they shall ready to stay there, as well as Rāma stays there when these words were uttered by the hind who was pleased to see *Rāma*, the stag too was delighted, and said to his beloved, "O high fortune, graceful lady, what you say is true ! I too know the potentiality of the extremely noble souled *Rāma*."

That desciple Akṛtavrana who is seen at his side has been fortunate enough to be protected from the clutches of a tiger by this *Rāma*. He had been greatly agitated due to the terrorising tiger. This *Rāma* is the youngest son of Jāmadagni. On seeing his father insulted by Kārtavyāyā, he had become infuriated. He took then the vow of exterminating kings. In order to get it fulfilled, he had formerly gone to the world of Brahma. Brahma had commanded him to go to the region of Śiva. On receiving his behest, the sage went to the presence of Śiva. He recounted to him all the incidents concerning the king and his father.

Mahadeva, honoured the scion of the family of Bhṛgu and gave him the excellent Mantra and the unbreakable *Kavacha* of Kṛṣṇa, his own pasupata missile as well as other sets of missiles too. He joyously bade farewell to him after giving the weapons eagerly

and with due regard, he came to practise the mantra. This righteous sage of good intellect repeats the mantra, Kṛṣṇa's *Kavaca* everyday. Thus this noble souled sage has spent a hundred years practising the mantra.

Rest of the portion regarding the Paraśurāma's killing Kārtavīrya and his valour have been described in detail through the development of heroic sentiments. Thus is wound up the description of *Paraśurāma's* incarnation in the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*.

Basing on the life account of Rāma as described in the Purāṇas and in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki poets like Kālidāsa Bhavabhūti etc. have written the works like *Raghuvamśa* (Mahākāvya), *Uttararāma-charita* (drama) etc. Kālidāsa describes Paraśurāma's episode in the eleventh canto of the *Raghuvamśa* in a poetic style. So also Bhavabhūti has made a pointing reference to Paraśurāma in the first act of the *Uttararāma charita*. In course of the description of Chitradarsana Prasanga in the first act Bhavabhūti brings on a scene of the mutual visit of *Paraśurāma* and *Rāma* who was accompanied by his brothers and other elderly relatives. Ofcourse as *Paraśurāma's* vision makes Sītā shaken up due to former's dreadful form, even in the scene of chitradarsana. So also it is suggested in this context that the pride of *Paraśurāma*, was silenced by *Rāma* himself.

Besides the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa notes an account of Paraśurāma's meeting Rāma is described in the eleventh canto. It occurs in the context of Daśaratha's returning to his capital after celebrating the marriage of his four sons with the four Mithila princesses.

When in Sītā's Svayamvara, *Rāma* lifted the Śiva's bow and strung it with no effort and then was broken as it was drawn by *Rāma* two part, it produced a sound as shrill as the crash of a thunderbolt. *Kālidāsa* describes as proclaiming to *Paraśurāma* that the warrior race had raised its head again. When Daśaratha together with his whole family was on the way back to Ayodhyā; *Kālidāsa* said that a mass of splendour arose and appeared in front of the army all of a sudden which after a long time became visible as a human form to the soldiers when they had rubbed their eyes.²⁰¹ Further the sudden appearance of *Paraśurāma* is described in a beautiful manner; Bearing a father's portion characterized by the sacred thread and also from his mother's side a powerful bow, he appeared like the sun united with the moon or like a sandal tree.²⁰² It was he who acting upto the command of his father whose mind was fierce through rage and who had even transgressed the bounds of moral rectitude, first subdued the feeling of kindness in cutting off the head of his mother, and then the earth. It was he who by the string of Akṣa seeds hung down from his right ear, appeared, as it were, wearing in a disguise form the number twenty one expressive of the times he had destroyed the Kṣatriyas.

201. पित्र्यमंशमुपवीतलक्षणं मातृकं च धनुरर्जितं दधत् ।

यः ससोम इव धर्मदीधितिः सद्विजिह्व इव चन्दनद्रुमः ॥

Rāmakrishna Nārāyaṇa Gadre Rabhuvaṁśa, Subhodha Prakashan
Pune, 1954, XI.64. p.22.

202. येन रोषपरुषात्मनः पितुः शासने स्थितिभिदोऽपितस्थुषा ।

वेपमानजननीशिरश्छिदा प्रगजीयत घृणा ततो मही ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.65. p.22.

Then, the king despaired at the sight of that *Paraśurāma* who had taken a vow for the destruction of the royal race through rage excited by the murder of his father, and his own state as his sons were too young.

The name *Rāma* existing with his own son and his formidable foe alike was both pleasing and fear inspiring to him, like a jewel in the necklace on a serpent.²⁰³ Not minding the king who was repeatedly asking for the material of worship, Bhārgava fixed his eyes, that had terrible pupils and that blazed with wrath against the Kṣatriya there were the eldest brother of Bharata was standing.²⁰⁴ Bhārgava said; the whole Kṣatriya race is my enemy for the wrong done to me. Having destroyed it many times, I was pacified. I am increased by the report of your exploits like a sleeping snake at the blow of a staff. It is rumoured that you have broken the bow of the king Mithila, which was never before bent by other kings. Hearing, this, I deem that the horn of my glory has been blunted by you. At any other time *Rāma* word being pronounced in the world applied to me only. Now that you are rising to importance that with its meaning changed puts me to shame ! To me who bear a missile unimpended even in the 'krauñcha mountain, there are two enemies of equal offence, the one is the king of Hailayas for stealing away the sacred calf and the

203. अक्षबीजवलयेन निर्बभौ दक्षिणश्रवणसंस्थितेन यः ।

क्षत्रियान्तकरणैकविंशतेर्व्याजपूर्वगणनामिवोद्धहन् ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.66. p.23.

204. नाम राम इति तुल्यमात्मजे वर्तमानमहिते च दारुणे ।

हृद्यमस्य भयदायि चाभवद् रत्नजातमिव हारसर्पयोः । *Ibid.*, XI.69. p.23.

other you who are bent on snatching away fame from me.²⁰⁵ Hence as long as you are not subdued, my prowess though able to bring about the destruction of the Kṣatriyas, does not delight me. That is counted as the greatness of fire, when it can burn in the ocean as in a heap of dry grass. Know that the bow of Śiva which you broke, was already deprived of its strength by the power of Hari. Even gentle gale lays low a tree on the bank when its roots are undermined by the currents of the river. Then fasten this bow of mine by the string and draw it when strung with an arrow. Let the fight wait. Even if you do this, I consider myself to have been vanquished by you with this equal strength of arms. "Or if you have lost heart being terrified by the edge of my axe that puts forth a flame of lustre, fold your hands in submission and sue for mercy, with your fingers uselessly hardened by the clash with the bow-string."²⁰⁶ When *Paraśurāma* fierce to look at, spoke thus, Raghava, with his lower lip curved with a soft smile considered the grasping of the bow itself as a fitting reply.

United with the bow of his former birth, he became exceedingly charming in appearance. A fresh cloud is charming to the sight even when alone; how much more charming would it be when it is marked with the rain bow ? The moment that the bow, with the one end placed on the ground, was strung by that powerful prince, the enemy of the kings turned pale like fire remaining only in smoke. The host

205. ब्रिभृतोऽस्त्रमचलेऽप्यकुण्ठितं द्वौ रिपु मम मतौ समागतौ ।

धेनुवत्सहरणाश्च हैहयस्त्वं च कीर्तिमपहर्तुमुद्यतः ॥ *Ibid.*, XI. 74, p.25

206. कातरोऽसि यदि वोद्भूतार्चिषा तर्जितः परशुधारया मम ।

ज्यानिधात कठिनाङ्गुलिर्वथा बध्यतामभययाचनाञ्जलिः ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.78, p.26

gazed upon them both with wonder, while they stood face to face, one Rāma growing in splendour and the other *Paraśurāma* waning fast like the sun and the moon respectively on the day of conjunction at the close of day.²⁰⁷ Rāghava who, looked like the son of Hara and who was moved with compassion, noticed both Bhārgava with prowess, paralysed in himself and his own unfailing fixed arrow and addressed Him thus : “Although you are the aggressor, I cannot ruthlessly smite at you, as you are a Brāhmaṇa”. Tell me then if I should bar your movement with this arrow or destroy the regions which you have acquired by sacrifices !²⁰⁸ The sage replied to him, “It is not that I do not know you to be the primeval man in reality. But with a desire to see all the pervading lustre of you come down to the earth, you have been provoked by me.²⁰⁹ Even the reverse of victory inflicted on me by you - the Supreme Being is undoubtedly to ashes my father’s foes and who have made over to the worthy the earth together with its oceans. Hence, O you who are the first among the talented, spare my desired power of movement for going to holy places. The way to heaven, if blocked, will not affect me who do not crave for enjoyment.

Rāghava complied with his request saying “All right ! and with his face turned towards the east, discharged the arrow. That became for *Paraśurāma*, though he possessed merit, an impossible barrier to

207. तावुभावपि परस्परस्थितौ वर्धमानपरिहीनतेजसौ ।

पश्यतिस्म जनता दिनात्यये पर्वणौ शशिदिवाकराविव ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.82. p.27.

208. न प्रहर्तुमलमास्मि निर्दयं विप्र इत्यादिभवत्यपि त्वयि ।

शंस किं गतिमनेन पत्रिणा हन्मि लोकमुत्ते मुखर्जितम् ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.84. p.28

209. प्रत्युवाच तमृषिर्न तत्त्वतस्त्वां न वेद्मि पुरुषं पुरातनम् ।

गामतस्य तव धाम वैष्णवं कोपितो ह्यासि मया दिदृक्षुणा ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.85. p.28

his path to Heaven.²¹⁰ Rāghava also touched the feet of the ascetic, saying “please forgive me”, Courtesy itself on the part of the valiant towards enemies vanquished by force leads to their fame.²¹¹ Indeed even my defeat hearing as it does a blameless fruit, is turned into a favour by you, in as much as you have brought me to my peternal tranquil nature after discarding the maternal irascible nature.

“I am going. May you be free from obstacles while accomplishing the work of the gods ! The sage said these words to *Rāma* and Lakṣmaṇa and disappeared.

After his departure the father embraced the victorious *Rāma* and thought through affection that he was really born again. For him who had been grieved for a moment the acquisition of satisfaction was like a shower of a rain for a tree, scorched by the wild fire.²¹² Then the monarch who resembled Śiva, spent some nights on the way where beautiful tents were pitched and entered the city of Ayodhyā, the latticed windows in which were turned into blue lotuses in the form of a fair women eager to gaze on Sītā.²¹³

210. प्रत्यपद्यत तथति राघवः प्राङ्मुखश्च विससर्ज सायकम् ।
भार्गवस्य सुकृतोऽपि सोऽभवत् स्वर्गमार्गपरिधो दुरत्ययः ॥ *Ibid.*, XI. 88. p.29

211. राघवोऽपि चरणौ तपोनिधेः क्षम्यतामिति वदन् समस्पृशत् ।
निर्जितेषु तरसा तरस्विनां शत्रुषु प्रणतिरेव कीर्तये ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.89. p.29

212. तस्मिन् गते विजयिनं परिरभ्य रामं
स्नेहादमन्यत पिता पुनरेव जातम् ।
तस्याभवत् क्षणशुचः परितोषलाभः ।
कक्षान्निलङ्घिततयेरिव वृष्टिपातः ॥ *Ibid.*, XI. 92. p.30.

213. अथ पथि गमयित्वा क्लृप्तम्योपकार्ये
कतिचिदवनिपालः शर्वरीः शर्वकल्पः ।
पुरमविशदयोध्यां मैथिलीदशनीनां
कुवलयित गवाक्षां लोचनैरङ्गनानाम् ॥ *Ibid.*, XI.93. p.31.

The *Paraśurāma* episode depicts the sentiment of *Irate*. *Paraśurāma* and *Rāma* are described as Anger and compassion or Humility, incarnate. The dialogue between them presents a picture of the discriminating importance of the क्षत्रबल and ब्रह्मतेज. *Paraśurāma* though a Brāhmaṇa had more of the क्षत्रबल in him, and *Rāma* though a Kṣatriya had more of the ब्रह्मतेज in him. Between निग्रह and अनुग्रह, the latter succeeds in the end.

No doubt the description of *Paraśurāma*'s episode, howsoever, long or short in its quantity in different *Purāṇas*, has been a source of the subject matter to be included in their works, poem or drama by the poets.

vii. The Concept of Rama Avatara

The epithet of Rama has been considered as the seventh incarnation of Lord Visnu in Indian literature. This myth of Rama has greatly influenced Indian culture and religion. No doubt, Janaka is often mentioned in the Brahmana texts and the Upanisads. Such Vedic references to Janaka lead to justify that he lived for very long period till the closer of Rama's reign at Ayodhya. But the some basic of references above hardly justify the existence of Rama even during Vedic period. Perhaps as per the traditional view, Rama's incarnation took place in the Treta Age which however is much prior to the age of Mahabharata. It also can be said that Rama's incarnation took place much before Vedavyasa's appearance on the earth who has been regarded as having divided the entire vast treasure of Veda into four Vedas. It is known by the ancient Indian History that Lord Vedavyasa appeared on the earth in the Dvaparayuga. All these points lead to conclude that the extant Vedas, that is Rgveda, Yajurveda etc. or Brahmanas and Upanisadic texts naturally do not contain any traces to Rama's incarnation. But, it does not mean that the story of Rama's incarnation has no substratum in the post Vedic literature. Excluding the Ramayana of Valmiki, the life story of Rama himself, has occupied its place in the Puranic works of Vedavyasa himself, such as Bhagavata Purana Agni Purana, Padma Purana, Narasimha Purana and so on. However, there are some variant readings regarding the Rama story, as comparing to Valmiki's Ramayana; such readings may be

known in the succeeding pages.

So too, the term Sita occurs in the Rgveda, where it signifies the "sorrow". In the opinion of scholars like Weber and Winternitz, Sita of the Rgveda is separated by a wide gulf from the Sita of the Ramayana. The unique character of Rama has to be appreciated and understood. As He is more human, as unlike the other Avataras such as Varaha, Vamana, which may be termed as Avataras for specific purposes. His life is more earthly and of longer span. In this respect the other exception is Krsna but latter's life is more supernatural. His supra powerful deeds were conducive to uphold Dharma or righteousness.

Although distinguished as a divine character, Rama's life never lacked to the poignancy of a human life. In this way, this incarnation gives the clue to the origin, organisation and classification of the various Avataras. In course of the history of Vaisnavism, the varied references in ancient legendary lore, such as Varaha, Trivikrama are combined with the epoch making human heroes, producing a wonderful spectrum of the Avataras to the great advantage of the devotees.

The story of Rama immortalised in Valmiki's Ramayana, is cherished by the people all over the world. It is definite that Rama was a kstriya hero, eulogized by the court bards of ancient times. To quote Macdonell, In Ayodya there must have been current among the court bards (Suta) a number of epic tales narrating the

fortunes of the Ikshvaku hero Rama".²¹⁴

Rama's story has found its place in the following Puranas :-

Padma Purana (VI, 242 - 244)

Bhagavata Purana (IX, 10)

Agni Purana (Chap. 5-11)

Garuda Purana (I-143)

Narasimha Purana

In the Ramayana itself, excepting the later interpolations, Rama is meereally a great hero portrayed as an ideal son, husband and king. As the Padma Purana is richest of all the Puranas with the description of Rama's incarnation, here follows the reading of this incarnation through the lines of Padma Purana occuring in the Uttara Khanda (IV 242-244).

Formerly, Svayambhuva Manu muttered the great formula of twelve syllables Naimisa on the pure, auspicious bank of river Gomati. For thousand years he worshipped goddess Lakshmi and

214 स्वयम्भुवो मनुः पूर्वं द्वादशार्णं महामनुम्
जजाप गोमतीतीरे नैमिषे विमले शुभे ।
तेन वर्षसहस्रेण पूजितः कमलापतिः । ।
मत्तो वरे वृणीष्वेति तं प्राह भगवान्हरिः ।
पुत्रत्वं भज देवेशत्रीणि जन्मानिचाच्युत
त्वां पुत्रलालसत्वेन भजामि पुरुषोत्तमम् । ।

Padma Purana, Uttarakhanda VI 242 1-5, P 839-840

Lord Visnu. Lord Visnu told him to ask a boon. Then Svayambhuva Manu joyfully said to Visnu, that he should be born as his son in three existences, He worshipped Him with a desire for a son. There Visnu said, "whatever, is desired in your mind will take place. I too have a great pleasure in being your son, when you will be born in the period having stability as its aim, I shall incarnate as your son. In every age, I shall be born of you for protecting the good, destroying the wicked and establishing righteousness".²¹⁵

Having thus given him a boon, Visnu vanished there only. From Svayambhuva, he had the first birth. He was born as king Dasaratha in the Raghu family formerly. The second birth was that of Lord Vasudeva in the family of Vrsnis. He will be born as a brahmana in the town of Sambhula in the last two quarters of the Kali age of the measure of the thousand divine years. Kausalya was born as the wife of king Dasaratha. Devaki was known to serve the Yadu family. Devaprabha was born as the wife of a brahmana Harivrata. Thus, they obtained the motherhood of Lord Visnu in three existences. Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha, taking up second birth will be born as the very strong Kambhakarna and Ravana.

215 अस्याभूत्प्रथमं जन्ममनोः स्वायम्भुवस्यच
 रघूणामन्वयेपूर्वं राजा दशरथ ह्यभूत् ।
 द्वितीयो वसुदेवोऽभूद्वृष्णीनामन्वये विभुः
 कलेर्दिव्यसहस्राब्द प्रमाणस्यान्त्य पादयोः । ।
 राघवः प्रथमं जज्ञे कृष्णास्तु तदनन्तरम् ।
 Ibid VI 242, 8-11, P-840

Visravas, a brahmana was the son of Pulastya. His wife Visalakshi was a demon's daughter, named Sukesi. And, the demon Sumalin's daughter Kekasi was his wife of a firm vow. Being excessively full of lust, the slim respectful lady of a charming, appearance had sexual relation with the great sage in the evening. Due to her desire for enjoyment, Ravana and Kumbhakarna were born, very powerful demons. A daughter Surpanakhi of a deformed face was also born to her. After sometime, Vibhisana was born to her. He was of good character, devoted to god, pious and pure. Ravana and Kumbhakarna were greatest like the Himalaya mountain. They two performed severe penance to please Brahma.²¹⁶

Then Ravana asked for a boon with a desire to conquer all worlds, and not be killed by gods, demons or friends. The Ravana, proud due to the grant of boon, troubled the three worlds, gods demons and friends. Gods, troubled by him, full of fear, led by Brahma sought the shelter of Lord Visnu. Understanding their anguish, He said, in order to grant them immunity from fear, to

216 पुलस्त्यस्य सुतो विप्रो विश्रवानामधार्मिकः ।
 तस्यपत्नी विशालाक्षि राक्षासेन्दुसुताऽनधे । ।
 सुकेशीतनया सा स्यात्सुमालेर्दानवस्य च ।
 केकसीनाम कन्याऽऽसीत्तस्य भार्या दृढवृता । ।
 कामोद्विक्ता तु सादेवी सन्ध्याकाले महा मुनिम् ।
 रमयामास तन्वङ्गी यथेष्टं शुभदर्शना ।
 तत्कालं सम्भवौ गभौतस्यां जातौ महाबलौ ।
 रावणकुम्भकर्णश्च राक्षसौलोकविश्रितौ ।
 कन्याशूर्पणखानाम जाताऽतिविकृतानना ।

Ibid VI, 242, 17-22, P-540

all gods. Then Lord Visnu said, "That He will be born in the family of Raghu as the son of king Dasaratha, and should kill the wicked Ravana with his relatives. Taking to a human body "He shall kill the thorn to the deities. You too, born as monkeys due to Nandin's curse, to help".²¹⁷

Being addressed by Lord Visnu, they were born on the earth in the form of monkeys. Bhargava also gave the earth girt by the ocean. It was formerly given to the very noble Raghus by great Sagara. There was Vaivasvata Manu's son, known as Ikshvaku the best among the kings and very powerful, best among those who knew the ways of the world. In his family, was born the brilliant and powerful king Dasaratha.²¹⁸

- 217 रावणस्वध दृष्टात्मा स्वशिरकमलैः
 शुभैः पूजयामस मा देवी दारुणेनैव
 कर्मणा ततस्तमब्रवं सुभ्रुः प्रहृष्टेनान्तरात्मनावरं
 वृणीष्व मे वत्स यत्ते मनसि वर्तते
 अवध्यत्वं प्रदेहीति सर्वलोकजिगीषया
 ततोऽहं दत्तवांस्तस्मै राक्षसाय दुरात्मना ।
 देवदानवयाक्षाणामवध्यत्वं वसनने
 राक्षसोऽसौ महावीर्यो वरदानात्तु, गर्वितः ।
 त्रिलोकान्पीडयामास देवदानवमानुषान्
 तेन सम्बाध्यमानाश्च देवा ब्रह्मपुरोगमाः
 भयार्थाः शरणं जग्मुरीश्वरं कमलापतिम्

Ibid VI-242, 24-28, P-840-841

- 218 राज्ञो दशरथस्याहमुत्पत्त्यामिरघोः कुले
 हनिश्यामि दुरात्मानां रावणं सहबान्धवम् मानुषं
 वपुरास्थायहन्मि दैवतकण्टकम् ।
 नन्दिशापाद्भवन्तोऽपि वान वानरत्वमुपागताः
 कुरुध्वं मम सहाय्यं ग्धर्वाप्सरसोत्तमाः ।

Ibid VI, 242, 29-30, 841

The king protected the entire earth with valor. He installed all best kings on the kingdoms. Dasaratha married Kausalya, the daughter of king Kosala. His second wife was Sumitra, Magadha king's daughter, and third wife was Kekaye, daughter of Kekaya king.

With these three wives, the Dasaratha enjoyed, while protecting the earth. There was a city named Ayodhya situated on the bank of Sarayu. It was full of all jewels, wealth and grains. It possessed ramparts and town-gates. It was like Indra's city. The king lived there, along with best sages and the noble brahmana, Vasistha, his family priest. That is the highest place where revered Visnu dwelt. When Lord Visnu was born there, all men were delighted. King Dasaratha having protected the earth and longing for a son performed a sacrifice in honour of Visnu. Worshipped with the sacrifice in his honour by him. Visnu said, Int he fire Visnu in the form of sacrifice then appeared. Seeing him the king full of joy and with his mind full of delight, seluted Him and said to lord to become his son.²¹⁹

219 तदन्वये महातेजा राजा दशरथो बली । अजस्य नृपतेः पुत्राः सत्यवाञ्छीलवाञ्छुचिः । ।
 स राजा पृथिवीसर्वान् पालयामासविर्यतः । राज्येषु स्थापयामास सर्वान्पार्थिवसत्तमान्
 कोसलस्यनृपस्याऽथ पुत्री सर्वाङ्गशोभना कौसल्यानाम तांकन्यामुपयेमेसपार्थिवः
 मगधस्य नृपस्याऽथ तनया च शुचिस्मिता सुमित्रा नाम नाम्ना च द्वितिया तस्य भामिनि
 तृतीया केकयस्याऽथ नृपतेर्दुहिता तथा । भार्याऽभूत्पद्मपत्राक्षी कैकेयी नाम नामतः
 ताभिः स्म राजा भार्याभिस्तिसृभिर्धर्मसंयुतः । रमयामास काकुत्स्थः पृथिवी चाऽनुपालयन् । ।

Ibid VI.242, 34-38, P-841

Lord Visnu promised him to born as his son. Visnu gave the king bright rice boiled in milk, kept in a golden pot and held in the hand of Lakshmi, and said to give this boiled rice to his wives. Having said this, Lord Hari vanished. The king Dasaratha divided the divine rice boiled in milk and gave it to them. His middle wife longing for a son gave half portion of that rice to Kausalya and Kekayi.²²⁰

Then Lord Visnu, wearing garments, holding a conch, a disc, a mace in his hands appeared in their dreams. In this auspicious time, in the month of Caitra, in the bright half of the month on the ninth day, when the Sun was in the Pushya constellation, in the noon and at a time all plants were auspicious, Kausalya gave birth to a son lord of the universe who was dark like lotus leaves, eyes were large like lotus petals, and was covered with great lustre.

220 स राजा पृथिवी सर्वा पालयत्वाशुभानने
अयजद्वैष्णवेष्टया च पुत्रार्थी हरिमुच्यताम्
तेन सम्पूजितः श्रीशोराज्ञा सर्वगतोहरिः
वैष्णवेन तु यज्ञेन वरदः प्राहकेशवः

V-242, 49, P-842

उत्पत्स्येऽहं नृपश्रेष्ठ तेवलोकहिताय वै
परित्राणाय साधूनां राक्षसानां वधाय च
मुक्तिं प्रदातुं लोकानां धर्मसंस्थापनाय च

Ibid VI, 242-55, P-842

इत्युक्त्वा पायसं दिव्यं हेम पात्रस्थितं शृतम्
लक्ष्म्याहस्तस्थितं शुभ्रं पार्थिवाय ददौहरिः
इदं पायसं राजापत्नीभ्यस्सव सुव्रतः
तेहिते तनयास्तासु उत्पत्स्यन्ते मदंराजाः

Ibid VI 242, 56-57, P-842

When the lord was born, in heaven divine drums were sounded, the gods, sent down showers of flowers. Gandharva sang, celestial nymphs danced. The Sun become very bright. Then the king performed the birth ceremony through sage Vasistha, and gave him a charming name Ramana^{220a}. It is equal to the thousand names of Visnu and gives salvation to human beings. Then king gladly gave away much wealth garments, ornaments, and thousand villages to brahmanas on this occasion.

Kausalya saw the excellent face of Rama, on his body she saw a conch, disc, a mace, a lotus, a flag and garments etc., on his chest Srivatsa and Kaustubha along with a garland of wood flowers. On his body, she saw the entire world with gods demons, and human beings. She saw fourteen worlds on his smiling face. In the breath of the noble one she saw Vedas and Itihasa. She saw in his navel, Lord Brahma and Siva, in his ears the bright quarters, in his eyes fire and the sun, in his nose the speedy wind. Seeing all

220a शुक्लो नवाभ्यां विमले नक्षत्रेऽदतिदैवते
मध्याह्नसमे लग्ने सर्व ग्रह शुभान्विक्षेते
कौसल्या जनयामास पुत्रं लोकेश्वरं हरिम्
इन्दीवरदलश्यामं कोटिकन्दर्पसन्निभम्
पद्मपत्रविशालाक्षं सर्वाभरणशोभितम्

Ibid VI-242, 64-66, P-843

His splendours the goal of all the Upanisads, she was afraid, seluted him again and again.²²¹

Bharata was born from Kekayi. Sumitra gave birth to Lakshmana and Satrughna. Lakshmana the killer of enemies was born with portion of Ananta. Satrughna, of unlimited valour, was produced from Sudarshana. They all grew there in the family of Vaivasvata Manu. They were properly taught by the very vigorous Vasistha. They studied the Vedas. They knew essential nature of all branches. They were very generous and they increased the joy of people.

The princes Rama and Lakshmana formed a pair, similarly Bharata and Satrughna. The goddess Lakshmi is born in the house of Janaka. In the meanwhile sage Kausika well known in the world,

221 कौसल्यायसुतं दृष्ट्वा रामं राजीवलोचनम्
 फुल्लहस्तारविन्दाभं पद्महस्ताम्बुजान्वितम्
 तस्य श्रीपादकमले पद्माब्जे च वरानने ।
 शङ्खचक्रगदापद्मध्वजवज्रादिचिन्हिते
 द्रष्ट्वा वक्षसि श्रीवत्सं कौस्तुभं वनमालया ।
 तस्याऽङ्गे सा जकत्सर्वं स देवासुरमानुषम्
 स्मितवक्रे विशालाक्षी भुवनानी चतुर्दश ।
 निश्वासे तस्य वेदांश्च सेतिहासन्महात्मनः
 द्वीपानब्धीग्निरीस्तस्य जघनेवरवर्णिनि नाभ्यां ।
 ब्रह्मशिवौ तस्य कर्णयोश्च दिशाःशुभाः
 नेत्रयोर्वह्नि सूर्याचम्राणे वण्युं महाजवम् ।
 सर्वोपनिषदामर्थं दृष्ट्वा तस्यविभूतयः
 कृत्स्ना भीता वरारोहा प्रणम्य च पुनःपुनः ।
 Ibid, VI-242, 82-88, P-844

commenced the performance of a sacrifice in the hermitage, on the bank of Bhagirathi. When that sacrifice proceeded, the demons of Ravana destroyed his sacrifice. The sage Kausika having thought, of bringing Rama to protect the sacrifice, went to the city of Ayodhya. King Dasaratha honoured the sage, then Visvamitra, with his mind delighted said, "Send Rama for the protection of my sacrifice. In Ramas presence sacrifice will be fruitful. He pleased the king to send Rama.²²²

Then hearing the words of the sage, Dasaratha sent Rama and Lakshmana. Taking those two, Visvamitra went to the hermitage. When Rama went there, all gods were delighted. Then very powerful Garuda delighted in heart, came there and gave the two bows, two quivers and two inexhaustible arrows to Rama and Lakshmana. He also gave the divine missiles and weapons.

Rama and Lakshmana were informed of the fierce looking

- 222 नृपश्रेष्ठं दशरथं ददर्श मुनिसत्तमः
 धन्योऽहमस्मीति वदन्हर्षण रघुनन्दनः ।
 अर्चयामास विधिना निवेश्य परमासने
 परिणीय नमस्कृत्य किंकरोमित्युवाच तम् ।
 ततः प्रवोच हृष्टात्मा विश्वामित्रो महातपाः
 देहिमे राघवं राजन्नक्षणार्थं क्रतोर्मम् ।
 साफल्यमस्तु मे यज्ञे राघवस्य समीपतः
 तस्माद्रामं रक्षणार्थं दातुमर्हसि भूपते ।

Ibid VI-242, 108-113, P-845

प्रददौ मुनिवर्याय राघवं सह लक्ष्मणम् आदाय
 राघवोत्तत्र विश्वामित्रो महातपाः

Ibid VI, 242-45, 114, P-845

demoness moving in the forest by noble Kausikas; her name was Tataka wife of the demon, Sunda. The two great heroes struck her with the arrows discharged from the divine bows. Having killed her, Rama entered the hermitage. Then the sages worshipped the Highest Soul. Then sage, Kausika properly commenced the excellent sacrifice. When the great sacrifice proceeded a demon named Marica with this brother Subahu came there creating obstacle. Seeing him Rama with his arrow killed Subbahu. With a great missile, he caused Marica to fall into the ocean.²²³

In the meanwhile, the king of Mithila, commenced the Vajapeya sacrifice Visvamitra went along with Raghus. While going to Mithila, Rama touched a stone on the way with his lotus foot. That Ahalya, who was formerly cursed by her husband Gautama, became, auspicious by the touch of Rama's foot. Then sage reached the city of Mithila. The king of Mithila, Janaka was delighted at heart and honoured them. He looked upon Rama just as the Highest Lord. And thought in his mind to give his daughter to him. The Raghus stayed along with the Vasistha, in Janakias city. Rama

223 वर्तमाने महायज्ञे मारीचो नाम राक्षसः
 भ्राता सुभाहुना तत्रविघ्नं कर्तुमवास्थितः ।
 दृष्ट्वा तौ राक्षसौ धौरौ राघवः परवीरहा
 जघनैकेन बाणेन सुबाहुं राक्षसेश्वरम् ।
 पवनास्त्रेण महता मारीचं तु निशाचरम्
 सागरे पातयामास शुष्कपर्णमिवाऽनिलः ।
 स रामस्य महावीर्यं दृष्ट्वा राक्षस सत्तमः
 न्यस्तशस्त्रस्तपस्तप्तुं प्रययो महदाश्रमम् ।
 Ibid, VI-242, 126-128, P-846

married Sita at an auspicious time. Lakshmana married Urmila Janakias second daughter. And Bharata and Satrugna married. Mandavi and Srutakirti. Dasaratha with his sons and daguthers-in-law left for Ayodhya.²²⁴ On their way, the strong valourous son of Jamadagni, the destroyer of warrior kings, Parasurama taking an axe like a lion, desiring to fight, rushed to the descendent of Kakatstha. Reaching Rama, Bhargava spoke that, having killed many kings in battle and having given land to the brahmanas he went to practise penance. Having heard the valour and power of Rama, he came to fight with him.

Thus being addressed by Parasurama, Rama took his bow and the power too of him by Visnu. Deprived of that power that brave

224 एतस्मिन्नन्तरे राजा मिथिलाया अधीश्वरः

वाजपेयं क्रतुं यष्टुमारेभे मुनिसत्तमैः ।

समागतन्महाभागन्दृष्ट्वा राजा महाबलः

प्रत्युद्रम्य प्रमम्याऽथ पुजयामास मैथिलः ।

रामं पद्मविशालाक्षमिन्दिवरदलप्रभम्

पीताम्बरधरं श्लक्ष्णं कोमलावयवोज्ज्वलम् ।

अवधीरितकन्द कोटिलावण्यमुत्तमम्

सर्वलक्षणसम्पन्नं सर्वाभरणभूषितम् ।

स्वस्य हृत्पङ्कजे ध्येयं परेशस्य तनोहरिः

तं दृष्ट्वा रघुनाथं स जनको हृष्टमानसः ।

Ibid V-242, 139-142, P-846

तस्मिन्नेव शुभे काले रामस्य धरणीसुताम्

विवाहं मकरोद्वाजा मैथिलेन समार्चितः ।

लक्ष्मणस्योर्मिलानामकन्यां जनकसम्भवाम्

जनकस्याऽनुजस्याऽथ तनये शुभवर्चसौमाण्डविश्रुतकीर्तिश्च ।

सर्वलक्षणलक्षिते, भरतस्येसौ मित्रे विवाहमकरोनुपः ।

Ibid VI-242, 149-151, P-247

Parasurama became powerless and lustreless; Bhargava seeing that very fierce arrow of Rama and knowing him the highest self, was delighted and bowed down to his feet and desired to obtain peace. Having spoke thus, Parasurama selected Rama and worshipped him with water of washing feet, materials etc. And then he went to the hermitage of Nara-Narayana to practise penance.²²⁵

King Dasaratha entered the city of Ayodhya with his sons at an auspicious moment. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, Satrughna, having approached their wives, amused themselves with their minds delighted, and passed long time happily when King Dasaratha affectionately desired to bestow his kingdom to his eldest son, Rama. His dear wife, who was given two boons by Dasaratha formerly, asked the king for coronation of Bharata and banishment of Rama for fourteen years.

According to her wish, Dasaratha banished his son Rama, and Rama obeying the words of his father with Lakshmana and Sita went to the forest. The kings afflicted by the separation from his son, died.

225 काकुत्स्थस्तन्मह द्वापं गृहीत्वाऽऽरोप्य लीलया
सन्धाय बाणं तच्चापे भार्गवं प्राह विस्मितम् ।
अनेन शुरुमुख्येण किंकर्तव्यं मया द्विज
छेद्भि लोकद्वयं चापी स्वर्गवाहन्मितेद्विज ।
तं दृष्ट्वा घोरसङ्काशं बाणं रामस्य भार्गवः
ज्ञात्वा तं परमात्मं प्रहृष्टो रामब्रवीत् ।

Ibid, VI-242, 167-170, P-248

Pious Bharata, though appointed to the kingdom along with the ministers did not desire the kingdom. Having come to the forest, he requested his brother Rama to come back. Rama did not desire the kingdom. He gave his own footwares which Bharata brought to the kingdom and everyday worshipped them with flowers and engaged in the practise of penance.

Rama with Sita enjoyed himself on the mountain of Chitrakuta, in the hermitage of Bharadvaja and the holy water of Mandakini. Sometime the magnanimous Rama was resting on Sita's lap. Indra's crow came there and went about him. He, seeing Janaki there and being tormented by Cupid's arrow, tore her plump and raised breast with his sharp nails.²²⁶ Rama seeing the crow, took a darbha, with his hand and uniting it with the missile of Bramha discharged it. The crow seeing the blade of grass, with its form full of flames, and crying with distressed tone ran away. Ramas arrow followed the crow. The crow wandered in all three worlds. Wherever, the crow, desiring shelter went, the fearful missile of Rama went after it. The crow, tormented by the missile, seeking a shelter, went to Brahma, Indra, Yama and Varuna. All

226 राजा दशरतः सोऽथ पुत्रैर्दारसमन्वितैः
स्वां पुरीं सुमुहुर्तेन प्रविशेष महाबलः ।
राघवो लक्ष्मणश्चैव शत्रघ्नो भरतस्तथा
स्वान्स्वान्दाराणां पागम्य रेमिरे हृष्टमानसाः ।
तत्र द्वादशवर्षाणि सीताया सगह राघवाः
Ibid, VI-242, 179-182, P-848-849

नियुज्यमानो भरस्तत्र तस्मिन् राज्ये स मन्त्रिभिः
नैच्छद्राज्यं स धर्मात्मा सौभ्रात्रमनुदर्शयन् ।
वनमागम्य काकुत्स्थमयाचद् भ्रातरं ततः
रामस्तु पितुरादेशानैच्छद्राज्यमरिन्दमः ।
स्वपादुके ददौ तस्मै भक्त्याऽत्यग्रहीत्यथा
रामस्य पादुके राज्यमवाप्य भरतः शुभे ।
प्रत्यहं गन्धपुष्पैश्च पूजयन् कैकेयी सुतः
Ibid, VI-242, 189-193, P-849

gods like Rudra, and the demons seeing the crow, said that they are not able to protect". Then Brahma said, "submit yourself to Rama only, the lord of beings, only he will protect you". Thus addressed by Brahma crow suddenly approached Rama and fell on his feet. Seeing the crow, Sita politely said to her husband, to protect the crow. Rama raised him with his hands and protected the crow. Then Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana went to wards the hermitage of Atri. Sage Atri was very delighted see to Rama coming towards him, he went with his wife and honoured Rama and worshipped him. His wife Anusuya affectionately gave Sita divine and excellent garments. She fed Rama with divine food and drink. Rama lived there for a day. Then Rama went to the Dandaka forest, there he killed the demon Viradha, and then entered the hermitage of Sarabhanga.²²⁸ Seeing Rama, his all sins were destroyed and he went along with Gandharvas, and celestial nymphs to Brahmas world. Then Rama went to the hermitage of

- 228 ऐन्द्रिः काकसमागम्य तस्मिन्नेव चचारः
 स दृष्ट्वा जानकीं तत्र कन्दर्वशरपीडितः।
 विददार नखैस्तीक्ष्णैः पीनोन्नत पयोधरं
 Ibid, VI-242, 195, P-849
 तं काकं प्रत्यनुययौ रामस्याऽस्त्रं सुधारुणं
 वायसस्त्रिषु लोकेषु बभ्राम भयपीडितः यत्र यत्र।
 ययौ काकः शरणार्थी स वायसः
 तत्र तत्र तदस्त्रन्तु प्रविवेश भयावहं।
 ब्रह्मणमिन्द्रं रुद्रं च यमं वरुणमेव च
 शरणार्थी जगमाऽऽशु वायसः शस्त्रपीडितः
 तं दृष्ट्वा वायसं सर्वे रुद्रादया देवदानवाः।
 Ibid, VI-242, 197-199, P-849

Sutiksna, there also Rama honoured. Rama lived there very happily for long time. Then entered the Panchavati. There the demoness Surpanakha meets Rama; she asked "who was he, why was he dwelling on the forest?. Rama told her everything; Surpanakha forced Rama to marry her and to divorce Sita. Rama angrily raised his sword and cut off her nose and ears. The demoness, with her face deformed, and weeping with fear, entered Khara's house and told him Rama's act. He came with thousands of demons and with Dusasana and Trisiras, to fight with Rama. Rama easily killed those demons of huge bodies. Hearing about the killing of the demons, Ravana rendered violent with anger and came along with the wicked Marica, to Janasthana. That Ravana came to Panchavati with Marica with an illusory deer form, when Dasaratha's sons were away from the hermiage; he then kidnapped Sita.²²⁹

The powerful Jatayu, seeing her being kidnapped, fought due to his affection for Rama, with Ravana but was killed by him. Ravana entered Lanka kept Sita in the Asoka grove. And Rama

229 तस्मिस्तयो दशाब्दानि रामस्य परिनिर्ययुः
गोदवर्यास्तटे रम्ये पञ्चवट्यां मनोरमे ।
कस्यचित्त्वथ कालस्य राक्षसी घौररूपिणी
रावणस्य स्वसा तत्र प्रविवेश दुरासदा ।
सा तु दृष्ट्वा रघुवरं कोटिकन्दर्पसन्निभं
इन्दीवरदलश्यामं पद्म पत्रायतेक्षणं ।
प्रोन्न तासं महाबाहुं कम्बुग्रीवं महाहनुम् ।
Ibid, VI-242, 227-231, P-851

अहं विश्रवसः पुत्री रावणस्य स्वसा नृप
नाम्ना शूर्पणखानाम त्रिषुलोकेषु विश्रुत ।
इदं च दण्डकारण्यं भ्रात्रा दत्तं मम प्रभो
भक्षयन्त्यृषिसङ्घान्वै विचरामि महावने
त्वां तु दृष्ट्वा मुनिवरं कन्दरपशरपीडिता ।
रन्तु कामात्वयासार्धमागताऽस्मि सुनिर्भया
मम त्वं नृपशार्दूल भर्तृभवितुमर्हसि ।
इमां तव सतिं सितां भक्षयिष्यामि पार्थिव
Ibid, VI-242, 241-245, P-852

having killed Marica who had taken the form of a deer, again came to his place with his brother, but he found Sita being kidnapped by a demon, Rama tormented by great grief, lamented. Searching for Sita in the forest, he saw Jatayu there, fallen on the ground with feet, wings cut off and entire body stained in blood. He told Rama that Ravana had kidnapped Sita. Having said thus Jatayu cast away its life. Then Rama performed funerals according to the vedic precepts, and he gave him his eternal abode. Then Rama went to the hermitage of Matanga on Malyavan mountain. Rama met Sabari there. She worshipped Rama and attained highest liberation. Then he went to the Pampa lake killed the demon Kabadha of a fierce form. ²³⁰

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- 230 राक्षसानांवधं श्रुत्वा रावणः क्रोधमूर्च्छितः
 आजगाम जनस्थानं मारीजयन दुरात्मना ।
 सम्प्राप्य पञ्चवट्यां तु दशग्रीवाः सराक्षसः
 मायाविना मारीचेन मृगरूपेण राक्षसः ।
 अपहृद्याऽऽश्रमादुदूरे तौतु दशरथात्मजौ
 जहारसीतां रामस्य भार्या स्ववधकाङ्क्षया
 हियमाणां तु तां दृष्ट्वा जटायुर्गुप्तराडबली
 Ibid, VI-242, 250-256, P-852
 रावणेन हताराम तव भार्या बलीयसा
 तेन राक्षसमुख्येन सङ्ग्रामे निहतोऽस्यहम् ।
 इत्युक्त्वा राघवस्याग्रे सोऽभवत्यक्तजीवितः
 संस्कारमकरोद्रामस्तस्य ब्रम्हविधानतः ।
 स्वपदम् च ददौ तस्मै योगिगम्यं सनातनम्
 राघवस्य प्रसारेण स गृधः परमपदम्
 हरेः सामान्यरूपेण मुक्तिप्राप खगोत्तमः ।
 Ibid, VI-242, 264-266, P-853

Then Rama went to RSYamuka mountain. Then on the bank of Pampa lake he joined Hanuman, Sugriva, etc. In search of Sita the lord of the monkeys sent Hanuman to Lanka. There he killed sons of minister, so also Ravana's son. By chance he was arrested by Ravana's son. The mighty monkey burnt the city of Lanka. Having taken the token of recognition given by Sita, he again came back to Rama. Reported him everything. Then Rama with help of the monkeys crossed the ocean and entered the city of Lanka. Then Ravana's son Indrajit bound both Rama and Lakshmana with magical nooses. Then monkeys killed the demons. In battle Rama killed Ravana's younger brother Kumbhakarna. Ravana set out with his complete army and ministers to fight with Rama in the battle field. A battle took place between Rama and Ravana, so also with Lakshmana. Ravana knocked down Lakshmana with his Sakti missile. Then angrily Rama killed all the demons. Rama covered the Ravana with thousands of arrows. Rama quickly discharged very fierce missile sacred to Brahma. That missile tore Ravana's chest, pierced on the earth, went to the nether world. Then Rama consecrated the demon Vibhisana on the throne of Lanka and approached Sita. Rama heard the harsh and censurable words spoken by the people against Sita. Sita was consoled by him and entered the fire. Then all the hosts of gods led by Siva, Brahma

seeing Sita entering the fire approached Rama and told Sita was extremely pure and forced him to accept her.²³¹

Then the Fire-god brought Sita and handed her over to Rama. Rama with Sita and Lakshmana, entered the city of Ayodhya. There all his family members and subjects welcomed Rama.

On auspicious day, people performed ceremony of the consecration of Rama. The sages Vasistha, Vamadeva, Jabali, Kasyapa, Parvata etc. performed the auspicious consecration, uttered the Vedic hymns in honour of Visnu. Gods sounded drums in heaven and dropped flowers from all sides. Ramachandra honoured all men and bid farewell with affection to all men, monkeys and deities full of love. Rama enjoyed with Sita royal pleasures as desired while protecting earth. In course of time, there

231 स्तूयमानःसुरगणैर्युधे तेन राक्षसा
ततो युद्धमभूद्धोरं रामरावणयोर्महत ।
सप्ताहिक महोरात्रं शस्त्रास्त्रेरतिभीषणम्
विमानस्थाः सुरास्वर्वे ददृशुस्तत्र संयुगम् ।
दशग्रीवस्य चिच्छेद शिरांसि रघुसत्तमः
समुत्थितानि बहुशो वरदानात्कपर्दिनः ।
ब्रह्ममस्त्रं महारौद्रं वधायाऽस्य दुरात्मनः
ससर्ज राघवं स्तूर्णं कालाग्निसदृशप्रभम् ।
तदस्त्रं राघवोत्सृष्टं रावणस्य स्तनान्तरम्
विदार्य धरणी भीत्वा रसातलतलो गतम् ।
सम्पूज्यमानम् भुजगैराघवस्य करं ययो
सगातसुर्महां दैत्यः पपा त च ममरच ।
ततोदेवगणसर्वे हर्ष निर्भरमानसाः ।

Ibid, VI-242, 318-330, P-855

arose a scandal about Sita among the subjects; as a result, Rama did abandon Sita.²³²

Yet Sage Valmiki brought Sita there and asked Rama why did he abandon sinless Sita. Then Rama told that when he came to Ayodhya, there was a great public scandal among the citizens. Being afraid of that, he abandoned her of good conduct and to satisfy the people. Thus addressed, Sita put forward a proof amazing the people in the assembly of sages and kings showing those people her sole devotion to Rama goddess Dharani holding Sita with her hands, greeted her with a welcome, seated her on a seat. Being honoured by all she entered the highest abode. Then Rama overcome by grief took both sons and along with the sages and kings entered saketa. Then after a long time Rama's mothers who had fulfilled their vows died and went to heaven. Rama who had fulfilled his vows, righteously ruled over the kingdom. Once the god of death came to Rama's abode in the guise of an asectic

232 अनुज्ञातः समारुह्य पुष्पकं सानुगस्तदा
 नन्दि ग्रामं ययोरामः पुष्पकेण सुहृदवृतः ।
 मन्त्रिभिः पौरमुख्यैश्च सानुजः कैकयीस्तुतः
 पुरोहितं वशिष्टं च मात्रवृद्धं च बान्धवान्
 प्रणनाम महातेजाः सीताया लक्ष्मणेन च ।
 विभीषणं च सुग्रीवं जाम्बवन्त यथाऽङ्गदम्
 हनुमन्तं सुषेणं च भरतः परिष्वजे ।
 भ्रतृभिः सानुगैस्तत्र मङ्गलस्नानपूर्वकम्
 दिव्य माल्याम्बरधरो दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनः ।
 आरुरोह रथं दिव्यं सुमन्त्राधिष्ठितम् शुभम् ।

Ibid, V-242, 357-365, P-857-858

and spoke "you descended on the mortal world; to kill the two demons; "He had said that he would live in the mortal world for ten thousand and ten hundred years". Now the time for you to go back to heaven, has come. And Rama also agreed. At the same time Durvasa came to meet Rama. Both Rama and Lakshmana worshipped the sage. Both give up their human forms in the water of Sarayu. Lakshmana thousand hoods, having Lakshmana assumed the form of Ananta with thousand hoods, having a lustre of crore of moons, having divine flowers, garments surrounded by thousand serpents and went to the abode of Visnu. Rama knowing Lakshmana's going to heaven, also desired to go to heaven. When Rama is ready to go to heaven, all monkeys also decided to go with him. Thus Rama with all his followers entered the Sarayu.²³³

This story of Rama may be read in more or less abridged form in the other Puranas referred.

233 शृणुध्वं देवता यो मां प्रत्यहं स्तोष्यतेबुधाः
 स्तवेन शम्भुनोक्तेन देवतुल्योभवेन्नरः ।
 विमुक्तः सर्व पापेभ्यो मत्स्वरूपं समश्नुते
 रणे जयमवाप्नोति न क्वचिदतिहन्यते ।
 भूतवेतालकृत्या भिग्रहिश्चाऽपि न बाध्यते
 Ibid, VI-243, 45, P-861
 इत्थं विसृष्टाः खलु ते च सर्वे
 स्वं स्वं पदं जग्मुर्तीवहृष्टाः
 परं पठन्तः स्तवमीश्वरोक्तं रामं स्मरन्तो वरविश्वरूपम् ।
 Ibid, VI-243, 53, P-861

viii. The Concept of Krsna Avatara

From the ancient times, India has strongly had a belief in the reality of the Avatara, the descent into form the revelation of the God-head in humanity. The fact about the existence of Sri Krsna both as the historical character and the Avatara was well established by the first century B.C., through various religious scriptures and legends. In the Rgveda, the name of Krsna has occurred at different places. At one place, there is a reference of Rsi Krsna as the seer of mantra. At another place, he has been mentioned as rsi of sutras. Krsna Angirasa is mentioned as a renowned seer. In the Atharvaveda, there is a story about Krsna as the destroyer of Krsna Kesi demon.

In the Rgveda the name of Sri. Krsna has occurred in many places. Against this veneration for cows inspired by Krsna may be compared to Visnu's association with the cows in the Rgveda. Even though Pusun is the cowherd god in the Rgveda he is constantly, mentioned together with Visnu; and Visnu's heaven is also described as being tenated by cows. Some passages are given below:

"We desire to attain to those bodes of Visnu, where the many horned and swift moving cows abide."²³⁴

234 तां वां वस्तुन्युश्मसि घमध्यै यत्र गावो भूरिशृङ्गा आयासः
अत्राह तदुरुगायस्य वृष्णः परमं पदमेव भातिभूरि । ।
Rgveda I.154.6

"Visnu possessed excellent wisdom which knows the proper day and accompanied by his friend opens the cow's stall (Vraja)"²³⁵

"Visnu is also mountain dwelling (girikṣita) and mountain abiding".²³⁶

The similarity in association of Kṛṣṇa and Visnu with the cows and mountains is remarkable. It is made all the more striking by the occurrence of the word Vraja in both the contexts.

Visnu is often called "Gopā" Visnu is a protector, preserves the highest heaven - Visnu is unconquerable, preserver. About the meaning of Gopa²³⁷ Macdonell says, "The words Gopa and Gopala occur in the Rgveda and later, but the former is usually metaphorical in the sense applying to any protector while the latter Gopala has the literal sense of cowherd.

235 तमस्य राजा वरुणस्तमश्विना क्रतुं सचन्त मारुतस्य वेधसः ।
दधार दक्षमुत्तमम हर्विदं व्रजं च विष्णुः सखिवां अपोर्णुति । ।

Ibid I.156.4

236 प्र विष्णवे शूषमेतु मन्म गिरिक्षित उरुगायाय वृष्णे ।
यं इदं दीर्घं प्रयतं सधस्थ मेको विममे त्रिभिरित पदेभिः । ।

Ibid I.154.3

237 विष्णुर्गोपाः परमं पाति पाथः प्रिया धामान्यामृतादधानः ।
अग्निष्ठा विश्वा भुवनानि वेद महददेवानामसुरत्वमेकम् । ।

Ibid III.55.10

त्रीणि पदाविचक्रमे विष्णुर्गोपा आदाभ्यः ।
अतो धर्माणि धारयम् । ।

Ibid I.22.18

Krsna appears in the Chandogya Upanisad (iii 17.6) as the son of Devaki and pupil of the sage Ghora Angirasa, who taught him that such moral qualities generosity, kindness, truthfulness are true sacrifices and that true worship is the highest light, the Sun as true being.²³⁹ In the Mahabharata Krsna represented as warrior, counsellor and religious teacher, famous hero of the Yadavas and the ally of the Pandavas. Krsna mentioned in the Upanisad and the Krsna who appears in the epic as a Yadava hero, are one and the same. It would therefore appear that the period when the spiritual activity, if not supremacy of the Kshatriyas was a marked feature of the ancient life of India.

Various myths of Lord Krsna's incarnation have been described in different Puranas though very brief in some Puranas and long elucidation in others. As such, the Garuda Purana in its first section accounts some of the important myths of Lord Krsna's life in eleven slokas only. The first two verses refer to Krsna's birth and his killing the demoness Putana by sucking her breast. The third verse points to Krsna's uprooting Arjuna trees, and his killing Sakata demon, humilting serpent Kaliya and throwing of Dhenuka demon. The fourth and fifth verses speak of Krsna's lifting up Govardhana mountain, His killing demons like Arista, Keshin. Next

239 तद्वैतद्वोर आङ्गिरसः कृष्णायदेवकी पुत्रयोक्त्वोवाचापीपारस ।
एव स बभूव सोऽन्तवेलायामेतन्नयं प्रतिपद्येताक्षितमस्यज्युतमसि
प्राणासः शितमसीति तत्रेते द्वे ऋचौ भवतः । ।

Chandogya Upanisad III.17.6

two verses (6-7) imply Krsna's killing of Chanura, Mustika and Kamsa. Also here it is said that he had eight principle wives besides sixteen thousand other wives. The eighth verse speaks of the birth of his son Pradyumna who killed Sambara demon. Aniruddha the latter's son married Usa. The tenth verse says that Krsna killed Naraka, Bala, Sisupala and the monkey Dvivida; and He brought Parijata tree. The last verse speaks that Krsna had Sandipani as his preceptor, and made his preceptor reunited with his son. Also it tells that Krsna installed Ugrasena on the throne at Mathura and set about the task of protecting the gods and men.

In like manner, the Agni Purana in the twelfth chapter running into fifty-five verses describes the story of Lord Krsna's incarnation.

The verses 1-3 speak of the geneology of Lord Krsna. The verses 4 to 7 speak of Lord Krsna's birth from the womb of Devaki. It is suggested here that the six sons born of yogic sleep, cast by Visnu, were carried off by Hiranyakasipu's yogic power. They were again born to Devaki and killed by Krsna. The seventh child in the womb of Devaki was transferred to that of Rohini (Vasudeva's another wife), hence was known as Sankarsana or Balarama. This information is also referred to in the Bhagavata Purana (X, I-II), Visnu Purana (V 1-70). Upto the verse 26 Kamsa's efforts of killing Krsna were described but the verse 27 informs that he is killed by Krsna. The verses 29 to 31 inform that Krsna killed Naraka and

he brought 16000 daughters of the celestials whom then married besides Rukmini and other eight. Verses 32-34 point to Krsna's bringing Parijata in the house of Satyabhama, His education under the preceptor Sandipani and rescuing his son, conquering Panchajana demon as well as Kalayavana. The rest of the verses speak of the valourous deeds of Pradyumna and Anirudha, the son and the grandson of Lord Krsna.

The Brahma Mahapurana is another text preserving few accounts of Lord Krsna. They are like, birth of Lord Krsna and Balarama. Yadavas transferring their residence from Mathura to Dvaraka due to the fear from Kalayavana. It also refers to the episode of Syamantaka jewel. These points are elaborated to a little extent from twelfth Adhyaya to fifteenth Adhyaya.

Similary, the Padma Purana too provides the details of Lord Krsna's life account. The eight adhyayas (245 to 252) of the Uttarardha portion of the Uttarakhanda in the Padma Purana are devoted to the description of Lord Krsna's incarnation as under.

Adhyaya 245 : Gods being tormented by demons approach Visnu and ask for his protection. Lord Visnu manifestatin as Krsna in the prison itself, taking Lord Krsna to Vrndavana, Krsna's killing Putana and bestowing Arjuna twin trees, Rasa description, at the behest of Akrura Krsna's arrival to Mathura and his killing Kamsa.

Adhyaya 246 : Thread ceremony of Balarama and Krsna their education under Sandipani, Krsna's fight against Jarasandha, his killing Kalayavana, blessing Muchukunda.

Adhyaya 247 : Jarasandha's defeat, Krsna's marriage, with of Rukmini.

Adhyaya 248 : description of Krsna's marriage with Rukmini.

Adhyaya 249 : Krsna's marriage with Satyabhama, description of Symantaka episode, Krsna's marriage with Jambavati, His killing demon Naraka, Krsna's bringing Kalparrksa.

Adhyaya 250 : The description of the battle between Bana and Lord Krsna

Adhyaya 251 : Krsna's killing Pundraka

Adhyaya 252 : Krsna's killing Jarasandha, Krsna, leaving for Parandhama.

The Visnu Purana is another available authentic source of Lord Krsna's incarnation. Of the six Amsas, the fifth Amsa in its 38 Adhyayas, the Visnu Purana is devoted for explaining various episodes during the period of Lord Krsna's incarnation. It may be seen as below :

V.1 Marriage of Vasudeva and Devaki, Gods approaching Lord Visnu, asking for protection from the clutches of the demons, Lord Visnu's suggestion If His taking incarnation

- V.2 Lord Visnu's entrance into the womb of Devaki, Gods praise Him
- V.3 Lord Visnu's manifestation, and deceiving Krisna through His Yoga Maya
- V.4 Releasing Vasudeva and Devaki from the imprisonment
- V.5 Krsna's killing Putana
- V.6 Krsna's throwing of aakata demon, blessing the twin Arjuna trees, description of the people of Gokula, their leaving for Brindavana and description of rainy season
- V.7 Lord Krsna's silencing Kaliya
- V.8 Krsna's killing of Dhenuka demon
- V.9 His killing of Pralmaba demon
- V.10 Description of Autumn and of Govardhana mountain
- V.11 Indra's agitation, Lord Krsna's lifting Govadhana up
- V.12 Dialogue between Indra and Krsna, Indra's, eulogy of Lord Krsna
- V.13 Description of Rasakrida
- V.14 Krsna's killing the demon Vrasabha
- V.15 Kamsa sends Akrura to bring Krsna

- V.16 Krsna's killing of Kesi demon
- V.17 Akrura's journey to Gokula
- V.18 Krsna's leaving for Mathura, description of Gopis' feelings of separation from their Lord Krsna
- V.19 Krsna's entrance to Mathura and His killing Vrajaka
- V.20 Krsna's blessing Kubja, His breaking the bow, His killing Kuvalyapida, Chanura and Kamsa
- V.21 Coronation of Ugrasena at Mathura, Lord Krsna's education
- V.22 Defeat of Jarasandha at the hands of Krsna
- V.23 Krsna's act of reducing Kalyavana to ashes, Muchukunda's praise of Lord Krsna
- V.24 Muchukunda's departure for penance, Balarama's journey to Brindavana
- V.25 Description of Balarama's wanderings at Vraja
- V.26 Lord Krsna's taking Rukmini away
- V.27 Description of carrying away Pradyumna and killing of Sambarasura
- V.28 Krsna's killing Rukmi

- V.29 Krsna's killing Naraka demon
- V.30 Krsna's bringing Parijata from heaven
- V.31 Krsna's marriage with 16000 women
- V.32 Story of Usa
- V.33 Description of the battle between Krsna and Bana
- V.34 Krsna's killing of Paundrika
- V.35 Marriage of Samba
- V.36 Krsna's killing Dvividā
- V.37 Curse of the sages for the destruction of Yadus, Lord
Krsna's leaving for his abode
- V.38 Funeral rites for Yadus, coronation of Parikṣita, and
Pandavas ascending to heaven

So also, the Devibhagavata Purana, Narasimha Purana and Brahmavaivarta Purana record some episodes of the Lord Krsna's incarnation. Coming to the Bhagavata Purana, one can unhesitatingly state that it is the text of greater repository of the description of Lord Krsna's incarnation than any other texts. However, the whole of the tenth skandha which is quite bigger one, imbibes all minute details of Lord Krsna's supra-natural activities during His incarnate period. The following is the table of the tenth skandha which is a pointer to each and every episode.

- 1 The Lord reassures mother earth, Vasudeva marries
Devaki and Krsna despatches the six sons
- 2 the Lord enters the womb of Devaki
- 3 Advent of Lord Krsna
- 4 Slipping from the grip of Krsna, Yogamaya's ascend to
the heavens and utters a prophecy
- 5 Festivities connected with the Birth of Lord Krsna's at
Gokula
- 6 Deliverance of Putana
- 7 Deliverance of Demon Tranavarta
- 8 Naming ceremony of the Lord and his infantile sports
- 9 Grace showered on Yasodha
- 10 The imprecation pronounced on Kubera's sons by Narada
and their conquest redemption
- 11 Destruction of Vatsasura and Bakasura
- 12 Deliverance of Aghasura
- 13 Brahma is seized with and ultimately rid of infatuation.
Brahma extols the Lord.
- 14 The demon Dhenuka slain

- 15 The Delivernance of Kaliya
- 16 The Lord rescues the inhabitants of Vrja from a wild fire
- 17 The Lord slays the demon Pralamba. The Lord swallows up a wild fire.
- 18 The Description of rains and Autumn
- 19 The song inspire by the flute
- 20 The Lord steals away the garments of cowherd maids
- 21 Redemption of the some wives of the Brahmanas engaged in a sacrifice
- 22 The Lord stops sacrifice to Indra
- 23 The Lord lifts up the mount Govardhana
- 24 Nanda's conversation with the cowherds about Sri. Krsna's glory
- 25 Indra extols Sri. Krsna
- 26 Sri. Krsna rescues his father from the realm of Varuna
- 27 Description of the Rasa play
- 28 The gopis quest for Sri. Krsna during the Rasa play
- 29 Gopis' song

- 30 The Lord comforts the gopis during the Rasa play
- 31 A Description of the Rasa play
- 32 The Lord make short work of Sankhacuda
- 33 The Gopis songs in pairs of verses
- 34 Kamsa sends Akrura to Vraja to bring Sri Krsna and
Balarama
- 35 The demon Vyoma slain
- 36 Akrura's arrival
- 37 Departure of Sri. Krsna and Balarama to Mathura
- 38 Akrura's Euology
- 39 Entry into Mathura
- 40 A Description of the Amphitheatre for wrestlers
- 41 The elephant Kuvalaya pida killed
- 42 Kamsa Slain
- 43 The Lord brings back his preceptor's son
- 44 The Lord relieves the agony of Nanda by despatching
Uddhava to Vrja with message of endearment
- 45 Dailogue between Uddhava and Gopis and ode to a black
bee

- 46 The Lord pays a visit to Kubja and Akrura at their
 respective places
- 47 Akrura's visit to Hastinapur
- 48 The Lord encounes himself in a forstress built by him in
 the western sea under the name Dwaraka
- 49 Muchukunda's glorification of Sri Krsna
- 50 Krsna's withdrawal to Dwaraka, Balarama's marriage.
 Rukmini sends a Brahmana with the message to Krsna
- 51 Krsna carries away Rukmini
- 52 Discomfiture of Sisupala allies and Rukumi and the
 Espousal of Rukmini by Krsna solemzed
- 53 The story of Pradyumna's birth, Destruction of demon
 Sambara
- 54 The story of the Syamantaka gam, Krsna weds Jambavati
 and Satyabhama
- 55 Syamantaka stolen, Satadhanvi killed and Akrura
 recalled to Dwaraka
- 56 The Lord snatches away a Parijata tree
- 57 Dailogue between Krsna and Rukmini
- 59 Rukmi killed by Balarama during Aniruddh's wedding

- 59 Aniruddha made captive
- 60 Aniruddha brought back to Dwaraka
- 61 The story of king Nrga
- 62 Baladeva triumphantly diverts the river Yamuna from its
course
- 63 Paundraka and others killed
- 64 Dwivida killed
- 65 Triumph of Samkarsana in the form of dragging
Hastinapura
- 66 A glimpse into household life of Sri Krsna
- 67 Krsna's daily routine; kings taken capitive by Jarasandha
and their messenger to Krsna
- 68 Krsna goes to Indraprastha
- 69 Jarasandha killed
- 70 Krsna and other return to Indraprastha
- 71 Sisupala Vadha
- 72 Duryodhana's humiliation
- 73 Siva's encounter with Yadavas

- 74 Salva's Deliverance
- 75 Deliverance of Dantavakra and Viduratha, Suta killed by
Balarama during his pilgrimage
- 76 An account of Balarama's pilgrimage
- 77 Krsna's reception of Sudama
- 78 The story of parched rice brought as a present by Sudama
- 79 Meeting of Vrsnis with Gopas and Gopis
- 80 Conversation between Krsna's consorts and Draupadi
- 81 An account of the pilgrimage by Krsna
- 82 The Lord brings back from the abode of death his six elder
brothers
- 83 Subhadra carried away by Arjuna, the Lord's grace on
Sutadeva
- 84 A song of praise uttered by the Vedas
- 85 Lord Rudra rescued
- 86 The Lord brings back the dead child of Brahmana
- 87 Krsna narrated the story of sports

Some of the important episodes above are described below :

1. *The Advent of Lord Krsna*

Oppressed with stupendous weight by millions of detachments of Daityas in the disguise of arrogant kings, mother earth sought Brahma, as her refuge. Appearing as disconsolate cow, its face wet with tears and piteously lowing, she sought the presence of Brahma and told him her distress. Realising her calamity, Brahma accompanied by Lord Siva proceeded to the shore of the ocean of milk along with the gods as well as with her. Having arrived there Lord Brahma praised Lord Visnu, in the terms of the purusa-sukta. Hearing in the course of a trance a voice uttered in the sky; that is Lord Visnu; He said "The affliction of Mother Earth had already been known by the supreme one. Therefore let yourselves be born among the Yadvas in part of manifestation till that Suzerain Lord walks on the Earth, reducing the burden of Earth through his own energy in the shape of time, and Lord Visnu himself will be manifested in the house of Vasudeva; with intent to do what pleases Sri.Hari, the Lord Ananta a part of manifestatioin of Lord Vasudeva Lord Visnu will be born in part of manifestation for the purpose of doing his work.²⁴⁰

240 भूमिर्दत्तनृपव्याजदैत्यानीकशतायुतैः । अक्रान्ता भूमिभारेण ब्राम्हणं शरणं ययौ । ।
 गौर्भूत्वा श्रुमुखी खिन्न क्रन्दन्ती करणं विभोः । उपस्थितान्तिके तस्मै व्यसनं समवोचनम् । ।
 ब्रम्हा तदुपादार्थाय सह देवैस्तया सह । जगामा सत्रिनयनस्तीरं क्षीरपयो निधेः । ।

C.I.Goswami, Bhagavata Purana, Motilal Jalan, Gokarkhpaur 1971, X. 1.17-19, P-1043

गिरं समाधौ गगने समीरितां निशम्य वेधस्त्रिदशानुवाच ह ।

गां पौरुषीं मे श्रुणुतामराः पुनर्विधीयतामशु तथैव मा चिरम् । ।

Ibid X.1.21 P-1043

Of yore Surasena, the chief of the Yadavas ruled the principalities of Mathura and Surasena residing in the city of Mathura in which Lord Hari is ever present. His son was Vasudeva. Vasudeva married with Devaki. Once Vasudeva mounted the chariot with his wife, while departing, attacked by the Kamsa, son of Ugrasena in order to oblige his cousin Devaki.²⁴¹

At the time of their departure, Devaka, who was fond of his daughter, gave away to his daughter by a way of dowry four hundred elephants, thousand horses, hundred chariots etc. As the procession of the bride and bridegroom just going to start, conches, clarionets etc. sounded in a most auspicious manner. On the way, addressing Kamsa, an incorporeal voice said, "O! foolish one! the eighth child of this girl, will slay you". Told thus, that wicked one, seized his cousin by hair, sword in hand and proceeded to kill her. Vasudeva pleaded with that hard hearted and shameless fellow of detestable deeds, trying to appease him. Kamsa ceased from killing Devaki. Vasudeva too reached home full of delight with Devaki, when the time came, Devaki represented all the gods brought forth

241 यास्यां तु कर्हिचिच्छौरिर्वसुदेवः कृतोद्धहः ।
 देवक्या सूर्यया सार्धं प्रयाणे रथमारूहत् । ।
 उग्रसेन सुतः कंसः स्वसु प्रियचिकीर्शया ।
 रश्मीन् हयानां जग्राह रौक्मैश्चशतैवृतः । ।

Ibid X.1 29-30, P-1044

eight sons and a daughter too (Subhadra by name) besides one every year.²⁴²

Vasudeva handed over his all sons to Kamsa with great difficulty. And the last child he gave to Nanda and Yasodha his relative to protect the child. Then Vasudeva and Devaki came to the village of Gokula owned by Nanda, afraid of Kamsa. There exists in Devaki's womb, in the form of an embroy, Lord Hari's part manifestation known by the name Sesa. Lord takes it out, places it in the womb of Rohini. Then assumes the role of Devaki's son. Thus on that delightful day, kittle drums sounded in heaven. Kinnaras, Gandharvas sang, siddhas and charnas uttered praises and Vidyadhara women danced. Full of joy, sages and gods showered flowers and clouds gently rumbled after the manner of the ocean. Lord Visnu manifested himself in his entirety through Devaki. Vasudeva beholds extro-ordinary boy with lotus like eyes endowed with four arms wielding uplifted weapons, conch, moce

242 शङ्खतूर्यमृदङ्गाश्च नेदुर्दुन्दुभयः समम् ।
 प्रयाणप्रक्रमे तावद् वरवध्वोः सुमङ्गलम् । ।
 पथि प्रग्रहिणं कंसमामाष्याहशरीरवाक् ।
 अस्यस्त्वामष्टमो गर्भो हन्ता यां वहसेऽबुध । ।
 इत्युक्तः सः खलः पापो भोजानां कुलपांसनः ।
 भगिनीं हन्तुमाराब्धः खड्गपाणिः कचेऽग्रहीत । ।
 Ibid X.1.33-35, P-1044
 कीर्तिमन्तं प्रथमजं कंसायानकदुन्दुभिः ।
 अर्पयामास कृच्छ्रेण सोऽनृतातिविह्वलः । ।
 Ibid X. 1.57, P.1047

and a discus, bearing on his bosom the mark of Srivatsa, possessing the charm of a cloud laden with moisture. Vasudeva plunged in joy, and beheld Sri Hari as his own son.²⁴⁴

After the birth-ceremony, Vasudeva returned to his palace. Kamsa heard the birth of the eighth child. He took the child from Devaki to kill. But he found that to be female. The child uttered that! "O foolish one, your destroyer has been born at another place, do not kill helpless children in vain!". Having warned him thus, the child disappeared.²⁴⁵

2. *Deliverance of Putana*

Calling the Brahmanas, well versed in art and fortune telling, having made them repeat benedictory verses, Nanda performed the Jatakarma ceremony. He gave away the Brahmanas two lakhs of newly calved cows seasum seeds studded with number of precious

244 समद्भुतं बापकम्बुजेक्षणंचतुर्भुजं शङ्खगदार्युदायुधम् ।
श्रीवत्सलक्ष्यं गलशोभिकौस्तुभं पीताम्बरं सान्द्रपयोदसौभगम् । ।
महाहवैदुर्यं किरीडकुण्डलत्विषा परिष्वक्तसहस्रकुन्तलम् ।
उद्धामकाञ्च्यङ्गदवङ्कणादिभिर्विरोचमानं वसुदेव ऐक्षत । ।

Ibid X.3.9.10 P.1054

245 किं मया हतया मन्द जातः खलु तवान्तकृत ।
यत्र क्व वा पूर्वशत्रुर्माहिंसिः कृपणान् वृथा । ।
इति प्रभाश्य तं देवि माया भगवती भुवि ।
बहुनामनिकेतेशु बहुनामा बभूव ह । ।

Ibid X.4.13

stones. etc.²⁴⁶ Then Nanda went to Mathura in order to pay his annual tribute to Kamsa. Kamsa came to know that his death was growing in Gokula. He was very frightened. He sent demoness Putana to kill Sri Krsna. Putana disguising herself as a woman entered the Gokula. She saw Sri Krsna lying on a bed in the palace of Nanda. Recognising her to be an evil spirit, Krsna laid with his eyes closed. Taking Krsna on her lap, the cruel woman put her dreadful breast into the baby's mouth, besmeared with deadly poison. Squeezing with hands Lord sucked the poison along with her life.

3. *Deliverance of the demon Tranavarta*

Again a demon named Tranavarta and servant of Kamsa, appeared in the form of a whirlwind, enveloping the entire Gokula in particularly of dust and blinding the eyes, and shaking the quarters, with his most terrible roar carried away the squatting baby. For an hour, Vraja remained enveloped in dust and darkness, Yashoda did not find her son on the spot where she had set him. The helpless mother lamented and dropped on the ground like a cow. Having heard the cry of Yasoda the wind had vehemence of

246 नन्दस्वात्मज उत्पन्ने जाताह्लादो महामनाः ।
 आहूय विप्रान् वेदज्ञान् स्नातः शुचिरलंकृतः । ।
 वाचयित्वा स्वत्ययनं जातकर्मात्मजस्य वै ।
 कारयामास विधिवत् पितृदेवार्चनं तथा । ।

Ibid X.5.1.2 P.1065

its shower of dust abuted and with their mind sore afflicted at not perceiving there the Nanda; the women wept; the face flooded with tears. Carrying away Lord Krsna Tranavarta went up to the skies, but could not proceed him impetuously having ceased now that he was carrying a huge burden. Taking that boy to be a rock because of his being heavier than himself, he could not cast him away. Rendered metionless by the pressure at the throat the demon fell down and dead.²⁴⁷

4. *The Deliverance of Kaliya*

In the Kalindi there was a certain pool, inhabited by the serpent Kaliya, whose water was being constantly boiled by the fire of its poison, and into which birds flying over it, fall down. touched by the wind which blew over the ripples of that poisoned

247 दैत्यो नाम्ना तृणवर्तः कंसभ्रत्यः प्रणोडितः ।
 चक्रवातस्वरूपेण जहारसीनमर्भकम् । ।
 गोकुलं सर्वमावृण्वन मुष्णंश्चक्षुषिरेणुभिः ।
 ईरयन् सुमहाघोरशब्देन प्रदिशो दिशः । ।
 मुहूर्तम भवद गोष्ठं रजस् ॥ तमसाऽऽवृतम् ।
 सुत यशोदा नापश्यत् तस्मिन् न्यस्तवती यतः । ।
 नापश्यत् कश्चनात्मानं पुरं चापि विमोहितः ।
 तृणावर्तनिसृष्टाभिः शर्कराभिरुपद्रुतः । ।

Ibid.X.7.20.23 P.1076

गलग्रहणानिश्चेष्टो दैत्यो निर्गतलोचनः ।
 अव्यक्तरावो न्यपतत् सहबालो व्यसुर्वजे । ।

Ibid X.7.28 P.1077

water. Observing that strength of the snake laid in its poison,²⁴⁹ possessed of tremendous force, and finding the river contaminated by the serpent, Sri.Krsna, the very purpose of whose descent on the earth was the subjugation of the wicked, climbed up Kadamba tree and having tightened the piece of the cloth tied around his waist and slapping his arms jumped from that height into the pool of poisoned water. With the volume of its water swelled by the poison of the snakes that were agitated by the vehemence of the plunge taken by Lord Krsna, the serpent's pool, whose terrible ripples had been coloured by the poison, over flowed in all directions. That was no miracle on the part of the Lord, possessed of infinite strength. The Lord who was sporting in the pool perceiving the violation of its abode at the latter's hands, and unable to broke it, the serpent approached the Lord. Biting Lord in a range in his vital parts, snake enclosed him in its coils. Sore distressed to see him caught in the coils of cobra with no movement visible, his friends, the cowherds who had dedicated to Sri Krsna their body wealth, wife, luxuries and whose judgement followed in successioin by grief and fear dropped down senseless.²⁵⁰

Meanwhile most terrible and grave portents of three kind foreboding imminent danger appered on the earth. Noticing them and coming to know of Krsna having gone to pasture the cows

250 अथ व्रजे महोत्पातास्त्रि विधा ह्यतिदारुणाः ।

उत्पेर्भुवि दिव्यात्मन्यासन्नभयशंसिनः । ।

Ibid X.16.12 P.1126

unaccompanied by Balarama. Concluding from those ills Sri.Krsna to have met his death, the cowherds, who did not knew him and whose life was Sri.Krsna, were overwhlmed with sorrow and fear.² Seriching for their beloved Sri.Krsna along with the track indicated by his footprints bearing the characteristic marks of the Lord, they headed towards the Yamuna. Spying from a distance Sri.Krsna caught in the coils of a cobra and devoid of motion in the middle of the pool, and the cowherds lying senseless on the pool, they felt afflicted and fell into a swoon. Yashoda had followed her child into the stream and shedding tears, equally pained as they were, they recounted the stories of Krsna and stood as though dead, with their eyes riverted on the countenance of Sri.Krsna.²⁵¹

Then finding the inhabitants of Gokula exclusively dependent on him and perceiving them along with their womenfolk and children sare distressed for his sake, Krsna escaped from the bondage of the serpent. Then serpent was feeling oppressed by the expanding of Sri.Krsna and left him; and heheld up its hood in a range, stood hissing and breathing out poison through its nostrile and staring at him and harming as a friny pan and emitting flames through its mouths.²⁵² Krsna like Garuda wheeled round the snake. The Lord wielded a severe rod of punishment, crushed under the

251 ताः कृष्णमातरमपत्यमनु प्रविष्टां तुल्यव्यथा समनुगृह्य शुचः स्तवन्त्यः ।
तस्त्वा व्रजप्रियकथाः कथयन्त्य आसन् कृष्णासनेऽर्पितदृशो मृतकप्रतीकाः । ।

Ibid X.16.21 P.1127

252 आज्ञाय मर्त्यषदवीमनुवर्तमानः स्थित्वा मूर्हूर्तमुदतिष्ठदुरङ्गबन्धात् ।

Ibid X.16.23 P.1127

tread of his feet whichever hood of the serpent ejecting deadly blood through its mouth and nostrils. Cobra fell into a deep swoon. Dancing on the cobra, Krsna subdued the cobra successively.²⁵³

5. *The Lord lifts up the Mount Govardhana*

Indra was once angry with Nanda and the other Gopa, as they looked upon Sri.Krsna as their protector. The indignant Indra mobilized the host of destructive clouds known as the Samvartaka host, issued the following command "Get rid of the stiffness caused by pride of wealth of these Gopas, who have grown arrogant through affluence and whose mind has been puffed up by Krsna and bring their cattle destruction. They commded by Indra, started tormenting Nanda's Vraja by their sharp driving showers with violence. Having observed this, Lord Krsna uprooting with one hand mount Govardhana as a child, sportfully lifted up . Then Lord said to the cowherds, the people of Vraja to take shelter in the cavity beneath the mountain along with cattle wealth. All they entered the cavity.²⁵⁴

253 तस्याक्षिभिर्गल मुद्धमतः शिरस्त्य, यद यत समुन्नमति निःश्वसतो रूषोद्यैः।

नृत्यन् पदान्नामयन् दमयाम्ब भूव पुष्पैः प्रपूजित इवेह पुमान् पुराणाः।।

Ibid. X.16.29 P.1127

254 इन्द्रस्तदाऽत्मनः पूजां विज्ञाय विहतां नृप। गोपेभ्याः कृष्णानाथेभ्यो नन्दादिभ्यश्चुकोप सः।।

गणं सांवर्तकं नाम मेघानां चान्तकारिणाम्। इन्द्रः प्रचोदयत् क्रुद्धो वाक्यं चाहेशमन्युत।।

Ibid X.25.19 P.1164

खं व्यभ्रमुदितादित्यं वातवर्षं च दारुणम्। निशाम्योपरतं गोपान् गोवर्धनधरोऽब्रवीत्।।

Ibid X.25.25 P.1164

6. *Description of Rasa Play*

Accompanied by the chowherd women, Lord Sri.Krsna inaugurated His Rasa play, on the sandy bank of the Yamuna. The festive dance of Rasa adorned with the circle of the aforesaid Gopis standing with their necks encircled by the arms of Sri.Krsna, who introduced himself between every two Gopis, was witnessed by hundreds of aerial cars of heavenly beings, who were accompanied by their consorts. Then sounded kettle drums, showers of flowers fell, and the Govardhanas sang His immaculate glory in chory with their spouses.²⁵⁶

In the company of those girls Lord Krsna shone exceedingly bright like a large emerald, strung in the midst of gold heads. Engaged in dancing and delighted with the touch of Lord Krsna, the Gopis, whose voice was sweetened with love closed delight and devotion, sang at the pitch of their voice. Embracing them, touching them, casting loving glances at them, making understained amorous gestures, Sri Krsna sported with those lovely women of Vraja.²⁵⁷

256 रसोत्सवः सम्प्रवृत्तो गोपिमण्डलमाण्डितः। योगेश्वरेण कृष्णेन तासां मध्ये द्वयोर्द्वयोः।।
प्रविष्टेन गृहीतानां कण्ठे स्वनिकटं स्त्रियः। यं मन्येरन् नभस्तावदविमानशतसङ्कलम्।
दिवौकसां साधारणामौत्सुक्यापहृतात्मानाम्।।

Ibid X.33.3.4 P.1190

257 एवं परिष्वाङ्गकराभिमर्शस्निग्धेक्षणोद्दामविलासहसौ।
रेमे श्मेशो ब्रजसुन्दरीभिर्यथार्थकः स्वप्रतिबिम्बविभ्रमः।।

Ibid X.33.17 P.1192

6. *Kamsa Slain by Lord Krsna*

Lord Madhusudana challenged of unflinching resolution immediately closed with Chanura and Balarama with Mustika. They tried to frustrate each other by revolving, pushing, squeezing in their arms, throwing down, and slipping to the front or to the rear of their opponent. Eager to score a victory over each other, they hurted the body of their adversary by lifting up, carrying and throwing. All the ladies collected in batches spoke to one another about the contest being ill-matched. "What comparison can there be between the two wrestlers of admantine frame and closely resembling a pair of two large mountains. The women of Mathura also talking of Krsna's glory and said : "Blessed are the women of Vraja who celebrate him in song, while milking their cows, churmins their curds, moving the cradles etc. all movements are inspired by the thought of Sri. Krsna".²⁵⁸

While the women were talking in anxious tones as aforesaid, Lord Hari made up his mind to get rid of his opponent Chanura.

258 एवं चर्चितसंकल्पो भगवान् मधुसूधनाः ।
 आससादाथचाणूरं मुष्टिकं रोहिणीसुतः । ।
 हस्तभ्यां हस्तयोर्वदध्वा पदभ्यामेव च पादयोः ।
 बिजकर्षतुरन्योन्यं प्रसह्य विजिगीषया । ।

Ibid X.44.1.2 P.1239

कृ वज्र सारसर्वाङ्गौ मल्लौ शैलेन्द्रसन्निभौ ।
 कृ चातिसुकुमाराङ्गौ किशोरौ नाप्तयौवनौ । ।

Ibid X.44.8 P.1240

Lord Hari caught hold of Chanura by his arms and whirling him several times, dashed him to the ground, his life became extinct as a result of his being whirled with vehemence. In the same manner, Mustika was struck violently with his pacton by the mighty Balabhadra, who had also been struck with his fist by the latter in the first instance. Balarama slew with his left fist Kuta, another wrestler. That very movement, Sala another wrestler, had his hand knocked off with Sri.Krsna's foot, while Tosalakar was split into two and both fell down dead. Chanura, Musta, Kuta, Sala and Tosalaka thus were despatched. With the exception of Kamsa, all the people rejoiced the achivement of Balarama and Sri.Krsna. Suddenly Krisna stopped strumpets and the tradition, uttered the following injunctionis "Drive out the city the two ill behaved sons of Vasudeva, confiscate the wealth of Gopas and put in bonds the wicked Nanda. While Kamsa was bragging them, Sri.Krsna flew into rage and springing with agility, speedily ascended the elevated dias. Sri.Krsna quickly caught hold with a firm hand of Kamsa. Grasping him tightly by the hair, his diadem slipping off and hurling him from the lofty dais to aruena, Lord Krsna jumped upon him. He dragged Kamsa and despatched from the world.²⁶⁰

260 ततः कूटमनुप्राप्तं रामः प्रहरतां वरः । अवधील्लीलया राजन् सावज्ञं वाममुष्टिना । ।
तर्ह्येव हि शलः कृष्ण पदापहतशीर्षकः । विधाविदीर्णस्तोशलक उभावपि निपेततुः । ।

Ibid X.44.26.27 P.1241

एवं विकन्थमाने वैकसे प्रकृपितोऽव्ययः । लघिमोत्पत्य तरसामञ्चमुत्तुङ्गमारुहत । ।

Ibid X.44.34 P.1242

7. *King Muchukunda glorified the Lord*

Muchukunda was born in the race of Ikswaku, son of Mandhata. He was not only devoted to the Bramhana but also was entreated for their protection by the hosts of the gods led by Indra. He ensured this safety for a long time. The younger son of Siva said to Muchukunda, O! king, cease you from the uphill task of protecting us on all sides. Since you have been protecting us all along, having completely renounced your kingdom on the mortal plane which had its enemies wiped out, all your enjoyment, have ceased. Your sons, wives, relations, ministers and counsellors having been swept away by the cruel hand of death. Thus addressed by them, king Muchukunda soluted him, entered the deep cave. Overpowered by sleep, vouchsafed by the gods laydown to repose there. The gods further said him : "Let him however, who thoughtlessly awakens you, when fallen into sleep in the middle, be instantly reduced to mere ashes when seen by you".²⁶²

After Kalay yavana converted into ashes, Lord Krsna showed himself to the wise Muchukunda.²⁶³ Beholding a cloud, bearing the

262 स इक्ष्वाकुकुले जातो मान्धातृतनयोमहान् ।
मुचकुन्द इति ख्यातो ब्राह्मण्यः सत्यसागरः । ।
लब्ध्वा गृहं ते स्वपालह मुचकुन्दमथाब्रुवन् ।
राजन विरमतां कृच्छाद्भवाननः परिपालनात् । ।

Ibid X.51.14,16 P.1283

263 यवने भस्मसान्निते भगवान् सत्ववर्षभः ।
आत्मानं दर्शयामास मुचुकुन्दाय धीमते । ।

Ibid X.51.23. P.1283

mark of Srivatsa, endowed with four arms, splendid with garland of Sylvan flowers etc. Muchakunda asks him several questions, that who is He! How he arrived in the mountain cave. At last, he considered him "He is no other than Lord Visnu". Lord Visnu told him about His incarnation. Recollecting the prediction of sage, he realised Sri. Krsna to be none else than Lord Narayana and bowed down to him.

8. *Glimpse into the household life of Sri. Krsna*

Having heard that the demon Naraka had been killed by Krsna and singly married numerous girls, the sage Narada felt eager to see how the Lord lives with them. Thus, full of eager to see the Lord, the divine sage came to Dwaraka which was adorned with park and gardens in full blossom and resounded with the warbling of bird and bees. Lakhs of mansions were built of cristal and silver, furnished with articles of gold, and precious stones. Narada saw Sri.Krsna seated there together with Rukmini, who was serving the Lord with a chourie provided with golden handle.²⁶⁴

264 नरकं निहतं श्रुत्वा तथोद्धाहं च योषिताम् ।
 कृष्णेनेकेन बह्वीनां तद दिदृक्षुः स्मनारदः । ।
 चित्रं बतेदेकेन वपुषा युगपत् पृथक् ।
 गृहेशु द्वयष्टसाहस्रं स्त्रिय एक उदावहत । ।
 इत्युत्सुको द्वांस्त्रतीं देवर्षिद्रष्टुमागमत् ।
 पुष्पितोपवनारामस्त्रिजालिकुलनादिताम् । ।

Ibid X.69. 1.3. P.1371

Discerning the Narada, the Sri. Krsna rose from the bed and bowing low with his head, adorned with a crown, at the feet of the sage, installed him on his own seat. The Lord washed the feet of the sage and bore that water on his head. After being worshipped by the Lord, sage Narada entered another mansion of consort of Sri. Krsna. There, he saw Krsna engaged in playing at dice with His beloved consort and Uddhava. There also, the Lord stood up, offered him seat and worshipped him with supreme devotion. Then Narada moved to another mansion. There too he saw Sri. Krsna founding his infant sons. Again, in another house he found the Lord preparing for this bath.²⁶⁵

In this way Narada found the Lord engaged in different activities, all at once in all the different mansions. If here, he was engaged in pouring oblations in the sacrificial fire, there he was propitiating god through the five fold daily sacrifices. Somewhere he was feeding the Brahmanas. Here, he saw performing Sandhya, and silent Japa of Gayatri. At one place, he was gifting well adorned cows to Brahmanas and listening to the recitation of auspicious Itihasas and Puranas. At one place, he found Krsna preparing against enemies, and at another place discussing terms of peace.

265 ततोऽन्यदाविशद गेहं कृष्णपत्न्याः स नारदः ।
योगेश्वरेश्वरस्याङ्ग योगमायावित्तया । ।
दिव्यन्तमक्षैस्तत्रापि प्रियया चोद्धवेन च ।
पूजितः परया भक्त्या प्रत्युत्थानासनादिभिः । ।
Ibid X.69 19.20 P.1373

And at one place, he found Him conducting festivities on a large scale, while sending of married girl. Some where, he saw Him offering worship to various gods by means of grand sacrifices etc.²⁶⁶

Thus Narada saw Lord Krsna present in all the mansions of His consorts. performing the pious duties of householders which lead to their purification. Seeing again and again, the vast display of the wonderful Yogic power of Sri. Krsna the curious sage was filled with astonishment.²⁶⁷

8. *Sisupala killed by Sri. Krsna*

When Jarasandha was killed by Sri. Krsna Yudhisthira was highly delighted with Sri. Krsna's occurances; Yudhistira invited at an hour propitious for the sacrifice, Brahmanas versed in the Vedas and proficient in the Vedic ritual to officiate as priests. etc. They were Vyasa, Vasistha, Gautama, Kanva, Jaimini, Sumati, Krtu, Kasyapa etc. Besides, there he also invited Dronacharya, Bhishma, Krupaharya and others. In order to witness the great sacrifice, many princes, ministers, Brahmanas, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas,

266 जुहन्तं च वितानाग्नीन यजन्तं पञ्चभिर्मखैः ।
भोजयन्तं द्विजान् कृापि भुञ्जानमवशेषितम् । ।

Ibid X.69.24 P.1373

267 कृष्णस्यानन्तवीर्यस्य योगमायामहोदयम् ।
मुहुदृष्ट्वा ऋषिरभूद् विस्मितो जातकौतुकः । ।

Ibid X.69.42 P.1375

Sudras were invited. Then the priests ploughed the sacrificial ground with ploughs of gold and initiated Yudhisthira according to the scriptural injunctions, as the sacrificer. All of them admitted without any hesitation that he was qualified to perform the same. Then the priests conducted for the king, the Rajasuya sacrifice according to the scriptural ordinance. On day was fixed for extracting some juice the king honoured the supervisors of the performance due to attention.²⁶⁸

Then the members of the assembly proceeded to consider the person worthy of receiving the first place of honour. Then they all selected Lord Krsna. Yudhisthira was delighted and honoured Sri. Krsna by offering him the worship. Seeing this, Sisupala rose from his seat, holding up his arm and spoke the harsh words that Krsna is not worthy of that honour. He uttered very harsh words with reference to Sri. Krsna. All the audience closed their ears. Then Pandavas Matsyas, Kaikayas, stood up and in rage with uplifted weapons. Then Lord Krsna stood up and pacified others who sided with him, exhibiting some anger, cut off with his sharp edged discus the head of Sisupala. Sisupala fell down and dead. The light emanating from Sisupala's body entered Sri. Krsna and merged into him.²⁶⁹

268 मेनिरे कृष्णभक्तस्यसूपपन्नमविस्मिताः ।
 आयाजयन महाराजं याजका देववर्चसः ।
 राजसूयेन विधिवत् प्राचेतसमिवामराः । ।
 Ibid X.74.16 P.1395

269 चैद्यदेहोत्थितं ज्योतिर्वासुदेवमुपाविशत् ।
 पश्यतां सर्वभूतानाम्मुल्लेखं भुविख्याद्युता । ।
 Ibid X.74.45 P.1398

10. *Sri. Krsna's Reception of Sudama*

There was a certain Brahmana who was a great friend of Sri. Krsna. He possessed true knowledge of Brahman and was free from attachment to the objects of the senses. He was always ill-clad and his wife too had no sufficient clothing to cover her body. The wife became very feeble on account of starvation. One day she approached her husband and said to him : "Sri Krsna the spouse of the Goddess of wealth, is your friend. You please approach him. When he comes to know that you are a house-holder and you are suffering from want of wealth, he will bestow abundant wealth on you. Thus frequently and gently entreated by the wife, the Brahmana at last agreed to the proposal, for he thought that it would give him an opportunity of seeing Sri. Krsna. He decided to go, and asked his wife for something to be taken as a present. The wife of the Brahmana begged of her neighbours and secured four handfuls of parched and beaten rice, and gave it to husband for presentation to Lord Krsna.²⁷⁰

Then Brahmana went on his journey to Dwaraka. The Brahmana together with other Brahmanas passed through three camps, the protective walls, and then reached the mansions

270 सएवं भार्यया विप्रोबहुशः प्रार्थितो मृदु ।
 अपं हि परमो लाभ उत्तमश्लोकदर्शनम् । ।
 इति संचिन्त्य मनसा गमनाय मतिं दधे ।
 अथस्तुपायनं किंचिद् गृहे कल्याणि दीयताम् । ।

Ibid X.80 19.13 P.1419

occupied by the Andhaka and Vrsni, who followed the righteous ways of the devotees of God, very difficult of access to ordinary people. There, was situated the palace of Sri. Krsna containing the dwellings of his sixteen thousand and old consorts. In one of them, the Brahmana entered with feeling of one who found himself merged in the bliss of God realization. Sri. Krsna seated on a couch with his consort Rukmini.¹ Seeing the Brahmana from a distance, He suddenly rose from His seat, advancing towards him folded him in both of his arms. he made His friend sit on his own seat and bringing all the articles necessary for worship. Washed the Brahmana's feet. He smeared the Brahmana's body with perfume, with the paste of sandal. He joyfully worshipped his friend.²⁷¹

Sri. Krsna and Brahmana recounted the sweet incidents of their boyhood, when they lived together in the house of their teacher. They passed few days happily.²⁷²

A perusal of the tenth skanda of the Bhagavata Purana thus emphatically declares that Lord Krsna is the very incarnation of

271 तं विलोक्याच्युतो दुरात् प्रियापर्यङ्कमास्थितः ।
सहसोऽत्थाय चाभ्येत्य दोभ्यां पर्यग्रहीन्मुदा । ।

Ibid X.80 17.18 P.1419

272 अग्रहीच्छिरसा राजन् भगवांल्लोकपावनः ।
व्यलिम्पद दिव्यगन्धेन चन्दनागुरुकुङ्कुमैः । ।

Ibid X. 80.21.22 P.1419

कथयांचक्रतुर्गाथाः पूर्वा गुरुकुले सतोः ।
आत्मानो ललिता राजन् करौ गृह्य परसप्रम् । ।

Ibid X.80.21 P.1420

Lord Visnu and his responsibility to protect the universe from the cruel hands of unrighteousness. Before entering into the womb of Devaki, Lord Visnu made it clear by exhibiting his supra natural form before Vasudeva and Devaki. Of course inspite of their knoweldge, both Vasudeva and Devaki being overpowred by Lord Visnu's Maya, they considered their child, Lord incarnate to be a human form. No doubt, Vasudeva had undergone the experience many a time that his child was not an ordinary one. As such he was taking, in accordnace with the incorporeal voice, his child out of the prison of Kamsa. He was released from the fetters, and all the doors were opened. So also over-flowing Yamuna gave him a way to Gokula when Vasudeva was to cross the river, during midnight. In his childhood itself Lord Krsna destroyed Vatsasura, Bakasura, Atshasura, Dhenukasura, Pralambhasura, etc. Again in his boyhood itself, Lord Krsna silenced the pride and haughtiness of Kaliya, he reseued his inhabitance of Vraja from the wild fire. His lifting up the Govardhana mountain, His rasa play with the Gopis etc. speak of the supreme glory of Krsna and his identification with Lord Visnu. In this connection Akrura's visualising the glorious and multitude forms of Lord Krsna underneath the river water, is a direct witness to establish the supremacy of Lord Krsna. So too the dialogue between Uddhava and Gopis, king Muchukunda's glorification of Krsna are the other instances exemplifying over-all superiority of Krsna.

As an ideal personality before the world of mundane existence,

Lord Krsna has given many important significant and beneficent lessons to the mankind. In this context one should bring to ones mind that whenever, a person unexpectedly becomes a puppet within the hands of a scandal, he has to make efforts to get himself cleansed from such scandals and should show his sense of integrity to the society around. That is why Krsna though being the Lord incarnate, showed to the society that the Symantaka jewel was not stolen by him, rather he could do good to the upliftment of the society. Lord Krsna's killing Puundraka, Dwivida Jarasandha, Sisupala, Dantavakra, etc. give a lesson that a person considering himself very great though crooked, would see the end of their lives in a pathetic way.

In this way the Bhagavta Portion on the incarnation of Lord Krsna and his glorious deeds becomes a prominent religio-philosophical thesis to the Vaisnava culture.

There are some chapters in the Padma Purana, Brahmavaivarta Purana and the Devibhagavata Purana that proclaim Krsna's supremacy. In other words they found the theme that Krsna is the supreme, superior to all except Visnu. For the sake of convenience the theme may be termed as Krsna cult.

Sri. Krsna is the Prime Person, ever embraced by Sri. Radha,

who is the cause of this entire creation including Brahma, Visnu and Siva^{274a}. The heavenly couple resides in Vrndavana, Sorrounded by myraids of Gopis.^{274b} Unlike Visnu, Krsna has two arms.²⁷⁵ His form is not material, for it is not made of flesh, marrow or bones. No one is equal to Krsna similary no woman is equal to Radha. Both are the first principles of cosmos, the Purusa and Prkriti. Krsna never leaves Vrindavana. The Upanisdic Brhamana is the lustre of the nails of the Lords feet. He is adorned by deities including Brahma. He trancends in the thence qualities of matter. He is called Nirguna, becuase he has no material qualities. Similary he is termed Nirakara, for we can not see his divine form with our material eyes. The Lord has produced it with his own will. It is said to be higher even than Vaikuntha. Once the deities approached Krsna to inform him of their calamity and to request him to help them. They deft for Gokula. First they reached Virja. They saw a mountain beyond which was Vrindavana. They went to Gokula

274 a) ब्रम्ह-विष्णु-शिवादीनां देहकारणकारणम् ।
 चराचरं जगत्सर्वं यन्मायापरिरम्भितम् । ।
 वृन्दावनेश्वरी नाम्ना राधा छात्राणुकारणम् ।
 तामालिङ्ग्य वसन्तं तंमुदा वृन्दावनेश्वरम् । ।

Padma Purana 4.77.16-17

b) मदंश्याश्च त्रयो देवा ब्रम्हविष्णुमहेश्वराः ।

Brhamavaivarta Purana 4.6.157

275 भुजद्वययुतः कृष्णो नकदाचिच्चतुर्भुजः ।

Padmapurana IV.77.46

which was round in shapes and crore of Yojanas in dimension. Then they saw the external banyan tree. There is no other loka higher than Goloka in the space, and Patala is the nethermost habitable place.²⁷⁶

Once it so happened that Sri. Krsna fell in love with Viraja, a Gopi of superb excellence in Goloka. Radha's associates came to know this, and they informed her. Radha was very much upset, then Lord Krsna came to her; she cursed the Lord to assume a human form in Bharata, since he had beloved like a man in Goloka.²⁷⁷ At this Sri.Krsna repaired to another place, But his friend Sudama could not bear the harsh words inflicted by Radha on Krsna. He therefore readily criticized her attitude towards Krsna.³ This further irritated Radha who pronounced a curse on Sri.Sudama also. Radha said, you are blaming me, as do the demons blame the deities. quite this, Goloka therefore, and get into a demon's body. Sudama too, did not spare Radha. He retaliated, since you have given vent to your wrath in a human way, you will

276 ब्रह्माण्डादि ब्रह्मरुर्ध्वं च नास्ति लोकस्तदुर्ध्वगः ।
 ऊर्ध्वं शून्यमयं सर्वं तदन्ता सृष्टिरेव च ।
 रसातलेभ्यः सप्तभ्यो नास्त्यधः सृष्टिरेव च ।
 तदधश्च जलं ध्वान्तमगन्तव्यमदुश्यकम् ॥

Padma Purana IV.4.191.192

277 शशवत्ते मानुषस्येव व्यवहराश्च लम्पट
 लभतां मानुषीं योनिं गोलोकाद् ब्रज भारतम् ।

Brahamavaivarta Purana IX. 3.61

become a woman. People will call you the wife of Ravana, a Vaisya, in Vrindavana you will remain separated from Krsna for a century of years. this was the circumstance narrated in the Brahma Vaivarta Purana which made it obligatory on both Radha and Krsna to descend upon this earth. Radha came down in response to Sudhama's curse and Krsna did so under Radha's words.

These curses already been pronounced before the duties approached Lord Krsna to request him to descend upon the earth to redeem it from the atrocities perpetrated by the demons. The Lord acceded to the duties request and planned a programme for his sojourn on the earth. the Lord asked the cowherds and cowherdresses to proceed to Vraja of nanda, and thereafter he wished Radha also to go to the residence of Vrasabhanu to be born as a daughter of his wife Kalavati.

It is read in the ninth book of the Devibhagavata also, that Lord Krsna is the prime cause of all that exists.²⁷⁸ Krsna is lovely to look at in his eternal youth.²⁷⁹ He divided his form into two parts. The right side male, and the left a female. The couple got engaged in a Rasa dance. After prolonged sport, the goddess gave birth to a golden child. The mother cast the child in the cosmic water which was unfathomable. from the tip of the tongue of that goddess

278 स्वेच्छामयं सर्वरूपं सर्वकारणकारणम् ।

Devibhagavata Purana IX.2.16

279 किशोरवयसं शन्तं सर्वकान्तं परात्परम् ।

Ibid IX. 2.17

emerged Saraswati. Thereafter Radhika emerged from the right side of the goddess; and Kamaeta from left side. At this Krsna too, divided himself into two. His right side remained as Krsna with two arms, but from his left side emerged Visnu of four arms. Krsna kept Radha as his spouse, and gave Lakshmi and Saraswati to Visnu. Then appeared Durga and after that there came Brahma who had emerged from Visnu's navel. His right side remained as Krsna, but the left turned into Siva. The golden child mentioned above, got the name of Mahavirata consisting of innumerable cosmic units. Each unit maintained, created, preserved, and sublated by a pael of a Virat Purusa, Brahma, Visnu and Siva. In this account Krsna seems to be Brahman and Radha the eternal Prakriti.

There is another story in the seventy-fifth chapter of the Padma Purana according to which, even Narada had to become a domsel experienced the divine glory. Narada wanted to experience of the beauty of Vrandavana. He requested his father Brhama to fulfil his desire. Brahma took Narada to Visnu, and asked him to accede to the devotees' request. At this, Visnu told Brhama to let Narada have a dip in a pool called Amrta. Narada did as he was required to do with the result that he was immediately transformed into woman.²⁸⁰ Narada then saw many ladies accosting her as to

280 तत्रामृत सरश्चाहं प्रविश्य स्नानमाचरम् । तत्क्षणात्तत्सरः पारे योषितां सविधेऽभवम् । ।
सर्व लक्षण सम्पन्ना योषिदु पातिविस्मित । मां दृष्ट्वा ताः समायान्तीमपृच्छैश्च मुहुर्मुहुः । ।

Padma Purana IV.75.31.32

who she was. Narada expressed her inability to introduce herself. Then Radhadevi imparted to Narada a fourteen-syllable Mantra of Lord Krsna and Narada at once found herself equal in beauty and grace, to other ladies of the locality.² She then accompanied them to Sri.Krsna who was existence consciousness and Bliss surrounded by women.³ The Lord offered Narada an affectionate embraces and Narada enjoyed the Divine communion for a year.⁴

Thereafter Lord said to Radha, This was my Prakriti in the form of Narada. Let her now have another dip in the Ananta pool. At this, Radha initiated Narada into the esoteric doctrine of oneness of Lalita and Krsna¹, and thereafter her to bathe in the pool. Narada did so, and assume her previous masculine form of Narada.

Lord Siva also said to have assumed the form of a Gopi in order to be allowed to participate in the Rasa dance at Vrandavana.

The philosophic impart of these description lies probably in the fact that all finite selves are so many phases of the Divine Prakriti. The Gita teaches that individual souls are the Lord's Para Prakriti, His apara Prakriti being the five elements mind, ego, and intellect. It is therefore figuratively said that Lord Krsna alone is the Purusa, and all other beings including Brahma are women. The pools of the above stories seem to be representative of devotional doctrines which teach that all finite soul depend for eternal bliss upon the Lord. Narada's divine, communion for a year

represents Narada's prolonged meditation on devotional lines.

The Puranas have identified Krsna with Visnu and Narayana while explaining the term Narayana. The Purana says, "The water are called Nara, because they were the offspring of Nara (The supreme spirit); and as in them is first (Ayana) progress (in the character of Brahma), took place, he is thence named Narayana (he whose place of moving was the water) (V.P.I.4.6). Manu also supports the same view. Bhandarkar opines that idea of Narayana was developed in the period of the Brahmanas and Aranyakas. (Collected works of Bhandarkar Vol.IV pp.43) In the Mahabharata and Puranas, Narayana figures as the supreme god, especially in connection with the creation. He is represented as lying on the body of a huge serpent in the ocean of milk. Narayana, thus became an object of worship. Bhandarkar opines, "Narayana being thus evolved as the supreme being in the later Brahmanic period, was of course prior to Vasudeva was identified with Narayana." (P-45). The Mahabharata also recognises the identification of Narayana with Vasudeva. The whole Narayaniya section seems to prove the identity between the gods.

The Purana also identifies Krsna with Visnu, Krsna is always represented with four arms holding Sankha, Chakra Gada, (V.P.V.3.10.18.39-41) etc. He used the Sudarsana Chakra in the battle against Indra (Ibid : V.30.67-69). Garuda the vehicle of Visnu, as also used by Krsna is represented as the supreme

personality. (Ibid V.18.48-51). He is cause of 'creation', continuance and dissolution (Ibid V.30.78-79). the Purana uses several epithets of supreme god for Krsna (Ibid V.39.75.76.17.9). The reason for the identification of Krsna with Visnu appears to be obvious. It is known that Visnu is a Vedic deity and his personality was by no means unimportant in the Vedic age. (RV I.155.5.22.20.154.5). Visnu began to rise in importance in the time of the Brahmnas (Ait Bra.I.I Sat Br.XIV 1.1) During the Epic and Puranic period, he rose to the position of the supreme god.

The cult of Krsna was gaining popularity in the age of Puranas. The Purana emphatically lays emphasis on the worship of Krsna. It says that the reward which a man obtains in the Krta age by abstract meditation, in the Treta by Sacrifice, in the Dvapara by adoration, he receives, in the Dvapara by adoration, he receives in the Kali age, by merely reciting the name of Kesava (V. P.VI.2.17) i.e. Krsna. Already it is told that all gods worshipped Krsna with flowers culled from the groves of Nandana (Ibid.V.7.66). Prahlada due to the recollection of Krsna, could bear the dash given by elephants (Ibid.I.17.47).

Krsna is the eighth and the full incarnation of Visnu. While Visnu incarnated himself as Rama to exhibit human perfections, he came as Krsna to demonstrate the divine perfection. The Krsna Avatara was intended to reveal to the world the external glory and greatness of God. Lord Krsna, the most celebrated hero of the

Indian mythology and a very popular deity of the Hindu pantheon says in the Bhagavad Gita "whenever there is a decline of righteousness and a rise of unrighteousness, I incarnate myself for the protection of the pious, for the destruction of those given to wicked ways, and for establishing righteousness firmly, I am born from age to age. In the same holy scripture, he declares; All the universe has been created by me; all the things exist in me". He is Lila Purushottama, God playing the divine sport of his transcendent and supramental magnificence glory and perfection in the world of mortals :

The Bhagavata Sandharbha on Sri. Krsna

According to the Gaudiya Vaisnavism, Bhagavan ever reveals in bliss which is His antaranga or svarupa sakti. When he associates Himself with bahiranga sakti, He is the cause of the origination, sustentation and dissolution of the universe.

Bhagavan in His pristine glory is Sri. Krsna. He in association with His creative energy (Prakrti) is termed Paramatma. Paramatma is thus a partial manifestation of Bhagavan. Brahman is Krsna's physical lustre.² The relation between the three is 'one of gradation in the hierarchy of manifestations of one and the same Ultimate Reality'.³

Again, Paramatma, the immanent regulator, is called Maha

Visnu, Garbhoda-sayi and Ksira-sayi when viewed respectively from the stand-points of immense in (a) phenomenal totality, (b) totality of individual souls and (c) an individual soul.

Jiva Gosvami has based himself on the Bhagavata 1:2:281 for his theme that Sri. krsna was Bhagavata Himself, whereas other forms such as Rama and Buddha are his partial manifestations only. He has categorically stated that out of the twenty-two divine incarnations mentioned in the Bhagavata, the twentieth, namely, Krsna, is AVATARI, the others being avataras. There is a difference between avatari and avatara. The former (avatari) is the main source of the latter (avatara).

To be more accurate, Jiva has made distinction between Bhagavan and Purusa. Bhagavan is Krsna who assumes the form of Purusa in the beginning of the creation. Purusa reposes on the causal water, and Brahma springs from Purusa's avataras,⁵ except Krsna, who is avatari, on the view of Jiva Gosvami. As to the view that Krsna is enumerated as one among the various avataras, Jiva replies that Krsna, the Supreme, sometimes appears as an avatara with a view to felicitating His own people. Krsna is thus Bhagavan; and Purusa, the source of all other avataras, is Paramatma or the Indwelling Soul. Paramatma is lower than Bhagavan (Krsna) according to Jiva. Jiva is conscious of the fact that there is only one statement, viz., Krsnastu bhagavan svayam, which can be construed to prove Krsna's supremacy over Purusa or Paramatma,

whereas there is a number of statements which prove that Krsna was but an avatara or partial manifestation of Paramatma. In that case the supremacy of Krsna would be of secondary importance only. But Jiva questions : Does that number of statements belong to the Bhagavata or to some other authority? If it belongs to the Bhagavata, then it is unambiguously propounded there, Jiva argues, that Krsna is Bhagavan, and therefore, that one statement alone must be held to be decisive even in the presence of a myraid of statements proclaiming Krsna to be an avatara.²⁸¹ That one statement is not of secondary importance. As a matter of fact, Jiva says, all other statements should be construed in the light of that one. And he has thereafter, tried that method in the following wise:

(1) There is a statement, tatramsenayatirnasya, which shows that God partially (amsena) manifested Himself in the form of Krsna. But Jiva does not explain the word amsena as partially. He says the word amsa here stands for Bala-deva, and therefore, the phrase means, according to Jiva, that the Lord (Krsna) descended along with Bala-deva.

(2) Kalabhyam nitaram hareh means that both Krsna and Bala-deva were Hari's parts. But Jiva dis-joins the word into kala and abhayam, and interprets the phrase to mean that Hari's earth

281 आद्ये अवतार वाक्येषु अन्यान् पुरुषांशत्वेन जनीयात् ।
 कृष्णस्तु स्वयं भगवत्त्वेनेति प्रतिज्ञाकारेण ग्रन्थार्थनिर्णायकत्वात् ।
 ततश्च वाक्यानां कोटिरपि एकेनैव अमुना शासनीया भवेदिति नास्य गुणवादत्वम् ।

was adorned by them both, viz., Krsna and Baladeva.

(3) We read in the Bhagavata (10:2:41) that the deities thus addressed Devaki. "Fortunately, O Mother, the Almighty Lord, the Supreme Person, has Himself partially entered your womb for our welfare."

Jiva interprets it in another way. According to him, it means : Fortunately, O Mother, the Almighty Lord, the Supreme Person, who on previous occasions partially manifested in the form of the Fish and so on for our welfare, has now Himself entered your womb.

(4) The Bhagavata (10:2:18) reads thus, Thereafter, just as the eastern quarter bears the moon, similarly, Devaki bore in her mind the part (amsa) of Acyuta (Visnu) who is the benefactor of the creation, the all-pervasive and the Self, communicated to her by Vasudeva."

Jiva interprets the word acyutamasa not as a part of Acyuta (Visnu) but as one whose part is in Acyuta (Visnu).

(5) The word amsena implies, These two (Krsna and Bala-deva) are partial manifestations of Hari Narayana and have descended in Vasudeva's home.

Jiva interprets amesena of this verse as sarvamesena that is to say, in completeness.

(6) Likewise, the word amsau implies. These two parts of

Bhagavan Hari, namely, Krsna belonging to Yadu dynasty and Krsna (Arjuna) belonging to the Kuru dynasty have come here to remove the affliction of the earth.

Jiva Goswami interprets the verse in the following peculiar manner :

Two parts of Hari, the source of all avataras, which are known as Narayana, have entered Krsna and Arjuna.

(7) Brahma extols Krsna as Naryana in the Bhagavata. Krsna, are you not actually Narayana, since you are the soul of all embodied beings, the witness of all creatures?

Jiva remarks here that Krsna is equated with Narayana not for the reason that Narayana had descended as Krsna, but for another reason, and that is to show that Narayana and Krsna are equal in prowess.

(8) According to the Bhagavata, Garga said to Nanda. Your son is a compeer of Narayana.

Jiva Gosvami interprets it differently. According to him, Garga means to say that Narayana is a compeer of your son.

(9) Having crossed even the Lokaloka mountain, Sri Krsna once escorted Arjuna to Bhuma Purusa (Visnu) to bring back the children of a brahmana of Dvaraka. Both Krsna and Arjuna bowed to Bhuma. Desirous of seeing you both, I had the sons of the

brahmana brought here. You have both partially manifested yourself on the earth to protect virtue. Having killed the demons who have become a burden to the earth, soon come to me.

Jiva Gosvami's interpretation of the verse is different. According to him, it means thus : I wanted to see you both. The children of the brahmana were, therefore, brought by me to this locus of mine. O Krsna and Arjuna, who have descended along with your parts (Kala) or who have descended on this material plane (Kala), kill the demons and also hasten the rest of them to come to me.

Jiva terms this visit of Krsna to Bhuma as the story of Mahakala-pura. He holds that Krsna Himself assumed the form of Mahakala (Bhuma) to steal away the Brahmana's children and that when He reached Mahakala, along with Arjuna, he bowed to His own form, just as He had done in the Govardhana-lila. He refers to Sri Krsna's assuming another Govardhana-lila. He refers to Sri Krsna's assuming another form at Govardhana to partake of the dishes which the cowherd community of Vrndavana had prepared for Indra but later, at Krsna's instance, offered to the mountain.

These nine points mentioned above are sufficient to indicate how Jiva construed the statements of the Bhagavata where Krsna is held to be a partial manifestation of Visnu to suit his own theme of the supremacy of Krsna.

Jiva has also pointed out some statements found in authoritative books other than the Bhagavata telling us that Krsna was a partial manifestation of Visnu, but he has at the same time interpreted them, too, in a different way; and has, thus, tried to justify Krsna's supremacy.

He frankly admits that there are statements in other Puranas which go against the theory of the supremacy of Krsna, but then he urges that all of them must be explained in the light of KRSNAS TU BHAGAVAN SVAYAM. An instance of this is as follows.

We read in the Visnu-Purana that on hearing the deities lamentation caused by the mis-behaviour of demons such as Kamsa, Visnu tore out two of Himself. One of them was black and the other was grey.²⁸² The Lord then told the deities that those two hair would descend on the earth in the form of Krsna and Balarama, and would lighten the burden of the earth.

A similar statement is found in the Mahabharata. The grey hair approached Rohini to become Balabhadra, and the black one proceeded to Devaki to appear as Krsna.

282 एवं संस्तूयमानस्तु भगवान् परमेश्वरः
 उज्जहारात्मनः केशे सित-कृष्णौ महामुने ।
 उवाच च सुरानेतौ णक्तेशौ वसुधातले ।
 अवतीर्य भुवो भार-क्लेश-हानिं करिष्यतः ।
 वसुदेवस्य या पत्नी देवकी देवतोपमा ।
 तत्रायमष्टमी गर्भो मत्केशो भविता सुराः ।

Commenting on these statements, Jiva points out that :

(1) The greyness of the hair of the Lord is simply to increase the personal charm, for it cannot transpire on account of age.

(2) The hair in the present context are not to be taken in a literal sense, but in a figurative one. The Lord wanted to suggest to the grieving deities that even His hair could do what they demanded. To remove the burden of oppression from the earth was not at all a difficult task for Him. Again, a reference to black and white hair was to denote that the Lord would assume two shapes - one of fair colour, and the other of swarthy complexion in the form of Krsna.

IX. the Concept of Buddha Avatara

Buddha is universally believed to be an incarnate personality. Historically he is known as the founder of the school of Buddhism. But a question remains unanswered whether historical Buddha is the same as incarnate of Lord Visnu which is declared in the puranic texts. From the historic investigations it is very clear that Gautama Buddha was born in 560 B.C. in Kapilavastu near the Himalayas. His father was Suddhodana. He was born in the family of the Sakyas. The real name of Buddha was Siddhartha. Suddodana brought up his son in such a way that he should not be subjected to any sort of mental pain or worry. So he kept Buddha

aloof from the outer world. Thus, he spent his childhood in comfort and pleasure. Once by chance he happened to see a sick, an old man and a dead body. The sight made him thoughtful. He began to think upon a way to remove sorrow and pain from the world and bring about peace and comfort.

The change that appeared in the son worried the father. So at the age of sixteen he made Siddhartha married with Yasodhara. A son was born to them. But the mind of Siddhartha was restless, distressed and agitated. One day, Siddhartha discarded everything and went out of the palace alone.

Siddhartha wandered from place to place learning from various teachers. But he did not find peace. Once on a full moon day, while he was sitting in meditation under a banian tree he got Bodha. From that day onwards, he began to know by the name of Buddha. After that he came to Kasi, and told his disciples how he got Bodha or conviction. The number of his followers increased day by day. Thus Buddhism came into being. Buddha said that the reason for pain and sorrow in the world was desire, and that sorrow could be exterminated only by controlling and overcoming all desire. To attain Eternal Bliss, one should be true and righteous in thought, deed and word, and that not killing was the foundation of righteousness. Buddhism spread everywhere in Bharata. Gautama Buddha died at the age of eighty.

The orthodox Hindu, while believes fully in Buddha being an

Avatara, gives a reason for not worshipping him as such, which could only have suggested itself to an acute, but unscrupulous theological brain. Because the lower castes, the Rakshasas and others who had no right to Vedic sacrifices, were beginning to take to them, and were thus enabled to occupy the seats specially reserved for the orthodox Hindu in Heaven, instead of going to Hell, their proper place therefore god, taking compassion on his elect, come down to devise some method which would effectually prevent these low born people from getting the seats of the favoured. He did so by denouncing the Vedic ritual and add that it stood for, and they turned the attention of these (aspirations) aspirants for heavenly joys into the ignoble channels of sacrificelessness, castelessness and freedom from ritual restraints of every mind. Modern India is steadily learning to suppress this blasphemous ornament, but with its suppression, the theory of Buddha being an incarnation of God tends also to be quit quietly thrust into the background.

Theological prejudice should not blind us to this fact of far reaching importance in the future life of Hinduism. This disinherited child must receive back its heritage and the dishonest trustees must be compelled to make full amends for their past conduct.

When the Mahabharata was smashed up the Kshatriya-power, it also paralysed their restraining hand on Brahmanic

pretensions. The Brahmanas found that, while it was more possible to revive the Vedic cult, it was quite feasible to re-establish their waning power, infact to make their supremacy as a hieratic caste secure once for all. The caste system became rigid, learning became the monopoly of the hereditary caste of priets. The Brahmana, the custodian of learning by diligent teaching and preaching, divided and subdivided the various ethical groups with whom he had dealings, into endless closed castes all looking upto him. Buddhism was a protest against the harmful influence of this degmerate sacerdotalism. For the non-Brahmanas had slowly been gathering force and were becoming self conscious and relief reliant and indisposed to put up any further with the overwhelming spiritual pride extreme exclusiveness, and all around domination of the Brahmana. They had though intimate contact in the course of ages, seen through him and the hallownesss of his pretensions. The gathering force of a reformation found their spokesman in Buddha, as they had earlier found in Rishabhadeva, the first founder of Jainism. Buddha again denounced the flowery words of the Vedas which misled people from the path of righteousness, as his great predecessor, Krsna had done and preached the law of universal love and harmlessness Ahimsa.

The earlier and more traditional list of the ten incarnations of Lord Visnu, includes Buddha as the ninth, unlike the later and more sectarian list which has Balarama instead of Buddha. The understanding is that Balarama is only a partial Avatara

(amsavatara) and not a complete incarnation (Puranavatara).

Jayadeva's great poem Gita Govinda, which articulates the wide spread Vaisnava ideology in Bengal and also in the south, also includes Buddha as the ninth incarnation. But this is not instead of Balarama but along with him. Krsna as an Avatara is omitted here, but all the ten Avataras are ready of Krsna alone.²⁸³

And the Buddha that Jayadeva recognizes is the name as the historical Buddha and not the puranic personality. His description of the Buddha as the personification of compassion, as opposed to the animal sacrifices is significant.

The Buddha was absorbed in the more orthodox and conventional pantheon as an incarnation of Visnu. The Vaisnava description of this Buddha is at variance with the historical accounts. The Bhagavata Purana simply makes a reference to Lord

283 वेदनुबद्धरते (मीन) जगन्निवहते (कच्छप)
 भूगोलमुदविभ्रते (सूकर)
 दैत्यं दारयते (नरहरी) बलिं छलयते (वामन)
 क्षत्रक्षयं कुर्वते (बृगुपति)
 पौलस्त्यं जयते (राम) हलं कलयते (हलधर)
 कारुण्यमातन्वते (बुद्ध)
 म्लेच्छान्मूर्छयते (कल्कि) दशकृतिकृते
 कृष्णाय तुभ्यं नमः । ।
 निन्तसि यज्ञविधेरहं श्रुतिजातम्
 सदयं हृदयं दर्शितपशुघातम्
 केशवधृतं बुद्धशरीरं जयं जगदीशहरे । ।

Visnu's manifestation as Buddha. IT is stated that when kali sets in Buddha will be born in Kikata (Magadha) as the son of Ajana with a view to deluding the enemies of gods.²⁸⁴

Moreover according the historical elements with regard to the myth of Buddha, the Agni Purana provides very little information in connection with the manifestation of Visnu as Buddha. Therein it is stated that once in the battle between gods and demons, gods were defeated by the demons, sons of Diti. They sought refuge in the lord saying, "protect us". The Lord Visnu who is of the form of illusory delusion became the son of Suddhodana. He deluded those demons. those who had abandoned the path laid down in the Vedas, became the Buddha's, and from them, others abandoned the Vedas. He then became the Arhat (Jaina). He then made others as Arhats. Thus the heretics came into being devoid of Vedic dharmas (Agni Purana 16.1-4).

The Visnu Purana through the dialogue between Vasistha and Bhishma expresses an account of Lord Visnu's manifestatioin as Buddha. The whole of the text explaining the atmosphere at the time of the incarnation of Buddha, is given which commences from the description of the battle between the gods and demons as below:

284 ततः कलौ सम्प्रवृत्ते सम्मोहाय सुरद्विषाम् ।
बुद्धो नाम्नाजनसुतः कीकटेषु भविष्यति । ।

C.J.Goswami, Srimad Bhagavata Maha Purana, Motlal Jalan Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 1971. I.3.24. P.9

There was formerly a battle between the gods and demons, for the period of a divine year, in which the gods were defeated by the demons under the command of hrada. The discomfited deities fled to the northern shore of the milk ocean, where engaging in religious penance they thus prayed to Visnu²⁸⁵. "May the first of beings, the divine Visnu, He pleased with the words that we are about to address to him, in order to propitiate the lord of all worlds; from which mighty cause, all created things have originated, and into whom they shall again dissolve! Who is able to declare this praise? We, who have been put to shame by the triumph of our foes, will glorify your true power and might be not within the reach of words. You are earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, crude matter, and primeval soul : All this elementary creation, with or without visible form is thy body; all, from Brahma to a stock, diversified by place and time.

Glory to who are one with the serpent race, double tongued, impetuous, cruel, insatiate of enjoyment, and abounding with wealth. Glory to who are one with the Rshis, whose nature is free from sin or defect, and is identified with wisdom and tranquility. Glory to you oh lotus-eyed, who are one with time, the form that

285 देवासुरमभूद युद्धं दिव्यमदं पुरा द्विज ।
तस्मिन् पराजिता देवा दैत्यैर्हृदिपुरोगमैः । ।
क्षीरोदस्योत्तर कूलं गत्वातप्यन्त वै तपः ।
विष्णोराराधनार्थाय जगुश्चेमं स्तवं तदा । ।

W.H.Wilson, The Visnu Purana, Nag publishers, Delhi, 1980 III. 17. 9-10 P.483

devotees, without remorse, all created things at the termination of the Kalpa. Glory to you who are Rudra, the bring that dances with delight after he has swallowed up all things, the gods and the rest, without distinction. Glory to you Janardhana, who are man, the agent in developing the results of that activity which proceeds from the quality of fullness.²⁸⁶ Glory to you who are brute animals, universal spirit that tends to perversity, which proceeds from the quality of darkness, and is encumbered with the twenty-eight kinds of obstructions. Glory to you who are that chief spirit which is diversified in the vegetable world, and which, as the essence of sacrifice, is the instrument of accomplishing the perfection of the universe. glory to you who are every thing, and where primeval form is the objects of perception, and heaven and animals, and men, and gods. Glory to you who are every thing and whose primeval form is the objects of perception, and heaven and animals and men and gods. Glory to you who are the cause of causes.²⁸⁷

Upon the conclusion of their prayers, the gods beheld the sovereign deity Hari, armed with the conch, the discus, and the

286 सभ्यक्ष सर्वभूतानि देवादीन्यविशेषतः ।
 नृत्यत्यन्ते च यद्रूपं तस्मै रुद्रात्मने नमः । ।
 प्रवृत्त्या राजसो यच्च कर्मणां कारकात्मकम् ।
 जनार्दन । नमस्तस्मै त्वद्रूपाय नरात्मने । ।

Ibid III.17.26.27 P.485

287 यज्ञाङ्गभूतं यद्रूपं जगतः सिद्धिसाधनम् ।
 वृक्षादिदभेदि तस्मै मुख्यात्मनेनमः । ।

Ibid III.17.29 P.485

mace, riding on Garuda. Prostrating themselves before him, they addressed him, and said, "Have compassion upon us, O Lord, protect us, who have come to thee for succour from the Daityas. They have seized upon the three worlds, and appropriated the offerings which are our portion, taking care not to transgress the precepts of the Veda. Although we, as well as they, are parts of thee, of whom all beings consist, yet we behold the world impressed by the ignorance of unity, with the belief of its separate existence."²⁸⁸

When the mighty Visnu heard their request, he emitted from his body an illusory form, which he gave to the gods, and thus speak : "This deceptive vision shall wholly beguile the Daitays, so that, being led astray from the path of the Vedas, they may be put to death; for all gods, demons, or others, who shall be opposed to the authority of the Veda, shall perish by my might, whilst exercised for the preservation of the world. Go then, and tear not : let this delusive vision precede you; it shall this day be of great service into you, oh gods!.

After this, the great delusion, having proceeded to earth, beheld the Daityas engaged in ascetic penances upon the banks of

288 तमूचुः सकला देवाः प्रणिपातपुरःसरम् ।
 प्रसीद देव! दैत्येभ्यस्त्राहिति शरणार्थिनः ।
 त्रैलोक्यं यज्ञभागाश्च दैत्यैर्हृद पुरोगमैः ।
 हतं नो ब्राह्मणोऽप्याज्ञामुल्लङ्घ्य परमेश्वरः । ।
 यद्यप्यशेषभूतस्य वयं नेच तवांशकाः ।
 तथाप्यविध्याभेदेन भिन्नं पश्यामहे जगत् । ।

the Narmada river;¹ and approaching them in the semblance of a naked mendicant, with his head shaved, and carrying a bunch of a peacock's feathers, he thus addressed them in gentle accents : "Ho, lords of the Daitya race! where is it that you practise these acts of penance? is it with a view to recompense in this world, or in another?" "Sage", replied the Daityas, "we pursue these devotions to obtain a reward hereafter; why should you make such an inquiry?" "If you are desirous of final emancipation," answered the seeming ascetic, 'attend to my words for you are worthy of a revelation which is the door to ultimate felicity. The duties that I will teach you the secret path to liberation.²⁸⁹ there are none beyond or superior to them : by following them you shall obtain either heaven or exemption from future existence. The Daityas were seduced from their proper duties by the repeated lessons of their illusory preceptor, maintaining the equal truth of contradictory tenets; and they were called Arhats, from the phrase he had employed of "Ye are worthy (Arhatha) of this great doctrine;" that is, of the false doctrines which he persuaded them to embrace.

The foes of the gods being thus induced to apostatize from the religion of Vedas, by the delusive person sent by Visnu, became in their turn preachers of the same heresies, and perverted others; and these, again communicating their principles to others, by whom

289 तपस्याभिरतान सोऽथ मायामोहो महासुरान् ।
ददृशो गत्वा नर्मदातीर संश्रितान् । ।

Ibid III.18.1. P.487

they were still further dissenninated, the Vedas were in a short time deserted by most of the Daitya race. Then the same deluder, putting on garments of a red colour, assuming a benevolent aspect, and speaking in soft and agreeable tones, addressed others of the same family and said to them, "If, mighty demons, you cherish a deisre either for heaven or for final repose, desist from the inquitous massacre of animals (for sacrifice), and heat from me what you should do. Know that all that exists is composed of discrimative knowledge. Understand my words, for they have been uttered by the wise. This world subsists without support, and engaged in the pursuit of error, which it mistakes for knowledge, as well as vitiated by passion and the rest, revolves in the straits of existence." In this manner, exclaiming to them, "Know!" (Budhyadvam), and they replying, "It is known" (Budhyate), these Daityas were induced by the arch deceiver to deviate from their religious duties (and become Baudahas), by his repeated arguments and variously urged persuasions. When they had abandoned their own faith, they persuaded others to do the same, and the heresy spread, and many desetted the practices enjoined by the Vedas and the laws.

The delusions of the false teacher paused not with the conversion of the Daityas to the Jaina and Bauddda heresies, but with various erroneous tenets he prevailed upon others to apostatize, unittl the whole were led astray, and deserted the doctrines and observances inculcated by the three Vedas. Some

then spake evil of the sacred books; some blasphemed the gods; some treated sacrifices and other devotional ceremonies with scorn;²⁹⁰ To say that casting butter into flame is productive of reward, is mere childishness. If indra, after having obtained godhead by multiplied rites, is fed upon the wood used as fuel in holy fire, he is lower than a brute, which feeds at less upon leaves. If an animal slaughtered in religious worship is thereby raised to heaven, it should not be expedient for a man who institutes a sacrifice to kill his own father for a victim? If that which is eaten by one at a Sraddhas gives satisfaction to another, it must be unnecessary for one who resides at a distance to bring food for presentation in person". "First then, let it be determined what may be (rational) believed by mankind, and then, said their preceptor, "you will find that felicity may be expected from my instructions. By such as you are." By such and similar lessons the Daityas were perverted, so that not one of them admitted the authority of the Vedas.

When the Daityas had thus declined from the path of the holy writings, the deities took courage, and gather for battle. Hostilities

290 स्वल्पेनैव हिकालेन मायामोहेन तेऽसुराः ।
 मोहितास्तत्यजुः सर्वा त्रयीमार्गाश्रितां कथाम् । ।
 केचिद विनिन्दा वेदानां देवानामपरे द्विज ।
 यज्ञकर्मकलापस्य तथान्ये च द्विजन्मनाम् । ।
 नैतदयुक्तिसहं वाक्यं हिंसा धर्माय नेष्यते ।
 हविंष्यनलदग्धानि फलोयोत्यर्भकोदितम् । ।

Ibid III. 18.22.24 P.491

accordingly were renewed, but the demons were now defeated and slain by the gods, who had adhered to the righteous path. The armour of religion, which had formerly protected the Daityas, had been discarded by them, and upon its abandonment followed their destruction. They have thrown off the garment of the Vedas. According to the law there are four conditions or orders of men (of the three first castes), the religious student, the householder, the hermit, and the mendicant. There is no fifth state; and the unrighteous man who relinquishes the order of the householder, and does not become either an anchoress or a mendicant, is also a naked (seceder). The man who neglects his permanent observances for one day and night, being able to perform them, incurs thereby sin for one day; and should he omit them, not being in trouble, for a fortnight, he can be purified only by arduous expiation.²⁹¹ The virtuous must stop to gaze upon the sun after looking upon a person who has allowed a year to clapse without the observance of the perpetual ceremonies; and they must bathe with their clothes but for the individual himself no expiation has been declared. There is no sinner upon earth more capable than one in whose dwelling the gods, progenitors, and spirits, are left to sigh unworshipped. Let not a man associate, in residence, sitting, with him whose person

291 नित्या नां कर्मणां विप्र । तस्य हानिरहर्निशम् ।
 अकुर्वन् विहितं कर्म शक्तः पतति तद्दिने ।
 प्रायश्चित्तेन महता शुद्धिमाप्नोत्यनापदि ।
 पक्षं नित्यक्रियाहानेः कर्ता भैत्रेयामानवः ।

Ibid III.18 37-38 P.493

or whose house has been blasted by the sight of the gods, progenitors, and spirits. Conversation, interchange of civilities, or association with a man who for a twelve month has not discharged his religious duties, is productive of equality of guild, and the person who eats in the house of such a man, or sits down with him, or sleeps on the same couch with him, becomes like him instantaneously. Again he who takes his food without showing reverence to the gods, progenitors, spirits, and guests, commits sin. How great is his sin! The Brahmanas and men of the other castes, turn their faces away from who relinquish pious works.⁵ Remaining in a place where there is too great an intermixture of the four castes is determined to the character of the righteous. Men fall into hell who converse with one who takes his food without offering a portion to the gods, the sages, the manes, spirits, and guests. Let therefore a prudent person carefully avoid the conversation, or the contact, and the like, of those heretics who are rendered impure by their desertion of the three Vedas.

In connection with the message of Buddha whether be a Puranic or historical, it is remarked in the following words : "Buddha introduced no sweeping changes; all that he did was to make clear what was implicit in Sri Krsna's teachings. Even the caste system was not denounced by him, as is popularly but erroneously believed. It was factual mistake made by his late followers when, instead of following the master's example of raising his followers to the level of Brahmanas and thus gaining widespread support, they tried to suppress the system itself, and

were therefore hounded out of India, as soon as their kings lost their sovereignty. It was the teaching of Buddha and Jaina that, at a subsequent date, was put forward in a modified and new garb by Shankaracharya and it is for this reason that the Vedantis of the school of Shankara have been called "prachachnna", masked, "Bauddhas".

Out of all these numerous Avataras, only Rama and Krsna excite love and worship in these days throughout India. The others exist only in the sacred books except Buddha who is widely revered and worshipped in many parts of Asia, and has also a large following in Europe and America.

On the whole, as per the traditional view the purpose of Visnu's incarnation as Buddha was to delude the demons who were engaged in the performance of sacrifices. And when the demons were set upon the wrong path, the immortals made the supreme effort and prepared for battle. Then the battle between the gods and demons was resumed, and the gods slew the demons, who now stood in opposition to the right path. The armour of their dharma which had at first been theirs had formerly protected them, and when it was destroyed, they were destroyed.

As already noted down, this traditional view does not fit in that of the historical frame in all its respects. And here, such discrepant views with regard to Buddha incarnation are not taken here for critical exposition, for, it embraces different perspective of the literature of Indian myths.

X. The Concept of Kalki Incarnation

Kalki is the tenth incarnation of Lord Visnu on the earth to destroy unrighteousness and to uphold virtue and righteousness and vanquish the evil doers during the Kali age, when it is usual for vice and wickedness to flourish. The Bhagavata Purana gives a clue that towards the end of the Kali age when the kings mostly turn into robbers, the Lord of the universe take descent from a Brahmana named Visnuyasha as Lord Kalki.

The Agni Purana also informs in a similar manner that Kalki as the son of Visnuyasa's, Yanjavalkya as the priest would destroy the non Aryans, holding the astras and having a weapon. He would establish moral law in four fold Varnas in the suitable manner. The people would be in the path of righteousness in all the stages of life. Hari after discarding the form of Kalki, would go to heaven. Then would come the Krtayuga as before.

However, it is the only incarnation yet to take place in future at the end of Kali age. Kalkin himself has the form of an invader, he comes riding on a white horse, like the scythian and parthian invaders of India. But his purpose is to destroy the invadery, to rare the wicked cities of the plain which have been polluted by foreign kings, these same horseman as well as to exterminate all heretics, including the Buddhists that he had himself just produced in his penultimate incarnation.

The Visnu Purana in its sixth book explains in detail the influence of Kali on the earth (VI.1.1-58, 2.1-41) So also the Narasmiha Purana on the similar lines gives an account of the customs and the manners of the people in the Kali age.

When Lord Visnu would desert this world and would go to his highest abode, all righteousness, would appear; then would appear the most terrible Kali age conducive to all sinful activities. At the advent of this terrible Kali age all the four castes irrespective of for Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras averse to righteousness would have the least regard Brahmins and the divinities. Puffed up with self conceit the people morally degraded by pride and vanity would be jealous of one another and would resort to a hypocritical way of life. The people would make a show of their learning and would preach the false doctrines as the truth "I am the omnipotent", thus every one would be beating once own drum. People addicted to all sorts of sinful activities would take pleasure in vilifying others and in consequence in this Kali age they would not live to enjoy the full span of life. Naturally during the short span of their life they would not be able to acquire the knowledge and wisdom, and in absence of right knowledge unrighteousness would prevail again. There will be intermixing among different castes like Brahmins etc. These born from mixture of casts are prone to passion and anger; vain and conceited they are deluded and undergo all sorts of sufferings.

Gripped by enmity they will be intent upon killing one another, all the different castes averse to righteousness and without the least regard for truth and penance will conduct themselves like sudras, persons of high status will go down in the society and persons of low status will go up. King overtaken by greed will engage themselves in acquiring material prosperity; under the garb of righteousness they will indulge in all sorts of unrighteous deeds. In the Kali age, with unholy and unrighteous deeds predominating, anybody in the possession of horses, chariots and elephants will rule over the people. Parents will be at the command of their sons, likewise mother-in-law will be at the beck and call of their daughter-in-law, married women will desert their husbands and children and will clope with others. Male persons will be few in number. People will consider wealth to be the summum bonum of life, in some regions parjanya will pour down heavy rains and other regions will go dry. Roads, high ways will be infested with the thieves; and each one will parade his amnesia. There would be no one who would not proclaim himself to be a poet; drunkards would be giving discourses on Brahman and Brahmana Ksatriya and Vaisyas would be serving the Sudras.

With the advent of the Kali age, sense will look down upon their parents, disciples will dishonour their preceptors and wives will disregard their husbands. Overtaken by greed and avarice people will resort to sinful conduct; Brahmins will make a doily

habit of living upon others. Attached to other wives people will seek to garb others belongings, with the advent of the terrible Kali age. Out of jealousy and everyone will laugh at the persons sticking to piety and righteousness, Brahmins will dispise the vedas and will not care to abserve any of the Vratas. Just to make a show of their eruditioin and apulence, Brahmins will resort to the performances of Pirtrayajna and other daily sacrifices. No deserving person would ever be rewarded with a gift, if people would care for the cattle, that is only due to their self interest of getting milk and production.

For extracting riches attendants of king would not hesitate to put the Brahmins in chains and the Brahmins would gladly sell away the fruit of their gifts. And even from the candals they would not hesitate to accept the gifts. At the end of the Kali age nobody would even remember the name of Hari and the Brahmins will lead a vicious life they will cohabitare with Sudra women.

Having taken up the manners and customs of a forest hermit, the despicable Sudras would never conform to their duties. And would not care to serve the three hgiher castes.¹ With the advent of the Kali age Brahmins would take to the path of Sudras, averse to the study of the Vedas they would take delight in dance, music. They would falsely assume the characteristics of a devout and righteous person.² Each one would grorify himself and vilify the other. And people would have little faith either in gods or Brahmins

of the Vedas. People will revile the Vedas and the Brhmins ungreatful people will swerve from the duties of their own castes and will take to duties not in keeping with their particualr castes.

In the Kali age beginning and back biting will be a regular habit with the people. Always used to slander others, they will be vainly proclaiming their own glory and diginity. Always planning to steand the property of others people used to take food from others. Brahmins would adore the different divinities and engaged in vilifying others, they would sshare their food with people of other castes. When people would resort to this ilcentious way of life, there will be no difference between a prcepto and descipte, a fther and son, between husband and wife.

Brahmins will conduct themselves as Sudras and languish in hell. Mostly suffering from drought people will always be looking at the sky with anxiety. Always suffering from hunger and starvation people will lead a wretched life. Women would care little for the advice of their husbands or elders howsoever beneficial they may be with the Brahmins desisting from performing any sacrifice or offering any oblution, the wise and experince would naturally be aware of the intensity of the Kali age. When the piety and righteousness would go to the four winds, the universe would be bereft of beauty and splendour. These are the characteristics of Kali age, but the brahmins devoted to Lord Hari are never affected by it. In the krtayuga penance is the most efficacious; meditation

in Treta, sacrifice in Dvapara and in kaliyuga it is the practise of making gifts that counts.

In the Kali age, thus, the righteousness will be at the lowest web and unrighteousness will predominate, disease and pestilence will spread among the people, then the gods would go to the milk ocean and suplicate Lord Visnu with hymns of praise propitiated by prayer and invocations in the densely populated village of Sambhala. The Lord would take his birth as the king Kalkin, the son of Visnuyasas seated upon a horse, with a sword in his hand he would exterminate the Mlecchas.

Then after having exterminated all the mlecchas, the cause of destruction and depredation of the earth, Kalkin, the partial manifestation of the Supreme Lord would perform the sacrifice Bahukancana, after establishing righteousness. He would ascend to heaven.

With regard to this incarnation of Kalkin the following passage is noteworthy.

"The Kalki will be in a brahmana body, and his main work will be the bringing back of the Satyayuga, and the establishment of one caste, the Brahmana. For by the time he comes, all caste distinctions will have become wholly confused, and it will be his great work to merge them all into one class, to unify the Vedas, to purify Dharma and reestablish righteousness. This process of caste

confusion has been going on for ages, When Yudhisthira was questioned about it by Nahusha, his answer was clear and unequivocal. It was character that made caste and not birth, for men and women all castes indiscriminately consorted with each other and so the resulting births were very mixed indeed. If such was the state of affairs thousand years ago, it is for more so today. Every day the lower castes becoming higher and higher and even out castes being gradually merged into the Hindu fold, through the agency of the great converting schisms or branches, of Hinduism.

Just as read growth is always from within, and is not something superimposed from without, so real disruption also is from inside, other causes being mere accessories; the disintegrating process proceeds from the organism itself. So the real redemption of the Brhamana and with him of the Hindu, can come only through a Brhamana, and so Kalki will be Brahmana.

The reading between the lines of all these ten incarnations of Lord Visnu concludes that through his different incarnations Lord Visnu has shown that He is the main cause for preservation, substance and annihilation of the universe, which he creates; and he does this work for the betterment of the universe through the process of the two contending forces of evolution pulling against each other. Therefore one should learn to recognise that the incarnations are God incarnate only in the philosophic sense of

everything being in Him and from Him and Himself vritually. Each and every incarnation of Lord Visnu as described before is unique in itself. Different forms of Lord Visnu as fish, Tortoise, Man-lion, Boar etc. at the first instance may appear for a general reader as insignificant. But in assuming different forms in the respective incarnations, Lord Visnu has pinpointed purpose to serve.