



Sri Krishna Kathamrita

तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्

tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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THE APPEARANCE OF LORD NARASIMHA

His Divine Grace A. C.

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

This Narasimhadev feature was specifically adopted for Hiranyakashipu. The powerful Hiranyakashipu took a benediction from Lord Brahma that no god or demigod can kill him, no man can kill him, no animal can kill him, and so on. Indirectly he made a plan that nobody could kill him. First of all he wanted to become immortal, but Lord Brahma said, “I am not immortal, so how can I give you the benediction of becoming immortal? That is not possible.” *Rākṣasas*, demons, are very intelligent — but for sinful activities. That is the feature of the *rākṣasa*. So Hiranyakashipu planned, “Indirectly I shall take a benediction from Lord Brahma in such a way that I’ll be immortal.”

In order to keep Brahma’s promise, Narayan appeared as Narasimhadeva — half lion and half man. Even Lakshmi had previously not seen such a feature of the Lord. This Narayan, Krishna, is all-powerful. He can assume any form. Although Lakshmi is associated with Narayan, she had previously never seen such a wonderful feature of Narayan. So she was fearful. “Maybe he’s a different person!” Lakshmi is the most chaste wife, so how she can mix with a different person? Therefore she was doubtful. Although she is supposed to know everything, still, she was thinking, “He may not be my husband.” This is the ideal standard of chastity. (From a lecture in Mayapur, 12 February 1977.)

Lord Narasimha appeared for two purposes— to kill Hiranyakashipu and to give protection to Prahlad. Prahlad Maharaja said, “Actually your appearance, your incarnation, is meant for these devotees,



His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

these demigods.” Demigod means devotee. There are two classes of men in the world. One class is demigod. Who are demigods? Those who are *vaiṣṇavas*, they are demigods. Demigod does not mean something extraordinary. Anyone who is a *vaiṣṇava*, a devotee of the Supreme Lord, is a demigod. That is the statement of Vedic literature — *viṣṇu-bhakto bhaved daivaḥ*. *Daiva* means *devatā*, demigod. *Asuras tad-viparyayaḥ* — and those who are atheistic demons, they are just the opposite. They are never devotees. So there are two classes of men in this world. Sometimes the number of devotees is more or less, but in this material world

the proportion of the demigods, *vaiṣṇavas*, is never greater. They are always fewer. You cannot expect that the whole population of the world will become *vaiṣṇavas*. That is not possible. Mostly they are demons, atheistic. So Prahlad Maharaja first of all appealed to the Lord, “My dear Lord Narasimhadev, your appearance is for their protection. Now you have killed the demon, my father. Now your business is finished. Now you become pacified, satisfied, because you have no other cause for being angry.”

Narasimhadev was groaning in anger, and the demigods were afraid to approach him, so Prahlad Maharaja first appealed to him, “My dear Lord, there is no need of any more groaning. You become satisfied because your appearance is for the protection of these demigods. They are not disturbing to you.” In this way he began his prayers, in a very nice, simple, childlike way. There was no *vedānta* philosophy. Just the simple truth. (From a lecture in Hawaii, 24 March 1969.)

**LORD BRAHMA EXPLAINS THE
NARASIMHA MANTRA**
*From the Nṛsīṃha-pūrva-tāpanī
Upaniṣad, Section 2*

Once, all the demigods, feeling afraid of death, sins, and material existence, went to Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma then instructed them in the king of all *mantras* — the *Nārasīṃha-anuṣṭubha* mantra, by which they could conquer over all these fears. The mantra was:

*om̐
ugraṁ vīraṁ mahā-viṣṇuṁ
jvalantaṁ sarvato-mukham
nṛsīṃhaṁ bhīṣaṇaṁ bhadraṁ
mṛtyu-mṛtyuṁ namāmy aham*

“To the fierce (*ugram*) brave (*vīram*) Lord Mahaviṣṇu; to the all-illuminated one (*jvalantaṁ*); to he who is omnipresent (*sarvato-mukham*); to Lord Narasimha who is terrible in appearance (*bhīṣaṇam*), yet gentle (*bhadram*); to the death of death personified (*mṛtyu-mṛtyum*), I offer my obeisances.”

Therefore, one who is afraid of death, sins, or material existence should take shelter in this mantra. One who takes shelter in this mantra conquers these three.

This mantra begins with the *praṇava* (*om̐*, or *a-u-m̐*), in which the first syllable is ‘a’. This syllable has the earth as its presiding planetary system, the *R̥g-veda* as its presiding Veda, Lord Brahma as its presiding deity, the eight Vasus as its presiding associates, the Gayatri as its presiding metrical structure, and

the Garhapatya as its presiding fire. All these are contained within the first syllable ‘a’. This syllable represents the first quarter of the mantra.

The second syllable is ‘u’. Its presiding planetary system is space, its presiding deity is Lord Vishnu, its presiding associates are the eleven Rudras, its presiding Veda is the *Yajur-veda* along with all its verses, its presiding metrical structure is the *triṣṭup*, and its presiding fire is known as Dakshin. This syllable represents the second quarter of the mantra.

The third syllable is ‘m’, which has the heavenly planets as its presiding planetary system, the *Sāma-veda* as its presiding Veda, Lord Rudra as its presiding deity, the twelve Adityas as its presiding associates, the Jagati as its presiding metrical structure, and Ahavaniya as its presiding fire. This syllable represents the third quarter of the mantra.

The prolonged resounding ‘m̐’ which one hears at the end of the ‘*om̐*’ is the remaining half syllable, which has Soma as its presiding planet, the Supreme Brahman (Lord Krishna) as its presiding deity, the forty-nine Maruts as its presiding associates, the *Atharva-Veda* as its presiding Veda, the Virat as its presiding metrical structure, the Samvartaka as its presiding fire, and only one presiding sage — Brahma. This extremely effulgent final syllable is a representation of the supreme Brahman and is the fourth quarter of the great mantra described above.

The mantra described above has a total of 32 syllables, with eight syllables in every quarter. The meter is known as *anuṣṭup*. The creation as well as the destruction of this world happens through this meter. Thus the total number of limbs of this mantra are five (*om̐* is the first limb and each quarter of the mantra is one limb). These five can be placed on five human body parts as follows: The first limb (*om̐*) should be placed on the heart (by touching it with the right hand) and thereafter one should recite “*hṛdayāya namaḥ*”. Similarly, the second limb (the first quarter of the mantra) should be placed on the forehead and then one should recite “*śirase svāhā*”. The third limb (the second quarter of the mantra) should be placed on one’s tuft (*śikhā*) and thereafter one should recite “*śikhāyai vaṣaṭ*”; the fourth limb (the third quarter of the mantra) should be placed on the shoulders and one should then recite “*kavacāya hum*”. The final limb (the fourth quarter of the mantra) should be placed on one’s head and then one should recite “*astrāya phaṭ*”. In this way one should



Unknown artist

Lord Nrsimhadev killing the demon Hiranyakasipu

apply the mantra on one's body. Just as all the planetary systems are related to each other in an orderly fashion, so are the various limbs of this mantra.

Om contains everything, and, therefore, sages realized in the absolute truth teach one to add *om* at the beginning and end of every syllable of this mantra while applying it.

In this way, there are eleven words in this *anuṣṭup* mantra. The entire world has been created and gets destroyed by this *anuṣṭup* mantra. One who knows this attains immortality.

When the demigods asked about the meanings of the individual words, Lord Brahma replied, “The Lord is known as *ugram* because by his potency he elevates and expands the creation of all the planets, demigods and living entities, and by that very potency he maintains and dissolves everything. In this way he performs a great favor for everyone. The *Ṛg-veda* instructs us to worship the same Lord who is situated in our heart. Although he has assumed a terrible form of Narasimha, he is not terrible at all. He performs favors for one and all, he elevates the devotees and punishes the demons. For that purpose he is known as *ugra*.”

Lord Brahma further explained that he is known as *vīram* because by his potency he playfully creates, maintains and dissolves all the planets, demigods and living entities. The *Ṛg-veda* says that the Lord is brave (*vīra*), expert in his tasks such as performance of *yajña*, and he is the one who desires to create the demigods.

Then Lord Brahma explained that the Lord is known as *mahā-viṣṇum* because he is equally manifest within all the living entities, the demigods and the planets. Just as fat is inherently manifest everywhere within flesh, similarly the Lord resides completely in each and every part of the universe. Therefore, the universe dissolves into his body completely at the time of destruction. This is described in the *Ṛg-veda* as follows, “The maintainer of all living entities has no equal and is equally manifest everywhere in his complete form full of sixteen opulences. Thus he is known as *mahā-viṣṇu*”.

Thereafter, Lord Brahma explained that he is known as *jvalantam*, effulgent, because he illuminates all the living entities, demigods, etc., and he simultaneously stays fully illuminated at all times. All the sources of light in this world are illuminated by him. Therefore the *Ṛg-veda* says, “He alone in the form of *savitā*, the deity of solar effulgence, illuminates himself and others. He creates heat in himself and in others. He is effulgent himself and makes others effulgent. He appears decorated with this brilliance and decorates others. Thus he is *jvalanta*.”

Then Lord Brahma explained that he is known as *sarvato-mukham*, having faces everywhere, because by his potency he sees, listens, and recognizes all living entities from all angles everywhere. Although he moves from all directions to all directions, he stays equally manifest everywhere. The *Ṛg-veda* says in

19th century painting by an unknown artist



this regard, “That Supreme Lord who was initially a single entity, expanded within the universe and is the cause of the creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe. Thus he is known as *sarvato-mukha*.”

Then Lord Brahma explained why he is known as *nṛsimham*. Among all living entities, the human (*nara*) is the best. And among all animals, the lion (*simha*) is the best. Thus the Lord is the best of all the worlds, and his eternal, indestructible form is supremely auspicious for all living entities. The Vedas say, “That Lord assumes the form of a lion and is worshiped by his devotees. Although fearsome, he is gentle for his devotees. He wanders everywhere on the earth and

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he resides everywhere, including in the voices of his devotees. Thus he is *nara-simha*.”

Then Lord Brahma said that he is known as *bhīṣaṇam*, terrible, because although all living entities become fearful on seeing his form, he fears no one. The Vedas testify to this fact when they say, “Out of fear of him the wind blows, the sun gives light, the fire-god and Indra perform their prescribed duties, and out of fear of him the Lord of death remains active. Therefore he is *bhīṣaṇa*.”

Then Lord Brahma explained that he is known as *bhadram*, auspicious, because he is self-effulgent and he illuminates the entire universe by that effulgence. He is decorated and he decorates the entire world by his presence. The Vedas say, “O Lord! May we always hear noble ideas! May we always see noble visions! May we be nourished to worship you for a full period of life! May we serve you in this way!”

Thereafter Lord Brahma explained that he is known as *mṛtyu-mṛtyum*, death of death, because when he is remembered by his devotees, at that time by his potency he destroys the timely and untimely death of his devotees. The Vedas say, “He who bestows all strength, he who is worshiped by the entire world, he whom the demigods follow obediently, and he who gives immortality to the sheltered and death to the non-sheltered, for him, *mṛtyu-mṛtyu*, we offer our oblations.”

Thereafter Lord Brahma explained that the term *namāmi*, I worship, is used in the mantra because all the demigods, learned souls, and aspirants of liberation worship him. The Vedas say, “He whom Lord Brahma worships, he who is the shelter of all the Vedas and Lord Brahma, he who is the worshipable deity of Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Aryama and the other demigods, may he accept our humble obeisances (*namāmi*).”

Finally, Lord Brahma explained as follows, “The term ‘*aham*’, I, is used in the mantra because I, Brahma, was the first one to receive it. I was born even before the Vedas manifested. I am the one who caused the demigods to attain immortality by producing the divine nectar. I am present within all food-grains. I am the one who empowers all the luminaries within this material world. I eat as my foodstuff those who eat foodstuffs without offering them. It is I, Brahma, who received the mantra, and therefore the term *aham* is used in it.”

In this way, the mantra was explained by Lord Brahma to the demigods.

— Translated by Hari Parshad Das from the *Nṛsimha-pūrvottara-tāpanīya Upaniṣat*, edited by Vinayak Ganesh Apte, published by Ananda Ashram Printing Press. Pune. 1929.