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Glimpses of Nrsimhadev in Odisha





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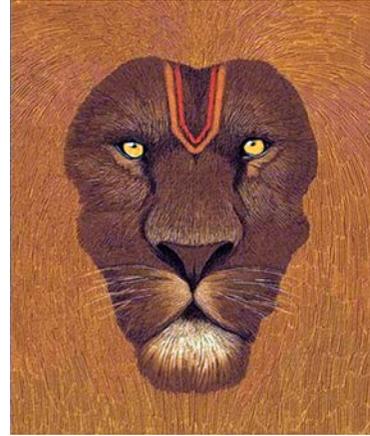
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WORSHIP OF NRSIMHA



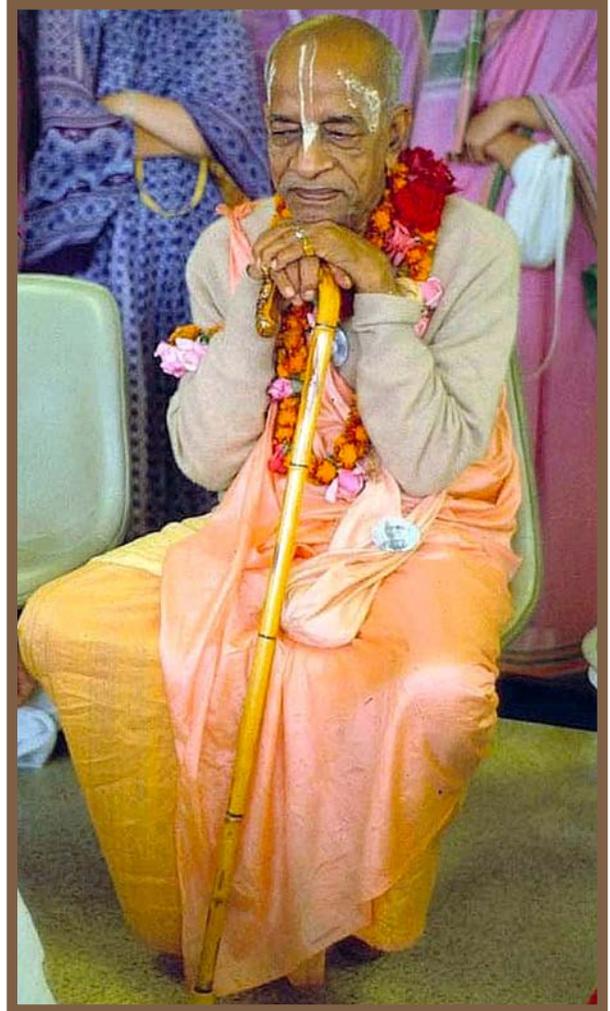
His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

So long we have got materialistic view, the serpent is fierce. When Prahlad Maharaja saw Lord Nrsimhadev, he was not at all afraid of this fearsome feature of the Lord. The big jaws and nails of Lord Nrsimhadev, and the fiery tongue of the Lord, and the gigantic lion's head did not create any fearsome havoc before Prahlad Maharaja. He said, "My Dear Lord, I am not afraid of this your fearsome feature, but I am afraid of the repeated cycle of birth and death in material existence." That instruction is very valuable. In our material existence we are always in a dangerous and fearful condition, but by the spell of *māyā* we do not take it very seriously. (Letter to Jadurani. 13 January 1968.)

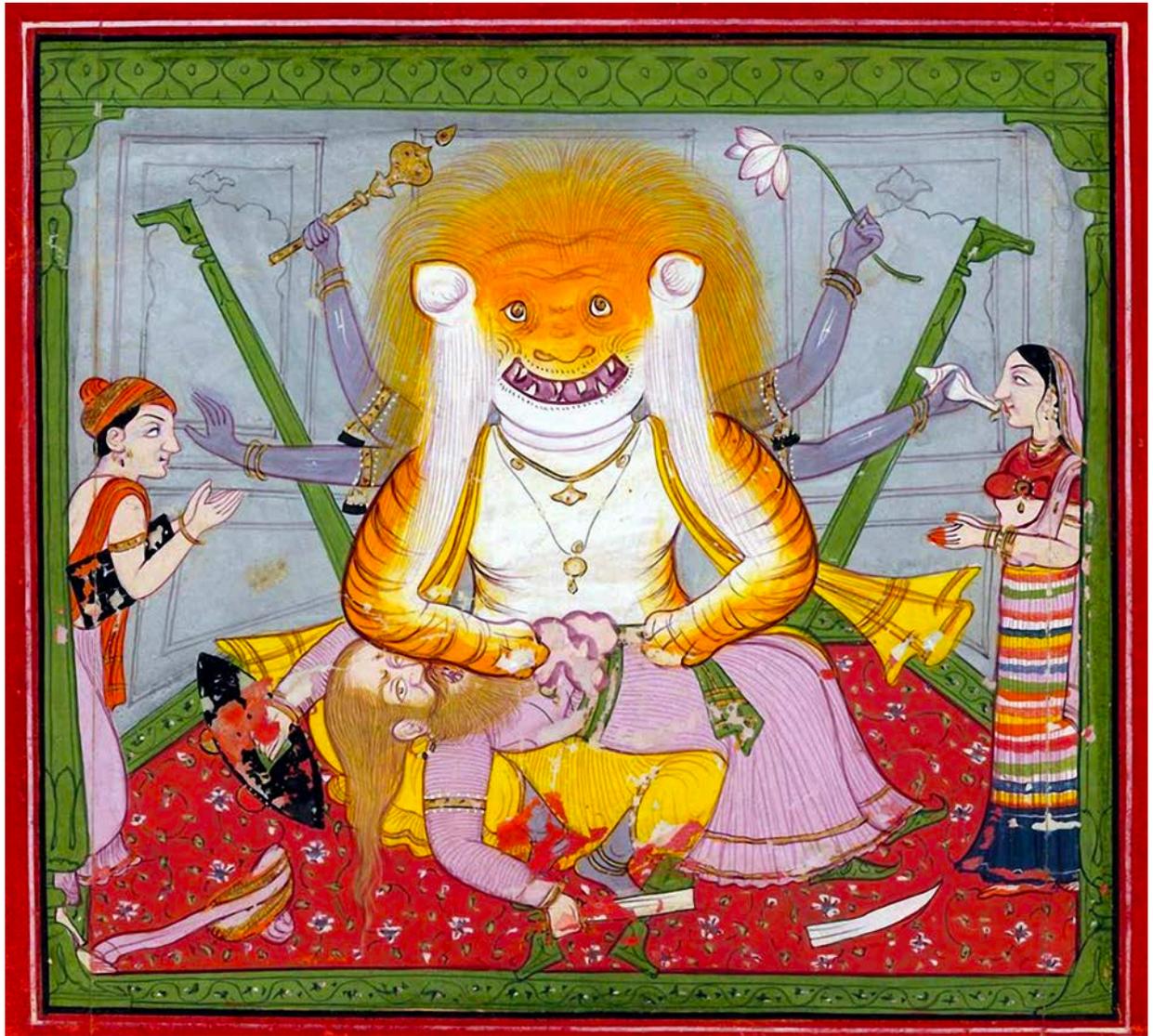
Regarding the Nrsimhadev deity, yes, that can be done. However, to worship Nrsimhadev requires a separate temple structure. Not that Lord Nrsimhadev can be worshiped in the same temple as Radha-Krishna. (Letter to Bharadraj. 18 November 1975.)

The goddess of fortune, Lakshmi, was requested to go before the Lord by all the demigods present, who because of fear could not do so. But even she had



Cover: Old Pata-citra painting of Lakshmi Nrsimha that was previously on the wall of the Gangamata Math in Jagannath Puri. Unknown artist.

Unknown artist. Rajasthan. 1700s



Lord Nrsimhadev kills the demon Hiranyakashipu

never seen such a wonderful and extraordinary form of the Lord, and thus she could not approach him.

The Lord has unlimited forms and bodily features (*advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam*). These are all situated in Vaikuntha. Yet Lakshmi-devi, the goddess of fortune, being inspired by *līlā-śakti*, could not appreciate this unprecedented form of the Lord.

... In other words, for the common man, the form of the Lord as Nrsimhadev is certainly unseen and wonderful, but for a devotee like Prahlad Maharaja, such a fearsome form of the Lord is not at all extraordinary. By the grace of the Lord, a devotee can very easily understand how the Lord can appear in any form he likes. Therefore, the devotee is never afraid of such a form. Because of the special favor bestowed upon Prahlad Maharaja, he remained silent and unafraid, even though all the demigods, including even Lakshmi-devi, were afraid of Lord Nrsimhadev. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 7.9.2) 🍌

PRAHLAD'S PREVIOUS BIRTH



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

A story is there in the *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*. Prahlad Maharaja asked Lord Nrsimhadev, “How is it that I have developed such *bhakti* for you?” Lord Nrsimhadev replied, “Very long ago, in ancient days, you were the son of a very pure *veda-vid-brāhmaṇa*. His name was Vasu Sharma and he was staying in the city of Avanti. The name of his wife was Sushila, and she was a very chaste and ideal wife. She was very devoted to her husband, *pati-vrata*, and she was following *sadācāra*, good behavior. They were very famous throughout



the three planetary systems, and you were the youngest of the five sons born from the womb of Sushila. The first four sons were *pañḍitas*, very learned and pure Brahmins. They were very devoted to their father. But you, the youngest one, were completely spoiled. You became addicted to a prostitute. Such a bad character you had! You never obeyed your father. Your name was Vasudev, and you spent your days with a prostitute. Such a woman hunter you were, not following any regulative principles! Only *asadācāra*, misbehavior!

“One night, there was a quarrel between yourself and that prostitute that went on all night. Because of that, both of you spent the entire night without food and sleep. By coincidence, however, that was the day of *Nṛsimha-caturdaśī*. So, automatically you got the result of fasting on my day. That prostitute was elevated to the planets of the demigods, and she became one of the *apsaras*. She had the desire for material enjoyment, and there is such an abundance of enjoyment on the planets of the demigods. But after that she became a very dear devotee of mine. And you, Prahlad, because of your desire, especially *veśyā-sanga*, the association of a prostitute, were born in a demoniac family. You became the son of Hiranyakashipu. But because you fasted on my appearance day, *Nṛsimha-caturdaśī*, you got that result,

vrata-phala, and became my dear devotee. Therefore, those who observe this *Nṛsimha-caturdaśī-vrata* will get such a result and develop *bhakti*. Lord Brahma also observed this *vrata* and therefore he got the *śakti* to create. Shiva, Maheshwar, observed this *vrata* and as a result he got the *śakti* to annihilate. For those who observe this *vrata*, any desire they have will be fulfilled. This is why you have developed such devotion for me. Unconsciously, you fasted the whole night without sleep, and this is the result.”

This *bhakti* is so powerful. Even if you have unconsciously performed only a little service, still such a result is there! Then what to speak of the result of those who are consciously doing it! We should understand what result they will get. This is the wonderful glory of *bhakti*. Somehow or other, if you engage in it you will get such result. We can understand this from the example of Prahlad.

When we say *nitya-siddhā prahlāda*, “Prahlad is an eternal associate of the Lord,” then the question comes, how is it that he was born as the son of that Brahmin, and was such a spoiled character, addicted to that prostitute? The answer is that *nitya-siddhā prahlāda* is always there, but

Vasudev, the son of Vasu Sharma, entered into the body of Prahlad Maharaja. 🍊

— From a talk in Bhubaneswar, 21 September 1994.

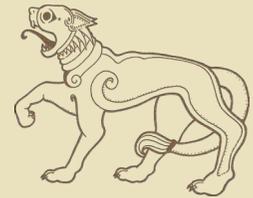
Ślokāmṛta

THREE MOST PERFECT FORMS OF THE LORD

Srila Rupa Goswami's *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.5.16



*nṛsimha-rāma-kṛṣṇeṣu śāḍ-guṇyaṁ paripūritam
parāvasthās tu te tasya dīpād-utpanna-dīpavat*



According to the *Padma Purāṇa* [uttara 226.42], “Nṛsimha, Ramachandra, and Krishna are complete in all six qualities. They are *para-avastha* forms of the Supreme Lord, like lamps lit from another lamp.”

Commentary by Gopiparanadhana Das: The perfections of Godhead are exhibited to different degrees by the various expansions of Krishna, who alone fully exhibits all six categories of perfection. The three most glorious forms of the Supreme Person are designated in Vedic texts as *para-avastha*, most perfect. The Lord exhibits his perfections in progressively greater completeness as Nṛsimha, as Ramachandra, and finally in his ultimate form as Krishna.

— Śrī *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*. English translation by Gopiparanadhana Das. Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Los Angeles. 2016



Unknown artist. Pahari style. c.1810.

THE CAT FORM OF THE LORD



In the Bargarh district of extreme western Odisha is the ancient temple of Lord Nrsimhanath, also known as Bidala Nrsimha, Marjara Kesari, and Marjara Nrsimha. (In Oriya language, *biḍāla* and *māṛjāra* mean “cat”, and *keśarī* means “lion”.) Situated about 300 kilometers from the temple of

Lord Jagannath in Puri, the Nrsimhanath temple is on top of the famous Gandhamadan Hill where ancient rishis are said to have come to meditate. Some literatures say that Gandhamadan Hill was originally in the Himalayas but fell down in this place when Hanuman was carrying it to Lanka with the herbs required to heal Lakshman. Gandhamadan Hill is also said to be one of the places where the Pandavas visited during their exile.

The local tradition about this deity was compiled in the middle of the 18th century by



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

Temple of Lord Nrsimhanath

the poet Yuga Das Kondh in his *Nṛsimha-carita*. It is said that in *Tretā-yuga* there was a rishi named Udanga who was performing austerities on the bank of the Godavari River. He had an attractive young daughter named Malati. One day, Ravan happened by that place and saw the beauty of the young girl. Ravan raped her and threw her into the Godavari River. The Godavari took compassion on her and brought her to the shore. When Malati came to her senses, she began searching for her father and crying. Indura, the mouse carrier of Ganesh, heard her cries and offered to help her reach her parents if she would agree to enjoy with him. From Ravan and Indura, a demon was born from Malati named Mushika Daitya (literally, “mouse demon”). The new-born baby was so ferocious that as soon as he came from the womb he immediately devoured his mother. Then he began to perform austerities to please Lord Shiva. Shiva was pleased with him and gave him the boon that he would have no cause of fear from anyone except for Lord Nrsimhadev from Satya-yuga.

Seeing his power, the *devas* became frightened and appealed to Lord Ramachandra to rescue the universe. Accordingly, Lord Ramachandra manifested the form of Nrsimhadev to catch the demon. Mushika Daitya became fearful and ran from place to place seeking shelter, until finally he appealed to Gandhamadan Hill. The personified Gandhamadan granted shelter to Mushika Daitya, who then entered within a crack in the hill. When Lord Ramachandra later arrived, Gandhamadan requested him not to enter inside of the hill to seek out the demon. Lord Ramachandra then assumed the form of *mārjāra-keśarī*, with the head of a cat and the body of a lion, and began guarding the area by the *suḍaṅga*, the inner door of Gandhamadan. Just as a cat sits quietly by a hole waiting for a mouse, similarly, Lord Marjara Kesari is said to still be sitting and waiting for the demon Mushika to come out.

Thousands of years later, in Kali Yuga, there was a tribal man named Hari Kondh and his wife Yamuna living near the Gandhamadan Hill.

Photo by Aitiha



Deity of Bidala Nrsimha, also known as Nrsimhanath

They used to go out every day to collect roots, which they would sell to maintain themselves. One day, Yamuna was digging for roots when she saw blood coming from the ground. She became frightened and ran to tell her husband. When the couple came back to the spot, they found milk pouring out. Then they heard a voice, "I am pleased with you. I am Narayan in my cat-lion form, waiting to kill the demon Mushika. Take me from the ground here and have a temple built to protect me."

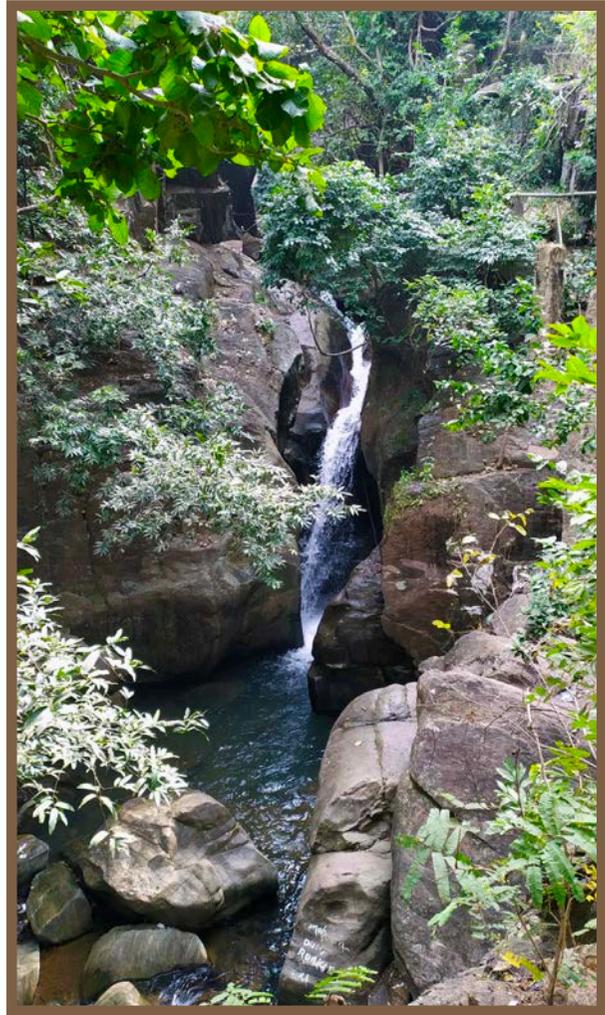


Photo by Aitiha

Nrsimhanath falls near the Bidala Nrsimha temple



Photo by Aitiha

Ancient carvings of Ganesh at the base of the Bidala Nrsimha temple

They dug in that place and unearthed the deity, and they informed the Chauhan king Baijal Dev, who built a temple for the deity in the 15th century. The descendants of Hari Kondh are said to have carried on the worship of Lord Nrsimhanath since that time.

There are many interesting and unusual features to this temple. Without anything else to offer the Lord, Hari Kondh and Yamuna are said to have given local wild oranges to Bidala Nrsimha. To this day these fruits are offered to the Lord and are considered to be as sacred as water from the Ganga. Nrsimhanath is considered to be sacred for both Vaishnavas as well as the followers of Lord Shiva. On the southern side of the hill is a deity of Shiva named Hari Shankar, who is considered to be an incarnation of Lakshman. There are also deities of Shiva named Gupteswar and Jala Mahadeva on the tops of two nearby hills. The *Nṛsimha-carita* describes that Bidala Nrsimha has the goddess Chandi on his chest, Somlai on his back [Somlai is a deity of śakti worshiped in western Odisha], and 64 *yoginīs* in each one of his hairs. — MD 🍊

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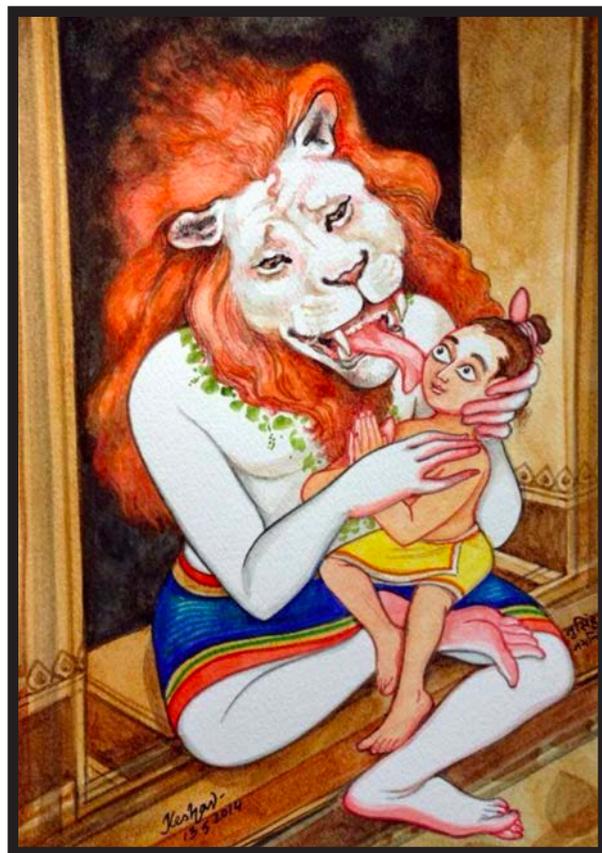
THE GARBHADHAN-SAMSKAR OF HIRYANYAKASHIPU



In his purport to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 3.16.35, Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has described the importance of the purificatory ceremony known as *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*:

... while conceiving a child, one’s mind must be very sober and devotional. For this purpose, the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra* is recommended in the Vedic scriptures. If the mind of the father is not sober, the semen discharged will not be very good. Thus, the living entity, wrapped in the matter produced from the father and mother, will be demoniac like Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu.

One may then inquire how it is that such a demoniac personality as Hiranyakashipu was able to have the great *vaiṣṇava* Prahlada Maharaja as his son?



Painting by Keshav

Lord Nrsimhadev shows his love for Prahlada Maharaja

This was explained by the great sage Markandeya Rishi while speaking to King Sahasranika, as recorded in the forty-first chapter of *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*:

Rigorous Austerities

Hiranyakashipu once decided that he would go to the forest to perform penance. When he set out, many omens indicating ill-fortune for one’s desired gain were observed. There were earthquakes, and fire was seen in all directions. Ignoring the inauspicious portents, the haughty demon, intoxicated with pride, started for Mount Kailash. There, near the peak of Mount Kailash, Hiranyakashipu began performing rigorous austerities for the sake of obtaining demoniac boons. Seeing the penance performed by Hiranyakashipu, lotus-born Brahma became worried. He thought to himself, “How can I dissuade this demon from his austerities?”

Just then, the great sage Narada arrived at that place. Perceiving his father’s distress, Narada Muni said, “O revered father! You are a devotee of Lord Narayan. Why do you worry? Those persons who meditate on Govinda need not fear anything. I will persuade this demon to stop his penance. Lord Vishnu, the Lord of the universe, will guide me.”

Narada Muni then bowed down to his father and, accompanied by the sage Parvata Muni, left that place, absorbed in thoughts of Lord Vasudev.

Two Sparrows

Narada and Parvata Muni then assumed the form of sparrows and went to Kailash where Hiranyakashipu was practicing penance. Seated on the branch of a tree, Narada Muni, in the form of a small sparrow, began to sweetly sing the holy names of Lord Narayan so that the demon Hiranyakashipu could hear him. Three times Narada sang the holy mantra, “*namo nārāyaṇāya*”, and then he fell silent.

When Hiranyakashipu heard the holy name of Narayan spoken by the sparrow with so much devotion, he fell into a fit of rage and picked up his bow and arrows. No sooner had he fixed an arrow to his bow and aimed it at the two birds when Narada and Parvata Munis disguised as sparrows flew away. Enraged at his failure to hit the birds, Hiranyakashipu left the hermitage and returned to his capital city.

Kayadhu

There in his palace, Hiranyakashipu met his beautiful wife named Kayadhu. It just so happened that her monthly courses had just ended, and she had just taken bath. Surprised to see her husband, Kayadhu inquired from him, “My lord, when you left to perform your penance you told us that your austerities would continue for ten thousand years. O sovereign lord, how is it that you have given up your penance and returned early? Just out of my attachment for you I would like to know the fact of this matter.”

Hiranyakashipu replied, “O lovely lady, listen to me. I will tell you the truth why I gave up my vow. An incident occurred which enraged me very much, although the gods were no doubt delighted by it. O queen, in the great pleasure-grove on top of mount Kailash there appeared two small birds that were reciting the mantra, “*namo nārāyaṇāya*”. O gracious lady, after hearing their recitation two or three times, I became angry and fixed an arrow to my bow. But just on the point of discharging the arrow the birds became frightened and flew away.



Unknown artist.

Narada Muni



Unknown artist.

Narada Muni speaks hari-kathā to Hiranyakashipu's pregnant wife Kayadhu

Then, considering destiny to be all-powerful, I stopped my penances and returned here.”

Bhakta Prahlada

Markandeya Rishi then described that after speaking with his wife Kayadhu, Hiranyakashipu engaged in sex life with her. As a result, Kayadhu conceived as her child the great devotee Prahlaad Maharaja. Markandeya Rishi explained to King Sahasranika that first Hiranyakashipu had heard the devotional recitation of the mantra “*namo nārāyaṇāya*” from the lips of the great devotee

Narada Muni. Then, just before uniting with his wife, Hiranyakashipu had repeated that mantra to Kayadhu. The consequence was that the child born of them became a great devotee of Lord Krishna.

In his purport to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 3.20.28, Srila Prabhupada comments:

Before begetting a child, one has to sanctify his perplexed mind. When the parents engage their minds in the lotus feet of the Lord and in such a state the child is born, naturally good devotee children come; when the society is full of such good population, there is no trouble from demoniac mentalities.

Unknown artist. Mysore South India. Circa 1700s.



Prahlad offers prayers to the Lord

Hiranyakashipu's chanting was not devotional, nor was it directed toward the Lord. He chanted in a neglectful way. Hence it was only a shadow of the holy name, *nāmābhāsa*. There are four types of *nāmābhāsa*. This *nāmābhāsa* of Hiranyakashipu is known as *helanā*, neglectful. The potency of the holy name is so great that even though Hiranyakashipu chanted in a neglectful way, the holy name sanctified his mind and as a result the great devotee Prahlad Maharaja took birth from his semen. The holy name is so powerful that even chanting on the level of *nāmābhāsa* gives immense benefit. It is stated in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

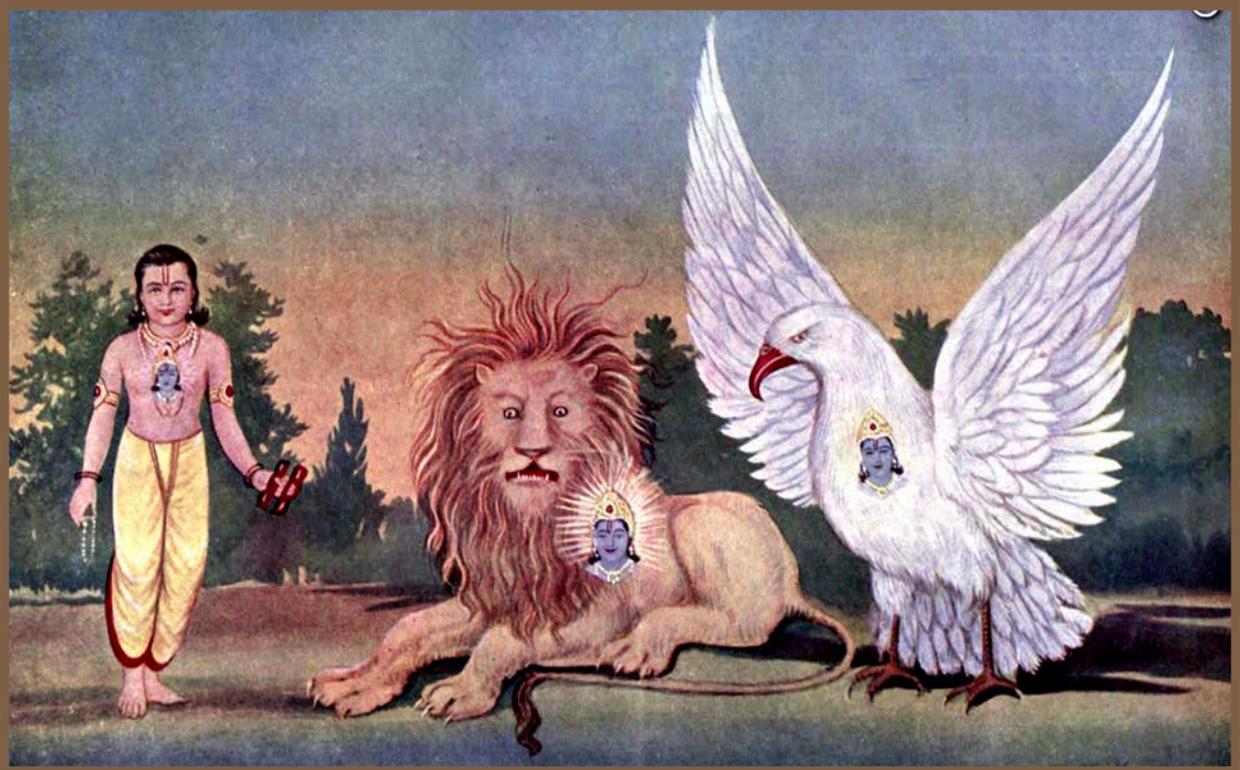
mukti' tuccha-phala haya nāmābhāsa haite

Liberation is the insignificant result derived from even a glimpse of the holy name. — Cc. *antya* 3.186 — MD 🍊

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Unknown artist. Gira Press. Gorakhpur. Circa 1940s.



Prahlad sees the Lord in everyone's heart

GLIMPSES OF NRSIMHADEV IN ODISHA



There is an ancient and significant connection between Lord Nrsimhadev and Odisha, and in particular Jagannath Puri. The Odia scholar Rashmi Sudheendra has commented:

There are 105 major temples of Nrsimha in Orissa in various districts: in Puri there are 21 Nrsimha temples, in Cuttack, 51 temples of Nrsimha and 5 of Lakshmi Nrsimha, in Ganjam, 12 temples of Nrsimha and 5 of Lakshmi Nrsimha, in Sambalpur, 10 temples of Nrsimha, in Balasore, Dhenkanal and Mayurbhanj there are 2 temples each, and in Bolangir there is 1 temple. ¹

The *Jagannātha-kṣetra-mahātmya* section of the *Vaiṣṇava-khaṇḍa* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* describes that Lord Nrsimhadev was worshiped in *Satya-yuga* in Puri even before the appearance of Lord Jagannath. Chapter sixteen says that when Indradyumna Maharaja desired to see the then-lost deity of Nila Madhava, Narada Muni installed a deity of Nrsimha at the place now known as Indradyumna Sarovar in Puri and instructed Indradyumna Maharaja to perform a *yajña* and worship that deity for the appearance of Lord Jagannath. That deity became known as Yajna Nrsimha.

Beginning with Yajna Nrsimha, the following are a few of the significant deities and connections of Lord Narasimhadev with Odisha and Jagannath Puri:

* **Yajna or Adi Nrsimha:** The temple of Yajna or Adi Nrsimha is on the western side of the Gundicha temple. There are two deities in the mandir. The ancient deity who is in an angry (*ugra*) form, and a newer deity that is in a *śānta* (peaceful) form. The ancient deity was established in *Satya-yuga* by Narada Muni at the time of Indradyumna Maharaja. According to the *Skanda Purāṇa*, (5.2.2.28), during their installation ceremony, Jagannath, Baladev and Subhadra manifested themselves as Nrsimhadev in the presence of Brahma, Maharaja Indradyumna, and all the people there. It goes on to say that Lord Brahma then initiated Maharaja Indradyumna into the *nṛsimha-mantra* known as the *mantra-rāja*, the king of mantras:

*ugraṁ vīraṁ māvahiṣṇuṁ jvalantaṁ sarvato mukham
nṛsimhaṁ bhīṣaṇam bhadrāṁ mṛtyor mṛtyuṁ namāmy aham*

I bow down before all-powerful, frightening, auspicious, sublimely ferocious Lord Nrsimha, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu, who burns like fire, whose faces are everywhere, and who is the death of death personified. ²

Sanatan Goswami in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (2.5.211) says that Narada Muni spoke the following to Gopa Kumar about Lord Jagannath in Puri:

*sarvāvatāraika-nidhāna-rūpas
tat-tac-caritrāṇi ca santanoti
yasmai ca roceta yad asya rūpaṁ
bhaktāya tasmai khalu darśayet tat*

His transcendental form, the one source of all incarnations, expands all of his various pastimes. Whichever of his forms a devotee finds attractive, that form the Lord shows to him.

Indradyumna Maharaja was attached to Lord Nrsimhadev. Thus, Jagannath first appeared to Indradyumna Maharaja as the king's worshipable



Shanta Nrsimha in the temple of Yajna Nrsimha in Puri

Unknown photographer



Yajna Nrsimha with painted decorations for a festival

Unknown photographer



The temple of Yajna Nrsimha



Unknown photographer

Yajna Nrsimha decorated with sandalwood paste

deity Nrsimhadev. The *Mādaḷā Pāñji*, literally “drum chronicle”, is the official historical record of the worship of Jagannath.³ It gives the same *nṛsimha mantra-rāja* as the mantra to be used for worshipping Lord Jagannath.⁴ Although today the pandas worship Lord Jagannath with Krishna mantra, according to the local tradition he was originally worshiped with the above *mantra-rāja* or *nṛsimha-mantra*. To this day, Sudarshan is worshiped with that mantra in the Jagannath Mandir. For these and other reasons discussed later in this article, some people in Odisha consider Lord Jagannath to be a deity of Nrsimhadev. [For more on the identity of Lord Jagannath, see our article “The Hidden Identity of Lord Jagannath” in issue 12 of the printed *Sri Krishna Kathamrita* magazine.]

There are several different versions of how the newer *śānta* deity in the Yajna Nrsimha temple came to be there. Kalapahad was a Muslim general⁵ in the army of the Sultan of Bengal, Sulaiman Khan Karrani. In 1568 CE, Kalapahad attacked Puri and killed Maharaja Mukunda Dev. Some say that since Kalapahad damaged the original deity of Yajna Nrsimha, the second, *śānta*, deity was established. Another local story has it that the second deity was

already there and when Kalapahad came before him, by the power of the deity, Kalapahad became peaceful (*śānta*) and gave up his anger.

* **Adi Nrsimha inside the Jagannath Mandir:**

Not to be confused with Yajna Nrsimha who is also sometimes called Adi, this deity is considered to be the guardian of the Jagannath Mandir. Adi Nrsimha resides in a small temple to the right side of Jagannath’s temple in the Sri Mandir complex. All activities of cooking or worship begin by first worshipping him. Although the height of Adi Nrsimha’s temple is about 55 feet, the deity is only about one foot in height.⁶

* **Chakra Narasimha:** This temple, which has three deities of Nrsimhadev enshrined within, is located southeast of the Jagannath Mandir on the southern side of Chakra Tirtha Road. The deities there are Chakra Nrsimha, Abhaya Nrsimha, also known as Ananta Narasimha, and Purushottam Nrsimha, who is also known Lakshmi Nrsimha. According to the local tradition, Abhaya Nrsimha represents Lord Balaram, Chakra Nrsimha represents Subhadra, and Lakshmi Nrsimha represents Lord Jagannath. It was near



Unknown photographer

The deity of Chakra Nrsimha

Photo by Madhavananda Das



Pandu Nrsimha and other deities in his temple

Photo by Bhakta Charles



Pandu Nrsimha is on top of Garuda

this place that the original *daru-brahma*, the sacred log that became Jagannath, Baladev and Subhadra, washed ashore. This temple is also considered to be the abode of Lakshmi Devi's father.

* **Pandu or Kandu Nrsimha:** This deity, who is also sometimes called Garuda Nrsimha, is located next to the temple of Jambeshwar Mahadev near the Tota Gopinath temple in Gaudabada Sahi, at Puri. According to the local tradition, there was a rishi named Kandu who in *Dvāpara-yuga* was doing austerities on the bank of the river Gomati. Worried about the growing powers of the rishi, the devas sent an *apsarā*, heavenly damsel, named Pralambha to destroy his penance. After falling for the beautiful girl, Kandu became depressed and initially decided to commit suicide by drowning himself in the water of the Gomati. However, after some consideration he changed his mind and decided to come to Jagannath Puri to purify himself by worshiping Jagannath. He made his *āśrama* next to the temple of Yameshwar Mahadev (today known as Jambeshwar Mahadev) and established and worshiped the deity of Nrsimha there.

According to another local tradition, the story of Pandu Nrsimha goes back to the time of the

Mahābhārata when the Pandava brothers are said to have visited Jagannath Puri on their pilgrimage. During their stay, they worshiped Lord Nrsimhadev at this site, who accordingly came to be known as Pandu Nrsimha.

Another story associated with this temple is of Kayadhu, the wife of the demon Hiranyakashipu. It is said that after Hiranyakashipu's death, Kayadhu came to Puri and prayed to Lord Nrsimha for salvation. Pleased with her devotion, Nrsimhadev appeared to her in the form of Pandu Nrsimha and granted her salvation.

The Pandu Nrsimha temple is small and simple, and the deity is said to be self-manifested. The image of Lord Nrsimha here has eight arms and is in the act of killing the demon Hiranyakashipu. One of the intestines of Hiranyakashipu is decorating the deity as his Brahmin thread. Pandu Nrsimha is a unique deity in that he is standing on the shoulders of his devotee Garuda.⁷ The deity is also unusual in that Hiranyakashipu, who is being killed by Nrsimha, has his body resting on the head of Garuda. Present also in this temple are deities of Lakshmi Nrsimha, Lord Narayan, and various devatas.

* **Rendha Nrsimha:** This four-armed deity of Lakshmi Nrsimhadev is said to have been established by Maharaja Kapilendra Dev who ruled Odisha from 1434 to 1467 CE. The temple is found on the left side of the road at Rendha Chowk as you are going from Puri to Brahmagiri. Aside from establishing Rendha Nrsimha, Kapilendra Dev is more famous as the father of Purushottam Dev, who in turn was the father of the famous Maharaja Prataprurudra, the great devotee of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In 1448, Kapilendra Dev is also said to have built the Simha Dwara gate as well as the large external wall around the Jagannath Mandir known as the Meghanada Prachira.

* **Lakshmi Nrsimha at Bhubanpur:** This deity, said to have been established in the 12th century, is situated in the village Bhubanpur, about 5 kilometers south of Bhubaneswar. The temple is located near the old Jagannath Road that pilgrims used previously to go to Puri prior to construction of the new road. Nearby the temple, the river Kuakhai divides into two parts. One becomes the river Bhargavi, while the river on the right becomes the Kushabhadrā. This is said to be the appearance place of the Bhargavi and Kusabhadrā rivers.



Photo by Sanskruti Parampar TV

Deity of Rendha Nrsimha



Unknown photographer

Wall carving of Maharaja Kapilendradev at the Kapileshwar Mahadev temple in Bhubaneswar. C. 1450



Sri Sri Lakshmi Nrsimha in Bhubanpur, Odisha

According to the local tradition, about one thousand years ago a group of Brahmins were moving through the forests of Bhubaneswar when they found a cave with ancient deities inside of Lakshmi Nrsimha. After this discovery, they collected donations from the local people and built a small temple there for Lord Nrsimhadev.

According to the local tradition, when Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu passed through on his way to Jagannath Puri, he took bath and *darśana* of Lord Nrsimhadev here.

* **At Nava-kalevara:** Lord Nrsimhadev is also prominent at the time of *Nava-kalevara*, the festival/

ceremony in which Jagannath changes his body to a new one fashioned from a special tree. The *Nava-kalevara* has two aspects, the *vanayāga*, forest sacrifice, and the *pratiṣṭhā*, ceremonial installation of the deity. Nrsimhadev is the presiding deity of both of these segments of *Nava-kalevara*, and until the deities are formally consecrated, the *dārus*, simple, preliminary tree forms of Jagannath, his brother and sister, are all considered and worshiped as Nrsimha.⁸

* **Jagannath's Dress as Narasimha:** Twice a year, on the thirteenth day of the month of Kartika and on the day of *Nrsimha-caturdaśī*, Lord Jagannath is dressed as Lord Nrsimhadev.



Photo by Amrutesh Gaura Das

ISKCON Bhubaneswar in 2022, Jagannath in the dress of Nrsimha, with a lion face, hands with sharp nails, Hiranyakashipu on his lap, and a temporary deity of Prahlad.

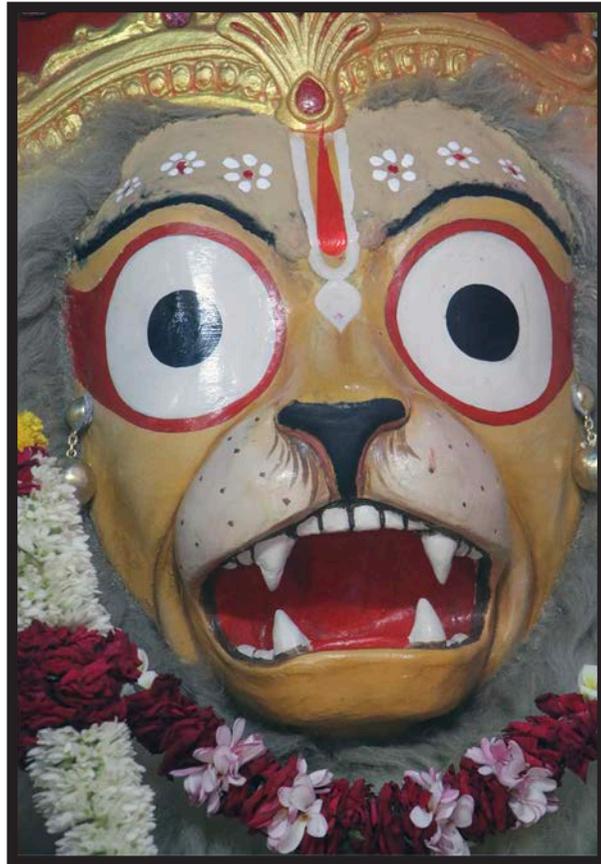


Photo by Amrutesh Gaura Das

Jagannath in Nrsimha dress, at ISKCON Bhubaneswar in 2022



Unknown photographer

Jagannath in Nrsimha dress, at Korapat, Odisha



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

At the Jagannath temple in Paralakhemundi, Odisha they offer the Lord a temporary deity of Prahlad Maharaja, a dummy of Hiryanakashipu, and a paper mache Nrsimha mask and arms to Jagannath on the appearance day of Lord Nrsimhadev,



Unknown photographer

Pārśva-devatās, accompanying deities, above the wheels on Balaram's chariot



Unknown photographer

The pārśva-devatā, known as Pandu Nrsimha, on Lord Jagannath's chariot



Unknown photographer

The pārśva-devatā, known as Ba-ishibhuja Nrsimha, on Lord Balaram's chariot



Photos of dancers dressed as Lord Nrsimhadev at the annual Sahijata festival in Jagannath Puri



Photos by Priyankar Maharaja

The Sahijata Utsava in Puri is a street festival that goes every year for nine days starting on Rama Navami

* **At Ratha-yatra:** Lord Nrsimhadev also accompanies the *Ratha-yātrā* festival in Puri. There are deities of Nrsimha who come amongst the *pārśva-devatās*, accompanying deities, as protectors of the carts on both Balaram and Jagannath's chariots. The Nrsimha deity on Balaram's cart is known as Ba-ishibhuja Nrsimha — Nrsimha with 22 hands — while the deity on Jagannath's chariot is known as Pandu Nrsimha.

* **Sahijata festival:** Starting on the day of *Rāmanavamī*, the appearance day of Lord Ramachandra, there is a special nine-day festival in Puri called the Sahijata (*sahi* meaning neighborhood, and *jata*, meaning *yatra* or movement). At that time, a group of actors move about the various streets doing daily performances of traditional music and dance. One aspect of the festival is that one or more of the dancers dress up as Lord Nrsimhadev. — MD 🍊

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Painting by Prateek Pattanaik

A wall mural/deity of Lord Nrsimhadev outside of someone's home in Jagannath Puri

Endnotes for Glimpses of Nrsimha in Odisha

¹ Article: “Nrusimha Worship in Puri and Rituals followed on Narasimha chaturdashi in Puri Jagannath Temple” <https://mahaprasada.home.blog/2021/05/24/nrusimha-worship-in-puri-and-rituals-followed-on-narasimha-chaturdashi-in-puri-jagannath-temple-25-may-2021/>

² This mantra is quoted, or at least referred to, in many scriptures. The *Nṛsimha Tapāni Upaniṣad* states that just as in the present creation the presiding deity is Sri Krishna and he initiated Brahma into the *kāma-gāyatri*, in the previous creation the presiding deity was Lord Nrsimhadev and he initiated Lord Brahma with the *nṛsimha-mantra*. Thakur Bhaktivinode initiated his son Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur into the worship of Lord Nrsimha with this mantra.

³ On page 14 of his masterful work, *Communication with God*, Gaya Charan Tripathi describes the *Mādaḷā Pāñji* as being a sort of chronicle of the Jagannath Temple, containing the history of the rulers of Odisha in relation to the Jagannath temple, a record of the rights and duties of the temple priests, the details of the various festivals observed in the temple, a daily record of the donations received in the temple, etc. It derives its name from the fact that it is inscribed on long palm-leaf sections, which are then bound together with a string in form of bundles resembling the shape of a *mādaḷā* drum. The *Mādaḷā Pāñji* has not been officially kept since the late 1950's, although there are still *karaṇas* keeping unofficial records, which today are done with paper and pen.

⁴ G. C. Tripathi, page 15.

⁵ Indological scholars such as Heinrich Blochmann and Henry Beveridge ascribe a Hindu origin to Kalapahad, which is also supported by the local tradition in Odisha. (See Sarkar)

⁶ K.C. Pattanaik, page 95-98.

⁷ To properly see the form of Pandu Nrsimha we suggest going to the temple around 5 AM. The *pūjārī*, while bathing and dressing the deity, allows outsiders *darśana*. When dressing the Lord they cover the lower part of his body, after which you cannot see Hiranyakashipu or Garuda.

⁸ A. Eschmann, page 171.

PRAYERS TO
NRSIMHA'S NAILS



Assorted verses from
Subhāṣita-ratna-bhāṇḍāgāram

Subhāṣita-ratna-bhāṇḍāgāram, “gems of Sanskrit poetry”, is a collection of more than 10,000 subhāṣitas, wise sayings, that was compiled and arranged subject-wise by Shri Kashinath Sharma.

śatroḥ prāṇānilāḥ pañca vyaṁ daśa jayo 'tra kaḥ
iti koṣād ivātāmrāḥ pāntu vo nṛharer nakhāḥ

May the fingernails of Narahari, who are assuming a reddish color and thinking, “The enemy has only five life airs while we are ten in number, so how can the enemy win against us?” protect you all!

[Translator’s Note: According to āyurveda, every mortal body has five life airs. These airs are known as prāṇa, udāna, vayāna, samāna and apāna. When all these life airs, especially the prāṇa, depart from the body, the body dies.]

daityāsthī-pañjara-vidāraṇa-labdha-randhra-
raktāmbu-nirjara-sarid ghana-jāta-pañkāḥ
bāleṇdu-koṭi-kuṭilāḥ śuka-cañcu-bhāsāḥ
rakṣantu śimha-vapuṣo nakharā harer vaḥ

They have become as reddish as a parrot’s beak due to contact with the blood flowing like a river from the crevices in the broken bones of the demon [Hiranyakashipu]. They appear curved like the waxing moon on the second day. May those fingernails of Hari, who assumed the form of a lion, protect you!

caṭac caṭiti carmaṇi cchamiti cocchalac choṇite
dhagad dhag iti medasi sphuṭa-ravo 'sthiniṣṭhāg iti
punātu bhavato harer amara-vairī-vakṣa-sthala-
kvaṇat karaja-pañjara-krakaca-kāṣa-janmānalaḥ

May the fire born out of the friction of the teeth of Hari’s saw against the chest of the demon purify you! On the demon’s skin, this fire made the noise, “caṭa caṭa”. His flowing blood created the noise “chama chama”. The fire burning his fat made a loud, “dhaga dhaga” sound, while the fire burning his bones, created a loud cracking sound, “kaḍa kaḍa”.

[Translator’s note: Lord Nrsimha’s arm is compared to a saw and the fingernails attached to that arm are compared to the teeth of that saw.]

His Own Nails Can’t
Bear to Look at Nrsimha

diśyāt sukhaṁ naraharir bhuvanaika vīro
yasyāhave diti-sutoddalanodyatasya
krodhoddhataṁ mukhaṁ avekṣitum akṣamatvaṁ
jāne 'bhavan nija-nakheṣv api yan natās te

Even his own fingernails are not able to look at the angry face of Nrsimhadev, made angrier by the slaughter of Diti’s son in battle. That is the reason why these nails are bent down [as if cowering away in fear]. May that sole hero of the universe named Narahari bestow happiness on you!

Hiranyakashipu Entered Nrsimha’s Nails

vapur dalana-sambhramāt sva-nakharāṁ praviṣṭe ripau
kva yāta iti vismayāt prahita-locanas sarvataḥ
vr̥theti kara-tāḍanān nīpatitaṁ puro dānavāṁ
nirīkṣya bhuvī reṇu-vaj jayati jāta-hāso hariḥ

Fearing the destruction of his body, the enemy [Hiranyakashipu] entered into Nrsimha’s nails. Nrsimha, being astounded at this disappearing act, thought “Where is he? Where is he?” and looked everywhere. Not finding him, Nrsimha said, “Oh! It was all in vain!” and banged his palm [on the wall]. Thus, the demon fell down like a speck of dust on the ground. Seeing him like this, the Lord laughed loudly. All glories to that Lord [Nrsimha]!

sandhyā-rañjita-śīta-didhiti-kalā-saundarya-bhājo nakhāḥ
prītiṁ pīvarayantu kaiṭabha-ripoḥ krīḍā-nṛsimhasya vaḥ
daityorasthala-pīṭha-kuṅṭhitatayā dīnena dambholinā
sāsūyaṁ sa-kutūhalaṁ sa-vinayaṁ sāścaryam ālokitāḥ

These nails of Nrsimha, the enemy of the Kaitabha demon, have the complexion and effulgence of the reddish evening crescent moon. When the thunderbolt of Indra was unable to tear apart the chest of the demon Hiranyakashipu, it looked at these nails with envy, surprise, humility, and amazement. May these nails of the Lord increase your happiness!

pūryanto jala-rāśayo vasumatī majjaty adho lupyate
pātālam śatadhā gataṁ nīpatati brahmāṇḍa-khaṇḍaṁ divaḥ



Painting by an unknown artist. Kangra, C. 1810-1820

Hiranyakashipu said, "If your God is in this pillar, I will kill him!" and drew his sword. Suddenly the column began to glow red-hot

*nikṣiptena sura-dviṣo 'sya vapuṣā matveti manye vahann
utsaṅgena hataṁ hiranyakaṣipuṁ siṁho hariḥ pātu vaḥ*
"If I throw away the body of this enemy of the demigods, then the oceans will overflow, the earth

will drown in the causal ocean, the lower planets will be destroyed, the universe will be shattered into pieces and the heavens will fall down." — Thinking like this, he kept bearing the body of dead Hiranyakashipu on his lap. May that Hari, who appeared as a lion, protect you all! 🍊

Translated by Hari Parshad Das from the following sources:

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