

while Prahlāda was repeating his chantings of Viṣṇu's name Hiranyakaśipu jumped up from his seat with sword in his hand and asked Prahlāda where his Viṣṇu was. Prahlāda very calmly replied that Viṣṇu was present everywhere even in stones, trees or the pillars of the palace. Hiranyakaśipu in uncontrollable rage struck the nearest pillar with his sword. Then to the shocking surprise of Hiranyakaśipu Mahāviṣṇu in the form of a fierce man-lion (Narasimha) jumped out from the pillar. The figure was terrifying to look at. It had fiery eyes, a dagger-like tongue with blood oozing from it, shaggy neck with trembling eyebrows, two teeth one on each side curved like the crescent moon, a black face inside a cave-like heap of manes, hairs strong and pointed like diamond needles, nails white and cup-like and a body as bright and brilliant as a thousand crores of suns. Only Prahlāda could stand before the figure and look at it.

The man-lion jumped on the body of Hiranyakaśipu and tearing open the belly of Hiranyakaśipu took the bloody intestines out and wearing it round its neck performed a naked dance. Everything happened in no time and the Narasimha changing into the form of Mahāviṣṇu blessed Prahlāda and then disappeared. (7th Skandha, Bhāgavata).

7) *Prahlāda and Naranārāyaṇas*. When Hiranyakaśipu was killed Prahlāda was crowned as emperor of the demons in Pātāla. At that time, once Cyavana the best of the Bhṛgus, went to Nāgakuleśvaratīrtha to bathe in the Narmadā. He saw Mahādeva there. When he entered the waters of the river a serpent Kekaralohita by name bit him and took him to Pātāla. Cyavana meditated on Viṣṇu when he was bitten by the serpent and so he was not affected by the poison of the serpent. He therefore, roamed about in Pātāla accepting the hospitality of the serpent maidens. Travelling thus he reached the land of the dānavas. He was worshipped by the daityas there and Prahlāda finding an ascetic of great saintliness honoured and worshipped by his people received him with respect and worshipped him and enquired about him. Cyavana said : "I came today to see Nāgakuleśvara and bathe in the Narmadā river. But as soon as I entered the river I was caught by a serpent and was brought to Pātāla. I was thus able to see you." Hearing the words of Cyavana the lord of the daityas said : "Oh, Bhagavan, which are all the sacred tīrthas of the earth, which are in the heavens and which all in Pātāla? Please do enlighten us." Cyavana replied ; "Mighty king, Naimiṣa is the best of all tīrthas on earth, Puṣkara in the heavens and Cakratīrtha in Pātāla."

The daitya emperor turned to the dānavas and said "Make all preparations immediately. We must go to earth to bathe in the holy tīrtha, Naimiṣa. We can then see Puṇḍarikākṣa (lotus-eyed) Viṣṇu sitting there as Pītāmbara (robed in yellow)." Hearing this dānavas with heavy equipments started from Pātāla with their king to the earth.

All the mighty dānavas reached the forest of Naimiṣa and after bathing in the holy pond there went for hunting. During their wanderings they found the river Sarasvatī, flowing with crystal-like water. On the shore of the same they saw a pine tree covered with arrows. The arrows were sticking to it one above another. The arrows looked like serpents and the gruesome sight roused Prahlāda's anger. Near that tree sat two ascetics wear-

ing the hide of Kṛṣṇa deer and matted hair on their heads. By their side were two divine bows, Śārṅga and Ajagava with two never-empty quivers. Prahlāda mistook them for two fake sannyāsins and therefore questioned them thus : "Why are you thus falsely trading on virtuousness? What connection is there between matted hair and penance and weapons of such supreme quality?" Then one of the ṛṣis, Nararṣi, said "King of daityas, why do you think like that? If one is powerful whatever one does will be right." Prahlāda jeered and said "When I, who have fixed limits for virtue and righteousness, am here what power can you wield?" Nara replied "Oh king, our ability is really supreme. There is nobody in the three worlds to conquer us in a fight." Prahlāda got furious on hearing the boasting of the ṛṣi and took a vow thus immediately : "I will fight and win against Naranārāyaṇas." Then the great Prahlāda keeping aside his army in the forest took his bow and made a thundering noise with it.

At once Nara took his Ajagava bow and showered arrows on Prahlāda with it. But Prahlāda broke them all with his gold-plated matchless arrows. Nara got angry when he found all his arrows broken to pieces so easily by Prahlāda and he sent different kinds of arrows in quick succession. But the daitya king replied with astonishing rapidity. For one arrow of Nara the daitya sent two and the fight became grim. Nara covered the whole world above with arrows and the daitya emperor smashed them all to pieces by his gold-plated ones.

The fight then turned to one with divine weapons. The asura chief took the divine Brahmāstra and then Nara took the fierce Nārāyaṇāstra. They met in the air and fell down powerless. When his Brahmāstra got fused Prahlāda got wild with anger and taking a mace jumped out of his chariot and rushed at Nara. When Nārāyaṇa saw the daitya chief rushing towards Nara with his mace he asked Nara to step aside and faced the demon himself. Prahlāda then attacked Nārāyaṇa and hit him with the mace. But the mace broke into a hundred pieces and Prahlāda was forced to use other weapons. The fight became ghastly and even devas assembled above to witness the fight. When Prahlāda found it was getting more and more difficult for him to defeat the Naranārāyaṇas he prayed to Mahāviṣṇu for help. Viṣṇu appeared before him and when Prahlāda asked him the reason why he could not defeat Naranārāyaṇas, Viṣṇu replied that they were the sons of Dharmadeva who were invincible by weapons. They could be won over only by devotion.

Hearing that Prahlāda returned to Pātāla and entrusting the administration of his kingdom to his cousin Andhaka, son of Hiranyākṣa, Prahlāda returned to Badarikāśrama and erecting an āśrama there started a penance to propitiate Naranārāyaṇas. When Naranārāyaṇas appeared before him Prahlāda requested to be pardoned for fighting against them. They pardoned him and blessed him and Prahlāda returned to Pātāla. Even after his return Prahlāda did not take back the administration from Andhaka. He constructed an āśrama away from the palace and lived there performing penance. He spent many years there as an advisor to the asura Kings. (Chapters 7 and 8, Vāmana Purāṇa).

8) *Blessings of Śukra*. Andhaka, son of Hiranyākṣa, ruled over the empire only for a short time. At that time