



# International Journal of Sanskrit Research

अनन्ता

ISSN: 2394-7519

IJSR 2021; 7(5): 271-273

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www.anantaajournal.com

Received: 18-07-2021

Accepted: 21-08-2021

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## Matsyavatara in stotra literature

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### Introduction

श्रीमान् वेङ्कटनाथार्य कवितार्किक केसरी ।  
वेदान्ताचार्यवर्यो मे सन्निधत्तां सदा हृदि ॥  
यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।  
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥  
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।  
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

‘Whenever righteousness is on the decline, unrighteousness is in its peak then I incarnate myself for the protection of the virtuous, for the eradication of the evil doers and for establishing dharma’ thus said Sri Krishna about the secret of His incarnations in *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*. The present paper of mine is an attempt to bring out the characteristic features of *Matsyāvātāra* of the Lord in *Daśāvātāra Stotram* of *Śrī Vedānta Deśika* with the commentaries of Sri Raghava Patrachariar, Sri A.V. Gopalachariar and Dr. V.N.Vedanta Desikachariar.

*Daśāvātāra Stotra* is considered as the masterpiece among his stotras. It is stated that *Swāmi Deśikan*, while returning from the bank of Kaveri river after finishing his *anuṣṭhānam*, requested by an *āstikā*, who stayed nearby *Daśāvātāra Sannidhi* in Srirangam, to compose a stotra on the Lord. *Śrī Vedānta Deśika* immediately accepted their request and composed thirteen slokas by treating it as the order of *Śrī Raṅganātha*, the presiding deity of Srirangam.

*Śrī Vedānta Deśika*, the author of *Daśāvātāra Stotram* needs no introduction as he was the *घण्टावतर* of the Lord and popularly called by every *Śrīvaiṣṇava* as *Kavitārṅkika* *Siṃham* and *Sarvatantra Svatantra*. He has authored a number of works in Sanskrit and established the Viśiṣṭādvaita Philosophy on firm footing.

In the introductory sloka *Swāmi Deśikan* explains the *leelā vibhūti* of the Lord *Śrī Raṅganātha*. The lord out of his own will assumed ten different forms for pleasing the devotees like an actor presenting a different role in various costumes. His consort *Śrī Raṅganāyikā* also occupies different forms suitable to the lord’s *avatāra* and enjoys the sport with such qualities equal to him.

देवो नः शुभमातनोतु दशधा निर्वर्तयन् भूमिकां  
रङ्गे धामनि लब्धनिर्भररसैः अद्यक्षितो भावुकैः ।  
यद्भ्रावेषु पृथग्विधेष्वनुगुणान् भावान् स्वयं विभ्रती  
यद्भर्मेरिह धर्मिनीविहरते नानाकृतिर्नायिका ॥

“All the world is a stage and all the men and women merely players” said Shakesphere.

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There is a stage manager known as *Sūtradhāra* for all the Sanskrit plays. Here, the divine force, Lord Ranganatha is the *Sūtradhāra* to the whole world (World-stage). Among the ten *Vibhavāvatāras*, *Matsyāvatāra* is the first one assumed by the Lord for the restoration of the Vedas.

मत्स्य कूर्मो वराहश्च नारसिंहोऽथ वामनः ।  
रामो दाशरथी रामः कृष्णः कल्की दश क्रमात् ॥

In *Daśāvatāra Stotra* the *Matsyāvatāra* is explained as follows:

निर्मग्नश्रुतिजाल मार्गणदशा दत्तक्षणेर्वीक्षणैः  
अन्तस्तन्वदिवारविन्दगहनान्यौदन्वतीनामपाम् ।  
निप्रत्यूहतरङ्गरिङ्गणमिथः प्रत्यूढपाथश्छटा-  
दोलारोहसदोहलं भगवतो मात्स्यं वपुः पातु नः ॥

Let the Matsyarupi God protect all of us with his glances. The Lord by assuming the form of a fish, went in search of Vedas which were hidden under the ocean by the demon named Hayagriva.

The fish God enjoyed the wave dashing as it gave Him a kind of pleasure as in a swing (*Dolā*). The so called *dolā* was done by the forceful waves of the ocean. The Lord's eyes delectably move hither and thither and search for the absconding Veda-theives. The eye glances look like lotus flower. The *dolā* of the Lord also decorated with the lotus flowers. The quick eye movements created hosts of lotus flowers under the water.

Here, an interesting fact is to be noted in the words दत्तक्षणेर्वीक्षणैः of the above-mentioned sloka. There is a popular faith that the fish nurtures its offspring by eyeing, the tortoise by mere mental thought and bird by its wings. This has been stated in *Sankalpa Sūryodaya*. (VII.12)

ईक्षण ध्यान संपर्शप्रमुखैः पोषयन्प्रजाः ।  
मत्स्यकूर्म विहङ्गादि विग्रहः प्रेक्ष्यते प्रभुः ॥

The explanation of *Matsyāvatāra* is also present in the eighth *skandha* 24<sup>th</sup> *adhya*ya of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with 60 slokas. Among the sixty slokas 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> is known as *Matsyāvatāra Stotram*.

नूनं त्वं भगवान् साक्षाद्धरिर्नारायणोऽव्ययः ।  
अनुग्रहाय भूतानां धत्से रूपं जलौकसम् ॥ 27  
नमस्ते पुरुषश्रेष्ठ स्थित्युत्पत्त्यप्ययेश्वर ।  
भक्तानाम् नः प्रपन्नानां मुखयो ह्यात्मगतिर्विभो ॥ 28  
सर्वे लीलावतारास्ते भूतानां भूमिहेतवः ।  
ज्ञातुमिच्छाम्यदो रूपं यदर्थं भवता धृतम् ॥ 29  
न तेऽरविदाक्ष पादोपसर्पणं  
मृषा भवेत् सर्वहृत्प्रियात्मनः ।  
यथेतरेषां पृथगात्मनां सता-  
मदीदृशो यद्वपुरद्भुतं हि नः ॥ 30

It is stated that Satyavrat Manu worshipped the *Matsyarūpa* Lord in Tirukkūdal. There is a belief that he still doing *Ārāadhanam* (regular Worship of Lord) in the banks of *Krutamālā* River.

अवतारो हरेर्योयं किर्तयेत् अन्वहं नरः ।  
सङ्कल्पास्तस्य सिद्ध्यन्ति स यान्ति परमां गतिम् ॥

‘One who is praising or worshipping the Lord in this *avatāra* will get success in all attempts and reaches the Supreme abode.’

In Varaha Purana, Chapter Nine, a rare *Matsyāvatāra Stuti* is found. This briefly describes the fish incarnation (*Matsyāvatāra*) by Lord Varaha to Dharani (Earth). The following prayer extols Lord Matsya, when appeared in the form of huge fish.

श्री वराह उवाच –

नमोऽस्तु वेदान्तरगाऽप्रतर्क्य, नमोऽस्तु नारायण मत्स्यरूप ।  
नमोऽस्तु ते सुस्वर विश्वमूर्ते, नमोऽस्तु विद्या द्वयरूपधारिन् ॥ 1 ॥  
नमोऽस्तु चन्द्रार्कं अनेकरूप, जलान्त विश्व स्थित चारु नेत्र ।  
नमोऽस्तु विष्णोः शरणं ब्रजामः, प्रयाहि नो मत्स्य तनुं विहाय ॥ 2 ॥  
त्वया ततं विश्वं अनन्तमूर्ते, पृथङ्गते किञ्चिद् इहास्ति देव ।  
भवान् न चास्य व्यतिरिक्त मूर्तिः, त्वत्तो वयन्ते शरणं प्रपन्नाः ॥ 3 ॥  
स्वात्मेन्दु वह्निश्च मनश्च रूपं, पुराण मूर्तेस्तव चाब्ज नेत्र ।  
क्षमस्व शम्भो यदि भक्ति हीनं, त्वया जगद् भासति देव देव ॥ 4 ॥  
विरुद्धं एतत् तव देव रूप, सुभाषणं सुस्वनं अद्रि तुल्यम् ।  
पुराण देवेश जगन्निवास, शमं प्रयाह्याऽच्युत तीव्र भानो ॥ 5 ॥  
नमामः सर्वे शरणं प्रपन्ना, भयाच्च ते रूपं इदं प्रपश्य ।  
लोके समस्तं भवता विनाद्य, न विद्यते देह गतं पुराणम् ॥ 6 ॥

In *Subhāṣitaratnabhāṇḍāgāra* there is a section named *Daśāvatāra*, wherein *Matsyāvatāra* is praised in fifteen slokas. I would like to share with you a sloka for each.

वेदानुद्धरते जगन्निवहते भूगोलसद्भिन्ने  
दैत्यं दारयते बलिं छलयते क्षत्रक्षयं कुर्वते ।  
पौलस्त्यं जयते हलं कलयते कारुण्यमातन्वते म्लेच्छान्मूर्च्छयते  
दशाकृतिकृते कृष्णाय तुभ्यं नमः ॥

मग्ने मेरौ पतति तपने तोयविन्दाविवेन्दा-

वन्तर्लीने जलधिसलिले व्याकुले देवलोके ।  
मात्स्यं रूपं मुखपुटतटाकृष्ट निर्मुक्त बार्धि-  
श्रीकान्तस्य स्थलजलगतं वेत्यलक्ष्यं पुनातु ॥

Through the present article, we had an opportunity to remember the God in *Matsyāvatāra* and I am sure that the *Matsyāvatāra* Lord will definitely shower His graceful glances on us.

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