

able preceptors he instructed that the boy should never mutter 'Nārāyaṇā namaḥ' but should on the other hand mutter 'Hiraṇyāya namaḥ' only. Not only that, he wiped out the name of Nārāyaṇa from the land altogether. Prahlaḍa stayed in the house of the preceptor and studied his lessons. One day Prahlaḍa went to see his father along with his preceptor. Hiraṇyakaśipu was drunk then. Prahlaḍa went and prostrated before his father and Hiraṇyakaśipu lifting the boy up from the ground asked him with affection to repeat to him all the good things he had learned so far and Prahlaḍa quickly repeated thus :—"I bow down to Mahāviṣṇu, the root cause of all things seen and unseen, the protector of this visible universe, who is without beginning, centre and end and who is without origin, growth and decay."

The words of Prahlaḍa struck his father like a thunderbolt. With his lips trembling with anger Hiraṇyakaśipu stared with his blood-red eyes at the preceptor. The frightened Guru again and again submitted that he had never taught him any of the kind the boy had repeated before his father. Then who must have taught him those things ? the emperor enquired. Then Prahlaḍa said that all those things were put into his mind by Mahāviṣṇu himself. A hot discussion then took place between Prahlaḍa and his father and in the end Hiraṇyakaśipu ordered the preceptor to take away Prahlaḍa and make another earnest attempt to correct him and bring him round to the emperor's liking. Prahlaḍa stayed for another period with the Guru serving him with devotion and studying well. After a long time Prahlaḍa was again taken before his father and the latter as before asked him to repeat what he had studied so far. To the shocking disappointment of Hiraṇyakaśipu Prahlaḍa again repeated verses in praise of Mahāviṣṇu. The emperor's rage knew no bounds and he ordered his men to kill his son. (Chapter 17, Aṁśa 1, Viṣṇu Purāṇa).

5) *Torturing Prahlaḍa*. On hearing the order of Hiraṇyakaśipu many armed soldiers surrounded Prahlaḍa. Prahlaḍa addressed them thus : "Oh daityas, Mahāviṣṇu resides in your weapons, in you all and in me also. Since that is the real truth your weapons will not injure me." The daityas struck him hard with their weapons but Prahlaḍa did not feel pain at all.

Hiraṇyakaśipu then sent thousands of poisonous serpents led by great ones like Takṣaka. When they started thrusting their venomous fangs into his body, Prahlaḍa stood cheerfully meditating on Mahāviṣṇu and he did not even feel the bitings. On the other hand the fangs of the serpents dropped out from their mouths and the gems on the heads of the big ones burst out and all the snakes felt sorry for their action.

Hiraṇyakaśipu then sent the aṣṭadiggajas (the eight elephants who bear the burden of this earth) to kill Prahlaḍa. The huge animals bigger than the biggest of mountains threw the boy to the ground and struck him with their long and pointed tusks. Prahlaḍa lay meditating on Mahāviṣṇu and the tusks that hit the body of Prahlaḍa were broken to bits. Prahlaḍa was then thrown into a pit of fire. But the wind-blown ferocious fire was not able to burn him and as he lay in the fire-pit meditating on Mahāviṣṇu he felt he was lying on a bed of lotuses.

When things progressed so far the astonished priests of the palace advised the emperor to put a stop to tortur-

ing Prahlaḍa. Their consoling words alleviated his rage and he sent Prahlaḍa again to his Guru for another term of study. He stayed with his Guru and continued his studies. Whenever he got leisure he taught the other inmates of the āśrama lessons in Viṣṇumārga. Hiraṇyakaśipu was informed of this and obeying orders from him the asuras gave poison to Prahlaḍa. That too was of no avail. The royal priests got angry and they created a devil as ferocious as the flames of fire. The devil with mighty thumpings on earth dashed towards Prahlaḍa and hit him on his breast with its spike. The spike broke into pieces and the devil turning back cursed the priests. Then the daityarāja took him to the top of a mountain twentyfour miles high and pushed him down from there. The boy fell down meditating on Mahāviṣṇu and the goddess of earth received him with extended hands and prevented a painful impact with the ground. The father became furious and sent Śambarāśura to kill his son. Śambara tried many magical attacks. Prahlaḍa without any ill-feeling towards Śambara sat meditating on Mahāviṣṇu and then Viṣṇu sent his Sudarśana wheel against the demon and he was forced to retreat. Then by orders from Hiraṇyakaśipu the wind god entered the body of Prahlaḍa. Prahlaḍa knew it and he sat meditating on Viṣṇu and the latter entering the body of Prahlaḍa drank the wind inside him. When Hiraṇyakaśipu was defeated in all his attempts to kill Prahlaḍa he sent his son again to his Guru. Then the preceptor taught him everything that was needed for a king and also the science of justice written by Śukrācārya. When Prahlaḍa completed his education and the Guru felt the boy had become humble he took him back to Hiraṇyakaśipu.

Once again Hiraṇyakaśipu entered into a discussion on god with his son and dissatisfied with his continued devotion to Viṣṇu decided again to kill his son. He was thrown into the ocean bound hand and foot. With every movement of Prahlaḍa the ocean became turbulent and water rose on all sides. There was a deluge on earth. Hiraṇyakaśipu called the daityas to his side and said : "Oh daityas, bring all the mountains on earth and create a barrier round the ocean so that my wicked son cannot get outside the ocean. Fire does not kill this boy; he is not wounded by any of the weapons; wind, poison, devils, magic, falls from heights and even the diggajas could not kill him. So let him remain in water for thousands of years together and then he will die."

The daityas and dānavas brought mountains and dropped them over Prahlaḍa lying inside the ocean. The mountains lay spread over thousands of miles. Lying thus in the ocean the pious boy prayed to Mahāviṣṇu and the latter appeared before him and granted him boons. Escaping from the ocean Prahlaḍa went to his father and prostrated before him. Hiraṇyakaśipu was astounded to see him alive and taking him in his arms embraced him and with tears rolling down his cheeks for having tortured him so far asked him "My son, you are still alive, are you not ?" After that he started treating him as his son. (Chapter 20, Aṁśa 1, Viṣṇu Purāṇa).

6) *The incarnation of Narasiṁha*. But as days went by Hiraṇyakaśipu got wild again. He could not bear his son's increasing devotion to Viṣṇu. He hated to hear Prahlaḍa's chantings of Viṣṇu's name and so one day