

Matsya Avatar

The first incarnation of Krishna

This is the story of how the Lord once incarnated as a fish. This happened because once Lord Brahma lost the Vedas, which were stolen by an asura called Hayagriva, who lived at the bottom of the ocean. Since a fish is the best animal for living in the water, Krishna took the form of a fish to get back the Vedas.



There once lived a king named Satyavrata. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and daily worshipped Him. One day when he was doing his daily worship, a tiny fish seemed to get caught in his water pot. He didn't want to hurt the fish, so he took it gently out of the pot and put it in the river.

But to his surprise, the fish called out, "Oh please don't leave me in this river! There are many creatures here that will swallow me up!"

So king Satyavrata put the fish back into his water pot took it home. The next morning he could see that the fish had grown quite a bit. Now it was too big for the water pot. He put it in a larger container. As soon as he did that the fish immediately grew, filling the larger container, too. So the king transferred the fish to an even larger pot. The fish quickly grew, filling that also. Every container that the king put the fish into, it would immediately outgrow! Finally the fish got so big that the king had to put it in a lake.

But, again, the fish filled up the whole lake. So the king took the fish and placed it in the ocean. The fish wasn't happy with this either, for it was scared of the other water animals that would kill it.

The king was certainly bewildered by now. Then he realized that this fish must be none other than the Lord Himself. He offered obeisances to the fish saying, "I have never known a fish to grow the way you have grown. I am certain that you are the Supreme Lord. I know that You come for the welfare of the world. But why have You taken the form of a fish? I am your devotee, o Lord, and ask that You enlighten me."

The Lord replied, "In seven days, the world will be plunged into the great flood of devastation. A large boat will come to you then. Now, collect all the herbs, plants, seeds, trees, and all kinds of animals. Take them and the seven Rishis with you into the boat. When the storms rock the boat, tie it up with the serpent Vāsuki to My horn. Do not be afraid. I will support the boat during the flood and will give you transcendental knowledge."

Satyavrata did as he was told. In seven days, the floods started. There were terrific storms and the clouds poured water down on the earth. You could no longer see the earth, or heaven. All was water. The king and the seven sages sat in the boat in deep meditation. King Satyavrata prayed, "Oh Lord, just as gold loses its impurities when it comes into contact with fire, so the living being loses his ignorance when he worships You. Please give me knowledge of You and cut the ignorance from my heart!"

And as Satyavrata listened, the Supreme Lord gave Him spiritual knowledge. When the flood was over, the Lord killed the demon Hayagriva and returned the Vedas to Brahma.