

## **NARASIMHA JAYANTHI**

Narasimha Jayanthi falls on Vaishaka suddha chaturdasi. This is the day Lord Maha Vishnu took the avatar of Narasimha (a combination of man's body and lion's face) and killed the demon, Hiranyakasipu.

**Pooja procedure :** Nine days prior to Narasimha jayanthi, Narasimha navarathri commences. The ninth day of fasting is Narasimha jayanthi. On this day, special pooja and prayers are offered to Lord Narasimha with special prasadam like Panaka (cold, sweetened jiggery water) and thak or neermore (buttermilk) and kosambari (moong dal soaked in water and salt added). Since this occurs during the hot summer, a fan made out of palm leaf is presented to the Brahmins. Some people burn oil lamp called Akhanda deepa for a month.

### **Story of Narasimha Jayanthi**

This marks the birth of Lord Narasimha (a combination of man with a lion's face), the avatar of Lord Vishnu, created to kill Hiranyakasipu. Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were to demon brothers. These two brothers in their previous birth were the Dwarpalakas (gate-keepers) of Lord Vishnu. They were called Jaya and Vijaya. When sage Sanaka and others once came to see the Lord, the two brothers intercepted them and refused entry. They were cursed by the sages to be born as the asuras (demons), through Diti and her husband Kasyapa. They came to be known as Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu. They engaged themselves in cruel oppression of the people. Hiranyaksha was killed by Lord Vishnu, when he incarnated as Varaha (wild boar). Hiranyakasipu smitten with sorrow and anger vowed to destroy Lord Vishnu. By intense tapas, he got a boon from Lord Brahma that he could not be killed by any God, man or beast.

To him was born a son who was named Prahlada. Even when he was in his mother's womb, he was imbibed with intense love of God, by the grace of Sage Narada. Though by birth he was a demon, and in age a child, he developed intense love for Hari and became a Haribhaktha. Hiranyakasipu, his father disliked the odd behavior of his son, which went against Asura swabhavas. He therefore, tried in vain to brainwash him by engaging teachers but to no purpose. Prahlada was a firm Haribhaktha. The angered father had him tortured in many ways by piercing with a trident, trampled repeatedly by elephants, bitten by snakes, given poisoned food, thrown down from mountain peaks all to no avail. No pain was felt by the boy.

Enraged, one day Hiranyakasipu shouting at Prahlada asked, "O, traitor, why do you challenge me, who is your support?".

Prahlada replied, “Mahavishnu is my support and your support too”. In a fit of anger, Hiranyakasipu asked, “Where is he? Where is your Hari? Is he in this pillar?” So saying he struck at a pillar with his leg. A thunderous sound was heard by this impact. The pillar broke into two. Out came a form, that was neither a man, nor a beast, nor God, but a man with a Lion’s head. (Nara means man, Simha means Lion), fierce looking, with matted locks, mouth wide open with sharp teeth. It took Hiranyakasipu on its lap, tore upon his chest with its nails. Hiranyakasipu was awe struck. Prahlada realized that it was Hari and pleaded with him. The Lord was



pleased and blessed Prahlada. The man-lion form was none other than the Lord, henceforth, came to be known as Lord Narasimha.

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