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Śrī Daśāvātāra Stotram

(from Gita-govinda)
by Poet Jayadeva

The Śrī Daśāvātāra Stotram is a hymn that praises the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Here is the text of the stotram:

(1)

pralaya-payodhi-jale dhritavan asi vedam
vihita-vahitra-caritram akhedam
kesava dhrita-mina-sarira jaya jagadisa hare

(2)

kshতির iha vipulatare tishthati tava prishthe
dharani-dharana-kina-cakra-garishthe
kesava dhrita-kurma-sarira jaya jagadisa hare

(3)

vasati dasana-sikhare dharani tava lagna
sasini kalanka-kaleva nimagna
kesava dhrita-sukara-rupa jaya jagadisa hare

(4)

tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhuta-sringam
dalita-hiranyakasipu-tanu-bhringam
kesava dhrita-narahari-rupa jaya jagadisa hare

(5)

chalayasi vikramane balim adbhuta-vamana
pada-nakha-nira-janita-jana-pavana
kesava dhrita-vamana-rupa jaya jagadisa hare

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(6)

**kshatriya-rudhira-maye jagad-apagata-papam
snapayasi payasi samita-bhava-tapam
kesava dhrita-bhrigupati-rupa jaya jagadisa hare**

(7)

**vitarsi dikshu rane dik-pati-kamaniyam
dasa-mukha-mauli-balim ramaniyam
kesava dhrita-rama-sarira jaya jagadisa hare**

(8)

**vahasi vapushi visade vasanam jaladabham
hala-hati-bhiti-milita-yamunabham
kesava dhrita-haladhara-rupa jaya jagadisa hare**

(9)

**nindasi yajna-vidher ahaha sruti-jatam
sodaya-hridaya darsita-pasu-ghatam
kesava dhrita-buddha-sarira jaya jagadisa hare**

(10)

**mleccha-nivaha-nidhane kalayasi karavalam
dhumaketum iva kim api karalam
kesava dhrita-kalki-sarira jaya jagadisa hare**

(11)

**sri-jayedeva-kaver idam uditam udaram
srinu sukha-dam subha-dam bhava-saram
kesava dhrita-dasa-vidha-rupa jaya jagadisa hare**

Meaning(1)

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"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of a fish! All glories to You! You easily acted as a boat in the form of a giant fish just to give protection to the Vedas, which had become immersed in the turbulent sea of devastation."

This verse expresses deep devotion and gratitude towards Lord Vishnu for his divine protection and intervention during a time of great crisis. It highlights his power, compassion, and willingness to take any form necessary to serve and protect his devotees.

Meaning (2)

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of a tortoise! All glories to you! In this incarnation of yours, the great Mandara Mountain rests upon your back, and you are sustaining the entire universe, which is like a tiny mustard seed, merely by the flickering of your eyelids. O God, we offer our respectful obeisance unto you."

The verse describes Lord Vishnu's Kurma avatar, in which he took the form of a tortoise to help the Devas (heavenly gods) and Asuras (demons) churn the ocean of milk to obtain the nectar of immortality. The prayer extols Lord Vishnu's greatness and his ability to sustain the universe effortlessly.

Meaning (3)

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of a boar! All glories to you! The earth, which had become immersed in the Garbhodaka Ocean at the bottom of the universe, sits

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fixed upon the tip of your tusk like a spot upon the moon. O God, we offer our respectful obeisance unto you."

The verse describes Lord Vishnu's Varaha avatar, in which he took the form of a boar to rescue the earth goddess, Bhumi, who had been submerged in the ocean by a demon named Hiranyaksha. The prayer extols Lord Vishnu's greatness and how He rescued the earth and restored order to the universe.

Meaning (4)

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Narasimha! All glories to you! The nails of your hands and feet are extremely fearsome and awe-inspiring. They have crushed the body of the demon Hiranyakashipu, who was like a tiny insect. O God, we offer our respectful obeisance unto you."

The verse describes Lord Vishnu's Narasimha avatar, in which he took the form of a half-man, half-lion creature to defeat the demon Hiranyakashipu, who had gained a boon that made him invincible to all creatures except humans and animals. The prayer extols Lord Vishnu's greatness and his ability to protect his devotees and destroy evil.

Meaning (5)

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Vamana! All glories to you! In this incarnation, you tricked the demon king Bali by asking him for three steps of land, and then grew to an enormous size to cover the entire universe with your first two steps.

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The water that washed your lotus feet purified the souls of all those who drank it. O God, we offer our respectful obeisance unto you."

The verse describes Lord Vishnu's Vamana avatar, in which he took the form of a dwarf Brahmin and asked the demon king Bali for three steps of land. When Bali agreed, Vamana grew to an enormous size and covered the entire universe with his first two steps, and then placed his third step on Bali's head, sending him to the underworld. The prayer extols Lord Vishnu's greatness and his ability to outsmart the most powerful demons.

Meaning (6)

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Parashurama! All glories to you! You have removed the sins of the world, which were as plentiful as the blood of the Kshatriyas. You have bathed the earth with the water of your axe, which has relieved the distress of those who were tormented by material existence. O God, we offer our respectful obeisance unto you."

The verse describes Lord Vishnu's Parashurama avatar, in which he took the form of a warrior sage and used his axe to slay the corrupt and sinful Kshatriya kings. The prayer extols Lord Vishnu's greatness and his ability to purify the world and relieve the suffering of his devotees.

Meaning (7)

"O Kesava, Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who has assumed the form of Rama! All glories to You! In the battle of Lanka, You destroyed the ten-headed demon Ravana and offered his heads as a delightful sacrifice to

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the presiding deities of the ten directions, led by Indra. This act was long-awaited by all of them, who were much harassed by this monster."

This verse praises Lord Rama for his victory over Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, in the epic Ramayana. It highlights Lord Rama's bravery and his role as the protector of the universe. The offering of Ravana's heads to the presiding deities symbolizes the triumph of good over evil and the restoration of order in the universe.

Meaning (8)

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Balarama, the wielder of the plow! All glories to You! On Your brilliant white body You wear garments the color of a fresh blue rain cloud. These garments are colored like the beautiful dark hue of the River Yamuna, who feels great fear due to the striking of Your plowshare."

This verse expresses deep devotion and reverence for Lord Balarama, who is one of Lord Krishna's most prominent and beloved incarnations.

It describes his striking appearance, with his white body and blue garments, and highlights his power and strength as symbolized by his plow.

Meaning (9)

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"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Buddha! All glories to You! You disregard the Vedic injunctions for performing sacrifices, and yet by Your mercy You show compassion towards the animals by giving them protection. O Lord Buddha, may all glories be unto You!"

This verse acknowledges Lord Buddha, who is considered an incarnation of Lord Krishna, as a compassionate protector of animals. It also acknowledges his disregard for the Vedic injunctions for performing sacrifices, which is a departure from traditional Hindu beliefs. The verse highlights the idea that the ultimate goal of all spiritual paths is compassion and mercy, and Lord Buddha is recognized as embodying these virtues.

Meaning (10)

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Kalki, the destroyer of the barbarians! All glories to You! You carry a sword, which looks like a comet, for killing the barbarians in the battle of the end of the world. O Lord Kalki, may all glories be unto You!"

This verse speaks of the Kalki incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu, who is believed to appear at the end of the current age to rid the world of evil and usher in a new era of righteousness. The verse describes Kalki as carrying a sword that looks like a comet, symbolizing his great power and the intensity of the destruction that will accompany his appearance.

The verse also refers to the barbarians or "mlecchas" who will be destroyed by Kalki, representing the forces of evil and chaos that will be vanquished by his appearance.

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Meaning (11)

"O Lord of the universe, Kesava, who has assumed ten different forms! This beautiful and uplifting hymn has been composed by Jayadeva, the poet. Please listen to it and gain happiness and auspiciousness. It is the essence of all spiritual knowledge."

The verse glorifies Lord Vishnu as the one who has taken ten different forms (Dasha-avatars) to protect the universe from evil and to establish righteousness. The hymn is composed by the poet Jayadeva, and it is said to bring happiness and auspiciousness to those who listen to it.

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