

## **Incarnation One**

### **Matsya - The Fish**

A long time ago a very good and religious king ruled the entire world. He was Emperor Satyavrata.

One day, whilst the King was bathing in the Kritamala River, he scooped some clear water up into the palms of his hands. He saw there a tiny fish and immediately dropped it back into the water. Then he heard a soft voice crying, “My dear King, why are you throwing me back when there are bigger fish who will eat me? I am afraid of them. Please help me.”

Astonished at this talking fish, the king put it in a jug and then returned to his palace.

The next morning when the King went to see the fish, he was astonished to see it had grown. It was now nearly as big as the jug!

The fish said, “My dear King, I do not like living in this water pot. It is too small. Please find me somewhere more comfortable.”

The King took the fish, called Matsya, and put him in a huge well in his palace gardens. Within a few moments, he grew and grew until he was feeling very cramped by the walls of the well. Again, he asked the King to find him a larger home.

The King took him to a nearby pond, but Matsya kept on growing. The king put him in the largest lake he could find. But when even that was not big enough, he decided to take him to the seashore.

As Emperor Satyavrata was putting the fish into the ocean, he heard the fish exclaim, “Oh hero, there are many powerful and dangerous sharks in this ocean who will eat me alive. Do not throw me in here!”

Hearing this, the king cried out, “How is it you can speak? You are a fish! Who are you? You must be an incarnation of God. My lord, I wish to know why you have taken this form. Please tell me!”

When King Satyavrata spoke in this way, Matsya replied, “Oh Emperor, your devotion has pleased Me. Thus I have revealed Myself to you in this form as a fish. Now please listen carefully as I tell you why.

This universe is not eternal. It will not last forever. Everything in this world is temporary. By My arrangement, on the seventh day from today the whole universe will flood with water.

When all the planets flood, a huge boat sent by Me will appear before you. I want you to collect all different types of herbs and seeds, and load them onto the boat. Then, along with seven holy men and all the different animals and other living beings, you should board the ship. You should not be disheartened. Even the sun and moon will become very dim. The only light will be from the halos of the seven saints.

“When the powerful winds toss your boat, tie it to My horn using the gigantic snake called Vashuki as a rope. Together we will travel over the waters until the storm has abated. During that time, I will instruct you in the knowledge of the Vedas. These sacred books reveal all the mysteries of the universe. Thus you will know everything about me and my creation.”

After instructing the King, Matsya swam away into the middle of the ocean, and the King Satyavrata began to wait.

Exactly one week later, huge inky-blue clouds gathered and rolled in the sky. Unending rain began to pour as thick as pillars. Gradually all the rivers overflowed onto the land.

As King Satyavrata remembered the order of the Lord, he saw a massive boat floating towards him. After loading the varieties of seeds, herbs and creepers, the King boarded the boat with the seven saints and all the different living creatures.

Fierce gales tossed the boat to and fro, but the King was not afraid as he remembered the Lord. Suddenly, against the black and stormy sky he saw the gigantic golden form of Lord Matsya swimming towards them. On his head was an enormous golden horn. The emperor anchored the boat to Matsya’s horn using Vashuki the snake. Then he offered prayers to the Lord.

Lord Matsya, swimming in the huge waves and pulling the boat, began to explain the wisdom of the Vedas. The King and the saints all listened attentively. The Lord taught them how this universe, with all its planets, was created. He explained how it remains for some time, and how eventually it is all destroyed. After this destruction, another creation follows, going on repeatedly- just like the seasons follow one another, year after year. He explained that the soul lives forever, even though the body must die. And finally, He taught that by serving Him everyone can be happy and live eternally in the spiritual world.

Upon hearing the words of the Divine Person in His form as a huge fish, the King and the saints all became peaceful and happy. Thus they developed their love of God.

Later these teachings of Lord Matsya became part of the Vedic scripture. Since then, many, many saints have spent their lives studying these books. In this way, they have tried to become perfect human beings by loving God and loving all His creatures.