CHAPTER I

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Although the first five of ten incarnations of Vishnu are mythological in character and all other four, except Narasimha have clear cut references in Vedas. Some traditional scholars like Krishnamacharya trace the myth in the Rg-veda as stated by Swain. A stray reference found in the Rg-Veda, hints at significant characteristics which clearly resemble with the characteristic of Narasimha. While describing the Lord Vishnu, the hymn addresses as “For this his mighty deed is Vishnu landed, like some wild beast, dread, prowling, mountain-roaring”. But a direct and earlier reference of Narasimha is found in the Taittiriya Aranyaka, where Lord Narasimha is invoked in a Gayatri Mantra:

“वज्रनाथ विग्रहेः तीक्ष्णंद्रिष्टयं धीमधि तन्नो नारसिंहः प्राचोदयात्”

Here he is described as one who possesses sharp claws and fangs, which were used as weapon to kill the demon Hiranyakasipu. Therefore, we can consider that this idea of Narasimha is for the first time mentioned directly. But Swain opines that this myth belongs to the period of epics. Besides the Mahabharata and its later addition Harivamsa, the Narasimha myth is found in the following Puranas and Upapuranas.

1) The Agnipurana
2) The Vayupurana
3) The Brahmandapurana
4) The Brahmapurana

1 Krishnamacharya in his interpretation of the ‘dve-virupe’ Sukta (Rg Veda 1.95) tries to prove the existence of the myth in Rg veda (Krishnamacharya viracitam Dve-Virupe sukta bhasyam edited by V.S. Bhinde published by Bharata lihasa Satyadhaka Mandala; Poona, 1968) – A.C. Swain “A study of the Man-Lion Myth”, p38
2 ‘प्र तद्दृश्य: स्तवते वीरयण मूर्ति: न भीम: कुशरो गिरिणा’ Rg- Veda 1.154.2a
3 Tai A. X. 1. 6
4 Swain, A.C., A study of the Man-Lion Myth  P. 38
5) The Skandapurana  
6) The Vishnudharmottarapurana  
7) The Padmapurana  
8) The Matsyapurana  
9) The Saurapurana  
10) The Kurmapurana  
11) The Sivapurana  
12) The Lingapurana  
13) The Vishnupurana  
14) The Narasimhapurana  
15) The Bhagavatapurana and  
16) The Garudapurana

The Narasimha myth in the above texts will be discussed in the developmental order of the concept of Narasimha, but not the chronological order of puranas.

The Mahabharata:

The Narasimha Myth referred to in the Taittiriya Aranyaka has been developed into an anecdote in the Mahabharata, while enumerating the important incarnations of Vishnu. The Aranyakaparva narrates how the Lord Vishnu, having manifested himself in the form of Narasimha has killed the demon king Hiranyakasipu. The reason for slaying Hiranyakasipu is given in the Santiparva briefly. Vishnu says that “I shall kill Hiranyakasipu, son of Diti, because he is destroying the sacrifices meant for the benefit of deities.” So the reason for killing Hiranyakasipu is that he was destroying the sacrifices meant for the deities.

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5 आदिद्वारा महावीरो विष्णुवक्ष्युपुस्तकायां।
नारसिंहे वनु कूलवा सुदितर्पुरुसेषोऽपि वलितम् II M. Bh III 100.2

6 नारसिंहे वनु कूलवा विष्णुवक्ष्युपुस्तकायां पुनः।
सूचकायं हनिष्ययां वस्त्रणं दितिमन्तनं II M Bh XII 326.73
1) The Agnipurana:

In the Agnipurana, while describing the ten incarnations of Vishnu, the incarnation of Narasimha is narrated in only two verses. It says that Narasimha has killed Hiranyakasipu, the brother of Hiranyaksha when he defeated the celestials in the war and monopolized their share of offerings in the sacrifices.

2) The Vayupurana:

The Narasimha myth in the Vayupurana is stated thus: The demon Hiranyakasipu performed penance for thousands of years to propitiate Brahma. Brahma having pleased appeared and bestowed boons on him. Hiranyakasipu wanted that "he should not be killed by any being; and all asuras and devas should be placed on equal footing and he should be crowned with supreme lordship. Brahma granted these boons and disappeared at once. Hiranyakasipu attained supreme position by defeating all his enemies. Such a powerful demon king Hiranyakasipu was torn off by Vishnu in the form of Narasimha by his sharp claws which were neither wet nor dry.

In this episode although there are no conditions under which the demon king Hiranyakasipu should not to be killed, it is stated that the demon was torn off by the claws of Narasimha, which were neither wet nor dry.

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7 The Agnipurana, IV. 3-5
8 The Vayupurana, Uttarartha, 6. 61-66
9 नवरुत्सु तेन निनिमित्त नामरुक्षक नया स्मृत: 1 Vayu P. Uttaradha 6 66
3) The **Brahmanda Purana**:

Next comes the *Brahmanda Purana*. A.C. Swain remarked that both, Pargitar and Prof. Willibard Kirfel are of the view that both the texts of the Brahmanda Purana and the Vayu Purana were based on one text Kemaľ, one manuscript and two separate redactors. Hence two different Puranas came into existence. The Narasimha Myth in the *Brahmanda Purana* was an improved version of the *Vayu Purana*, though there are several textual parallels.

The boon granted to Hiranyakasipu in the *Vayu Purana* is that “danavas, asuras and devas should be put on equal footing”, while the demand of Hiranyakasipu according to the *Brahmanda Purana* is that “all the danavas, asuras and devas should be under his control”. It clearly establishes his desire of becoming Supreme Lord. The conditions under which Hiranyakasipu supposed to die are enumerated in the *Brahmanda Purana* and in the *Vayu Purana*. He desired that he should die neither by a wet nor by a dry thing; and neither during day nor at night. Bhrama grants the boon. While the oppression of gods by Hiranyakasipu was narrated in a single verse in the *Vayu Purana*, the *Brahmanda Purana* describes it in six verses. Hiranyakasipu assumed the forms of the Moon, the Sun and the Wind; he became the priest, the sacrifice and the expounder of the mantras. He was the lord and protector. The demons along with the deities shared the same juice. All were ordered to worship him only. As result, all the deities and sages

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10 *The Brahmanda Purana*. 2. 5. 13-19
12 Prof. Willibard Kirfel. *Das purana pance lakshana* (cf. *ibid*.)
13 आशुतोषिकप्रवचन दिवसारी तैयत य प्रभुम्बा । *The Brahmanda*. II.V.17 Prof. Kane observes that some of these conditions to Hiranyakasipu were supplied by the story of the slaughter of Namuci by Indra at dawn with the foam of water. The conditions for killing Namuci are,” he should not be killed by day or by night, with dry or the moist, with palm or with fist and with staff or bow etc. (Saptapatha Brahmana 12.7.3.1-4. History of Dharma Sastra, Poona, volume, II pp 718-719.
14 *The Vayu Purana*, Uttarakatha. 6-65.
15 *The Brahmanda Purana*. 2.5.20-25.
were used to paying homages to him only. The method of killing the
demon king is same as in the Vayupurana\textsuperscript{16}. In this Purana, there is a
reference that the demon king had four sons among whom Prahlada
was the eldest.\textsuperscript{17}

4) The Brahmapurana and 5) The Skandapurana

The version of the Brahmapurana\textsuperscript{18} is exactly same as the legend
given in the Harivamsaparva of Harivamsa\textsuperscript{19}.

The demon king Hiranyakasipu did penance for eleven thousand
and five hundred years. Brahma being pleased by his penance
appeared before him along with all the devas, Yakshas, Kinnaras,
Sages and Rivers, the Planets etc. When he asked about the boon of
his choice, Hirayanyakasipu put forth enormous conditions under which
he should embrace the death - “he should be killed by a person who
can kill him with a single stroke and at the same time the person should
neither be a deity nor a demon nor a gandharva nor a yaksha nor a
reptile”\textsuperscript{20}. Further he states that his death should not be caused by a
curse of the sages, not by the weapons, nor the mountains, nor the
rivers and not by anything wet or dry. And he should not die either in the
sky or on the earth. Brahma confers the boon which is great and
significant. When the deities were afraid of the consequences of the
boon, Brahma consoles them saying that the demon king had to enjoy
the fruit of his penance and he would be killed by Vishnu at an
appropriate time.

Hiranyakasipu, being proud of his boon oppressed all the deities
and seers and enjoyed the homage of sacrifices meant for the deities.

\textsuperscript{16} नारदिविदेश संकृतो नारदपुर्यो नामः प्रतिः I. Ibid 2.5.29b
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. 2.5.33
\textsuperscript{18} The Brahmapurana. 213.44-79
\textsuperscript{19} The Harivamsaparva of Harivamsa. 41.40-78
\textsuperscript{20} The Brahmapurana. 213.55-56
Then Brahma along with all the deities approached Vishnu and reports the atrocities of Hiranyakasipu. Vishnu understanding the plight of celestials entered the assembly hall of Hiranyakasipu in the form of Narasimha and killed the demon king with a single stroke.21

The specialty of the *Brahmapurana* is that the condition asked by Hiranyakasipu as a part of the boon is that he should die in the hands of a person, who can kill him with a single stroke, but not by a god or a demon or a *Gandharva* or a reptile. It seems to fulfill this condition only, Hiranyakasipu and other demons were killed with a single stroke by Narasimha, whereas the other versions say that he was torn off by the sharp claws. But this method of killing will be contrary to the condition that the demon should not die by any thing wet or dry. Even in the *Skandapurana*, while explaining the greatness of Narasimha Tirtha, we find the boon of Hiranyakasipu that he should be killed by a person who can kill him, his race and his followers with a single stroke of his palm.22 Accordingly the *Brahmapurana*, the *Harivamsaparva* of *Harivamsa* and the *Skandapurana* Hiranyakasipu was killed by a single stroke of Narasimha.

6) The *Vishnudharmottarapurana*:

The story of the *Vishnudharmottarapurana*23 deviated a little from the story of the *Brahmapurana* and states that the demon king Hiranyakasipu was playfully torn off into pieces by Narasimha by placing him on his lap.24 In the *Puranas* dealt with so far have no mention of Prahlada at all.

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21 Ibid. 213 79
22 The *Skandapurana*, V 77 10
23 The *Vishnudharmottarapurana*, I 54
24 Ibid. I 54 50
7) The *Padmapurana* and 8) The *Matsyapurana*:

These *Puranas* represent a later development of Narasimha myth. Compared to the previous versions a more developed legend is found in the *Padmapurana*²⁵. The myth has taken a poetic style as there is a beautiful description of the assembly of Hiranyakasipu. Many demons like Bali, Vali, Naraka and Prahlada were attending upon him, when Vishnu appeared in the form of Narasimha in the assembly. Prahlada, who was of great prowess (दीर्घायु) recognized Narasimha at first and saw the whole universe in him including the assembly hall of Hiranyakasipu along with the members present there²⁶. Though he could recognize the divinity of Narasimha, he could not identify him as Vishnu himself in the form of Narasimha²⁷. By observing the cosmic form, Prahlada surprisingly expressed his doubt to his father Hiranyakasipu. But Hiranyakasipu without paying any attention ordered his men to catch the beast. Then there is a vivid description of the fight between Narasimha and Hiranyakasipu. When the fight was in progress many evil portents appeared and finally the demon king was torn off by Narasimha with his sharp claws.

In the *Matsyapurana*, the myth runs into three chapters²⁸, which is similar to the version of the *Padmapurana*. But the difference is that: In the *Padmapurana*, Prahlada with his divine form had the vision of the whole universe in Narasimha,²⁹ whereas he had the vision with his divine eye³⁰ in the *Matsyapurana*. Of these two versions, the version of the *Matsyapurana* "Divyena Cakshusa" is an appropriate one. Even in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavadgita*, Lord Krishna bestows

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²⁵ *The Padmapurana. V. 42.1-197*
²⁶ Ibid. V. 42.84-96
²⁷ अव्यक्तं परम दियं किसिदर्यगतम् | Ibid V.42.88
²⁸ The *Matsyapurana*. chapters 160-162
²⁹ दियेन यथुष्ण सिद्धस्यस्य द्येयमागतम् | Padmapurana V.42.85
³⁰ दियेन यथुष्ण सिद्धस्यस्य द्येयमागतम् | Matsyapurana 162.2
supernatural eye to Arjuna to enable him to witness his cosmic form (विधार्य), stating that he cannot witness cosmic form with normal eye.

The question that arises now is what made the Padmapurana and the Matsyapurana to bring Prahlada in to the myth and to say that Prahlada visualized the universal form of Narasimha, when earlier versions had not brought Prahlada into the myth of Narasimha though they were aware that Prahlada was the eldest son of Hiranyakasipu. Probably the reason may be assumed like this: At the beginning, Prahlada might have pictured as a great demon with demoniac nature in Mahabharata. But the subsequent additions of the Mahabharata might have brought complete change in the character of Prahlada, where he was depicted as a pious and noble person. In the Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna says "of the demons, I am Prahlada". In the evolution of Vaishnava cult, he was considered as a staunch devotee of Vishnu. It appears that because of these reasons, the Padmapurana and the Matsyapurana have introduced Prahlada in the assembly of Hiranyakasipu and made him visualize the cosmic form of Narasimha.

The versions of the Saurapurana, the Kurmapurana, and the Bhavishyaparva of the Harivamsa and Rudrasamhita of the Sivapurana form a bridge between two different characteristics of Prahlada i.e., a demon with usual demonic nature and a devotee of Vishnu as found in the versions of the Vishnu and the Bhagavatapuranas.

11 न तु मा शक्यसं दत्तुमनमैय स्वपक्षा ।
दित्य ददाति ते धर्मः पश्च मे योगीमुष्यम्।110 Bhagavadgita XI. 8
12 प्रज्ञात्यात्मिक देवतवाण।। Bhagavadgita X. 30
9) The Saurapurana:

The Saurapurana\(^{33}\) narrates that Hiranyakasipu, proud of the boon obtained from Brahma began to torture the divines. Then Vishnu manifested himself before Hiranyakasipu in the form of Narasimha and challenged him for a fight. The demon sent Prahlada and other three sons to fight with Narasimha. When their great weapons such as Brahma, Vaishnava, Kaumara and Agneya have became futile,\(^{34}\) Narasimha caught hold of them at once. Hiranyakasipu became furious at the defeat of his sons. Meanwhile Prahlada, who realizes that Narasimha was none other than the supreme God Vishnu, advises his father and to surrender to Narasimha rather than to fight\(^{35}\). But Hiranyakasipu ignoring his words fought with Narasimha and being torn off with his sharp claws. A similar account is found in the Suryapurana\(^{36}\) also.

10) The Kurmapurana:

Next comes the Kurmapurana\(^{37}\) version of Narasimha myth. This version is almost similar to that of Saurapurana, but adds some more details of the weapons etc. Being requested by the deities to protect from the demon king, Vishnu created a divine person, who was invincible, fearful and gigantic, possessing conch, discus and club and ordered him to go and kill the demon king\(^{38}\). That person went to the city

\(^{33}\) The Saurapurana. 28.17-37
\(^{34}\) Ibid. 28.29 - 30
\(^{35}\) शार्क्य तु भगवद्वारं नृतिक्षयामिति जग्यं ध्यात्वा नरायणं देवं गवारामास दन्तवान् ।
एव नरायणो योगी प्रजात्मा नायकां ध्यात्वा न तु योजयो अवद्धिर्यति निदित्तस् ॥
\(^{37}\) The Kurmapurana. I.15 18-88
\(^{38}\) ध्यात्वादेववदूरस्य सीम्स्कुलस्य पुण्यत् स्वयं ।
अंद्रौभू मैत्रेक्षणं ग्राह्यते भगवानकम् ॥
of the demon king on the vehicle of Garuda and challenged by making a frightful sound (Bhairavanada). Hiranyakasipu sent his four sons to fight with him. Prahlada hurled the Brahmasstra; Anuhlada, the Vaisnava; Samhlada, the Kaumara; and Hlada, the Agneya. But all of them had become futile. The Devine Person caught hold of the hands and legs of all of them together and threw them away and shouted again. Hiranyakasipu became furious at the defeat of his sons and kicked heavily with his feet on the chest of that divine person. The divine person returned and informed the matter to Vishnu. Then lord Vishnu with his divine power created Narasimha with half body of a man and half body of a lion and sent again. Narasimha appeared before the demon king with dreadful fangs and resembling the fire of delusion, shining like the sun light at noon. Looking at Narasimha, the demon king sent Prahlada along with other demons to kill the lord, whom he assessed as inferior to him. Prahlada fought with the lord with all his efforts but was defeated. Then Hiranyaksa, by the order of his brother released Pasupatasstra and shouted. Prahlada finding the Pasupatasstra becoming futile against Narasimha realised that he is none other than the Omnipresent Almighty Vishnu and advised his father Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksa to surrender to the lord. However Hiranyakasipu ignoring his son’s advice and thinking Narasimha was inferior to him fought with him and was torn off by the lord with his sharp nails. Then Lord Vishnu returns to his abode.

The version of the Bhavisyparva of Harivamsa following the versions of the Padmapurana and the Malyapurana points out the conditions under which the demon king should not die. They are “the

शास्त्रांगादायौशॉ शराह गतिध्वजः: 1 ibid. 1.15.32 & 33

पादेन ताहांमात्र देवेत्वाटू हि बली 1 ibid. 1.15.47 b.

Hiranyaksa, the brother of the demon king Hiranyakasipu, who was supposed to have been killed by Vishnu in the form of varaha (boar) and for whose slaughter, Hiranyakasipu developed hatred towards Vishnu in earlier versions, find place here as assisted the demon king in his fight with Narasimha.

The Harivamsa (Bhavisyparva). Chs. 41-47
demon should not die either in the heaven or in the hell or on the earth or in the sky. He should not die either in day or at night. Another change was that when all the deities approached Vishnu requesting him to kill the demon king, he assured them and was worried as to how to kill the demon king under conditions imposed by the boon of Brahma. He went to Himalayas and thought over the method to kill the demon king. Like in the Padma and the Matsyapuranas, Prahlada saw the whole universe in Narasimha and narrated it to his father. When he did not pay any attention, he started to meditate upon Narasimha in whom he saw the whole universe by bowing down his head. When Prahlada was called Viryavan (of great prowess) in earlier versions, here he was called Mahamanti (very wise). Here though Prahlada was not a devotee of Vishnu from the beginning, he started meditation as soon as he witnessed the whole Universe in Narasimha. Thus his attitude of going against Dharma with usual demonic nature had transformed into devotional attitude. This helped the coming versions to project Prahlada as a true devotee of Vishnu.

Like in the Padmapurana, here also many evil omens were seen found while the fight between the demon king and Narasimha was in progress. An innovation in this version is the conversation of Hiranyakasipu and Sukracarya. Sukracarya, the royal priest of demons told that either the kingdom would be lost or the king would be killed because of those evil portents. But ignoring the prophecy of Sukracarya, Hiranyakasipu fought with Narasimha and was killed by him.

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42 ibid 41:15
43 ibid 43:17
44 ibid. Chapter 46.
11) The Sivapurana:

The Narasimha myth in the Sivapurana appears in two places like in the Harivamsa, at the Forty-third chapter of Yudhakanda of Rudrasamhita and 10 – 12 chapters of Satarudrasamhita.

The version of the Sivapurana almost followed the versions of the Padmapurana and the Harivamsa (Bhavishyaparva) with some minor changes. The main change is that the demon king unlike the earlier versions invaded the heaven and drove away the Gods as a revenge for the death of his brother in the hands of Vishnu. He started to perform a severe penance for propitiate Brahma to conquer the death. In the meantime the Gods once again settled in their places by subduing the demons. The flames caused by the severe penance of the demon king frightened the Gods and made them to approach Brahma for protection. Brahma appeared before the demon king and bestowed the boon. The arrogant Hiranyakasipu again started to torture the deities. Vishnu, being requested by the Gods, had taken the form of Narasimha and went to the city of the demon king and killed all the demons who opposed him. Prahlada visualized the supreme nature of Narasimha and advised his father to surrender in order to protect himself, since there was no one in all the three worlds equal to Him in prowess. The demon king, ignoring the advice of his son sent his warriors to fight with Narasimha and finally he himself was torn off into pieces by Narasimha. Then, Lord Narasimha after installing Prahlada on the throne disappeared. It is clearly stated that the God himself coronated Prahlada as the successor of the demon king.

Another version found in the Salarudrasamhita of the Sivapurana contains a slight different version. Like in the Harivamsa, the
Siva Purana too contains Narasimha myth in two different places. The present myth is really an extended version of the earlier one. An attempt for the establishment of the supremacy of Saivism can be observed in this version. This might have happened because of working out of two different redactors. The Bhakti cult as well as the enthusiastic attempts to establish the supremacy of Saivism and Vaishnavism over each other and especially the advent of Virasaivism might have influenced to bring out this change. This version is as follows:

Jaya and Vijaya, the door keepers of Lord Vishnu being cursed, were born to Kasyapa as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksa. To save the earth that was being carried away by Hiranyaksa, Vishnu in the form of a Boar (Varaha) killed Hirayaksha. Hiranyakasipu, who was fond of his brother developed hatred towards Vishnu and to take revenge did penance for several years and got the boon from Brahma that he should not be killed by any of his creation. He conquered all the three worlds and tortured the seers and deities. When the demon king started to hate his son Prahlada, devotee of Vishnu and Vishnu himself in particular, Lord Vishnu in the form of Narasimha descended from the pillar of hall. The Lord first killed all the demons, who tried to attack him and then there was a terrible fight between Narasimha and the demon king. Finally in the evening dragging the demon king to the threshold of the palace and placing him on his lap, the Lord tore open the demon king with his sharp nails even while all the Gods were looking on.

After killing the demon king Hiranyakasipu, the furious flames of the anger of the lord Narasimha did not subside. Seeing that dreadful and awful form of Narasimha, the Gods, and the Goddess Lakshmi got astonished and the whole universe again trembled. To pacify the fury, Brahma and other Gods have made Prahlada to go near Narasimha,
who embraced Prahlada with full of compassion by which his chest became cool, but the flames were not controlled. The Gods have finally requested the Lord Siva to pacify the fury of Narasimha for the welfare of the universe. Siva had agreed to find out a solution to come over the menace.

Having sent back all the Gods, Siva created Virabhadra and ordered to go and pacify the fury of Narasimha with soothing words. If Narasimha fails to pacify himself even after his advice, Siva ordered him to kill and bring his skull and skin. The leader of *ganas* Virabhadra with calm posture went to Narasimha reminded him of all the great deeds done in his Mastya, Kurma, and Varaha incarnations and finally requested him to cool down for the welfare of the universe. Narasimha becoming more furious and asked Virabhadra to go back saying that no one would kill him and he would engulf the whole world with his flames. Virabhadra, failing in his attempts had assumed the form of Sarabha, a gigantic form with big wings, very sharp and lengthy fangs, and nails as weapons, black neck, lengthy arms, four legs, with three furious eyes making terrific sounds pounced on Narasimha. Sarabha caught hold of Narasimha's legs with tail and hands with hands and sticking on his chest with hands flew up into the sky along with Narasimha like an eagle with a serpent and flying up and down repeatedly. Then Narasimha, requests him to forgive his condemnable ignorance and ego whenever it rises. Inspite of his request, Virabhadra cut off the head of Narasimha and peeled the skin and offered it to Siva as ordered earlier. All the Gods praised Siva for his timely protection. The Lord Siva told them that Vishnu, who was in Narasimha form was merged within

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48 उपरान्ततिष्ठिनः नरसिम्ह ते नरसिम्ह: कृपानिधि:।
इदं स्वयं जातं सूक्ष्म्यात्मा न निविष्टिति:॥ Ib 3.10.29.

49 यदा यदा ममात्मनमः महासाधित:॥
तदा तदा तदापनेतः त्वमेऽव परमेश्वर ॥ ibid 3.12.
himself like water in water; milk in milk. He directed all the Gods and his devotees to worship Narasimha also along with him stating the praise of Siva pleases Narasimha and praise of Narasimha pleases him. From then Siva became Kruttivasa wearing the skin of Narasimha and the skull also took prominent place in Siva's Mundamala (garland of skulls).

12) The Lingapurana:

The Narasimha myth similar to the myth of the Sivapurana is found in the Lingapurana. This is an improvised version with more poetical flavour.

The Sivapurana stated that Hiranyakasipu had a son Prahlada, who was a devotee of Vishnu from the beginning and was against the wishes of his father. Prahlada, who was truthful, wise and noble and inspite of being warned by his father to stop worshiping Vishnu used to inspire his friends to worship Vishnu. Finding his son's unchanged attitude, Hiranyakasipu ordered his attendants to kill Prahlada. But all the attempts of demons to kill Prahlada became futile by the grace of Vishnu. Finally Vishnu manifested in the form of Narasimha and tore open the belly of the demon king with his sharp claws. With a terrible roar of Narasimha, all the Gods including Brahma were horrified and ran away to Lokaloka Mountain and praised Narasimha in an extensive manner, but the Lord could not be pacified because of the animal instinct in him.

Like in the Sivapurana, here also the Gods headed by Brahma approached and informed the matter to Siva and requested him to control Narasimha. The praise of Siva by Gods was an extensive one.

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50 प्राचीनो नमस्तस्मि मद्ये सिद्धि कालिंसि: इबि 3.12.
51 The Lingapurana chapters 95 & 96
52 न जगाम द्विज शालिं भान्मध्यभोजितमातमा: इबि The Lingapurana 95.30a
The story of Sarabha controlling Narasimha just runs like in Siva Purana Narasimha's praise of Siva after clearing of his illusion was lengthy. Like in Siva Purana, here also after killing Narasimha, the skin and skull of Narasimha were made use of by Siva all were ordered to worship lord Narasimha also along with him.

Then the phalasruti added at the end of the story states that who ever read or hear this story, would get relieved of miseries, get abundant crop, glory, longevity, good health, clear off all hurdles and illness, untimely death, bestowed with peace and get whatever is desired etc. and finally attain the abode of Siva.

It is noteworthy that both the versions of the Sivapurana and the Lingapurana have attempted to establish the supremacy of Siva over Vishnu by extending the myth beyond the death of Hiranyakasipu and a terrible fight between Narasimha and Sarabha, who are the two anthropomorphical forms of Vishnu and Siva respectively. However, at the end they tried to maintain a balance between Siva and Vishnu by the ordain given by Lord Siva that Lord Vishnu is to be worshipped in the form of Narasimha by the devotees, who wishes to obtain prosperity.

Another characteristic that one will find in these two versions is that the character of Prahlada was totally transformed into devotional without any tinge of his demonic nature found in earlier versions. Even in the Lingapurana, it is stated that he used to teach the devotion of Vishnu to his childhood friends and the demon king attempted to kill his son for his act of worshiping Vishnu, his enemy. This feature of Prahlada is further highlighted in coming versions of the Vishnupurana and the Bhagavatapurana more elaborately.

\[\text{Ibid. 95 35-52 a}\]
\[\text{Ibid. 96 76-94.}\]
\[\text{Ibid. 96 117-128}\]
13) The Vishnupurana:

The legend in the Vishnupurana\(^6\) follows like this:

Having acquired a boon from Brahma, Hiranyakasipu oppressed the seers and deities and established his sovereignty over all the three worlds. Prahlada was his son, who was a staunch devotee of Vishnu right from his birth. Prahlada was studying along with other children of the demons under the teachers Sanda and Amarka. Once Hiranyakasipu keeping his son Prahlada on his lap asked to recite a lesson that he learnt. Then Prahlada glorified the greatness of Vishnu. Immediately Hiranyakasipu became furious and ordered his soldiers to kill Prahlada for his intolerable devotion to Vishnu, who was his enemy. The soldiers hit Prahlada with weapons; used venomous snakes to bit him; made elephants trampled down; placed him in the midst of fire. But none harmed him because of his devotion to Vishnu. The teachers requested the demon king to give them a chance to change Prahlada’s attitude and was sent to school again. He learnt all that the teachers taught him and taking advantage of the absence of the teachers gave a sermon to his classmates on the greatness of Vishnu\(^7\) and asked them to contemplate on Vishnu, who was Omnipotent and Omnipresent. The teachers were afraid of the demon king, because of the unaltered behavior of Prahlada and reported the matter to Hiranyakasipu. Prahlada did not agree with the words of his teachers to worship his father as a Supreme Being and said his father was venerable to him and equal to a deity but not a supreme being. He categorically proclaimed that lord Vishnu alone was almighty and supreme. The priests, with their supernatural power produced a fiery flame and hit the chest of Prahlada with it. But it fell down and broke into pieces without harming him. Then Hiranyakasipu called his son and asked for the failure of all his devices. Prahlada explained that he was protected by

\(^{6}\) The Vishnupurana 1.16-20 chapters

\(^{7}\) Ibid 1.17.55-91
the power of Lord Vishnu from all those devices. The demon king ordered to throw Prahlada from the top of the palace on the rocks to kill, but when that was also failed; he sought the help of Sambara, a magician to kill the boy. All the subtle magics employed on Prahlada were cleared off by Vishnu with his Chakra. Hiranyakasipu having failed in all his attempts ordered to place Prahlada at the bottom of the ocean and the demons bound him with Nagapasas and piled big rocks around him.

Prahlada from there in the ocean meditated upon Vishnu, as soon as he was identified with Vishnu, the Nagapasas were cleared off and the ocean was agitated to give way to Prahlada to come out. He came out and praised Lord Vishnu in many ways. Most surprisingly the Lord Vishnu appeared before Prahlada in his usual form wearing yellow ropes. Vishnu was pleased by the devotion of Prahlada and granted three boons to him. The three boons prahlada choose were: 1) his everlasting firm devotion to Vishnu. 2) Pardon for the sins of his father torturing him and 3) to attain liberation in due course on account of devotion and attachment to him. After granting the boons Vishnu disappeared and Prahlada went to his father. Hiranyakasipu repented for his cruel treatment towards his son and shed tears. He started to treat him with kindness.

Thus, the myth of Narasimha is given a change here and this kind of behavior of Hiranyakasipu is not found in any other version and also Vishnu’s appearance in his usual form to grant boons to Prahlada, is seen only in the Narasimhapurana in addition to this Purana. Without ignoring the tradition of the earlier Puranas, Vishnu here also

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59 Ibid. 1.19.64-86 and 1.20. 9-13
60 आतिवेदने भगवान् पीताम्बरपरः हैं: I ibid 1.20. 14.
61 Ibid. 1.20.18-28
62 Ibid. 1. 20. 30-31
manifested in Narasimha form and killed Hiranyakasipu,\textsuperscript{62} which was stated in a simple way, whereas in all most of all previous versions a terrible fight between the demon king and Narasimha was described. This version has taken a complete different turn in the myth. Prahlada was the main figure and had become a true devotee of Vishnu. In the Sivapurana, Prahlada was mentioned as a devotee of Vishnu from the beginning, but not clear of his age and in the Lingapurana; Prahlada was a devotee of Vishnu right from his birth and even taught the devotion of Vishnu to his childhood friends. In the Lingapurana, it is even said that Hiranyakasipu attempted to kill his son Prahlada for his devotion to Vishnu, but failed in all his attempts. However, it is in this version of the Vishnupurana only, the character of Prahlada was brought to limelight with much emphasis and total version is woven around him.

Here in this version, Prahlada was just a child and was devoted to Vishnu from his very childhood. The tender age and helplessness made the demon king to torment him severely either to change him or to end his life, though all the attempts became futile.

In this regard Swain\textsuperscript{63} opined that Hiranyakasipu in this version was killed for torturing his son Prahlada. It is better to understand that he was killed for his misbehavior with the seers and the deities and for destroying sacrifices, instead of the reason of torturing his son Prahlada, since there is no meaning in killing Hiranyakasipu for torturing his son, when Vishnu himself granted a boon to pardon the demon king. Moreover Hiranyakasipu also repented for his misbehavior to his son, but not for his misdeeds. Besides, in this version no representation to Vishnu about the atrocities of the demon king and the request to punish him is not seen, which might have prompted Swain to think so.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{62} Swain, A.C., A study of the Man-Lion Myth, p. 45
\end{flushright}
However, according to the incarnation theory in the Bhagavadgita

"Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of injustice, I manifest myself." It can be presumed that it was his duty to set right the world whenever it was in disorder. Hence there is no need for any representation. So mentioning the reason for the killing of Hiranyakasipu for his oppressions of the deities and the sages and the destruction of their sacrifices is the most appropriate one.

Pramada, in this version, is pictured as a true devotee of Vishnu. When he was teaching his class mates about the devotion to Vishnu, he said* the whole universe is the manifestation of Vishnu. Search for the identity of Vishnu in all creatures. True worship of Vishnu consists in treating all equally**. This, he had shown in his personal life by asking the boon to pardon his father for the sins committed by torturing him.

It seems the devotion to Vishnu and his grace were the main theme of this version. Parasara while introducing Pramada to the sages introduce him as a true devotee of Vishnu. To show the power of Bhakti (devotion), Pramada is pictured as a tender child and withstood all the torments. This final victory was the victory of the Bhakti. One more important element of this version is Pramada's sermons on Vaishnavism to his class mates. This shows that the main theme of this version is the propagation of Bhakti cult. In this connection Swain**** approvingly quotes the words of Prof. OTTO: "By the time the Vishnupurana was written, Vaisnavism had been a strong missionary religion. It had a long fight not only against Buddhism but also against other sects and beliefs. Pramada in the Vishnupurana acts as a missionary. He gathers his classmates around him and gives them lessons on Vishnu". So no doubt Bhakti aspect is given a significant role in this version.

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64 The Bhagavadgita. IV.7
65 सबेर देवासमस्थर्थ अप्यत ।
 समस्या आराधन अयोद्यस्य ॥ Vishnu P 1.17.90.
66 Swain Ac, A study of the Man-Lion Myth p. 47.
The Padmapurana:

Like the Harivamsa and the Sivapurana, the Padmapurana too contains Narasimha myth in two different Khandas. The story of this version is as follows:

Hiranyakasipu did penance towards Siva. He got a boon not to die at the hands of any animate or inanimate being. He established his sovereignty all over the three worlds. He had a son by name Prahlada, who was a true devotee of Vishnu right from his childhood. He stayed with the teachers and learnt all the lore. Once, when he visited his father, Hiranyakasipu embraced Prahlada and made him to sit on his lap. Being asked about his studies, Prahlada praised Vishnu and offered salutations to him. The demon king was astonished and thought the teachers might have taught this to his son and wanted to punish them. But Prahlada told that he was inspired by Vishnu only and requested him not to punish the teachers as they were not at fault. Hiranyakasipu asked his son to worship him only as he was the lord of all the worlds or Siva, who was capable of bestowing boons. The teachers also advised the same. But Prahlada reiterated that “Vishnu was the only supreme Lord and was the sole refugee” and gave a sermon on Vishnu’s glory. Hiranyakasipu became furious and ordered to kill Prahlada. All the attempts of the demons to kill him became futile. Then Hiranyanyakasu demanded Prahlada to show Vishnu if he was Omnipresent in the pillar of assembly hall and also said that he was unconquerable by the boon of Siva and if Vishnu was really omnipotent he had to establish it by defeating him. He also threatened to kill

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67 The Padmapurana. VI. Ch. 265
68 सद्य उपाय
शाचार निर्वश्च शर्वसा हिरण्यकवलिपुलत:।
तपस्तेत् महंदेित्वं भोरेयायं ध मापति॥ ibid VI. 265. 1
69 नायाजन्य: पर वर्ण तत् नायाजयण: परस् ॥ ibid. VI. 265.36
Prahlada, if he failed to show Vishnu in the pillar. When he struck the pillar with his fist, a terrible sound was produced from the pillar that was struck by him and the demons fell down being unable to bear the sound. At once Lord Vishnu assuming the form of Narasimha manifested there and Prahlada observed the whole universe in Narasimha. Narasimha burnt all the demons from the flames coming out of his mane and then caught hold of the demon king and by placing him on his lap tore off his body with his sharp nails, which were neither animate nor inanimate. He wore the entrails round his neck as garland. Because of the dreadful appearance of Narasimha, no deity including Brahma and Siva could approach him. Then the Gods meditated upon Goddess Lakshmi and requested her to pacify the Lord. She requested Narasimha to pacify himself and seeing his consort, he cooled down. He made her to sit on his lap and appeared in a pleasing manner. This pastime is called ‘Lakshmi Narasimha’. He granted boons to all the Gods and the Gods made Prahlada successor of his father’s throne. Narasimha granted the desired boon to Prahlada and also liberation in due course and vanished.

In this version, the noteworthy change is that Siva granted boon to Hiranyakasipu whereas it is Brahma, who granted boon in all other versions of this myth. Hiranyakasipu's character had undergone a slight change. In the Vishnupurana he became furious all of a sudden as soon as hearing the Vishnu’s praise by his son, while in this version he tried to change his attitude, but when Prahlada reiterated again and again his undaunted devotion to Vishnu, he became furious and ordered to kill his son. More over he embraced his son and made him to sit on his lap after his return from gurukula, which shows the natural affection of a

70 Ibid. VI. 265-102-111
71 अकृत्यण्यति दीपोणि कन्दे संस्कारान् प्रियत् । दि. VI. 265. 123
father for his son. Here it is clear that the reason for killing Hiranyakasipu is for his torture of his son Prahlada only but not the oppression of the deities, which is evident by the demon king’s order to show Vishnu in the pillar of assembly hall or otherwise Prahlada, had to face death. Immediately, when Hirayakasipu was about to kill Prahlada, Lord Vishnu manifested in Narasimha form to protected his devotee. This is a significant change from earlier versions. So, Bhakti became the most important thing to Vishnu to manifest immediately rather than the oppressions of seers and deities. Further, the myth of the present khanda is really an improved version of the earlier one. It can be observed a complete change in the case of Prahlada i.e., he was a demon with usual demonic nature, though he had a vision of universal form in Narasimha in the earlier version, whereas here he was a child and a true devotee of Vishnu right from birth. This might have happened because of the working of two different redactors just like it happened in the case of the Harivamsa and the Sivapurana. The Bhakti cult might have played a role in to bringing out this change.

14) The Narasimhapurana:

The myth of Narasimha in the Narasimhapurana is slightly different. Hiranyakasipu observed penance for Brahma and obtained boon. He established his sovereignty all over the three worlds and ordered to worship him only and none else. All the deities headed by Siva approached Vishnu and praised Him with Satanamastotra. Vishnu, knowing the purpose of their arrival, proclaimed that the demon king would be killed by him when he tortures his son Prahlada.

When Hirayanyakasipu started to go to perform penance once again, his relatives and well wishers prevented him because of the evil

72 The Narasimhapurana Chaps 40-44
73 Ibid 40.61-69
portents appeared at that time. But ignoring their words, Hiranyakasipu went to Kailasa Mountain and started penance. Then Brahma and Narada planned to disturb his penance since it would create some more troubles to Gods and seers. Both taking the forms of sparrows sat on a branch of a tree near the place where Hiranyakasipu was performing penance. Narada uttered loudly the mantra "नमो नारायणाय" thrice. Soon after hearing the mantra, Hiranyakasipu got disturbed and tried to hit the sparrows with an arrow, but failed. He returned home being disturbed.\(^{74}\)

On that night being asked by his queen, Hiranyakasipu narrated the matter to her. By just hearing the Narayanamantra alone, she got conceived and gave birth to Prahlada, a true devotee of Vishnu. Prahlada, while undergoing studies was asked by his father to recite a lesson. Prahlada praised the greatness of Vishnu. Though the demon king was annoyed by hearing Prahlada's eulogy of Vishnu, did not express ill feelings immediately and tried to change his son's attitude. He sent Prahlada to gurukula again. While in gurukula, Prahlada gave sermon on the devotion of Vishnu and Vaishnavism to his classmates. When his class mates asked how he knew all this, Prahlada revealed the anecdote related to his birth: Once when Hiranyakasipu was performing Penance, Indra abducted his wife and was carrying her away with him. Then Narada came across and told that she was carrying a child in her womb, who was a true devotee of Vishnu and because of whom only Hirayapanakasipu would be killed by Vishnu. Indra released her and Narada took her with him to his hermitage and imparted the devotion of Vishnu to the child in womb, who was none other than Prahlada.\(^{75}\) But when there was no change in his attitude, then Hiranyakasipu became furious and tortured him in several ways. But all attempts failed.

\(^{74}\) Ibid 41.9-19  
\(^{75}\) Ibid 43. 17-24
When Prahlada was tied up and thrown into the sea to kill him by the attendants of his father, he meditated on Vishnu and came out of the ocean unharmed. Vishnu appeared in his usual form to Prahlada as soon as the later came out of the ocean and granted two boons*, his everlasting devotion to Vishnu and permanent liberation. Vishnu also assured that he would manifest again shortly and kill Hiranyakasipu. As soon as Prahlada returned home, Hiranyakasipu asked him to show Vishnu in the Pillar of Hall, if he was Omnipresent. At once, when Prahlada remembered Lord’s assurance, the pillar had broken into two parts and Narasimha came out of it. Narasimha, after slaying all the demons easily dragged Hiranyakasipu to the threshold of the palace and keeping him on his lap, tore off the demon king with his sharp nail. As he was being torn off, the demon king Hiranyakasipu himself expressed his surprise that “the tusks of Airavata and even the Parasu of Siva could not affect him, his chest now is being torn off by the nails of Narasimha very easily. Oh! Probably when the fate is not favoured a wise person can be insulted by a blade of grass”76. At the end of the version an interesting point is made that Lord Narasimha was settled on Srisailam Mountain for the welfare of his devotees and for the destruction of the wicked.77

In this version, the reason for killing Hiranyakasipu is expressively stated here for torturing his son, whereas it was implied in Sixth Khanda of the Padmapurana. Yet another development in this version is Prahlada’s self-revelation of the background story of his birth. It makes

76 यज्ञशेष दत्तदेवतामुकुंडालायाकावितान्यायहे

77 शैवस लिख्यं प्रथम विवादू सुसूचित ।

स्पष्टता अतिदृष्टान्तं अभावता हर्षाय ए II ibid 44.39

Here in the text ‘रूपमार्ग’ is used, but ‘रूपमा’ will be better reading.
us to understand the reason for the undaunted devotion of Prahlada on Vishnu without demoniac nature, though Prahlada was just a child and born in a demon race. Here also Hiranyakasipu did not express his ill feelings as soon as hearing his son's eulogy of Vishnu's glory, but tried to change his attitude first and when he failed to budge from his devotion to Vishnu, then attempted to kill him. This establishes the natural fatherly affection like in sixth khanda of the *Padmapurana*. Like in the *Vishnupuran*na, here also Prahlada gave sermon on the devotion of Vishnu and Vaishnavism to his classmates, which helps for popularity of Vaishnavism. It is found here also Vishnu appearing before Prahlada in his usual yellow robes, when the latter comes out of the ocean like in the *Vishnupuran*na, but only difference is in this *purana*, Prahlada did not ask to pardon his father for torturing him and it is evident from Vishnu's statement in the beginning made to Gods the reason for killing Hiranyakasipu is for torturing Prahlada only in this version.

15) The *Bhagavatapurana*:

Now we come across a well developed and a popular story of Narasimha in the *Bhagavatapurana*. In the first chapter of seventh *skanda*, the background story of Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksa is given. Jaya and Vijaya, the door keepers of Vaikuntha of Vishnu were cursed to take birth as demons three times by the sages Sanaka and others for not allowing them to see Vishnu. Being persuaded by them, the sages modified the curse that though they take birth as demons and hate Vishnu, they always think of him and attain their original positions after three births. Accordingly, in their first birth they were Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksa; in the second Ravana and Kumbhakama and in the third Sisupala and Dantavaktra.

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The *Bhagavatapurana* VII Chs 1-10 (till the end of 52 nd sloka of tenth ch.)
While in some of the earlier *puranas*, it was just stated the reason for Hiranyakasipu's hatred towards Vishnu was his brother Hirayanksa's death at the hands of Vishnu, here in this version it is explained clearly at length. He addressed the demons and said that though Vishnu was supposed to be impartial towards both deities and demons, he actually was at that time in favour of deities. Hence Vishnu needs to be killed and to offer oblations to his brother with the blood of Vishnu by cutting down his neck with his trident. He ordered the demons to kill the sacrificers and the devotees of Vishnu and to upset the religious order. The demons carried out the orders. Hiranyakasipu consoled the family members, who were grief stricken at the death of Hiranyaksa. In this context, he gave a lengthy philosophical discourse stating that the death was inevitable and referred to the story of Suyagna.  
Hirayanyakasipu to make himself immortal, invincible and to establish sovereignty over the three worlds, started a severe penance towards Brahma on *Mandara* Mountain. He continued Penance for several years and was covered with ant hills. His flesh, blood, etc., were eaten away by the white ants. When he was performing austerities, a smoky fire arose of his head and all the worlds were agitated by that heat. Finally, Brahma appeared himself before the demon king and told that he was pleased by his penance. He sprinkled water on Hiranyakasipu and at once the demon king felt refreshed and became more vigorous.

Being asked by Brahma to ask a boon, Hiranyakasipu asked that "he should not be killed by any being created by him; either indoor or outdoor; during night or day; on the earth or in the sky; by animate or inanimate. He also demanded for a matchless might in the battle and sovereignty over all the worlds. He wished for the glory of the guardian of the world and finally announced that whatever Brahma possessed

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Ibid VII 2 20 61
should be passed on to him. Brahma granted and disappeared. The
demon king, having obtained the invincible boon, increased his
vengeance and enmity against Vishnu. He ruled from heaven
dethroning Indra and all the Gods except the Trinity surrendered to him
including the nature elements. When the gods requested Vishnu, he
being invisible announced that he would slay Hiranyakasipu when the
latter torture his son Prahlada, who was his true devotee. Having
heard the words of Vishnu, all the gods sighed in relief as if the demon
king was already killed.

Like in the Vishnu, the Siva (Satarudrasamhita), the Harivamsa
(Bhavisyaparva) and the Narasimhapuranas, here also Prahlada was a
child and was being trained by Sanda and Amarka, the sons of
Sukracharya, the demon preceptor. Here also, when once Prahlada
visited his father, he was asked to recite a lesson. Prahlada replied that
the people unnecessarily feel proud and that such people should go to
the forest to meditate on Hari. Unlike the earlier versions, here
Hiranyakasipu just smiled (may be with a feeling it was just a childish
act, but not intentional) and sent him back to his teachers. There the
teachers threatened him to forget Vishnu and taught him the Trivarga
i.e. dharma, artha and kama. Again on Prahlada’s second visit,
Hiranyakasipu asked the same question and Prahlada replied that the
nine fold devotion to Vishnu was the only way to get liberation. Now
Hiranyakasipu became furious and asked him where from he learnt all
this nonsense. Prahlada replied that the worship of Vishnu only leads to
liberation and the persons who had confused conception and rush up
for the worldly pleasures by not realizing Vishnu, fall in a pit just like a
blind person led by another blind person. Irritated Hiranyakasipu

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80 Ibid. VII. 3.35-38
81 Ibid. VII. 4.25-28
82 कृप्या कीर्तित किमेवः स्मरण पार्तेयययाम् ॥
अर्थं कतरं दास्यं सवर्गमातत्त्विनिवेषतन् ॥ ibid. VII 5:23
ordered to kill Prahlada. Observing the failed attempts of him attendants, Hiranyakasipu was afraid and suspected that his fury against his son may lead to his death. On the advice of the teachers, Prahlada was again sent back to the ashram. There Prahlada in the absence of his teachers used to deliver sermons on the devotion to Vishnu. Being asked by his classmates as to how learnt all those when teachers were not told, Prahlada narrated the background story that lead to his birth here also just similar to the version of the Narasimhapurana. Here it was added explicitly that it had shown effect on the children. They had forgotten all the lessons imparted to them by the teachers and their mind bent towards attaching themselves to Vishnu. In this version Prahlada’s discourse on vaishnavism was given at length. The teachers reported the matter to the demon king.

Hiranyakasipu called his son and rebuked him for his devotion to Vishnu and asked the source of his strength and Prahlada replied that the Supreme Lord Vishnu was the source of his strength and in fact the source of the entire universe as well. Then, Hiranyakasipu ordered his son to show the Lord Vishnu in a nearby pillar of the hall, if Vishnu was all-pervasive failing which he would kill him. He said “Let Hari who is your protector come to protect you”. Then he jumped from his throne and struck the pillar with his fist.

At once, the pillar that was struck by the demon king burst with a terrible sound and as if to testify the words of his devotee and to establish his omnipotence, Lord Vishnu in the form of Narasimha manifested from the Pillar. Here Narasimha was described briefly but the sharp nails of Narasimha got proper share, which served as weapons for killing Hiranyakasipu. When Narasimha killed all the demons with his usual weapons like cakra etc, Hiranyakasipu doubted
that he might also be killed, but did not hesitate to fight. Narasimha caught hold of the demon king, dragged him to the threshold of the palace and by placing him on his lap tore him off with his sharp nails. Then he put the entrails of Hiranyakasipu around his neck like a garland. Thus Vishnu, in the process of killing the demon king fulfilled all the conditions under which the demon could not be killed.

After putting the entrails of the demon king round his neck he sat on a beautiful throne. No deity could approach him because of his awesome and dreadful form. Even Goddess Lakshmi was afraid to approach him, while she was the one who pacified the wrathful form of Narasimha in Sixth Khanda of the Padmapurana.

Brahma requested Prahlada to pacify Narasimha, who was in awful form. Then Prahlada prayed the Lord at length and the lord was pacified and his anger vanished. This very fact that the other two members of Trinity viz. Brahma and Siva and even his own consort Goddess Lakshmi could not approach him because of Lord Narasimha's dreadful form and pacify, but Prahlada, a true devotee could do it clearly establishes the prominence of 'bhakti' (emotional surrender) to Vishnu as the best way for liberation. Being compelled by Vishnu, Prahlada asked the boon for the complete eradication of worldly desires from his mind and everlasting devotion on him. He also requested Vishnu to pardon the sins committed by his father for defying the Supreme Lord and for torturing him. Vishnu told that twenty one generations of Hiranyakasipu had been sanctified, because of the birth of Prahlada, his devotee in the family. This myth is certainly more polished than that of the Vishnupurana, where Hiranyakasipu was pardoned, when he was alive. Narasimha asked Prahlada to occupy the throne for a period of one manvantara only and after which he could

\[\text{\textsuperscript{65}}\text{ कर्मानवं इति समन हयतसस्तु हुणे यर्म} \text{Ibid VII. 107}\]
attain liberation and instructed to perform last rites to his father. Brahma came forward then and praised the Lord wherein he said "whoever meditates on this form of yours, shall be protected from all the dangers and from the clutches of the death". This helped the practical application of the myth in day to day life.

In the Harivamsa (Bhavisyaparva), Vishnu went to Himalayas to contemplate on the method of killing Hiranyakasipu, but in the Sivapurana (Satarudrasamhita), Sixth Khanda of the Padmapurana, the Narasimhapurana and in this Bhagavatapurana, Vishnu even did not enter in to the assembly hall, but all of a sudden He manifested himself in a pillar, which helped to establish his omni-presence and omnipotence firmly. So it helped us to know that Vaishnavism was on its full swing, when Puranas were redacted.

In the earlier versions, Vishnu appeared to the Gods and assured them that he would kill the demon king, when they approached him to report the atrocities. But in this version, he was invisible even to the Gods and assured them by a divine voice only. So here Vishnu's super eminent power even over other gods was established very effectively. This may be the result of attempts to establish Vaishnavism as supreme over the other sects of Hinduism.

Thus the simple episode of the Mahabharata is developed to this extent in the Bhagavatapurana, where we find a very descriptive account of Narasimha myth. After examining all the above versions, we can come to a conclusion that there is a gradual development in the character of Prahlada. Briefly the development can be classified into four stages. In the first stage, Prahlada had no place in the episode at all like in the Mahabharata, the Vayupurana, the Brahmandapurana, the

86 Ibid VII. 10.9
Brahmapurana, the Harivamsaparva of Harivamsa and the Vishnudharmottarapurana. The second stage is that where Prahlada appears but does not have devotion to Vishnu and with demoniac nature, but how ever visualizes universal form in Vishnu, when He appeared as in fifth khanda of the Padmapurana, the Matsyapurana. The third stage is that Prahlada does not have devotion to Vishnu at first and even fought with him and after the fight; he realizes Him as the supreme god and starts meditation on him like in the Saurapurana, the Kurmapurana, Bhavisyapurva of the Harivamsa, and Rudrasamhita of the Sivapurana. In all these stages Prahlada was a grown up person. The fourth and final stage is that Prahlada was a child and a devotee of Vishnu from the beginning. This aspect is very popular among the masses. Prahlada of this character can be seen in Satarudrasamhita of the Sivapurana, the Lingapurana, and sixth khanda of the Padmapurana, the Vishnupurana, the Narasimhapurana and the Bhagavatapurana. In Satarudrasamhita of the Sivapurana and the Lingapurana, of course we don't find the torturing of Prahlada by Hiranyakasipu for his devotion to Vishnu explicitly.

This kind of shift in the myth viz., the reason of killing Hiranyakasipu of the Mahabharata “I shall kill Hiranyakasipu as he destroys the sacrifices” totally converting into “Hiranyakasipu will be killed when he tortures his son Prahlada, who is a true devotee of Vishnu” in the Bhagavatapurana vouch safe the development of Bhakti Cult. To make the Bhakti Cult aspect popular here in this myth Prahlada’s character is made to undergo various changes by turning him into a child and make him face so many torments at the hands of his father with undaunted devotion to Vishnu. Bhakti aspect has taken front seat even in relegating the oppression of righteousness.
In addition to the above context of the destruction of the demon king Hiranyakasipu, the Narasimha myth continued again in totally different context in later Puranas like in the Saura, the Surya, the Kurma, the Garuda and the Matsyapuranas. Let us have a glimpse over this later part of the myth.

The Saurapurana:

According to the Saurapurana, when Hiranyakasipu was killed, Prahlada became king. Once, by the illusion caused by gods, Prahlada insulted a Brahmin, who in turn cursed him to lose his devotion to Vishnu by which he became proud and insulted others. Prahlada influenced by the tamasaguna fought with Vishnu to retaliate his father’s death and being defeated, once again realized Vishnu’s glory and surrendered to him. Later Andhaka became king. Once Siva, while going out for alms instructed Vishnu and other gods to protect Parvati in the guise of women attendants. He also placed his ganas with Nandi and Bhairava as door keepers. Meantime Andhaka came to elope Parvati and was fell on the ground being kicked by Kalabhaimva. Gaining consciousness, Andhaka came back again and kicked Bhairava and the gana. Seeing that Vishnu created Sakti and defeated the demon and the same was informed to Siva after his return. When Andhaka came again and attacked on the advice of Vishnu, Siva sent Kalabhairava to kill the demon. Kalabhairava pierced the demon with the trident and danced joyfully. Andhaka then praised Siva at length and surrendered to Siva. Siva was pleased at his devotion and made him Ganadhyaksa on par with Nandisvara and named him Brngi. Here it is stated that the Sakti of Vishnu and Bhairava joined together and came to know by a single name as Kalagni-Bhairava, which is nothing but...

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87 The Saurapurana 29th chapter
88 भीरव ताह्याकास तथा पान्यसलेखरत् | ibid 29.17a
89 ibid 29.43
Narasimha himself.\textsuperscript{90} It is stated that worshipping any one of them would be considered as the worship of other deity also and also stated that a person who sees difference between them would be facing difficulties and had to repent.\textsuperscript{91}

The Kurmapurana:

The version of this myth found in the Kurmapurana\textsuperscript{92} is almost similar to the Saurapurana. Hiranyaksa, who ran away, being afraid of Narsimha after fighting with him returned back again after Narasimha disappeared. Prahlada coroneted Hiranyaksha as successor of Hiranyakasipu. He begot a son by name Andhaka by pleasing Siva with his penance. Hiranyaksa also tortured the sages and having conquered the Gods and imprisoning Indra, carried away the earth to Patala. Then Vishnu in the form of Varaha (boar) killed Hiranyaksa and restored the earth.

Pralada, the devotee of Vishnu as a successor of Hiranyaksa ruled the demons without demonic nature. As in the Saurapurana here also by the curse of a Brahmin, Prahlada lost his devotion to Vishnu by illusion and fought with Vishnu to take revenge for the death of his father. After the fight he surrenders and continues to be the faithful devotee to Vishnu till the end. After Prahlada, Andhaka became the king of demons and he wanted to elope Parvati. Siva, while going out for alms placed Parvati under the protection of Vishnu, who assumed the form of a female attended on Parvati\textsuperscript{93}. Bhairava and Nandi were also ordered to take care of Parvati. Meantime Andhaka came to the Mandara Mountain to carry away Parvati. Bhairava in the form of Kala

\textsuperscript{90} एकीय मूर्तिमान्यार्व शालिख्यांमन: १० ००
कलामार्गीयो यो सी स एव नृहरी: स्मायम् ॥ ibid 29.49

\textsuperscript{91} ibid. 29.50-53.

\textsuperscript{92} The Kurmapurana. I 15 89-237

\textsuperscript{93} सीनापादित्वे नियतं संबंधनाम महाधरीम् ॥ ibid I 15 122b.
attacked Andhaka which lead to a terrible fight. Then bull ensigned Lord struck the demon by piercing a spear into his heart. Then Andhaka created thousands of Andhakas, who vanquished Nandi and Ganas like Ghantakarna etc. Then Bhairava sought the help of Vishnu. Vishnu created hundred goddesses who could defeat the army of Andhaka. Immediately, Andhaka ran away from the battle field. Siva was informed of the victory after his return. Again Andhaka came back to carry away Parvati then Siva with Vishnu, Kala-Bhairava, matrikas (matriarchs) advanced for encounter. Andhaka vanquished all the ganas and matrikas and stood before Kala-rudra. Vishnu advised Kala-Bhairava to kill the demon king. Immediately, Siva in the form of Kalagni-Rudra pierced Andhaka on the tip of his trident and danced. Andhaka being pierced by the trident, by the mere touch of it all his sins had become cleared off and he began to praise the Lord Siva at length. Siva being pleased took him off his trident and made him one of his Gana chief. Bhairava form of Rudra along with matriarchs went to Netherlands and Kalagni-rudra form of Siva merged within himself. The matriarchs created by Vishnu being hungry began to eat up all the three worlds. Then Lord Bhairava bowed to Vishnu who was in the form of Narasimha. Witnessing the association of Bhairava and Narasimha, matriarchs calmed down and bestowed their power on Bhairava. As a result, both the manifestations of Narasimha and Bhairava forms were became united.

The salient feature in this version is that Andhaka was stated as the son of Hiranyaksa born by the grace of Lord Siva. This helps us to understand his repentance after his defeat and was being made as ganadhyaksa at the end.

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"शुल्यांशति ते देवयोग्यतान मुष्टमयः। I ibid 1.15.127
"विशेषंशति विन्यय प्राप्तस्त। I ibid 1.15.184.
"अवतरणस्य अनुभूति नुस्तम्य मैथुनः।
शणात्तेक्ष्ठमाधव्य शास्तर्थिपि यापि मातरः। II ibid 1.15.229
The **Matsyapurana**:

The *Matsyapurana*\(^9\) too bring out a synthesis between Bhairava and Narasimha.

According to the *Matsyapurana* the demon king Andhaka did penance and became invincible to the Gods. Once he saw Parvati wandering with Lord Siva and wanted to get her. There was a terrible fight between lord Siva and Andhaka in *Mahakalavana* in Avanti country. Siva was severely tortured by the demon king Andhaka\(^8\). Siva hurled Pasupatastra, which injured the demon. But from the blood that dropped on the ground from his body began to produce several Andhakas. To counter them, Siva created 189 *Matrikas*\(^9\) (matriarchs) like Maheswari etc. to see that the blood of the demon should not fall on the ground as to prevent the creation of new Andhakas. Those terrible Matriarchs drank the blood of the demon for some period and were fully satisfied. When they were satisfied completely, again new Andhakas began to be created from the blood of the demon and they started to torture Siva. Being worried by those Andhakas, Siva sought the help of Vishnu, who created Goddess Suskarevati, who started to lick the blood of Andhaka. The more she drinks the blood, the more emaciated she was and did not allow the blood of Andhaka to fall on the ground\(^10\). In the absence of the creation of new Andhakas, Siva killed all the Andhakas and finally destroyed the original Andhaka with his trident. By the mere touch of the trident, Andhaka transformed into a devotee of Siva and praised him at length. Siva was pleased and blessed him with the lordship over his *ganas*.

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\(^9\) The *Matsyapurana* 178 chapter

\(^8\) अरिस्मिनन्दु तदा स्त्वचानन्यक्ष्ततातिप्रहित: । ibid 178 b

\(^9\) The main Matriarchs created by Siva are 1) शाश्वी 2) महेश्वरी 3) अम्मारी 4) देवण्यी 5) दाती 6) इन्द्राणी (षोडः) and 7) चामुङ्गी. Twenty-six assistant Matriarchs are created for each of the above.

\(^10\) ibid 178.36.
Then all the 189 matriarchs created by Siva earlier requested permission to swallow the whole worlds to pacify their hunger. When it appears that they were not in a mood to heed the advice of Siva, who is always for the welfare of the universe, Siva contemplated on Narasimha with his special features for the rescue. Lord Narasimha appeared before Siva as contemplated. Even gods were not in a position to gaze at the form of Narasimha. After due prayer, Siva informed him that the 189 Matriarchs created by him to kill Andhaka were now after swallowing the whole world ignoring his advice and he was unable to control them. At once Narasimha created Vanisvari from his tongue, Maya from his heart and Bhagamalini from his male organ (Guhyanga). Kasiki was already created from his bones, who drank the blood of Andhakas in the name of Suskarevati. To these four saktis, he again created from his limbs 32 divine saktis as companions at the rate of eight for each. All these 32 divine saktis ferociously marched and defeated the matriarchs created by Siva. Narasimha instructed them to protect the universe in stead of harassing them. If they did so they would be worshipped on par with other saktis. Siva benevolently transferred their forms as benign from malignant along with other gods. It is stated that those who worship Suskarevati would get children.

16) The Garudapurana:

To the story of the Matsyapurana, the Garudapurana contributes a beautiful stotra of Narasimha from the mouth of Siva. This version

101 Ibid 178.44-51
102 Ibid 178.61-64
103 1) घन्टाकर्णी 2) बैसोक्षमष्ठिंगी 3) सदसंताशकुरी 4) घन्टाकर्णी 5) कामचारिणी 6) शरीरिणी 7) लेखकी, 8) कामसंधारिणी- under यगीन-भये; 1) सक्षमिभि 2) अधिवर्ती 3) श्रीरकाई 4) अपरााभिता 5) कामचारिणी 6) सुभुद्वी 7) कामस 8) उत्स्मात्सितकइ -under मयाय 1) अवर्तिता 2) सुभुद्वी 3) दुमा 4) वैसाहित्यवतिता 5) श्रीमद्वैरिता 6) बिकाहा 7) मात्र-मात्रवत्ता 8) जीवा-under प्रमाणाविता, and 1) अवर्तिता 2) सम्बादन 3) उत्स्मात्सितकइ 4) ज्ञातामुक्ति 5) श्रीरकाई 6) कामसंधारिणी 7) कामचारिणी 8) प्रदक्षिण -under कामचारिणी/ सुभुद्वी

104 The Garuda Purana Part I. 231 Chapter.
started with the matriarchs created by Siva who expressed their desire to gulp all the three worlds. Siva contemplated Vishnu in the form of Narsimha with the special features of the lord.\textsuperscript{105} When Narsimha appears, Siva praised a \textit{stuti} in honour of Narsimha.\textsuperscript{106} On the request of Siva, Narsimha’s vagisvari with furious tongue destroyed all the matriarchs and restores peace in the world.\textsuperscript{107} Here, only Vagisvari is said to have controlled all the matriarchs. It is stated in the \textit{phalasruti} that one, who reads this \textit{stotra} with controlled senses, would obtain the desired object without doubt.

The \textit{Narasimhastuti} before and after the appearance of Narsimha found in both the Matyapurana and the Garudapurana are almost similar with even parallel lines with minute changes. This \textit{stuti} contains several iconographical features of Narsimha.

Now it would be appropriate to deal with the association of Sarabha and Narsimha Matriarchs in the light of the above mythical background. The fabulous Sarabha has to be distinguished from the real animals of that name. The \textit{Taittiriya Samhita} IV.2.10 mentions, the Aranya (or wild) Sarabha along with Mayura (peacock), Goura (wild buffalo), Gayya (a kind of wild ox) and Ushtra (camel). Sarabha in the Vedas is a kind of deer as found in Dr. MacDonnell’s dictionary, while it is a fabulous eight legged animal in mythology\textsuperscript{108}. The \textit{Vacaspatya} mentions Sarabha as a kind of deer, a young elephant, a kind of monkey and a camel. He also quotes a text to show a fabulous Sarabha is Astapad (having eight legs, four of which upwards) and upwards eyes. The \textit{Mahabharata} also mentions a fabulous Sarabha\textsuperscript{109} with upwards eyes, eight legs, capable of even killing the lion that can kill

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{105}] Ibid part I. 231. 6-9
  \item[\textsuperscript{106}] Ibid part I. 231. 12-17
  \item[\textsuperscript{107}] Ibid part I. 231. 20-21
  \item[\textsuperscript{108}] Narayan Asvengar, Essays on Indo-Aryan Mythology, p251
  \item[\textsuperscript{109}] M Bh Aranyaparva 13.4.15
\end{itemize}
elephant. There is also a spider ‘Umanabhi’ called as Astapad with eight legs and this insect which sends forth and withdraws its threads has the distinction of being used as a simile to the Supreme Lord who sends forth the universe and withdraws himself at the time of creation and destruction respectively.

The word ‘Sara-bha’ itself can be construed as ‘the arrow-beast’ and can be taken as ‘killer of lion’. In the Vedas, Rudra is the famous archer and is called ‘mrgavyadha’ shooting the stag of sacrifice. Though mr ga is generally applied to the deer, the general name can be applicable to all the wild animals including that of a lion. This might have prompted the worshippers of Siva to address him as Mrgavyadha. Rudra might deserve that name better by killing a greater mrga than just a deer. We find in puranic legends Siva killing an asura (demon), who had the form of elephant (Gajasura). After killing the elephant, the next higher stage is a lion, so to fulfill this it can be assumed that mrgavyadha(Rudra) was made to conceive as the lion killing Sarabha with eight legs as might had been the evolution of the concept of Sarabha alias Mrgavyadha. It seems that he was let loose into the jungle of myths as a beast surpassing all the mrgas including that of the lion, its king. It is probable that thus evolved lion-killing Sarabha might have influenced the votaries of Saivism to adopt the idea of Rudra as Sarabha, when the Narasimha story became much popular to counter Vaishnavism.

'Paramavaidika Siddhanta Tatva Ratnakara' is based on the verse in Taittiriya Aranyak-

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111 A written manuscript available at Oriental Research Institute, Sri Venkatesvara University. Tirupati without authorship. However Narayan Aiyengar in his *Essays on Indo-Aryan Mythology* mentions author as one Ramanujacarya (of late origin) Son of Srinivasam Jagannadacarya P 251
"हरि हरतं अनुषाति देवः । विश्वनन्देयो युष्मं मणीनाम् ॥" iii.15.1

and quoting certain slokas said to be in the Vishnudharmottarapurana, the Agnipurana, in elucidation of the above quoted verse, attempts to establish the idea that seeing the Man-Lion Vishnu (Narasimha) Rudra Sarabha came roaring terribly, but the Man-Lion Vishnu killed him and was praised by devas. He quotes a verse to the same effect said to be in the Garudapurana112 and a long verse said to be in the Narasimhapurana, which changes the man-lion into a figure called Gandabherundasimha with eight faces- of lion, tiger, boar, monkey, horse, eagle, bear and another (not mentioned) and with thirty-two hands holding all kinds of weapons and putting down the pride of Sarabha.113 The followers of Saivism construe the same verse as that "the devas followed the most wise lord of universe, who is killing the lion (Vishnu in Narasimha form).114

However, the above Vedic verse can not vouchsafe any of the constructions, since neither the Narasimha story nor the Sarabha story had arisen by the time of that Vedic text. The Vedic text simply compares and praises the wise lord of all as the mighty lion that kills (enemy). It may be compared with the similar praises of Vishnu and Rudra in the Rg-Veda. The Rg-Veda i.154.2, wherein Vishnu is said that his might is like fearful, prowling, wild-beast, located in mountains; whereas Rudra is described elsewhere in the words "praise him the chariot borne, the young, the famous, fierce, slaying like a dread beast of the forest".115

The episode of Narasimha's wrath not pacifying even after the death of Hiranyakasipu and Siva in the form of Sarabha controlling him

112 हन्तु अभ्यासात् भद्रं तस्म नृकृष्णाः नारदेदारायामास हिरण्यकाशिपु यथा । ibid
113 यद्यपि लोकसंगम गन्तौहृदस्वतिष्ठ । ibid
114 Narayanan Aiyengar, Essays on Indo-Aryan Mythology. P 252
115 Rg-Veda, I.133.11
found in the *Sivapurana* and in the! *Lingapurana* might be the result of Saivism trying to establish the supremacy of Siva over the other two Gods in trinity i.e., Brahma and Vishnu as it was, most probably consolidated in its present form in the 8th Century A.D. as viewed by Dr. Puspender Kumar in his introduction to the *Sivapurana*.\(^{116}\)

As if to counter this advancement of an attempt to gain supremacy of saivism over vaisnavism by induction of Sarabha episode, it appears that the episode of Narasimha controlling the Matriarchs created by Siva, when the latter failed to control them and extending a helping hand to Siva was an attempt of vaisnavaítes.

By close observation of the above arguments, it can be construed that the Sarabha and Matriarchs episode found in a few *Puranas* might be the interpolations by the sectarian votaries i.e. Saivism and Vaisnavism. It can be seen that in both the episodes, an attempt is made to establish supremacy of one sect over the other. However the praise worthy thing to note is that in no where antagonism is shown against each other. More efforts were made to bring out a harmony between the popular sects including Saktism. The concluding remarks clearly and explicitly state at the end that the prayer to one (sarabha) belongs to another (Narasimha) also and mere ignoring one deemed to be insulting the other. In the Matriarchs episode it is shown that both Kalabhairava and Narasimha have merged into one form to become Kalagnibhairava.

\(^{116}\) Introduction P IX. *The Sivapurana* Part 1 Ed by Dr. Puspender Kumar. Nag Publications, Delhi-7, 1986