

## Three Minutes - 17 Say it with Less

icChA mIna vihAra kacChapa  
mahA  
potrin yadR^icChA hare  
rakShA vAmana roSha rAma  
karuNA  
kAkutstha helA halin |  
krIDA vallava kalka vAhana  
dashA  
kalkin iti pratyahaM  
jalpantaH puruShA punanti  
bhavanaM  
puNyaugha paNyApanAH ||  
(svAmi deshikan, dashAvatAra storam)

*icChA mIna = Self-willed fish  
vihAra kacChapa = playful tortoise  
mahA potrin = gigantic wild boar  
yadR^icChA hare = Spontaneously, lion  
rakShA vAmana = protecting vAmana  
roSha rAma = indignant rAma  
karuNA kAkutstha = rAma, of the mercy  
and kindness filled kAkutstha clan  
helA halin = plough-wielder  
krIDA vallava = executor of impossible  
tasks  
kalka vAhana dashA kalkin = kalki  
perumAn, who is going to ride on a  
white horse!  
puruShAH = people who  
iti pratyaham = say or pray like this  
everyday and  
jalpantaH = chant  
puNyaugha paNyApanAH = and who  
are like shops carrying dharmic virtues  
as sales objects  
punanti bhavanaM – cleanse the world*

svAmi vedanta deshikan, most likely,  
is the most supreme preceptor  
(AcArya) of the shrI vaiShNava

tradition (sampradAyam). He is the  
epitome of knowledge (j~nAana),  
detachment (vairAghya), devotion  
(bhakti), and adherence to the shrI  
vaiShNava scripts (shAstra  
anusanTAnam). He has contributed  
enormously in multiple languages.  
This dashAvatAra stotra is one of  
the gems, which describes a  
salutation to each of the ten  
incarnations (avatAra-s) of the Lord.  
svAmi deshika composed this while  
he was worshiping in the  
dashAvatAra sanctum (sannidhi) in  
shrIra~Ngam.

In this verse (shloka), svAmi  
deshikan precisely puts all ten  
avatAra-s in less than a single verse.  
For each avatAra, he gives exactly  
one adjective that best describes  
that incarnation.

Lord's incarnations have been  
enumerated as ten by AzhvAr-s. He  
appeared as a 1. Fish in his first  
avatAra, 2. Tortoise to have fun 3.  
Huge wild boar 4. nR^isimha  
(man-lion form) when no one  
(including Himself) expected. 5.  
vAmana, whose only objective is to  
protect (rakShA) those who  
surrender to Him. 6. Angry  
parasurAma 7. rAma, the ocean of  
mercy and kindness 8. balarAma  
with a plough 9. KR^iShNa, a  
player, playing (lila) with everyone  
as a cow-herd (iDaiyan) and finally,  
10. kalki, the rider on a white horse,  
who has yet to make his  
appearance. Even those who simply  
blabber these avatAra names will  
make the world holy. They are like

streets of warehouses filled with good deeds (puNyams).

Now let us see how those adjectives aptly suit each avatAra.

1. Lord came down first at His own wish (sha~nkalpam). He is independent and need not obey anyone. Thus, icChA fits nicely to describe the reason for incarnation.
2. Lord did everything sportively - churning the milk ocean (pARkaDal), as a bewitching girl (mohini avatAra) etc.
3. The wild boar is huge with a single horn. Besides He preached as varAha (boar) the final hymn (carama shloka) to earth goddess (bhUdevi), He lifted the entire universe with a single horn. What other word but 'great' (mahA) can describe this?
4. The magnificence of nR^ismha avatAra is a sudden explosion. He instantly appeared at a time that no one expected. The term yadR^icCha means spontaneous or without any indication.
5. vAmana avatAra is the only avatAra without any killing. He protected friends (Indra and devA-s) and even the enemy (mAhAbali) and changed his mind as well. He stamped the entire universe with His holy feet. Protector means vAmana.
6. ParasurAma is analogous to anger. He beheaded his own mother by listening to his father's words and vowed to wipe out warrior class (kShatriya kulam)

entirely. 'roSha' here means indignant.

7. rAma avatAra is the very personification of kindness. You can see it every instant.
8. balarAma always had the plough. It was inseparable from Him.
9. KR^iShNa means play. What other word can describe that better?
10. Finally, kalki reminds us immediately of a white horse.

One can benefit a lot by studying svAmi deshika's style and insight, especially in this verse. Try to adopt some when you write an essay, letter or give a speech.

1. **Target brevity;** Less is more (although this may be difficult) 
2. **Use appropriate words.** Understand the whole and choose the most appropriate. (like multiple choice questions)
3. **More on preparation and less on execution.** deshikan was constantly contemplating about the Lord through scripts, AcArya advice, meditation etc. He was filled with knowledge and when the time came, everything poured out so nicely and easily.

**Wise men speak because they have something to say,  
Fools speak to just say something.**  
(Plato)