

## Sage Narada: Mischief Monger or Divine Guide?

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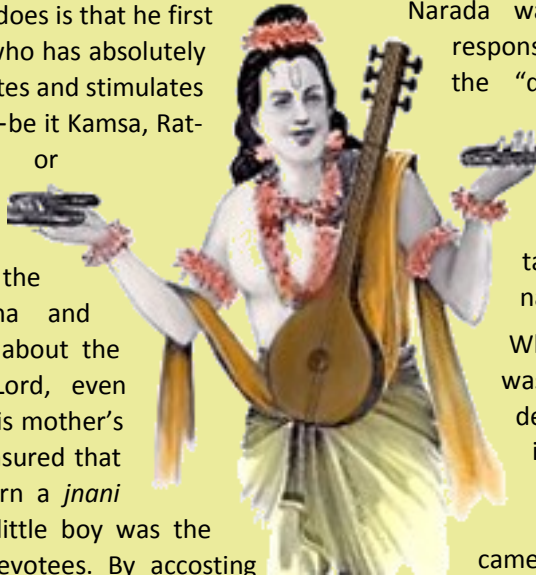
Sage Narada is generally considered a mischief-monger and a trouble-maker by many casual readers of our Puranas. It is believed that wherever he appears, confusion and perplexity follow; and he is said to be one who revels in creating *kalaham* (conflict).

However, the fact is that the only *kalaham* that Narada does is that he first approaches one who has absolutely no worthy attributes and stimulates him to seek God—be it Kamsa, Ratnakara, Dhruva or Prahlada.

By initiating Prahlada into the name of Narayana and speaking to him about the glories of the Lord, even while he was in his mother's womb, Narada ensured that the child was born a *jnani* who, even as a little boy was the greatest of all devotees. By accosting little Dhruva who was headed to the forest to see the Lord, Narada instructed him step-by-step on what he should do to behold the Lord. In fact, Narada described the glorious Lord in such great detail to the little boy that when the Lord actually appeared in front of him, Dhruva saw Him exactly as Narada had described! Narada was responsible for transforming the depraved hunter Ratnakara into the most esteemed Sage Valmiki simply by making him chant the name of the Lord: "Rama". Even in the case of Kamsa, by revealing to him that Krishna was the eighth son of Devaki, Narada actually sent him towards the Lord and hastened his salvation.

Narada is no normal *deva* traversing the skies! The author of the Bhakti Sutra, he is indeed the father of *bhakti* (devotion). With the Lord's name constantly on his lips, he is among the foremost and favorite devotees of the Lord; he is the

Lord's confidante who often serves to further His *avatara karyas* (purpose of incarnation); he is an *uttama* Guru who, as we saw, leads many a *jiva* (soul) to the Lotus Feet of the Lord; and furthermore, Narada also plays the role of a guide to other great rishis who are his own peers.



Narada was single-handedly responsible for inspiring the "documentation" of the lives of the two foremost avatars of the Lord: Sri Ramavatara and Sri Krishnavatara.

When Sage Valmiki was contemplating deeply whether an ideal and perfect man really existed, it was Narada who came to him and told him the story of Sri Rama's life, thus inspiring Valmiki to compose the Ramayana.

At the end of the Dwapara Yuga, Sage Veda Vyasa, himself an incarnation of the Lord, felt restless about the future of mankind despite having compiled the Vedas, Upanishads, seventeen Puranas and even the Mahabharata. At this juncture, again it was Narada who came to him and advised him to write a *grantha* that glorified the Lord in a manner that would evoke the sweet feeling of bhakti in the reader.

On Veda Vyasa's request, Narada also narrated how he himself had earned devotion in his previous birth. He said that, as the little son of a servant maid, he had had the great fortune of serving the *sadhus* in his village through his mother's blessings. It had been simply through the sheer grace, compassion, and by eating the *ucchishtam* (sacred

food remnants), of these sadhus that he had developed great dispassion and an overpowering desire to seek the Lord. The Lord had granted him a brief *darshan* in his heart in that birth, due to his having served the sadhus, but He had withdrawn His form saying that the boy was only eligible for that brief vision in that birth.

However the Lord blessed him, so that in his next birth as Sage Narada, he does no arduous penance but instead constantly only chants the name of the Lord. And, while in his earlier birth that Lord went away from him, in this birth, the Lord constantly follows him and does not move away even for a second!

Thus inspired by Narada's story, Veda Vyasa authored Srimad Bhagavatam, the crown jewel among the Puranas, that extols not just the Lord's *lilas* in His colorful Krishnavatara, but also the inspiring life stories of His foremost devotees, while laying down *nama sankirtan* and *katha shravanam* as the basis of developing true love for the Lord.

Thus Sage Narada appears to be almost single-handedly responsible for showing posterity (i.e., us) a way to the Light in this dark and depressing Kali Yuga. How then can we label this great redeemer of the world as a mischief-monger or troublemaker?

Priya Thulasi, Milwaukee, WI

Based on the discourses and articles of HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

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## Pilgrimage and its Phala

**Infinite Ways to Infinite Bliss**—Excerpts from the discourses of HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji of Chennai, India.\*\*

“**V**aranasi, Vrindavan, Ayodhya, Dwaraka and Pandharpur are *kshetras* (holy places of pilgrimage) filled with the presence of the Lord.

However, a trip undertaken to these sacred spots without the knowledge of the *sthala purana* (history/importance of the kshetra), in the company of friends, while gossiping all the way, placing greater importance on comfortable boarding and lodging, or visiting the temple according to one's whims and fancies, can be deemed only as an excursion and not as pilgrimage.

When one decides to undertake a pilgrimage, the *sthala purana* should be learned from a *bhagavata* (true devotee) or the Sadguru. Undertaking pilgrimage along with the Sadguru is the best way. To go in the company of good, devoted, religious-minded people is *madhyama* (i.e. not ideal,

but the next best option). All other ways are *adhama* (not good).

This is because it is not possible for ordinary mortals like us to comprehend the ancient incidents that took place in these kshetras, or the experiences of *mahans* (great saints) who had lived there in the past in *bhakti bhaava* (mood of immense devotion). But when we go in the company of a mahan, he explains the special features of the kshetras and enjoys it all with bhaava. This makes us feel a deep involvement in them. Worldly matters do not arise in our minds when we go in the company of the Sadguru or in a satsang. The pilgrimage then is greatly enjoyable as there is incessant *Nama Sankirtan* and *pravachanas* (spiritual discourses). Every pilgrimage should be undertaken only in this manner.

If even a visit to a kshetra is possible only

due to merits accrued in earlier births, then what to speak of those who live in those kshetras? Therefore, one should not hold any grudge against any 'demanding' priests or beggars in such kshetras. One should not say things like

“how can we call this river holy when the gutter flows into it”, etc. Such thoughts/speech would earn us grave sins!

One should deem all residents of the kshetras as verily *sadhus*. While going to and returning from a kshetra, one should perform incessant Nama kirtan or Nama *japa* or think of Bhagavan or do *dhyaana*. If these are not possible one can remain in silence.

*Poorna Phala* (full benefit) is obtained only if the pilgrimage is undertaken in this manner."



## Lord Buddha in Hinduism

**L**ord Buddha is known the world over as the founder of Buddhism. In Hinduism, Lord Buddha is considered as a revered *avatara* of the Lord, and is often counted among the ten popular avatars of Lord Vishnu.

Born as Prince Siddhartha in a royal family, he initially enjoyed all the pleasures of a materialistic life. He was trained in various forms of art, given a good education and brought up in abundance of wealth. The king's fervent wish was that his son would grow up and take over the kingdom as his successor.

But fate decided otherwise. Siddhartha had never been exposed to the miseries of life. Once, when he ventured out to get a glimpse of the kingdom, he came face to face with the suffering of the world. He saw an old man weakened and frail with age, a man suffering from disease, a corpse of a dead man being carried by his lamenting kinsmen, and finally, an ascetic who looked



tranquil and unaffected by anything. This incident affected Siddhartha to a great extent. He realized that nobody could escape aging, illness or death. He went into deep contemplation and started his quest towards enlightenment after renouncing his family, title and wealth. He attained enlightenment under a tree in Gaya, India, and henceforth came to be called Buddha, the Enlightened One.

The prime difference between Hinduism and Buddhism lies in the latter's non-acceptance of the Vedas as the prime scriptural authority.

However, in this context, Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana clearly says:

*tata: kalau sampravrutte sammOhAya suradvishAm |*

*budhdhO nAmnAjanasuta: kikatEshu bhavishyati ||*

This ancient verse says that the Lord will incarnate as Buddha at the dawn of Kali Yuga in a place called Gaya; that He himself

would preach against the Vedas because in the Age of Kali, the Vedas will be interpreted superficially and will be misused by evil people for their selfish needs.

It might be quite perplexing as to why Bhagavan himself would want to speak against the Vedas, which are verily His own words.

Here we should understand that Bhagavan, is a complete embodiment of immense compassion. He only wants to bring every single person to Himself, even at the cost of refuting His own words! The fact that He wants everyone to reach Him is indeed the reason why he takes so many avatars and also sends so many different Mahans, to show so many different paths to Him, in accordance with the situation and circumstances of a particular age.

Therefore, at a time when people had become very ritualistic, Buddha came to show a way to Liberation, to such people who had lost faith in rituals and rites, and those who were unable to interpret the Vedas correctly according to the Age. This too is only the compassion of the Lord.

Buddha Purnima, the birthday of Lord Buddha, will be celebrated this month.

**Anusha Ramesh, San Jose, CA**





## A Mother: The First Guru!

We all know the story of little Dhruva, who did intense tapas and saw the Lord, and eventually became the Dhruva star alongside the *Saptarishi mandala*. But how did he get to see the Lord in such a young age? Who inspired him?

Dhruva was the son of King Uttanapada and his first wife, Sunithi. However, both Sunithi and Dhruva were neglected by the king as he always spent his time with his other queen, Suruchi, and her son Uttama. Dhruva grew up without the love of a father.

When he was about 5 years old, Dhruva found out from his friends that the king was his father. Immediately he directly went to the palace and sat on his father's lap. The mean Queen Suruchi however could not stand that and pushed him off the king's lap. She said that if he wanted to sit there, he should be born to her and not to anybody else, and asked him to do penance to the

Lord for that reason.

Little Dhruva was deeply hurt. He

went crying to his mother Sunithi and told her the whole story. The helpless mother consoled him and asked him not to worry. *And this is where Sunithi reacted differently from normal mothers; a reaction that set her apart and gave undying glory to her little son.*

Instead of simply consoling her little child and saying "everything will be all right", she told him that, in such a situation, only the Lord could really help him. She told him to seek refuge, not in a worldly father, but in the Father of the whole world. Thus, by encouraging him to seek the Lord (even if it meant going alone to the forest), she guided her son on the right path towards the greatest good.

Listening to her, the little prince bravely set

off to the wild forest with determination. Sunithi, who had strong faith in the Lord, knew that the Lord would protect her son from all dangers.

When Dhruva went in search of the Lord, Sage Narada came there as a Guru and showed him the way to see Him. Following his Guru's instructions, Dhruva was, in a very short time, able to have *darshan* of the Father of the world, and obtain His immense love and blessings.

A mother should always lead her child only in the right direction which is towards the Lord; just as Sunithi did. Such a mother is indeed a child's first Guru.

This year, Mother's Day falls on May 13. On this day, let us pray for the welfare and happiness of our selfless mothers who shower so much love on us.

*Yamini Kelappan, Chicago, IL*



## Kid's Quiz - Ganga Trivia

**G**anga Dasami, the day when the holy Ganga descended from the heavens to the earth, will be celebrated this year on May 31, 2012. Let's see how much you know about this sacred river and the stories associated with her.

1. In which part of India can one see the river Ganges?

- A. Southwest India
- B. Southern India
- C. Northern India

2. During which Avatar of the lord, was Ganga born?

- A. Varaha
- B. Krishna
- C. Vamana

3. Name the longest river in India

- A. Brahmaputra
- B. Ganga
- C. Godavari

4. What is Ganga called in Badrinath and Kedarnath?

- A. Alakananda



- B. Bhageerathi
- C. Ganga

5. Name the king who did severe penance for Ganga to come down to earth for the sake of his ancestors' souls:

- A. Amshuman
- B. Asamanjan
- C. Bhageeratha

6. Name the god who took Ganga unto his head when she descended to the earth.

- A. Lord Brahma
- B. Lord Shiva
- C. Lord Indra

7. Name the place in India where river Ganges originates.

- A. Gangotri
- B. Varanasi
- C. Haridwar

8. Which sage's tapas did King Sagara's thousand sons disturb, and as a result were burned to death?

- A. Sage Durvasa
- B. Sage Kapila
- C. Sage Akrura

9. Who stole the horse during King Sagara's Ashwamedha Yaga?

- A. Lord Indra
- B. Lord Muruga
- C. Lord Brahma

10. What is the name that river Ganga got because she came out of Sage Jahnu's ear?

- A. Jahnvi
- B. Janani
- C. Jaganmohini

11. Which place in India is the confluence of Alakananda and Bhageerathi?

- A. Dev Prayag
- B. Badrinath
- C. Kasi

12. Why do people take a dip in the holy river Ganges?

- A. It bestows wealth
- B. It obliterates all sins
- C. It bestows knowledge

**Compiled by:**

**Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA**

**Answers:**





## Sri Poornimaji's visit to the US

### Milwaukee Satsangs



## News and Events

### Michigan - GK 1st Anniversary



### Clean-up day in Houston



### Chicago - 3 Day Bhagavath Kathamrutham



### Seattle Sampradaya Camp



### Chicago - GK Art Contest



### Corpus Christi



### San Antonio



### UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 20** - Sant Tukaram - An evening of abhangs at Vedic cultural center, Sammamish, WA  
**Jun 13** - Gopa Kuteeram Youth Summer camp **start** at Houston Namadwaar  
**Jun 23-24** - Gopa Kuteeram Lil Gopas Summer Camp @ Houston Namadwaar  
**Jun 27 - 29** - Gopa Kuteeram Summer camp at Naperville Public Library, Naperville, IL. For detail contact [chicagogopakuteeram@gmail.com](mailto:chicagogopakuteeram@gmail.com)

### Atlanta Satsangs



### Seattle Akandanama



Weekly satsangs are held regularly in the following regions:

**Atlanta, GA; Bay Area, CA; New England area; Chicago, IL; Cortlandt Manor, NY; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; Saskatchewan, Canada**

A Telecon satsang is held every Fri evening and Tele-Bhagavatam discourse is telecast every Tue evening, both at 8:30 PM CST. Anyone is welcome to attend. Ph: 605-475-4000, Passcode: 131581

Gopa Kuteeram (kids' programs) & Srimad Bhagavatam study circles are conducted in various cities. Email [newsletter@godivinity.org](mailto:newsletter@godivinity.org) for more info.



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 3363 Bel Mira Way  
 San Jose, CA 95135

Phone: 1-(830)-4GOD-USA

Feedback email: [newsletter@godivinity.org](mailto:newsletter@godivinity.org)

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**Newsletter team:**

**Content**—Aravind TRA, Latha Kumanan, Lekshmi Nair, Narayanan Sathiamoorthy, Nair MPR, Nisha Giri, Nithya Rajesh, Ramya Srinivasan, Shalini Kelappan, Sriram Ramanujam, Sowmya Balasubramanian, Sujatha Sankar, Yamini ZivanPrakash.  
**Illustrations**—Sripriya Sarathy.