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Narayana

For twin avatars of Vishnu, see [Nara-Narayana](#).

Narayana (Sanskrit: नारायण IAST: *Nārāyaṇa*) is



Narayana's depiction, at Badami cave temples

the Vedic Supreme God^{[1][2]} (including his different avatars) in Hinduism, venerated as the Supreme Being in Vaishnavism. He is also known as Vishnu and Hari and is venerated as Purushottama or Supreme Purusha in Hindu sacred texts such as the Bhagavad Gita,^[3] the Vedas and the Puranas.

Narayana is the name of God in his infinite all pervading form. He is the Supreme Purusha of Purusha Sukta. The Puranas present a seemingly divergent, but accurate description of Narayana (as an Enlightened Supreme Being). The fifth verse of the Narayana Sukta, a hymn in Yajurveda, states that Narayana pervades whatever is seen or heard in this universe from inside and outside alike. Another important translation of Narayana is *The One who rests on Water*. The waters are called narah, [for] the waters are, indeed, produced by Nara-Narayana (the first Being); as they were his first residence [ayana], he is called Narayana.^[4] In Sanskrit, "Nara" can also refer to all human beings or living entities (Jivas). Therefore, another meaning of Narayana is *Resting place for all liv-*

ing entities. The close association of Narayana with water explains the frequent depiction of Narayana in Hindu art as standing or sitting on an ocean.

In Hindu sacred texts like Vedas, Puranas etc., Narayana is described as having the divine blue colour of water-filled clouds, four-armed, holding a Padma (lotus flower), mace Kaumodaki, Panchajanya shankha (conch) and a discus weapon Sudarshana Chakra. Narayana is also described in the Bhagavad Gita as having a 'Universal Form' (*Vishvarupa*) Vishvarupa which is beyond the ordinary limits of human perception or imagination.^[5]

Bhagavata Purana declares Narayana as Para Brahman Supreme Lord who creates unlimited universes and enters each one of them as Lord of Universe.^[6] Narayana engages in creation of 14 worlds within the universe as Brahma when he deliberately accepts rajas guna. Narayana himself sustains, maintains and preserves the universe as Vishnu when he accepts sattva guna and annihilates the universe at the end of maha-kalpa as Shiva or Rudra when he accepts tamas guna.^{[7][8][9]} According to this reference, the holy Trimurti is non-different from Narayana.

Narayana is also venerated as Mukunda^[10] which means God who is giver of mukti or Moksha or liberation from cycle of births and deaths in the material world.

Narayana's eternal and supreme abode beyond the material universe is Vaikuntha which is a realm of bliss and happiness. It is also known as Paramdhama, which means final or highest place for liberated souls, where they enjoy bliss and happiness for eternity in the company of supreme lord. Vaikuntha is situated beyond the material universe and hence, cannot be perceived or measured by material science or logic.^[11] Sometimes, Ksheera Sagara where Narayana or Vishnu rests on Ananta Shesha is also perceived as *local Vaikuntha* with in the material universe.

In the *Mahabharata*, Krishna is often referred to as Narayana and Arjuna as Nara.^[12] The epic identifies them both in plural 'Krishnas', or as part incarnations of the earlier incarnations of Vishnu, recalling their mystical identity as Nara-Narayana.^[13]

1 Etymology

Narayana is spoken of in the scriptures as being 'parabrahman', 'paramatma' and 'parameshwar' which are all ways of saying "absolute" or "supreme"

God/Lord/Soul. In the *Vedas* it is written that that "Narayana parabrahman tatvam Narayana paraha !", which points to the how Narayana is essentially the supreme force and/or essence of all.

Antar Vahisca Sarvam vyapta Narayana stitaha means inside and out Narayana is pervaded throughout the universe both spiritual and material universes. He resides at the blissful *Vaikuntha* planet, which is situated at the *Swetadwipa*, he is also called *Vaikuntha nathan* and *Ksheerabdhi nathan* means the lord of milk ocean, he plays his divine pastimes with his consort Lakshmi and other liberated souls.

He never leaves milk ocean but his power works throughout the universe as it says in Upanisada "*Om purna midam purnat purna muduchyate*" means he is the complete whole, even though everything comes from him, he is still the complete.

In Sanskrit, another name for water is Nara. The Supreme Lord Vishnu whose resting place ('Ayana') is 'Nara' is therefore called Narayana. "Nara" also means the living entities (Jivas). Therefore, another meaning of Narayana is 'resting place for all living entities'. The close association of Narayana with water explains the frequent depiction of Narayana in Hindu art as standing or sitting on an ocean.

Another important translation of Narayana is "The Supreme Being who is the foundation of all men".^[14]

Harivansh^[15] explicitly define Narayan as: *Naaraa Apah samaakyaataastaasaamayanaamaaditah, yatastavan bhootabhavyesha tat-Naarayanashabdhitah. Naaarah Apah samaakhyaat means naarah known as aapah* (Water), *Naaraanaam aaditah ayanan yasya sah* (from the beginning (aditah) you are resting in (ayanam) that is why (yasya sah), oh lord of past and future (bhoot-bhavyesha, you are called (shabdhitah) Narayan.

In *Mahabharata*^[16] *Naar* means water in human (*Nar*) body, is residence (*Aayan*) of God (Narayan).

Another interpretation of the word Narayana sees *Nara* meaning "human" and *Ayana* as "direction/goal". Some view Narayana as meaning "son of man." Hence Narayana refers to the "direction of a human" (or the one that helps a human to his/her goal, i.e. towards moksha). *Nara* is related to moksha as both are rooted to the Water element (*Ap*), one of the *Great Elements* (*Mahābhūta*). (See also *Tattva*).

Nara means humans and *Ayana* means shelter so Narayana means the shelter of all human beings. The Narayana Upanishad reads: *Om Namō Narayanayeti mantra upasaka Vaikuntha bhuvanam gamishyati*,^[17] or "Whosoever chants the 'Om Namō Narayana' mantra reaches the ultimate goal *Vaikuntha* planet where one attains eternal blissful life." *Vaikuntha* is the supreme spiritual abode; there is nothing that exists beyond *Vaikuntha*, *Vaikuntha* means 'no desires'.

Actually, Lord Narayan is the supreme almighty, everything emanates from Him. In the *Yajurveda* it says, *Om adha nitya Narayan ha, brahma narayanaha, shivasca narayana ha, shankarsca narayanaha and kalasca narayanaha, sarva bhutasca mekam via narayana Karan purusha makarana parabramahan'* and ultimately it says '*Savo deve eko Narayana na dwitiyacha kaschit*' ("There is only one God Narayana and no second"). He Himself expands as Brahma the creator (Generator), Vishnu the maintainer (Operator) and Shiva as the annihilator (Destroyer)-GOD. Whether you read Rig Veda or any other Vedas and Puranas it has said Lord Narayan is the supreme and there is absolutely nothing beyond Him, it says in *Srimad Bhagavatam Yesha tu Narayanam devam adevam isham* ('Narayan is the lord of the lords beyond him there is nothing exists'). Whoever worships with love and devotion achieves the highest destination *Vaikuntha*. (G as Generator, O as Operator and D as Destroyer hence GOD)

Narayana's sculpture at Badami resembles Bodhisatva Avalokiteshwara or Dakshinamurthy.

2 Variations

- Narayan
- Narayanan
- Narayanaswami
- Thai: Narai (นารายณ์)

3 Religious uses

- Narayana is appears as the 245th name for Vishnu in the *Vishnu sahasranama* (See *Vaishnava Theology*).
- Narayana is also the original name for Supreme Being from whom everything exists. It is observed in the *Bhagavat Mahapuran* and the *Rig Veda* that "Narayana devam adevam isham" or, Narayana is the only lord and beyond him there is no other. Therefore, great sages like *Devarshi Narada* always chant "Narayan, Narayan" and "Sriman Narayan".
- Narayan in the *Narayana Sukta* mantras is held to be the primeval Lord from whom everything originates. It is also said that from the Universal form of Narayana, Brahma and Siva are created for creation and destruction of the whole cosmos. To protect the universe it is said, he took 21 incarnations. The universal form of Narayana is mentioned in the *Maha Narayana Upanisad* as "Om sahasra sreesam devam vishwakhyam vishwa sambhubam, viswam Narayana devam aksharam paramam padam" meaning, the universal form of Narayana has thousands of

heads, eyes, limbs and he is the indestructible seed whose feet are the ultimate shelter for all.

- The book, *Sri Ramanuja, His Life, Religion, and Philosophy*, states that the name “Narayana” means, “He who is the dwelling place i.e. the source, support and dissolving ground of all Jivas or souls, including inert matter.”
- While performing a puja, people often say all the 108 names of *Narayana*.

A verse that confers the *Devas*' subordinate status comes from the *Vishnu sahasranama*, whose concluding verses state: “The *Rishis* (great sages), ancestors, the *Devas*, the great elements, in fact, all things moving and unmoving constituting this universe have originated from *Narayana*.” This verse indicates that the *Devas* are subordinate to *Vishnu* or *Narayana*.

4 Rarity of devotees of Narayana

“There are ninety million demigods and seventy million sages, who are all called narayanayana, devotees of Lord Narayana. Among them, only a few are called narayana-parayana/direct devotees are called narayana-parayanas/.”

5 See also

- Adam Kadmon
- Bhagavan
- Bhakti
- Garbhodaksayi Vishnu
- Hari
- Hiranyagarbha
- Kshirodakasayi Vishnu
- Mahavishnu
- Narayana sukta
- Pangu
- Parabrahman
- Paramatma
- Pausha (Hindu calendar)
- Sankarshana
- Vaikuntha (abode of Narayana)
- Vishnu

- World egg
- Jagannath
- Anthropos

6 References

- [1] Bhagavata Purana (12.12.56): “Narayanam Devam adevam isam - Lord Narayana, the Supreme controller and the ultimate Soul of all existence, beyond whom there is no other god.
- [2] Bhagavata Purana (12.13.16): Just as the river Ganges is the greatest of all rivers, Lord Achyuta (Vishnu or Narayana) the supreme among deities (devas) and Lord Shambhu (Shiva) the greatest of Vaishnavas, so Bhagavata Purana is the greatest of all Puranas.
- [3] Bhagavad Gita (15.18): Because I am transcendental, beyond both the fallible and the infallible, and because I am the greatest, I am celebrated both in the world and in the Vedas as that Supreme Person (Purushottama)
- [4] Manu Smruti 1:10 " The Law Code of Manu", Published by Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-280271-2, page 11, also, The Laws of Manu in the 21st Century by Pt. Sri Rama Ramanuja Acharya, page 6
- [5] Prabhupada, AC Bhaktivedanta. “Bhagavad-gita As It Is Chapter 11 Verse 3”. vedabase.net. Retrieved 2008-05-10. “see the cosmic manifestation”
- [6] Bhagavata Purana Canto 2 Chapter 10 Verse 10
- [7] Bhagavata Purana Canto 2 Chapter 5 Verse 16-18
- [8] Bhagavata Purana Canto 11 Chapter 4 Verse 5
- [9] Vishnu Purana 1.2.61-63
- [10] Name No. 515 in Vishnu Sahasranama
- [11] <http://www.tirumala.org/sapthagiri/062003/vaikuntha.htm>
- [12] *Vaisnavism Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar. Published by Asian Educational Services, p.46.
- [13] Hildebeitel, Alf (1990). *The ritual of battle: Krishna in the Mahābhārata*. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press. ISBN 0-7914-0249-5. p61
- [14] Hariyansh, Adhyay 88 shlock 44, also, Manu Smruti 1:10 " The Law Code of Manu", Published by Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-280271-2, page 11
- [15] Adhyay 88 shlok 44
- [16] Aranyak Parva- Chapter 272 shlok 42- Published by Sastu Sahitya Vardhak Karyalay, Ahmedabad, India)
- [17] http://www.sathyasaiottawa.org/pdf/Vedam/Narayana_Upanishad.pdf

7 External links

- Name of Narayana even at the time of death can save a great sinner, Ajamila.
- http://www.srivaishnavan.com/ans_secrets.html
(See Answer #14.)
- http://www.ayurvedacollege.com/articles/drhalpern/om_namo_narayanaya Om Namō Narayana and Ayurveda

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