

NĀRADĪ. One of the Brahmavādī sons of Viśvāmitra. (Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 4, Verse 59).

NĀRADIYAPURĀNA. One of the eighteen Purāṇas. (See under Purāṇas).

NARAKA I. (NARAKĀSURA). A valiant Asura.

1) *Birth.* Once the Asura Hiraṇyākṣa was amusing himself by wading through the ocean and beating at the waves with his club. Varuṇa, the god of water, was alarmed at this and ran to Mahāviṣṇu and told him every thing. Hearing this Mahāviṣṇu got up to kill Hiraṇyākṣa. Hiraṇyākṣa who had assumed the form of a Boar carried the earth on his tusks and ran to Pātāla. As the goddess earth had come into contact with the tusks of Hiraṇyākṣa she became pregnant and gave birth to an asura infant of immense might and power. That infant was Narakāsura.

Taking the infant born from impurity the sad goddess Earth went to Mahāviṣṇu and requested him to save the child somehow. Mahāviṣṇu pitied him and gave him Nārāyaṇāstra (Nārāyaṇa's weapon) and said: "Naraka! So long as this weapon is with you, nobody but me could kill you." Saying this he disappeared. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 10).

2) *Administration.* Narakāsura made Prāgjyotiṣa his capital and ruled over the asuras as their emperor for a long time, all the while terrifying the Devas. Once this asura raped Kaśerū the daughter of Tvaṣṭā. He brought sixteen thousand and one hundred maidens from the women of the earth and the world of gods. He made them captives at Audaka on the top of the mountain Maṇiparvata. He appointed four mighty and fearful asuras: Hayagrīva, Nisunda, Pañcanada and Mura as gate-keepers of Prāgjyotiṣa. As they stood blocking the way up to Devayāna, nobody dared to enter Prāgjyotiṣa. The ten sons of Narakāsura guarded the harem. At the boundary of the country Murāsura had tied six thousand ropes with a sword at the end of each. So enemies dared not come near the boundary. When Sugrīva gave instructions to the monkeys who were sent in search of Sītā, about the route they were to follow, he had mentioned about the city of Prāgjyotiṣa. Mention is made in Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa, Sarga 42 that Sugrīva had given them special instructions to search for Sītā in Prāgjyotiṣa. (M.B. Viṣṇu Parva, Chapter 63).

3) *Previous birth of Naraka.* Long ago a king who was the father of sixteen thousand daughters, ruled over a country. While the father and daughters were sitting in the palace Mahāviṣṇu came there as a hermit. The sixteen thousand damsels gathered round the hermit. Their father got angry and cursed them. The daughters shed tears and entreated their father for liberation from the curse. He gave them remission and said that in the next birth they would become wives of Mahāviṣṇu.

Another version of this story says that the damsels had requested Brahmā for liberation from the curse according to the advice of the hermit Nārada, and that Brahmā had given them liberation from the curse. In some versions it is stated that Nārada himself gave them liberation from the curse.

It was this King, who was the father of the sixteen thousand damsels, who took birth again as Narakāsura. Those sixteen thousand damsels who had been born as princesses in different places were taken captives by Narakāsura and were kept in Audaka. (Bhāgavata,

Skandha 10).

4) *Death.* Narakāsura who had been causing devastation and terror in the three worlds entered the world of the gods once. The gods were not able to withstand the fury of Naraka, who carried away the ear-rings of Aditi, the mother of Indra, and the large white royal umbrella of Indra to Prāgjyotiṣa. Indra went to Dvātākā and told Śrī Kṛṣṇa of the molestations he had received at the hands of Narakāsura. Śrī Kṛṣṇa rode on his Garuḍa with his wife Satyabhāmā to Prāgjyotiṣa. They flew over the city round and understood the lay-out of the city, and the precautions taken by Narakāsura. The battle began after this reconnaissance. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Satyabhāmā and Garuḍa fought with the asuras. The mighty asuras such as Mura, Tāmra, Antarikṣa, Śravaṇa, Vasu, Vibhāvasu, Nabhasvān, Aruṇa and others were killed. At last Narakāsura himself entered the battle-field. A fierce battle ensued in which Naraka was killed. The divine weapon Nārāyaṇāstra of Naraka was given to his son Bhagadatta. After the battle Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā went to the world of the gods and returned the ear-rings to Aditi and the umbrella to Indra. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 10).

NARAKA II. Mention is made about another Narakāsura who was born to Prajāpati Kaśyapa by his wife Danu, in Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 65, Stanza 28. Once Indra defeated this Narakāsura. It is seen in Mahābhārata, Sabhā Parva, Chapter 9 that this asura after his death, stayed in the palace of Varuṇa worshipping him.

NARAKA III. Bhagadatta the son of Narakāsura ruled over the part of Pātāla called Naraka, and being the ruler of Naraka, Bhagadatta seems to have been known by the name of Naraka also.

NARAKA. IV See under Kāla I.

NARANĀRĀYAṆAS. Two hermits Nara and Nārāyaṇa. These two hermits had spent many thousands of years in Badaryāśrama doing penance. Arjuna was the rebirth of Nara and Śrī Kṛṣṇa was the rebirth of Nārāyaṇa. (For detailed story see under Nara and Nārāyaṇa).

NARĀNTAKA I. A captain of the army of Rāvaṇa. It is stated in Agni Purāṇa, Chapter 10, that the captains of Rāvaṇa, viz., Kumbha, Nikumbha, Makarākṣa, Mahodara, Mahāpārśva, Matta, Unmatta, Praghāsa, Bhāsakarna, Virūpākṣa, Devāntaka, Narāntaka, Trisīras, Atikāya and other Rākṣasas fought on the side of Rāvaṇa against Śrī Rāma and that all of them were killed.

Of these Devāntaka and Narāntaka were mighty and valiant warriors. Aṅgada killed Narāntaka after a fierce battle. (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddha Kāṇḍa, Chapter 69).

NARĀNTAKA II. Son of Rudraketu, an asura. This asura terrorized the three worlds by his wicked and cruel deeds. When the wickedness and cruelty of this asura became unbearable Gaṇapati incarnated in the house of Kaśyapa to protect the three worlds. Knowing this Narāntaka resorted to various means to kill Gaṇapati. But his attempts were futile. Finally he was killed by Gaṇapati. (Gaṇeśa Purāṇa).

NARARĀṢṬRA. A kingdom of ancient India. In Mahābhārata, Sabhā Parva, Chapter 31, Stanza 6, it is mentioned that Sahadeva one of the Pāṇḍavas, conquered this country.

NARASIMHA. See under Avatāra.