

Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1 Chapter 6: Narada and Vyasa

11 September 2026



A note before you read

These chapter-by-chapter summaries of the **Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇa** are prepared with the **Gita Press Bhagwat** as the primary reference. They are meant to support your study of the Bhagwat, not to replace the original scripture.

The primary and recommended way to study is to read directly from the physical Gita Press Bhagwat. When you are travelling, away from home, or the book is not at hand, these summaries may be used as a companion for continued study, revision and understanding.



Alone in a vast forest, the child who would become the sage Nārada sits beneath a Peepul tree, and Śrī Hari gradually rises within his heart.

Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

Welcome back to *Srimad Bhagavatam Wisdom*, our devotional journey through the Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa. In the previous discourse, the divine sage Nārada told Vyāsa how, in his former life, a company of wandering saints kindled devotion in the heart of a humble servant's son. Now Vyāsa longs to know the rest: what became of that fatherless boy? This sixth chapter is Nārada's answer — one of the most tender and luminous life-stories in all scripture. It carries us from a lonely forest, through a vision granted and withdrawn, across death and a new creation, to the eternal wanderer who sings the glory of the Lord with his vīṇā and delights a weary world.

Chapter Information

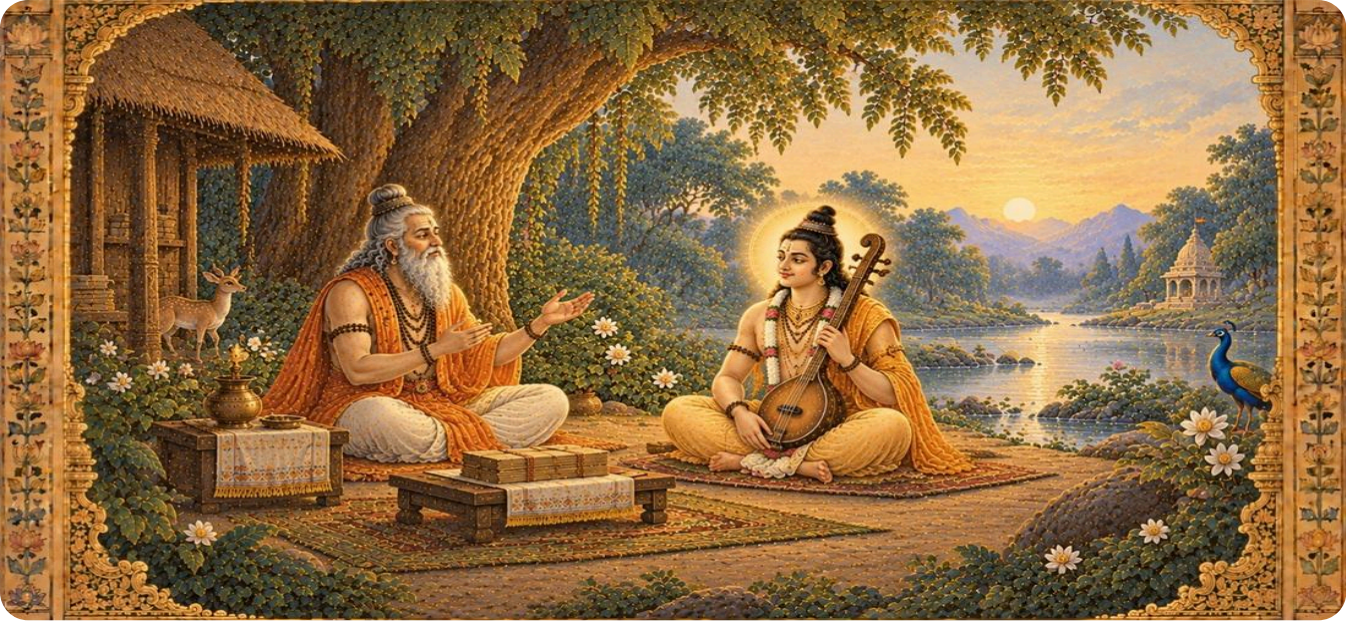
- Scripture: Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa
- Canto: 1 (Book One)
- Chapter: 6 (Discourse 6)
- Chapter title: Conversation Between Nārada and Vyāsa
- Principal speaker: the Devarṣi Nārada (within the frame narrated by the blessed Sūta, Ugrāśravā)
- Principal listener: the sage Vyāsa, Bādarāyaṇa, son of Satyavatī (and, in the frame, Śaunaka and the sages of Naimiṣāranya)
- Main setting: a great uninhabited forest of Nārada's previous life; the frame in the forest of Naimiṣāranya
- Central subject: the secret of Nārada's birth and spiritual endeavours — the vision of the Lord, his passage through death and creation, and the saving power of singing the Lord's glory
- Principal verse range: Canto 1, Chapter 6, verses 1–38
- Primary edition: Gita Press *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*

Context from the Previous Chapter

In the fifth discourse, Nārada consoled a despondent Vyāsa and revealed his own former life: born to a lowly maidservant, he had served a band of saints through the rainy season, heard them sing the glories of Śrī Hari, and so received the seed of pure devotion. Here Vyāsa asks him to continue the story to its end.

Vyāsa Asks the One Question That Remains

Having heard how devotion first awakened in Nārada, Mahārṣi Vyāsa — the son of Satyavatī — wished to hear everything that followed, and questioned the sage again.



Having heard of Narada's birth and spiritual endeavours, the sage Vyasa questions him once more (SB 1.6.1).

सूत उवाच

एवं निशम्य भगवान्देवर्षेर्जन्म कर्म च ।

भूयः पप्रच्छ तं ब्रह्मन् व्यासः सत्यवतीसुतः ॥ १ ॥

sūta uvāca evaṁ niśamya bhagavān devarṣer janma karma ca bhūyaḥ papraccha taṁ brahman vyāsaḥ satyavatī-sutaḥ

Meaning: Having thus heard of the divine sage's birth and deeds, the venerable Vyāsa, son of Satyavatī, questioned Nārada once more. (SB 1.6.1)

His questions were three, and they are the questions of every thoughtful heart. When the saints who had instructed you departed, Vyāsa asked, what did you do — a mere child, alone in the world? In what manner did you spend the rest of that life, and how did you cast off your mortal body when the time came? And, foremost of the gods, how is it that time, which obliterates all things, failed to erase the memory of your existence in the previous age of the world?

A Fatherless Child and a Mother's Passing

Nārada answered gently. He had been the only child of his mother, an unlettered woman who worked as a servant-maid and had bound herself with ties of affection to her son, who depended on her alone. Much as she wished to provide for him, she could not, for she herself was helpless — and here Nārada offered a truth that would shape his whole life: the world is subject to its Ruler even as a puppet is moved by the one who pulls the strings. Out of regard for her he stayed in that settlement of the brāhmaṇas, and being only five years old he had as yet no notion of the four directions, or even of space and time.



The boy who would become Narada was the only son of a poor and devoted maidservant (SB 1.6.6-7).

Then came the night that changed everything. His mother left the house to milk a cow, and on the dark path she trod upon a serpent, which — as fate would have it — bit the helpless woman, and so her life came to its end. A grieving child might have called this a cruelty. Nārada received it as a kindness: he took it as a boon granted by the Lord, who is ever solicitous for the welfare of His devotees, freeing him now for the road he was meant to walk. And so, unattached at last, the boy set out toward the north.

Alone Toward the Great Forest

He passed through prosperous lands and cities, through villages and cowherd settlements, past mines and hamlets and the stray dwellings of hermits by mountains and rivers; through plantations and groves, past hills bright with many-coloured minerals, trees whose boughs the elephants had broken, and lotus-ponds frequented by the gods, made vocal by birds and adorned by wandering bees. Having crossed all these alone, he came at last upon a vast and formidable forest, dense with reeds and hollow bamboos and kuśa grass, dreadful in appearance, haunted by serpents, owls and jackals.



Journeying alone, the child crossed many lands and came upon a vast and formidable forest (SB 1.6.11-13).

Wearied in mind and body, overcome with thirst and hunger, he bathed in the pool of a river, drank of its water, rinsed his mouth, and felt refreshed.

Beneath the Peepul Tree

In that forest, where no human being dwelt, the child sat down at the foot of a Peepul tree, and with a mind drawn inward he began to contemplate the Lord seated within his own heart — just as he had heard Him described from the lips of the saints.

तस्मिन्निर्मनुजेऽरण्ये पिप्पलोपस्थ आश्रितः ।
आत्मनात्मानमात्मस्थं यथाश्रुतमचिन्तयम् ॥ १५ ॥

tasmin nirmanuje 'raṇye pippalopastha āśritaḥ ātmanātmānam ātmasthaṁ yathā-śrutam acintayam

Meaning: In that forest uninhabited by men, seated at the foot of a Peepul tree, I meditated with my mind upon the Self seated within the self, as I had heard of Him. (SB 1.6.15)

As he meditated upon the Lord's lotus-feet with a mind overpowered by love, tears of longing rose to his eyes — and gradually, upon the screen of his heart, Śrī Hari appeared.

ध्यायतश्चरणाम्भोजं भावनिर्जितचेतसा ।
औत्कण्ठ्याश्रुकलाक्षस्य हृद्यासीन्मे शनैर्हरिः ॥ १६ ॥

dhyāyataś caraṇāmbhojaṁ bhāva-nirjita-cetasā autkaṇṭhyāśru-kalākṣasya hṛdy āsīn me śanair hariḥ

Meaning: As I meditated upon His lotus-feet with a heart conquered by love, my eyes brimming with tears of eagerness, Śrī Hari gradually arose within my heart. (SB 1.6.16)

The Vision Given and Withdrawn

The hair of his body stood on end in an outburst of love, and his heart knew a thrill of overwhelming joy and peace. Immersed in a flood of ecstasy, he lost all awareness both of himself and of the vision he beheld. Then, in that very moment, the indescribable form of the Lord — which had enraptured his heart and dispelled all his grief — slipped from his sight. Troubled to the depths, the boy sprang to his feet. Again and again he fixed his mind upon his heart and searched for the beloved form, but it did not return; and he felt as miserable as one whose dearest longing has been left unfulfilled.

The Voice That Consoled Him

To the child struggling thus in that lonely forest, the Lord, who is beyond the reach of speech, spoke in words at once sublime and tender, as though to soothe his grief.

हन्तास्मिञ्जन्मनि भवान्मां द्रष्टुमिहार्हति ।
अविपक्वकषायाणां दुर्दर्शोऽहं कुयोगिनाम् ॥ २१ ॥

hantāsmiñ janmani bhavān mā māṁ draṣṭum ihārhati avipakva-kaṣāyāṇāṁ durdarśo 'haṁ kuyoginām

Meaning: Alas, in this life you shall not be able to see Me again; for I am hard to perceive for those whose impurities are not yet burnt away and who are imperfect in yoga. (SB 1.6.21)

It was only to awaken in him a burning longing to behold Him, the Lord explained, that He had shown His form even once; for one who yearns in this way for the Lord gradually casts off every lingering desire of the heart. Then He revealed the fruit of the boy's small, faithful service.



The unseen Lord speaks to console the grieving child and bless him with lasting remembrance (SB 1.6.21-25).

सत्सेवयादीर्घयापि जाता मयि दृढा मतिः ।
हिवावद्यमिमं लोकं गन्ता मज्जनतामसि ॥ २३ ॥

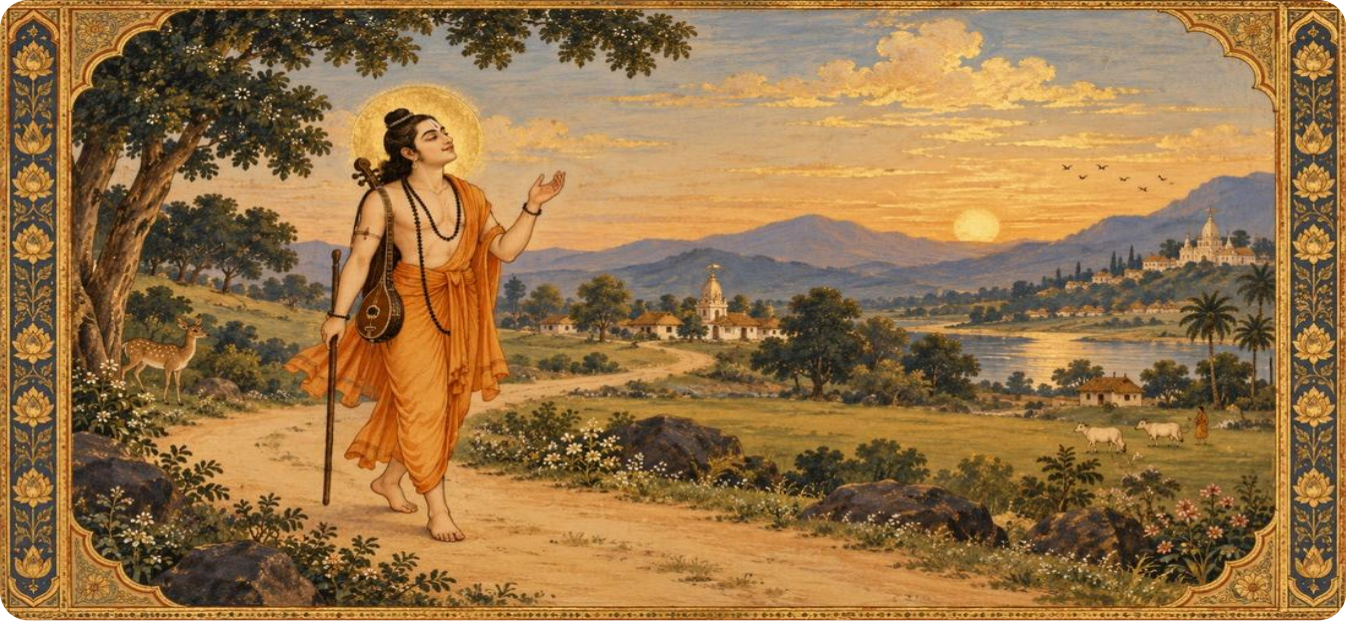
sat-sevayādirghayāpi jātā mayi dṛḍhā matiḥ hitvāvadyam imaṁ lokam gantā maj-janatām asi

Meaning: Through your service to the saints, though it lasted but a short while, your mind has become firmly fixed on Me; leaving behind this imperfect body, you shall come to be one of My own attendants. (SB 1.6.23)

That thought fixed on Him, the Lord promised, would never cease; by His grace Nārada would continue to remember Him even when the whole creation had dissolved. Having said this much, that great unseen Being — the Ruler of all, present everywhere like the sky — fell silent. Recognising the Lord's unique grace, the boy bowed his head to Him, the greatest of the great.

Chanting the Name Across the Earth

From that day, casting off all shyness, Nārada began to repeat aloud the mysterious and auspicious Names of the infinite Lord and to dwell upon His deeds. Rid of every craving, free of pride and envy, and contented within, he wandered over the face of the earth, awaiting his appointed hour.



Free of pride and craving, Narada chants the auspicious Names of the Lord and roams the earth (SB 1.6.26).

नामान्यनन्तस्य हतत्रपः पठन्
 गुह्यानि भद्राणि कृतानि च स्मरन् ।
 गां पर्यटंस्तुष्टमना गतस्पृहः
 कालं प्रतीक्षन् विमदो विमत्सरः ॥ २६ ॥

nāmāṇy anantasya hata-trapaḥ paṭhan guhyāṇi bhadraṇi kṛtāni ca smaran gām paryatamś tuṣṭa-manā gata-spṛhaḥ kālāṁ pratīkṣan vimado vimatsaraḥ

Meaning: Free of all diffidence, chanting the Names of the infinite Lord and remembering His hidden, auspicious deeds, I roamed the earth content and free of craving, awaiting my time, without pride and without envy. (SB 1.6.26)

Through Death and a New Creation

To one whose thoughts were fixed on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, unattached and pure of heart, death came at the appointed hour like a sudden flash of lightning. His material body fell away, its allotted destiny spent, and Nārada was translated into a spiritual form fit for an attendant of the Lord. At the close of that age of the world, when Lord Nārāyaṇa withdrew the whole creation into Himself and lay upon the waters of the cosmic deluge, and Brahmā prepared to enter the Lord's body to rest, Nārada too — in his subtle form — entered with the ingoing breath. Ages later, when a thousand cycles of the four yugas had passed and Brahmā rose again to bring forth creation, Nārada was reborn from the creator's senses, together with Marīci and the other great sages. His vow of ceaseless remembrance of the Lord had never once been broken; and now, by the grace of Lord Mahāviṣṇu, he moves without hindrance through all the three worlds, within them and beyond.

The Vīṇā and the Endless Song

Then Nārada spoke of the instrument by which he is known across the worlds — the vīṇā bestowed on him by the Lord Himself, sounding the seven notes that represent sacred vibration. Playing upon it, he wanders everywhere, singing the story of Śrī Hari.



With the vina the Lord Himself bestowed on him, Narada wanders the worlds singing the glory of Sri Hari (SB 1.6.32-33).

प्रगायतः स्ववीर्याणि तीर्थपादः प्रियश्रवाः ।
आहूत इव मे शीघ्रं दर्शनं याति चेतसि ॥ ३३ ॥

pragāyataḥ sva-vīryāṇi tīrtha-pādaḥ priya-śravāḥ āhūta iva me śīghraṁ darśanaṁ yāti cetasi

Meaning: As I sing of His mighty deeds, the Lord of holy renown, whose feet are the source of all sacred places, swiftly appears within my heart, as though summoned by the song. (SB 1.6.33)

Why the Song Saves

This, Nārada revealed, is the great secret. For those whose minds are ceaselessly tormented by the craving for sense-enjoyment, the narration of the Lord's deeds has been found to be a very raft by which to cross the ocean of worldly existence.

एतद्भ्यातुरचित्तानां मात्रास्पर्शेच्छया मुहुः ।
भवसिन्धुप्लवो दृष्टो हरिचर्यानुवर्णनम् ॥ ३४ ॥

etad dhy ātura-cittānām mātṛā-sparśecchayā muhuḥ bhava-sindhu-plavo dṛṣṭo hari-caryānuvarṇanam

Meaning: For those whose hearts are restless with endless craving for sense-contact, the recounting of Śrī Hari’s deeds has been found to be a raft across the ocean of birth and death. (SB 1.6.34)

A heart smitten again and again by lust and greed, he added, does not find peace so surely through the various disciplines of yoga — self-restraint and the rest — as it does through loving service of Lord Mukunda, the giver of liberation.

Nārada Takes His Leave

“O sinless one,” Nārada said to Vyāsa at last, “I have now told you everything you asked — the secret of my own birth and deeds, and the means by which your soul may find its rest.” And the frame returns to the Naimiṣāraṇya forest, where the blessed Sūta continues the tale. Having spoken thus, the divine sage Nārada took his leave and, sounding his vīṇā, went on his way, with no purpose of his own left to accomplish.

Important Verse — The Blessing of the Wandering Sage

The chapter closes with Sūta’s own tribute, a benediction upon the celestial minstrel whose whole being is a song of God.

अहो देवर्षिर्धन्योऽयं यत्कीर्तिं शार्ङ्गधन्वनः ।
गायन्माद्यन्निदं तन्त्र्या रमयत्यातुरं जगत् ॥ ३८ ॥

aho devarṣir dhanyo ‘yaṁ yat-kīrtiṁ śārṅgadhanvanah gāyan mādyann idaṁ tantryā ramayaty āturaṁ jagat

Meaning: Ah, blessed indeed is this divine sage, who — singing to his lute the glory of the Lord who wields the Śārṅga bow — is himself intoxicated with joy and gladdens this afflicted world as well. (SB 1.6.38)

Principal Teachings

1. The world moves in the hand of God. Even in his grief, the child recognised that the world is subject to its Ruler as a puppet is to the wire-puller (SB 1.6.7). To trust that ordering — even when it wounds us — is the beginning of surrender.
2. Loss can be a doorway. Nārada received his mother’s death as a boon that freed him for the Lord (SB 1.6.10). Faith does not deny sorrow; it lets sorrow open onto grace.
3. The Lord answers the heart that longs. It was tears of eagerness, not mastery of technique, that drew Śrī Hari into the boy’s heart (SB 1.6.16). Sincere longing is itself a form of worship.
4. A vision withdrawn deepens desire. The Lord hid His form on purpose, to kindle an unquenchable yearning (SB 1.6.21–23). Even the Lord’s apparent absence is His teaching.

5. Small service bears endless fruit. A brief, humble service to the saints fixed Nārada's mind on the Lord forever (SB 1.6.23) — proof that no sincere act of devotion is ever lost.
6. Singing the Lord's glory is a raft across saṁsāra. For restless, craving hearts, hearing and singing of Hari's deeds is the sure crossing (SB 1.6.34) — surer even than austere yoga (SB 1.6.35).

A Devotional Reflection

There is a reason the whole tradition loves this chapter. Nārada is not born great; he is born to nothing at all — a servant's fatherless son who loses even his mother before he is old enough to know the four directions. And yet this is the soul who becomes the wandering sage of the three worlds, the one whose vīṇā can summon the Lord into the heart. What lifted him was not birth, nor learning, nor power, but a few weeks of humble service and a river of longing. When the Lord grants a single glimpse and then withdraws it, we are tempted to read absence as rejection. Nārada teaches us to read it as invitation — the ache of missing God is itself the pull of God. And so his life becomes an encouragement to every ordinary seeker: begin where you are, serve the holy, and let the heart long. The song you carry may yet gladden a weary world.

A Daily Devotional Practice

Do today what saved Nārada: sing, even softly. Take one of the Lord's holy Names — Kṛṣṇa, Hari, Mukunda — and repeat it aloud for a few minutes, letting the sound settle into the heart. If a longing rises, even a small one, do not push it away; offer it as your prayer. Remember that it was not perfection but a child's tears that drew the Lord near.

Conclusion

So ends the sixth discourse of Book One, the conversation between Nārada and Vyāsa, in this great Purāṇa the God-realized call the Paramahansa-Saṁhitā. In *Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1 Chapter 6*, the Devarṣi Nārada completes the story of his previous life: the fatherless child alone in the forest, the vision of Śrī Hari granted and lovingly withdrawn, the promise of eternal remembrance, his passage through death and a new creation, and his endless wandering with the Lord-given vīṇā, singing the glory of Hari and delighting an afflicted world. It is a chapter that turns our poverty into hope, for it shows that the door to God is opened not by greatness but by service and longing. From the next discourse, the blessed Sūta will carry the sacred history forward — to Vyāsa's own great work, and to the fierce events on the field of Kurukṣetra. May we, like Nārada, keep the Lord's Name ever on our lips and His form ever in our hearts.

May the divine wisdom of Srimad Bhagavatam awaken pure devotion within our hearts.

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

Jay Shree Madhav.

References and Attribution

Primary edition: Gita Press, Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa (English), Book One (Skandha 1), Discourse 6, book pages 19–22.

Srimad Bhagavatam Wisdom · Biswa Sanatan Dharma Seva Trust. Presented following the spiritual guidance and recommendation of Pandit Dr. Shri Kashinath Mishra.

॥ हरि ॐ तत्सत् ॥

Jay Shree Madhav

Read online: kalkiabatara.org/blog-srimad-bhagavatam-canto-1-chapter-6-narada-and-vyasa.html

Srimad Bhagavatam Wisdom · Kalki Avatar International · Biswa Sanatan Dharma Seva Trust

