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# Narada and the Pot of Oil



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Classics for Kids

# Narada and the Pot of Oil

Story told by  
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“Narayana! Narayana!” sang Narada, as he travelled across the universe. He kept a curious eye on everyone – gods, demons and humans alike. Narada was a great follower of Vishnu, whose other name was Narayana.

As he passed through a village, he looked around him and frowned. “All the people are so busy with their work,” he thought. “No one has the time to remember Vishnu!”





Shaking his head, Narada continued on his way. "I never forget his name even for a moment. Why . . . come to think of it, there is no one in the world who loves Vishnu more than I do."

Narada stopped and looked at the millions of twinkling stars and planets around. He held his head a little higher and puffed out his chest. "Yes! There is no doubt, I am his greatest follower," he thought. "I am sure Narayana will agree with me."



And with these thoughts, a very smug Narada made his way to Vaikuntha, Vishnu's home.





Vishnu was happy to see Narada.  
“What brings you here today?” he asked.  
“Has there been a quarrel between the  
gods and the demons? Is a follower of  
mine in trouble?”  
“No quarrels and no troubles, my lord,”  
replied Narada. “I just . . . ahem . . . want to  
know . . . who is your greatest follower?”





Vishnu did not have to think long. Pointing to a little space on earth, he said, "Well, Narada, I love all my followers but that farmer there is the greatest of them." Narada was dumbstruck.

"A farmer?" he exclaimed. "I mean, there are so many wise and holy men who pray to you and . . . ah, well, there's me. Why him?"

"Why don't you go and see for yourself?" urged Vishnu. Narada did not have to be told twice. "Narayana, Narayana!" he chanted, and in a flash he stood outside the farmer's simple hut.





It was early morning and the farmer had just woken up. "Narayana, Hari Om," said the farmer, getting up from his bed. "One," counted Narada, watching the farmer carefully. The farmer finished his work around the house, said goodbye to his wife and children and went to his fields.



Narada followed him. The farmer worked hard all day, ploughing and weeding and watering his fields. Not once did he utter the name of Vishnu.





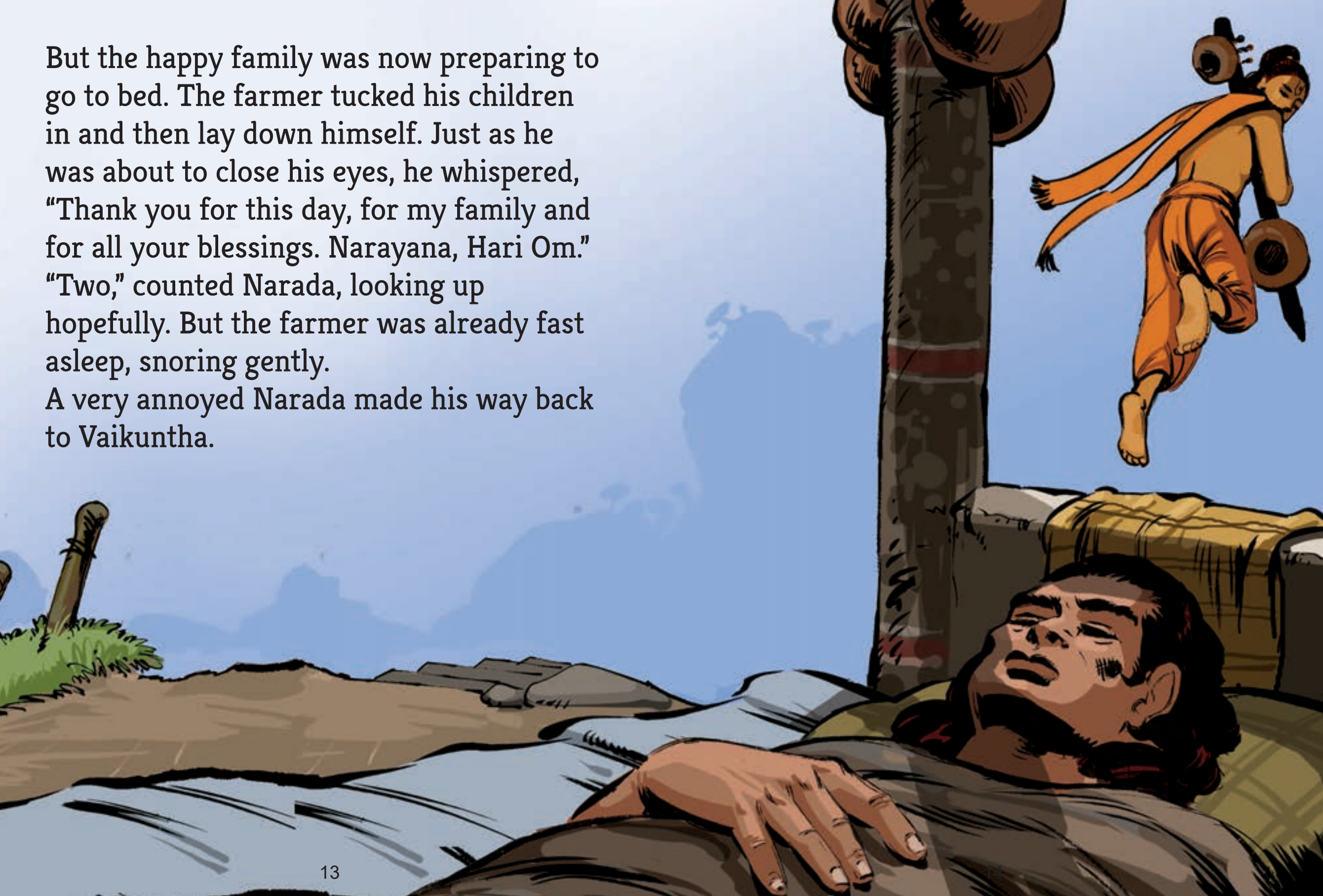
The farmer returned home in the evening. Then the family sat down together to a small meal. The children chattered excitedly about what they had done all day. By now Narada was getting quite restless.

“He has remembered Vishnu only once till now,” he thought, walking up and down. “Is he going to say some special prayers throughout the night that make him so dear to Vishnu?”





But the happy family was now preparing to go to bed. The farmer tucked his children in and then lay down himself. Just as he was about to close his eyes, he whispered, "Thank you for this day, for my family and for all your blessings. Narayana, Hari Om." "Two," counted Narada, looking up hopefully. But the farmer was already fast asleep, snoring gently. A very annoyed Narada made his way back to Vaikuntha.





“Your greatest follower remembered you only twice in a whole day,” he said to Vishnu. “Twice! Why, even ordinary sages chant your name more than that. And I? Narayana, Narayana! I chant your name all day long.”



Vishnu seemed very busy. He had a lot of bowls, urns, oils and incenses spread around him. “Is that so?” he said. “Well, will you help me finish my work before we talk about this?”





Narada sat up at once. "Vishnu is asking for my help," he thought joyfully. "There is no greater honour. Narayana! Narayana!"

"I need someone to carry this bowl of oil once around the universe," explained Vishnu. "Since you can travel around the universe with ease, will you do it for me? But not a single drop should fall, or all my work will be spoilt."  
"Of course!" replied Narada. "I will do it!"





Vishnu passed a huge bowl, full to the top with oil, into Narada's hands and said, "Now remember, Narada, not one drop should fall."

Without another word, Narada slowly made his way out of Vaikuntha.

Carrying the large bowl and watching his step at the same time was hard work.

Vishnu watched him go with a mischievous grin.





Outside, some dancers were on their way to a dance contest. They bowed to Narada. "Bless us, Narada. We have to dance in front of Indra today," they said. Narada almost looked up, but the oil sloshed dangerously. "Ug . . . u . . . h . . ." Narada muttered as he



tottered on without a word, his eyes fixed on the bowl. "What's the matter with him?" giggled the dancers. "He is usually quite talkative." "Maybe Indra didn't invite him," one of them said in a loud whisper.





Poor Narada wanted to reply but he dared not turn back, or even look up, fearing that he might spill some oil. "I must not look at anyone or listen to them . . . Oops! Got to be careful!" he thought, almost walking into a pond.

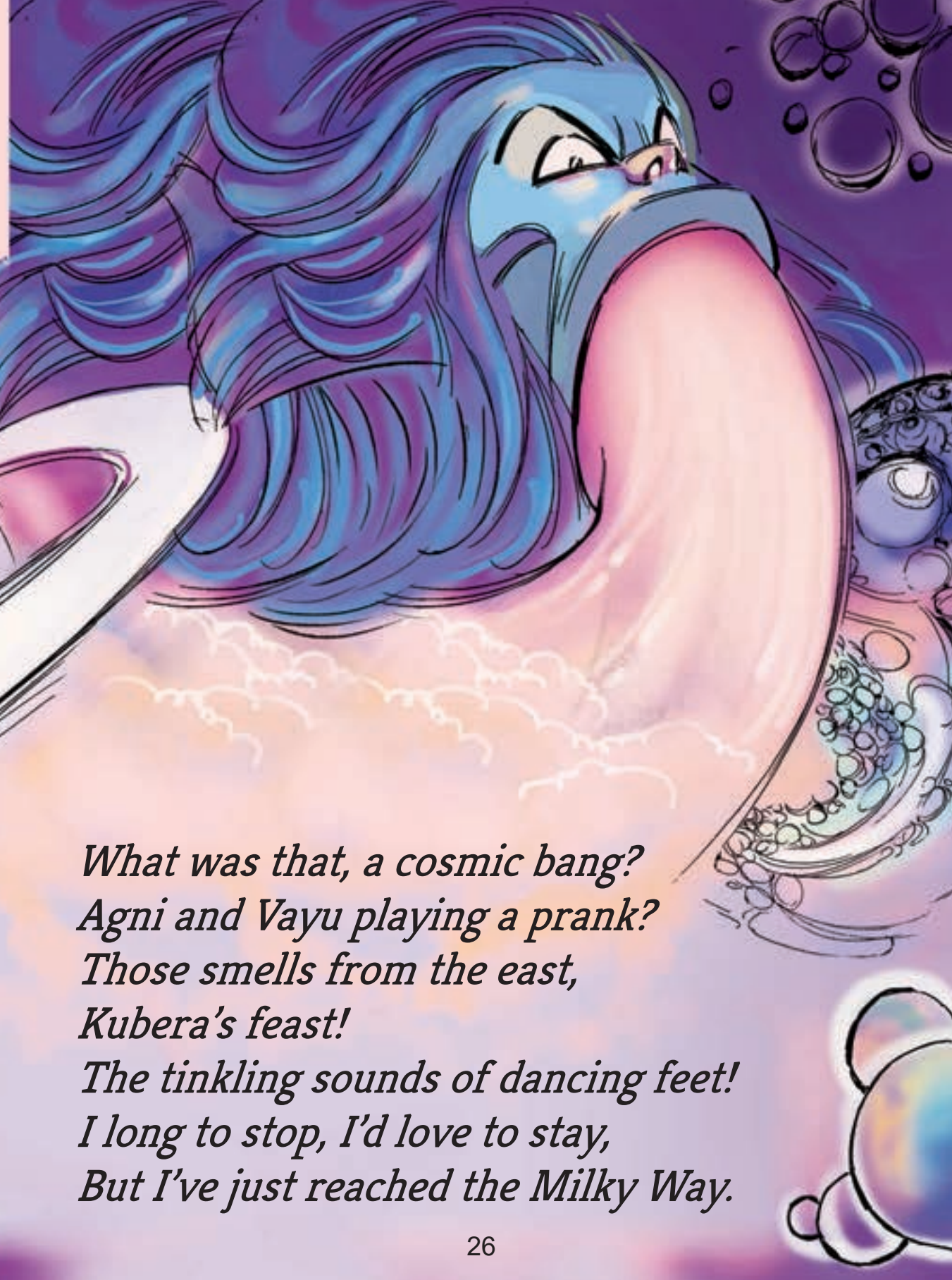


"This is not going to be such an easy task, after all."





Narada was right. As usual, the universe was full of action but this time poor Narada could not stop to watch!



*What was that, a cosmic bang?  
Agni and Vayu playing a prank?  
Those smells from the east,  
Kubera's feast!  
The tinkling sounds of dancing feet!  
I long to stop, I'd love to stay,  
But I've just reached the Milky Way.*



*A comet goes by zip, zap, zoom,  
Dangerous deep black holes do loom,  
Ouch! A meteorite touches my feet,  
I almost fall but grit my teeth,  
I cannot stop, I cannot stay,  
A million stars must I cross today.*





Narada made his way carefully across the universe and finally came back to Vishnu. Setting the bowl of oil down, he said proudly, "It was hard work, my lord, but it's done."



"I knew you would do my work perfectly, Narada," replied Vishnu. "But tell me, how many times did you take my name today?"

"Your name? Aaah . . . I . . ." Narada stammered.

Then he answered quickly, "I had to pay attention to the work you gave me. I just did not have the time."





Vishnu smiled and said, "That farmer too was doing the work I gave him, but he remembered me twice in one day."

Narada was quiet. Then he said, "Now I understand, my lord. Those who remember you even while doing their work are your greatest followers."



Vishnu smiled and patted him on the shoulder.

Once again, Narada continued on his way through the universe, happily singing, "Narayana! Narayana!"





# Learning

# Ladder



Curious Wanting to know everything

Smug Annoyingly self-satisfied

Dumbstruck So shocked as to be unable to speak

Chores Jobs done around the house

Ploughing Digging the field to make it ready for sowing

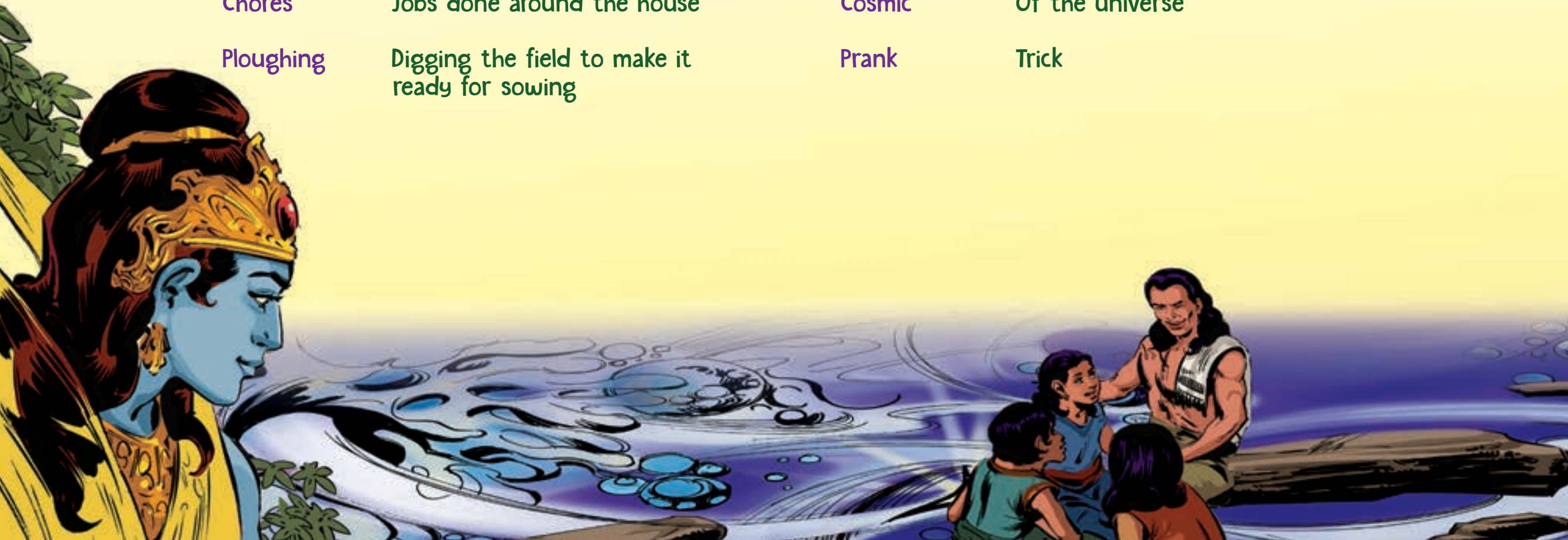
Pacing Walking up and down

Urns Vase-shaped vessels

Incenses Substances that give off sweet-smelling smoke when burnt

Cosmic Of the universe

Prank Trick







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# AFTER THE STORY...

Vishnu has a thousand names! Narayana is one of them.

Vaikuntha is the home of Vishnu and his wife, Lakshmi.

Vishnu is said to be the colour of dark clouds.

Narada is very mischievous. He enjoys causing quarrels between others.

'Nara' means knowledge. 'Da' means to give. Narada means 'the giver of knowledge'.

Narada had only one weakness—his pride.

